

2015

ROUGH ROADS TO EQUALITY

Women Police in Meghalaya



North East Network



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Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
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Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

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Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

CHRI Headquarters, New Delhi

55A, Third Floor, Siddharth Chambers-1,
Kalu Sarai, New Delhi 110 016
India
Tel: +91 11 4318 0200
Fax: +91 11 2686 4688
E-mail: info@humanrightsinitiative.org

CHRI London

Room No. 219
School of Advanced Study
South Block, Senate House
Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU
United Kingdom
Tel: +44(0) 207 664 4860
Fax: +44(0) 207 862 8820
E-mail: chri.admin@sas.ac.uk

CHRI Africa, Accra

House No.9, Samora Machel
Street Asylum Down, Opposite
Beverly Hills Hotel Near Trust
Towers, Accra,
Ghana
Tel/Fax: +233 302 971170
Email: chriafrika@humanrightsinitiative.org

www.humanrightsinitiative.org

Rough Roads To Equality

WOMEN POLICE IN MEGHALAYA

Written by

Joy Grace Syiem, Namrata Rynjah and Balarisha Lyngdoh

Edited by

Devyani Srivastava

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative,
New Delhi

North East Network,
Shillong

This report has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

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Foreword

The future of our overall security relies on deeper engagement between police and public. Yet at this time, it would not be an exaggeration to say that each is distant and distrustful of the other. Much of the alienation comes from knowing very little, or harbouring distorted ideas, about the other. This requires both police and public to make deliberate efforts to learn more about each other. This study on women in policing in Meghalaya helps pave the road towards that understanding.

Women are reluctant to approach the police and, therefore, denied access to justice right at the gateway. Much of their hesitation to come forward and claim remedies rests on the perception that police is the preserve of men alone and will have no understanding of their plight and even less sympathy for it. Yet there are a growing number of women in the police. The public see them sometimes, with approval for their courage in being in a predominantly male bastion, and sometimes as foolhardy (or naïve?) exotics misplaced in the wrong profession. But hitherto little attention has been paid to how they may be contributing to policing and their potential for changing the way policing is done.

The study aims at making known the status and condition of the many women who work in the police. It highlights some of the steps that are needed to ensure gender equity and parity within the force and a targeted response to women's issues from the police. By extension it directs our attention to how this must effect policing responses to women in general. However small the numbers and however great the challenges, CHRI believes the very presence of more and more women in policing holds the promise of positive change. This has to be encouraged and supported by civil society.

This study, made possible through the initiative and efforts of the North East Network (NEN), makes a beginning toward increasing public knowledge and creating a better understanding of women in policing. The close interactions between the Meghalaya Police and NEN during the course of the study demonstrate the value of developing a sympathetic understanding between the police and civil society. CHRI is fortunate to support this initiative that provides a basis for ongoing dialogue between the police and wider civil society towards the larger goal of better policing. We assure our full support and help to further deepen this engagement in the future.

Maja Daruwala

Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

Foreword

Two important outcomes have resulted from the report prepared by the North East Network (NEN) on the status of policewomen in Meghalaya: one, it relates to the police at every step of its work in the state; and two, in the process of conducting the study, the knowledge base of the NEN team was strengthened. Interviews with policewomen, meetings and interactions with senior officers helped NEN immensely. The team is now more familiar on the functioning of the police force, the hierarchies that exist and how incidents of violence and crime are handled by the police.

In a state where crime rates are rising, the need for a vigilant police force is necessary. Though it is expected that policewomen can handle crimes against women better than men, the role of police men and women are at par, and both are equally responsible to act when necessary. For us at NEN, we are keen that policemen and policewomen are sensitised to understand fellow human beings, whether it relates to an abused woman or running a Helpline. Having said that, it is important to increase the recruitment of women, so that roles, duties and powers are equitably distributed within the police force. In general, a policeman is seen as an authority and a powerful one, in his uniform. But there is also a view that they could act as friends and protectors of the populace. Most victims would like the police to act in such a way. The first conversation or interaction with a victim of violence is crucial for her/him to determine whether the police person is sensitive or not. Policing is necessary, but its role must adhere to instruments of accountability. I do believe that this can be enhanced if the existing archaic and antiquated laws are replaced by mechanisms that give quick access to justice to the victim and transparency to the police.

I am sure this report will be an important contribution towards understanding the opportunities as well as challenges that women experience in the state. It is our hope that the report, which is part of a larger report by CHRI, acts as an antenna to what NEN will do as trainers, how it will sensitise more police personnel towards functioning in a gender balanced organisation.

Dr Monisha Behal

Executive Director, North East Network

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This report has been a collaborative effort and steadfast support of several individuals including the Meghalaya Police. We are grateful to the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative for this enriching opportunity and for assisting us at every stage till the successful completion of the report.

We acknowledge the gracious cooperation of M. Khakhrang, Meghalaya Police Service (MPS), Superintendent of Police, East Khasi Hills District and Claudia Lyngwa (MPS), Senior Superintendent of Police, Criminal Investigation Department. This study would not have been possible without their unwavering support. We would like to thank C. Shadap (MPS), Deputy Superintendent of Police, Traffic, and all the Officers-in-Charge of police stations in East Khasi Hills for their participation in interviews and focus group discussions held at their respective police stations.

The North East Network (NEN) team comprising Joy Grace Syiem, Namrata Rynjah, Balarisha Lyngdoh and Colleen Michelle Lyngdoh Mawphlang were instrumental in conducting interviews, focus group discussions and in drafting the report. We greatly appreciate their efforts and teamwork. We would also like to thank Dr Monisha Behal for her guidance and support.

Finally, our sincere gratitude goes to the policewomen of the Crime Investigation Department and East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya. The report would not have been possible without their active participation and willingness to talk to the NEN team. We hope this report will go a long way in bringing about change in women's policing and contribute to their growth.

Aim and Methodology

Aim

Police institutions need to be representative of the society they serve, in order to command public respect and credibility. Diversity in police organisations, besides being a value to be upheld in and of itself, is a vital attribute of effective and impartial law enforcement. In any society, women comprise nearly half the population but are poorly reflected in police institutions. This report champions the inclusion of women in policing, not just to realise the goal of gender equality, but also on the utilitarian ground that in today's policing most police functions can be performed by either gender and there is little evidence to support the myth that policing is a "man's work". The report examines the status of women in policing in Meghalaya. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Identify obstacles and challenges to women's entry into the police force;
2. Explore the functioning of women in the police force, their responsibilities, and the degree of decision-making opportunities available to them;
3. Identify training received by policewomen to date and future strategies to enhance the same;
4. Examine the recruitment, positions held, promotions and working conditions of women police in Meghalaya.

This state-specific report is an offshoot of the regional research carried out by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative on the status of women police in South Asia.¹ For the North East Network (NEN), the study builds on its ongoing work and advocacy with the Meghalaya Police on gender issues. NEN Meghalaya has worked with the Meghalaya Police Department since 2007 when a project was initiated on "Building a Cross/Multi-Sectoral Gender Sensitive Approach to Violence against Women" with a focus on legal remedies for women in India and the role of the police. Years of training finally culminated in the police producing a "Training and Resource Manual for Police Personnel on Gender Sensitisation and Violence against Women" jointly written by NEN and the North Eastern Police Academy (NEPA). NEN Meghalaya continues to work with the Meghalaya Police and NEPA in ensuring that training in gender sensitisation and legal remedies is conducted for newly recruited personnel and officers of all ranks posted in all the districts of Meghalaya.

Methodology

NEN led the research for the study. After initial consultations with CHRI and a field visit to the region, an overall framework for the report was agreed on. NEN, in consultation with CHRI, prepared detailed questionnaires and interview questions. Based on this framework, the team outlined a detailed work plan to conduct research and carry out interviews.

¹ CHRI's regional report titled *Rough Roads to Equality: Women Police in South Asia* examines status of women police in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives. It provides the first systematic assessment of the barriers women police face on the ground in South Asia, and recommends ways to strengthen gender equality within police departments. It was published in August 2015 and can be found at <http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/download/1449728344rough-roads-to-equalitywomen-police-in-south-asia-august-2015.pdf>

The following methodology was adopted:

- **Desk research:** The team gathered information on: police structures and ranks; state and national level policies; data on the number of women police in East Khasi Hills and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). It reviewed: police circulars, notifications and orders relating to training, promotions and working conditions of women police; police department manuals and regulations to assess provisions relating to or affecting women police; and relevant reports by the Meghalaya Police. In instances where material was not publicly available, it was kindly provided by the Police Department.
- **Survey:** A list of questions was prepared that took into consideration the current situation of policing in Meghalaya and the issues that affect women in rising in the hierarchy. The questions were close- and open-ended, and aimed at obtaining a statistical picture of the views and expectations of female police officers.
- **Face to face interviews:** A list of questions was developed to interview senior men and women police officers to obtain their views on current policies, the status of women police in their departments and to receive recommendations on how policing could be improved.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** These were carried out with women police deputed in police stations in East Khasi Hills and the CID.

Chapter 1:

The Importance of Women in the Police

Introduction

Policing, under the Constitution of India, is a state subject.² Each state and Union Territory has a separate police force, and their organisation and working is the responsibility of the state government. Following independence, states inherited the police system put in place through the Police Act, 1861 by the British. Even after 68 years of independence, policing remains colonial in structure and law across India. Designed to serve as an instrument of force on behalf of the regime in power, the police were expected to be predominantly muscular and aggressive. Its primary function was seen to be dealing with crime, danger and coercion, and thus, it relied heavily on masculine characteristics of “toughness”. It was never expected to be representative in order to address safety and security concerns of a diverse population.

Not much has changed in policing philosophy and nature since. Police organisations throughout the country continue to be male bastions. While this is true of police forces worldwide – on average women constitute only 9% of the police strength globally³ – in India the situation is grimmer with women constituting just 6.11% of the total police strength.⁴ Police departments are only now slowly opening up to women, that too mainly at the lower ranks. Of the total women police strength, 89% belong to the constabulary.⁵ This shows the deep resistance within departments in effecting change.

The lack of women’s representation in the police force has repeatedly been emphasised in reform debates. Way back in 1979, the National Police Commission (NPC) constituted by the Government of India called for an increase in women’s representation at all levels of the police. The Commission’s recommendations, however, have mostly gone unheeded by states till date. Thereon, the issue got sidelined in subsequent reform initiatives.

2 The Constitution of India divides areas of legislative jurisdiction between the centre and the states. The Seventh Schedule of the Constitution lays down three lists: the Union List including items on which Parliament has exclusive right to legislate; the State List including items on which state legislative assemblies have exclusive right to legislate; and the Concurrent List on which both can legislate.

3 UN Women (2011-12) *Progress of the World’s Women: In Pursuit of Justice*. <http://progress.unwomen.org/pdfs/EN-Report-Progress.pdf>. The figures behind these findings do not appear to be publicly available but are apparently calculated by UN Women “from regional aggregates (population weighted) using UNODC 2009 and population data from UN DESA 2009b”.

4 Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), *Data on Police Organization in India as on 1 January 2014*, p.32.

5 Government of India, *Data on Police Organization in India as on 1 January 2014*, p. 141.

The National Police Commission's Recommendation

In the fifth of its eight reports, the NPC devoted a large section to women police. It not only called for an increase in the representation of women in the force, which at that time stood at 0.4%, but also recommended an equal share in police work and greater involvement in the police administration. Its specific recommendations include:

- Women police should be given a greater role in investigation work, performing a special role dealing with crimes against women and children and tackling juveniles in conflict with law.
- Women police need to be recruited in much larger numbers than at present, preferably in the ranks of Assistant Sub-Inspectors or Sub-Inspectors of Police rather than in the rank of Constables.
- Women police should become an integral part of the police organisation and should not constitute a separate branch with recruitment and promotion confined to that branch alone.
- Generally, women should be given the same training as male officers with emphasis on special training in dealing with women and children in public order situations.

The issue gained importance at the policy level much later, particularly as a measure to improve police response to crimes against women. The central government in 2009 laid down a target of 33% representation for women in police departments (discussed in detail below). While no state or Union Territory has yet achieved the target, some, such as Chandigarh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have made considerable progress at 14%, 12% and 10% respectively (see Table 1) whereas efforts are underway in many other states towards improving the status of women police.

Table 1
State-Wise Strength of Women Police as a Percentage of the Total Police Force⁶
(As on 1 January 2014)

State/UT	Total Police Force	Total number of Woman Police	Percentage of Women Police	Rank (1-35, Highest-Lowest)
Chandigarh	7,181	1,017	14.16	1
Tamil Nadu	1,11,448	13,842	12.42	2
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	3,947	445	11.27	3
Himachal Pradesh	14,024	1,552	11.07	4
Maharashtra	1,71,359	17,957	10.48	5
Dadar & Nagar Haveli	261	26	9.96	6
Daman & Diu	373	34	9.12	7

⁶ Government of India, *Data on Police Organization in India as on 1 January 2014*, pp. 32 and 141.

Odisha	51,396	4,381	8.52	8
Uttarakhand	18,187	1,528	8.4	9
Manipur	24,832	2,040	8.22	10
Sikkim	4,281	333	7.78	11
Delhi	75,704	5,413	7.15	12
Rajasthan	92,330	6,568	7.11	13
Haryana	41,112	2,734	6.65	14
Punjab	73,782	4,761	6.44	15
Kerala	47,782	3,067	6.42	16
Goa	5,924	366	6.18	17
Lakshadweep	264	16	6.06	18
Mizoram	9,895	568	5.74	19
Puducherry	3,143	165	5.25	20
Arunachal Pradesh	11,247	582	5.17	21
Jharkhand	56,439	2,906	5.15	22
Karnataka	72,011	3,682	5.11	23
Madhya Pradesh	86,946	4,190	4.82	24
West Bengal	79,476	3,791	4.77	25
Andhra Pradesh	1,06,635	4,622	4.33	26
Chhattisgarh	54,693	2,348	4.29	27
Uttar Pradesh	1,68,851	7,238	4.29	27
Gujarat	74,023	2,691	3.64	29
Bihar	68,819	2,341	3.4	30
Tripura	23,619	777	3.29	31
Jammu & Kashmir	72,196	2,252	3.12	32
Meghalaya	11,453	329	2.87	33
Nagaland	24,030	253	1.05	34
Assam	55,033	510	0.93	35
All India	17,22,786	1,05,325	6.11	-

The matrilineal state of Meghalaya in North East India has made steady progress in increasing the percentage of women in its police force. As of 1 January 2015, there were 489 women police in the state, constituting 3.99% of the police strength, a marked improvement from 2008 when they numbered just 174, that is 1.88% of the police strength. In fact, in just one year, the state recorded an increase of over 1%, from 2.87% in 2014 (see Table 1) to 3.99% in 2015. Clearly, the department is making sincere efforts in opening up the police force to women. Although the numbers are in no way a reflection of the proportion of women in society, the marked improvement in such a short period is commendable. Before reviewing the improvements that the department needs to carry out regarding the working conditions for women personnel, it is important to highlight the value women bring to policing and the legal framework that must guide the department in its efforts.

Benefits of Gender Diversity in Police Organisations

Diversity and representativeness in general – including on the basis of gender – is an integral component of effective, democratic and impartial policing. To be credible and command respect, police organisations need to be, and be seen to be, representative of the society they serve. Dominance of or by any one segment of society – be it gender, class, caste, race or ethnicity – leads to fear of discrimination and bias, and ultimately alienates the unrepresented sections of society. While this is harmful for any professional organisation, policing in particular can hardly afford to alienate communities whose cooperation and trust is crucial for functions such as crime investigation and maintenance of law and order. A representative police force that serves the entire community is more likely to treat people fairly, and will have a better understanding of the experiences of the people and community it polices.

Further, diversity and equality enrich both the police and policing itself, by ensuring that the police have at their internal disposal a wide range of skills, experiences, perspectives, knowledge, education and cultures, rather than limiting this potential pool of expertise. Women officers bring additional skills and qualities, and improve the image of, and public confidence in, the police as a whole. The traditional but increasingly outdated view of policing as “man’s work” is built on a model of policing that views the work as physical, authoritative, forceful, dangerous; and hence inherently unsuitable to the female physique and disposition. These powerful stereotypes persist, despite evidence to the contrary that strongly indicates not just the suitability of women to policing, but also the positive contributions they make. Studies particularised to women in the police are few and far between in the region. Elsewhere however, from the 1970s onward, research on women in the police has been uniform in discovering that the overall police functioning benefits from the presence of women. There is no reason to believe that it is any different in India.

“Twenty years of exhaustive research demonstrates that women police officers utilise a style of policing that relies less on physical force, and more on communication skills that defuse potentially violent situations. Women police officers are therefore much less likely to be involved in occurrences of police brutality, and are also much more likely to effectively respond to police calls regarding violence against women.”⁷

A comprehensive cross-country report in 2003, by the National Centre for Women and Policing (NCWP) on the advantages of hiring and retaining women in law enforcement pointed out that research in the US and other nations indicated that women police officers were as effective as their male colleagues and that there was:

“No meaningful difference between male and female officers in: their activities or productivity on patrol; their commitment to law enforcement organisations; their response to violent confrontations; their performance evaluations received both at the academy and on the job; their level of job satisfaction; and their participation in training and other professional development activities.”⁸

7 National Centre for Women and Policing: website, homepage.

8 National Centre for Women and Policing (2003), *Hiring and Retaining More Women: The Advantages to Law Enforcement Agencies*, p. 3: <http://womenandpolicing.com/pdf/NewAdvantagesReport.pdf>.

Female police officers have better interpersonal skills and in particular are better communicators than their male counterparts. According to the NCWP:

“Studies have also shown that community members prefer female officers to respond to potentially dangerous situations and believe they are better able to defuse these interactions.”⁹

Women police officers have also proved to be more adept at community policing. The nature of policing is moving away from the physical, forceful model, which women have previously (and wrongly) been regarded as unsuited for. As pointed out:

“Communities are demanding more contact with the police in non-enforcement related matters such as interaction with the youth, crime prevention and simply officer presence in the neighbourhoods.”¹⁰

Better interpersonal and communication skills undoubtedly contribute to an increased ability of women police officers in this regard; likewise research has found women to be less cynical and more respectful in their opinions of citizens, and give greater support to the principles of community policing.¹¹

Research by the NCWP also demonstrates that women police officers are substantially less likely than their male colleagues to be involved in allegations or cases of excessive or deadly use of force.¹² That is not to say that women police officers are unwilling to use force. Research has demonstrated that they are just as likely to use force as male officers, but that the force used is less likely to be excessive or deadly. A consequence of this is that there is a decline in complaints against the police and increased confidence in policing. According to one commentator:

“Excessive force pay outs and discrimination lawsuits occur every day. Research conducted has suggested that a higher percentage of women police officers in an agency will decrease these claims and provide for a more positive relationship with the community. Female officers offer a style of policing which relies less on physical force and this can only assist a department’s liability in regards to claims of excessive force.”¹³

Women police officers have also had an impact on corruption levels in the police. For example, in Australia, inquiries into police misconduct and corruption concluded that “there was a direct association between increasing numbers of women police officers and reducing levels of corruption”.¹⁴ Likewise police services in Latin America and Mexico established women-only corps to handle traffic violations because they are less likely to accept bribes and engage in other forms of corruption.¹⁵

9 National Centre for Women and Policing, “*Hiring and Retaining*”, p. 6.

10 Sgt. Anderson, L. (2003), *Women in Law Enforcement*, p. 10: [http://www.emich.edu/cerns/downloads/papers/PoliceStaff/Police%20Personnel%20\(e.g.,%20Selection,%20%20Promotion\)/Women%20in%20Law%20Enforcement.pdf](http://www.emich.edu/cerns/downloads/papers/PoliceStaff/Police%20Personnel%20(e.g.,%20Selection,%20%20Promotion)/Women%20in%20Law%20Enforcement.pdf).

11 National Centre for Women and Policing, “*Hiring and Retaining*”, p. 7.

12 National Center for Women and Policing (2002), *Men, Women and Police Excessive Force: A Tale of Two Genders*: http://womenandpolicing.com/PDF/2002_Excessive_Force.pdf.

13 Anderson, L., *Women in Law Enforcement*, p. 10.

14 Prenzler T., Fleming, J., King, A. (2010), “Gender Equity in Australian and New Zealand Policing: A Five-Year Review”, *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 584–595, 585: http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/38891/68129_1.pdf?sequence=1.

15 National Centre for Women and Policing, “*Hiring and Retaining*”, p. 7.

Increasing Access to Justice for Women

For crimes that are experienced predominantly by women – sexual assault and gender-based violence in particular – the police are a fundamental and usually the first link in the chain of access to justice. If women do not report crimes to the police, then such crimes are not recognised or dealt with through the formal justice system. While there may be myriad reasons why women do not report such crimes, one factor is undoubtedly the gender composition and responsiveness of the police. As recognised in the 2011 UN Women’s report:

“Discriminatory attitudes of justice service providers, including the police, court staff, the judiciary and health care workers can act as a major barrier to women’s access to justice. Tackling this is a vital part of making the justice chain gender-responsive. Employing women in the justice system, training justice providers and putting in place measures to foster greater accountability to women can make a difference. Approaching male police officers can be particularly difficult and sometimes impossible for women. Both male and female victims of sexual violence express a preference for reporting to women police. Data from 39 countries show that the presence of women police officers correlates positively with reporting of sexual assault, which confirms that recruiting women is an important component of a gender-responsive justice system.”¹⁶

Women police officers have also been shown to be more effective at handling domestic violence complaints. As highlighted above, one of the fundamental aspects of a representative police service is the ability to reflect, appreciate and understand the differing experiences within a society, and as a phenomenon experienced mostly by women, it stands to reason that female police officers are better placed to respond to domestic violence. Research demonstrating this dates back to the 1970s and has been consistent ever since.¹⁷

Like elsewhere in India, crime against women is a serious concern in Meghalaya. Statistics of the Meghalaya Police show an increase in reported crimes against women from 138 cases in 2004 to 480 in 2014.¹⁸ Rape, assault on women and domestic violence are major concerns for society. This is borne out by work done by NEN, which runs a hospital-based support centre for women jointly with the Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Meghalaya.

IOHYNTI Support Centre for Women

“Iohlynti”, a Khasi word meaning “the way”, is the first hospital-based support centre established in northeast India on 28 November 2011 to respond to the needs of women facing violence within their homes and the community. The Centre is a joint initiative of the Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Meghalaya and NEN. Iohlynti was established to:

16 UN Women (2011-12) *Progress of the World’s Women: In Pursuit of Justice*, p. 59: <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2011/progressoftheworldswomen-2011-en.pdf>.

17 National Centre for Women and Policing, “*Hiring and Retaining*”, p. 7.

18 Meghalaya Police, “*Crime Trend during the Last 14 Years (2001-2014)*”: http://megpolice.gov.in/Crime/Crime_chart_Megh.pdf.

1. Provide immediate social and psychological support for women facing violence;
2. Build the capacity of Health Care Providers on Gender and Violence against Women;
3. Create awareness on women's issues at large.

Since its inception in 2011, Iohlynti has received 293 cases of crimes against women. These are mainly domestic violence complaints comprising physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence. Such cases are on the rise and with each passing year, Iohlynti receives a larger number of cases. Iohlynti is staffed with a counsellor and an assistant counsellor, who provide its clients with the emotional support needed immediately after an incidence of violence and refers them to other state agencies for legal aid and holistic support when necessary. A monthly report is sent to the NEN office and a quarterly report of the cases is sent to the National Rural Health Mission, Meghalaya.

The Table below depicts the increase in reported cases of crimes against women from 2001 – 2014.

Table 2
Incidents of Crimes Against Women in Meghalaya during the Period 2001 to 2014¹⁹

S. No	Crime Head	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14
1.	Rape	26	38	40	54	63	74	82	88	112	149	130	164	183	118
2.	Kidnapping & Abduction of Women & girls	11	10	10	18	19	25	22	25	26	37	37	24	33	38
3.	Dowry Death	0	0	0	2	1	6	2	2	0	0	1	1	2	1
4.	Molestation	25	23	13	34	44	57	45	54	72	48	74	43	98	105
5.	Sexual Harassment	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	1	0	1	0	0	0
6.	Cruelty by Husband or Relatives	4	0	4	5	3	13	19	32	24	24	21	16	23	42
7.	Importation of Girls	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0
8.	Immoral Traffic (P) Act	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	7	4	3
9.	Dowry Prohibition Act	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
10.	Indecent Rep. of Women (P)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11.	Total Crimes Against Women	66	71	69	113	131	176	172	208	237	261	269	255	343	480

¹⁹ Meghalaya Police, "Statistics: Crime Against Women in the State during 2001 to 2014": http://megpolice.gov.in/crime/Crime_Women_Reg_2001-2014.pdf.

From January 2015 to September 2015, 339 cases of crimes against women were reported, with 76 cases of rape.²⁰

The present strength of 489 women officers is woefully inadequate to handle these cases effectively. There is an urgent need to increase the number of women police, particularly at the investigation levels, if the state is to be better prepared to tackle crimes against women.

Legal Obligations

Beyond the requirements of representativeness, access to justice for women and the proven importance of the contribution women make to policing, there are also legal drivers that compel states to address the inclusion of women as a matter of necessity and of right.

Non-discrimination and gender equality are fundamental principles enshrined in the Constitution of India. The Constitution not only guarantees equal rights in all spheres including civil, political, social and economic to women, it also empowers the state to adopt measures for positive discrimination in favour of women. Several articles in the Constitution guarantee equality and protect the rights of women.

Article 14: Equal protection of the laws within the territory of India

Article 15(1): Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them

Article 15(3): Empowers the state to make special provision for women and children

Article 16: Guarantees equal opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state

Other than constitutional obligations, the legal framework on policing comprises: police laws, manuals and regulations, criminal law and procedure, special laws; and government and/or departmental advisories/orders/circulars/notifications. State-specific regulations and policy initiatives on recruitment, training, promotions and postings are discussed in Chapter 3 of this report.

In terms of police laws, policing across much of India was till recently governed by the Police Act, 1861, which as mentioned earlier is in need of considerable updating. It has no mention on the need or role of women in police forces. Gender was addressed for the first time only in 2006 under the Model Police Act drafted by the Government of India to serve as a template for new police laws across the country. The Model Act called for “adequate gender representation in the composition of the police service” and required “each police station to have a Women and Child Protection Desk staffed, as far as possible, by women police personnel, to record complaints of crimes against women and children and to deal with the tasks relating to administration of special legislations relating to women and children”.²¹ Although this is a step forward, the Model Act, 2006 does not explicitly mention gender equality as a core principle governing the police service nor does it define “adequate representation”.

20 Meghalaya Police, “Month-Wise Reported Cases of Crimes Against Women in the State during 2015”: http://megpolice.gov.in/crime/Crime_Women_2015.pdf.

21 Section 12(6), Model Police Act, 2006.

In 2013, a second Committee re-examined the 2006 model and produced a new draft Model Police Act in 2014. The 2014 model takes greater account of the need for diversity in policing and for more equitable representation of women, but still does not include proportions.²² As a result, none of these models influence the numbers on the ground.

While police laws do not provide much guidance on the role of women police, criminal law and jurisprudence has over the years considerably expanded statutory functions to be performed by women police personnel. These range from requiring the arrest of a woman to be made by a female police officer;²³ search of a woman reasonably suspected of concealing any article by another woman only;²⁴ and in relation to sexual offences including assault, harassment and rape, recording of the victim's statement is preferably to be done by a woman police officer.²⁵ New laws relating to sexual crimes against children and women were passed in 2012 and 2013 respectively, giving exclusive functions to women police in the registration of complaints and recording of victims' statements.²⁶ Meeting these requirements calls not just for an increase in the number of women police but also deliberation on a suitable policy framework, including a review of police laws, to properly guide and monitor the increase of number of women across departments.

A range of international human rights standards also point to the need for inclusion of women in policing. The overarching and most forceful framework is provided by the UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which India ratified in 1993. Beyond prohibiting all forms of discrimination it requires state parties to take appropriate measures specifically to eliminate discrimination in employment and to ensure equality between men and women in relation to "the right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings".²⁷ State parties have an obligation to take measures to address discrimination and inequality in this regard.

In addition to CEDAW, there are a range of other international human rights standards of both binding and nonbinding status that relate to women in policing. For example, in the year 2000, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (UNSCR1325) was adopted. It is particularly concerned with the effects of armed conflict on women and reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict.²⁸ Accordingly, it urges the United Nations to increase women's involvement in

22 Section 10(2) of the Draft Model Police Act, 2014 states that the composition of the police service "shall, as far as possible, reflect adequate representation of all sections of society, provided that the number of women in the Police Service be adequate and be decided in consultation with the State Police Chief".

23 Section 46 (1), Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, inserted by Act 5 of 2009.

24 Section 100 (3), Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

25 Section 157 (1), Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, inserted by Act 5 of 2009; Section 161 (3), Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, inserted by Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013.

26 See Sections 24 and 26 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012; and the proviso to Section 154, Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

27 CEDAW, Art 11(1)(a). This Article continues: (b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment; (c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training; (d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work; (e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave; (f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction."

28 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1325, 31 October 2000: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325\(2000\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325(2000)).

conflict resolution and prevention, and calls on member states to respect the human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the Constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary.²⁹ More women in policing goes towards fulfilling this resolution.

To conclude, in moving forward, Meghalaya must bear in mind the above objectives and legal framework. A lot more needs to be done before women are regarded at par with men and can play an equal if not a leading role in all policing functions. Despite the marked improvement in numbers, women personnel remain too few to have a say in decision-making and organisational matters. They face several problems in their working conditions which hinders their growth within the organisation. The police department must continue to further increase their numbers across ranks and strive to meet, at the very least, the target laid down by the central government.

29 Additional related standards include the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action aimed at achieving greater equality and opportunity for women: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>;
General Recommendation 19 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, (1992) on violence against women: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>;
The UN General Assembly Declaration on the elimination of violence against women (1993): <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>;
The UN General Assembly Resolution on crime prevention and criminal justice measures to eliminate violence against women in 1998: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f33f0.html>;
The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution on strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women, 2010: <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2010/res%202010-15.pdf>.

Chapter 2:

The Meghalaya Police Organisation: An Overview

The Police Organisation and Structure

Meghalaya came into existence on 21 January 1972 by joining the districts of Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills which were previously part of Assam. The Meghalaya Police was created on the same day. At the time, it had a total of 2,500 personnel.³⁰ The organisation has today grown into a force of 12,418 personnel (489 women and 11,929 men)³¹ serving a population of 3,211,474 as of 2014.³² This leaves one police officer per 240 people approximately, well within the UN recommendation of 1:500. However, these figures have to be seen in the context of the geographical spread, terrain and history of insurgency in the state.

Given the quasi-federal character of Indian polity, state police forces are supervised by centrally-appointed officers belonging to the Indian Police Service, an All India Service which is recruited, trained and managed by the central government. These officers occupy the ranks of Deputy/Superintendent of Police and above and are responsible for the overall supervision and management of policing functions within their stipulated jurisdictions. Positions that are filled by state governments include: upper subordinate ranks (Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors) who generally work at the police station level and do much of the crime investigation work; and the police constabulary which consists of the bulk of the police strength and carries out tasks such as patrolling, surveillance, guard duties and law and order work. The head of the police force is the Director General of Police who is responsible to the state government for the administration of the police force.

Rank Structure

1. Director General of Police (DGP)
2. Additional Director General of Police (Addl. DGP)
3. Inspector General of Police (IGP)
4. Deputy Inspector General of Police (Dy. IGP)
5. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP)

³⁰ Meghalaya Police, Committee on Police Reforms, p. 23: http://megpolice.gov.in/report_police_reforms.pdf.

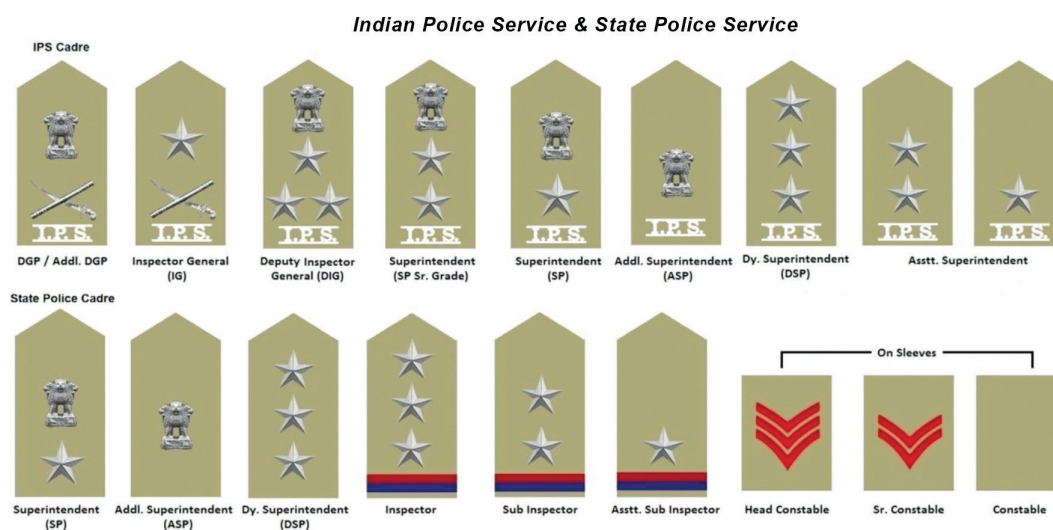
³¹ See Annexure I: Letter No. FM/XXI-6/2012/Vol. II/195, dated 4 June 2015 to NEN.

³² Government of India, Press Information Bureau, General Elections 2014, Fact Sheet – 5, “Fact Sheet on Meghalaya”, 10 March 2014: <http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2014/mar/d2014031002.pdf>.

6. Superintendent of Police (SP)
7. Additional Superintendent of Police (Addl. SP)
8. Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) / Deputy Superintendent of Police (Dy. SP)

State-Cadre

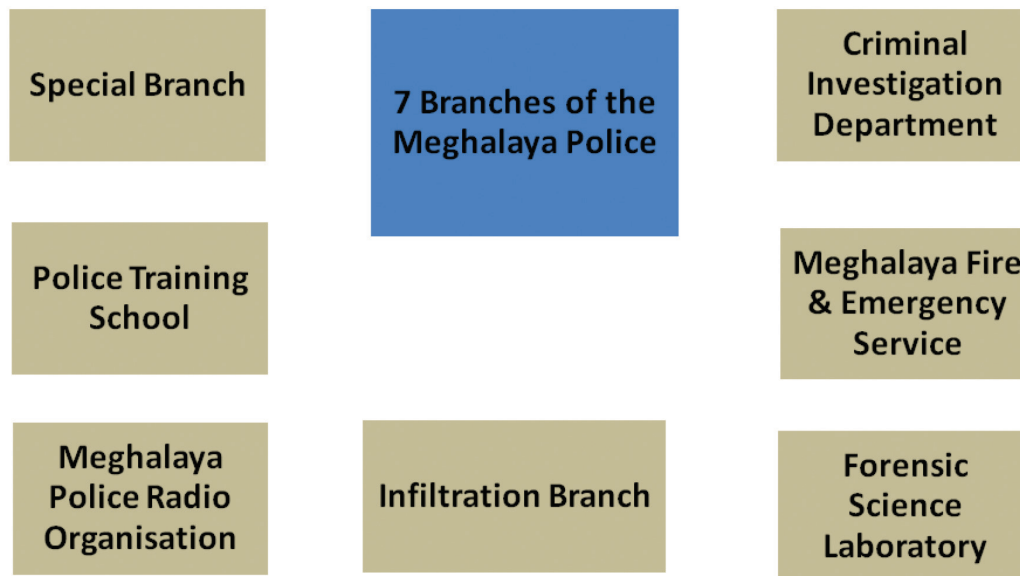
1. Inspector of Police
2. Sub-Inspector of Police (SI)
3. Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police (ASI)
4. Police Head Constable
5. Police Constable



Meghalaya Police is further divided into armed and unarmed branch. Each police district in the state has an armed branch unit to deal with group protests and violent disturbances involving breach of peace or law and order and in disaster management functions.³³ Like the unarmed branch, the armed branch units also function under the control and supervision of the District Superintendent of Police and is headed by an officer of the rank of Inspector or Deputy/Additional Superintendent of Police.³⁴ The Meghalaya Police comprises 7 branches: (i) Special Branch (ii) Infiltration Branch (iii) Criminal Investigation Department (iv) Police Training School (v) Meghalaya Fire & Emergency Service (vi) Meghalaya Police Radio Organisation and (vii) Forensic Science Laboratory. It also has 6 battalions.

³³ Section 25, Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

³⁴ Section 26 (2) and Section 27 (1), Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.



Following the bifurcation of Assam, Meghalaya continued to be governed by the central Police Act, 1861 and adopted the Assam police manual. The need for a comprehensive review of policing in the North East was emphasised by the Shri Padmanabhaia Committee on Police Reforms constituted in 2002 by the Government of India.³⁵ The Committee recommended a detailed study of the criminal justice system and the maintenance of public order for each state in the North East. Meghalaya was the first state in the North East to constitute a Committee on Police Reforms, in February 2004, to examine the overall functioning of the state police department.³⁶ Headed by Shri I. T. Longkumer, IPS (Retd.), the four-member Committee was mandated to:

1. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the state police force, in terms of its present structure and organisation, vis-à-vis future challenges.
2. Identify the gap between public expectations and the performance of the police force, and to suggest remedial measures.
3. Examine and bring out specific recommendations on the following issues:
 - a) Accountability of the police
 - b) Redressal of public grievances
 - c) Community policing
 - d) Intelligence gathering and sharing.

The report mentioned the need to recruit more women police and post them at all police stations, specifically for handling cases related to women and children.

The Committee laid down elaborate recommendations on several organisational issues such as police recruitment, particularly at the constable rank, training, police infrastructure, traffic police, intelligence gathering and community policing. One of the important points stressed

³⁵ Meghalaya Police, Committee on Police Reforms, p. 21: http://megpolice.gov.in/report_police_reforms.pdf.

³⁶ Meghalaya Police, Committee on Police Reforms, p. 5.

by the Committee was to strengthen “normal policing” functions. It noted that the “focus of policing seems to have shifted from normal policing to anti-insurgency duties” resulting in an unbalanced increase in the armed branch over the unarmed branch and that this is “a matter of concern and calls for urgent measures to set the trend on the right course.”³⁷ The Committee emphasises that the primary duty of the police is prevention and investigation of crime, and therefore, there is a need to reverse the trend of an unbalanced increase in the armed branch. Recognizing the value of civil police functions is crucial for improving access to justice for ordinary citizens and creating a safer environment for communities at large. At the same time, it is also important for women police as it provides the background against which the role and value of women police needs to be understood. Women police are integral to strengthening civil police functions, be it crime prevention, detection of crime, engaging with communities, or crime investigation for all the reasons explained in the earlier chapter. Efforts at improving civil policing must, therefore, necessarily involve bringing women into policing.

In pursuit of the Committee’s recommendations, the state enacted the Meghalaya Police Act in 2011 to further police reforms. Although not perfect, the Act incorporates several progressive features which provide for a democratic and professional police organisation. It mandates the state government to develop a transparent recruitment process.³⁸ It lays down an objective and independent selection process for the appointment of the Director General of Police.³⁹ It establishes the State Security Commission, a bipartisan and independent oversight body responsible for formulating policy guidelines, determining policing priorities and identifying performance indicators to evaluate the functioning of the police service.⁴⁰ The Act also establishes an accountability commission for the purpose of investigating police wrongdoings; however, its composition fails to inspire confidence as it is dominated by retired government servants.⁴¹ These provisions lay the foundation for an efficient, professional and accountable police service. Crucially, one area where the Act fails, is gender diversity. Like the Model Police Act, 2006, the Meghalaya Act calls for adequate gender representation in the composition of the police service but fails to define “adequate”. This is indeed a missed opportunity, for best practice globally is to make specific commitments for promoting gender equality in police services.

Number of Women Police across Ranks

As on 1 January 2015, there are 489 women personnel in the Meghalaya Police constituting nearly 4% of the police force.⁴² Of these, 75% are Constables, similar to the trend across the country where the majority of women personnel are in the constabulary. Around 18% have the ranks of investigating officers (Assistant Sub-Inspector to Inspector) and only 2% hold the senior ranks of Deputy Superintendent of Police and above. Like elsewhere in the country, the percentage of women police in Meghalaya, too, is nowhere close to the percentage of women in society.

37 Meghalaya Police, Committee on Police Reforms, p. 25.

38 Section 4, Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

39 Section 6, Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

40 Section 44, Meghalaya Police Act, 2011. The State Security Commission is one of the seven directives on police reforms laid down by the Supreme Court in *Prakash Singh and Ors v Union of India and Ors*.

41 Section 73 and Section 74, Meghalaya Police Act, 2011. Notably, the composition of the accountability commission is at odds with the Supreme Court directives on police reforms. Under the Act, the Commission is to be headed by a retired bureaucrat not below the rank of Principal Secretary, whereas the Apex Court stated that the Commission is to be headed by a retired High Court judge.

42 See Annexure I: Letter No. FM/XXI-6/2012/Vol. II/195, dated 4 June 2015 to NEN.

Table 3
Total Strength of the Meghalaya Police
Gender Disaggregated Data with Rank Classifications of Gazetted and
Non-Gazetted Officers
(As on 1 January 2015)

Gazetted Rank	Male	Female	Non-Gazetted Officers	Male	Female
Director General of Police	1	0	Inspector	174	9
Additional Director General of Police	5	0	Sub-Inspector	772	69
Inspector General of Police	5	0	Assistant Sub-Inspector	236	10
Dy. Inspector General of Police	1	0	Head Constable/ Havildar	1,491	22
Superintendent of Police	28	3	Constable/Naik/Lance Naik	9,120	368
Additional Senior Superintendent of Police	25	1		-	-
Dy. Superintendent of Police	71	7		-	-
Total	136	11		11,793	478
Total Male Police			11,929		
Total Women Police			489		
Total Police Strength			12,418		

A large majority of women police are posted in East Khasi district with 152 women personnel, i.e. 31% of the total strength of women police serving in the non-gazetted ranks (see Table 4). While data for other districts could not be obtained, a sizeable concentration in one district raises an alarm over the numbers present in other districts. No matter how sparse the population, it is important for women personnel to be present in each police station to carry out various statutory duties as stipulated above.

Table 4
Strength of East Khasi Hills District Meghalaya Police
(As on 1 January 2015)

Gazetted Rank	Male	Female	Non-Gazetted Officers	Male	Female
Superintendent of Police	1	0	Inspector	18	2
Superintendent of Police (City)/ (Traffic)	2	0	Sub-Inspector	148	26

Deputy Superintendent of Police/SDPO/ASP	3	1	Head Constable/ Havildar	226	18
			NK/LNK	47	0
			Unarmed Branch Constable/ Armed Branch Constable/Driver Constable/ Handyman Constable	1,690	104
			Follower	44	02
Total	6	1		2,173	152

Notably, the criminal investigation department, considered to be one of the toughest and most crucial policing functions, has a woman officer in the rank of Senior Superintendent of Police, two women Inspectors (around 12% of the total number of Inspectors) and four Sub-Inspectors (nearly 15% of the total number of Sub-Inspectors).

Table 5
Strength of Police Personnel in the Crime Investigation Department
(As on 1 January 2015)

RANK	Male	Female
ADGP	1	0
IGP	1	0
DIGP	0	0
SSP	0	1
SP	1	0
Dy. SP	3	0
Inspector	14	2
Sub-Inspector	23	4
Head Constable	7	0
Constable	24	7
Driver Constable	9	0
Handymen Constable	1	0

Policy Framework

National Level

Recent attention and stormy public discourse on women's safety have led to a heightened focus within the political class on improving police response to crimes against women which includes, among others, the drive for more women in the police. The Government of India has taken several initiatives emphasising the need for states to increase the number of women in their police forces. Although not binding, these initiatives place a duty on all states, including Meghalaya, to meet their objectives. Key among these are:

1. The Ministry of Home Affairs' Advisories on Women Police

In 2009, the Ministry of Home Affairs first proposed a target of 33% representation of women in police at all levels with the aim of improving the responsiveness of the law and order machinery in dealing with crimes against women. This has since become a key thrust of the centre's policy. To achieve this target, the Ministry, in 2013, recommended each police station to have at least three women Sub-Inspectors and 10 women Constables to ensure that women's help desks are staffed at all times.⁴³ More recently, the Ministry has proposed creating Investigative Units for Crimes against Women (IUCAW) at police stations in crime-prone districts across states.⁴⁴ These units will be constituted on a cost-sharing basis between the Centre and the state, and are to have around 15 specialised investigators dealing specifically with crimes against women. Of the 15 staff, at least a third is required to be women personnel.

These advisories, though not binding, serve as a useful benchmark for states to bring more women into their police forces. For effective implementation, states need to draw up recruitment plans which take into account the proposed target for women police and allocate necessary funds and resources to meet the target. Given that Meghalaya introduced the Transparent Recruitment Process in 2012 (discussed in detail below), based on computerised tests where men and women compete equally, it must consider other measures, including having a women's recruitment drive for a stipulated time period in order to overcome the huge current deficit. With crimes against women on the rise in the state, it can no longer afford to remain noncommittal.

2. Modernisation of State Police Force Scheme

Encouragingly, the policy push for more women police is not just restricted to increasing numbers. Emphasis is also placed on improving amenities for women police, particularly at the police station level. Under the Modernisation of State Police Force Scheme,⁴⁵ the Government of India issued guidelines in February 2013 to state governments on items to be covered under the scheme. This clearly lays down that police stations constructed under the scheme must include toilet facilities, crèches and restrooms for women police

43 Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Advisory dated 22 April 2013, D.O. No. 15011/21/2013 – SC/ST – W: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/AdvisoryWomenPolice-290513.pdf.

44 Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Advisory dated 5 January 2015, 15011/72/2014 – SC/ST – W: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/CrimesagainstWomen0601.PDF.

45 Modernisation of Police Force Scheme is a scheme of the Government of India to provide financial support to state governments to modernise their police forces. It started in 1969 and covers expenses incurred on items such as weapons, equipment, upgrading of police stations/outposts, forensic science laboratories and training infrastructure. For more details, see Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India: <http://mha.nic.in/policemodern>.

personnel.⁴⁶ Detailed instructions on amenities for women police were again issued in May 2014 where states were directed to include in their action plan for 2014-2015:⁴⁷

- Suitable toilets for women police personnel including separate hand-washing and shower facilities with adequate supply of water at existing police stations, outposts and barracks. Wherever it is not possible to provide access to permanent toilets, portable toilets need to be provided. These must be installed securely and be provided with lockable doors, lighting and ventilation.
- A restroom at every police station for women personnel. The room needs to be separate from other parts of the workplace and it should be clean, secure and located at a convenient place close to other facilities, such as the toilet. The room should be large enough with proper ventilation to use as a change room also if required. Facilities may be provided for storing clothes and personal belongings with lockable shelf-storage and coat/shirt hanging space.
- The room and toilet should be reasonably accessible to women police officials so that their security is not compromised.

It is essential that adequate resources are allocated to and spent on implementing these policy directions to address the current dire situation.

3. Parliamentary Committee Reports

In 2012-2013, and again in 2014-2015, the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women took up the issue of women police to “review the working conditions of women police in India”. This Committee was constituted on 23 September 2012 and comprised 20 members of the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and 10 members of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House). The term of the Committee is one year and is reconstituted every year. This was the first effort by a Parliamentary Committee to examine the issue of women in policing. The Committee’s findings and recommendations not only provide a strong impetus to improve the gender ratio within police organisations but also, importantly, point out the changes in the organisational structure and policies which have to go hand-in-hand for women to play a meaningful role in policing.

Parliamentary Committee Report on “Working Condition of Women in Police Force”: State of Follow-Up

The Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women published two reports on women police. The first, published in September 2013 titled “Working Conditions of Women in Police Force”,⁴⁸ reviews steps taken by central and state governments to increase representation and improve working conditions of women in the police forces.

46 Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (2013), No. 21011/23/2013-PM-1: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/ImpModPoliceForces_120314.PDF.

47 Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (2014), Police Modernisation Division, No. 21011/27/2014-PM-1: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/PM-I-280514.PDF.

48 Parliament of India, Lok Sabha, Committee on Empowerment of Women (2013), Twenty-First Report of the Fifteenth Lok Sabha on “Working Conditions of Women in Police Force”, [hereafter referred to as Parliament of India, (2013), Twenty-First Report of the Fifteenth Lok Sabha], p. 13: http://164.100.47.134/lsscommittee/Empowerment%20of%20Women/15_Empowerment_of_Women_21.pdf.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, on behalf of the central government, along with state governments made submissions before the Committee which then laid down a series of recommendations for follow-up action. The Committee's substantive recommendations are interspersed throughout this chapter. In December 2014, the newly constituted Committee⁴⁹ published its second report⁵⁰ on action taken by the government on its recommendations. Of the 14 recommendations from the first report:

- Nine were accepted by the government. A number of these were communicated to the states in the advisory issued in August 2014 which asks states to initiate special recruitment drives, ensure basic amenities such as restrooms and toilets for women personnel at every police station, provide equal opportunities to women personnel particularly in allocation of duties, and effectively deal with reported cases of sexual harassment.⁵¹
- On three recommendations, the Committee expressed disappointment with the government's response and replies. These include linking of modernisation funds granted by the Centre to the states with the progress achieved in increasing women's representation in the police force; constructing residential accommodation exclusively for women police personnel; and seeking time-bound Action Taken Reports on implementation of resolutions passed in the National Conferences for Women in Police (details below). The Ministry has either held these steps as unfeasible or has not yet finalised any specific measure.
- The government's reply is awaited on two recommendations. These include suggestions on gender modules to be incorporated in police training of different cadres, and performance audits of All-Women Police Stations.

4. National Conferences for Women in Police

Since 2002, women police personnel have been demanding better policies and amenities to address their difficulties in service. Every two years, the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), a wing of the Ministry of Home Affairs, organises a national conference for women in police in collaboration with a state police force, bringing together women police across ranks and states.⁵² The conferences have repeatedly stressed the need for increased representation of women and recommended several measures including 33% reservation, special recruitment drives, a common cadre for men and women and better facilities for women.

49 The Committee on Empowerment of Women for 2014-2015 was constituted on 1 September 2014 for a term of one year. It consists of 20 members of the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and 10 members of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House).

50 Parliament of India, Lok Sabha, Committee on Empowerment of Women, (2014), Second Report of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha, "Working Conditions of Women in Police Force" (Action taken by the government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Empowerment of Women (2012-2013)...), [hereafter referred to as Parliament of India, (2014), Second Report of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha], p. 23: http://164.100.47.134/lssccommittee/Empowerment%20of%20Women/16_Empowerment_of_Women_2.pdf.

51 At present, this advisory is not available on the MHA's website. All references to it have been taken from the Parliament of India (2014), Second Report of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha: http://164.100.47.134/lssccommittee/Empowerment%20of%20Women/16_Empowerment_of_Women_2.pdf.

52 Six conferences have taken place so far: New Delhi (2002), Mussorie, Uttarakhand (2005), Panchkula, Haryana (2009), Bhubaneswar, Odisha (2010), Thrissur, Kerala (2012) and Guwahati, Assam (2014).

The national conferences are an important platform for facilitating discussions on policy reform and need to be held more frequently. Much more needs to be done by way of implementation of its recommendations. At the end of each national conference, a set of recommendations are put forward which are then circulated to states and union territories by the central government. Action-Taken Reports (ATR) are required to be submitted to the MHA but this is not done regularly. For the sixth national conference, for example, only 17 states/UTs submitted the ATR.⁵³ On other occasions, states have also disagreed with certain recommendations such as introducing a shift system. The central government itself was lacklustre in following up on ATRs; it only requested for ATRs six months after the national conference in 2014.⁵⁴ The central government must, at the very least, put in place a mechanism to follow up on recommendations including laying a strict timeline for states/UTs to submit ATRs.

State Level

As pointed out above, since 2008, Meghalaya has slowly but steadily increased the strength of women personnel within the police department. Key policy initiatives in this regard were:

1. Committee on Police Reforms Recommendations on Women Police

The issue was first discussed by the Committee on Police Reforms which looked at women police within the larger context of improving manpower planning within the Meghalaya Police Department and the need to increase civil police strength, particularly at the police station level.⁵⁵ The Committee recommended:

“More women police be recruited to be posted at the police stations and traffic branch. Women police should handle all cases involving women and children.”

and

“There shall be a juvenile branch in the main police station at district headquarters. Women police should also be posted to the branch. Women police at the police station should be trained in counselling victims in various crimes.”

The Committee further recommended that women police be considered for posting in the wing that deals specifically with tourists in the state and who are suitably trained for the role.⁵⁶

There is a clear recognition in the Committee’s approach of the value in placing women in roles that require public interface. It is important to note here that women police were envisaged as central to policing functions at the police station level. The Committee does not talk about creating separate All-Women Police Stations. This advice, however, has gone unheeded by the state as discussed later in the report.

One point of concern on the Committee’s recommendation regards the counselling role women police are called on to perform. The duty of a police officer is to ascertain full

53 Parliament of India, Lok Sabha, Committee on Empowerment of Women, Second Report of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha, “Working Conditions of Women in Police Force” (Action taken by the government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Empowerment of Women (2012-2013)...), December 2014, p. 23.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

55 Meghalaya Police, Committee on Police Reforms report, pp. 51-52. http://megpolice.gov.in/report_police_reforms.pdf.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 195.

facts of the crime being reported and based on the details of the case at hand, provide information about various legal remedies and rights of the complainant/victim. The police must not go beyond this mandate and take on roles which they are neither suited for nor qualified to perform. Moreover, this also leaves a grey area where counselling may amount to negligence of their statutory duty. For instance, it has been observed that often, the police, on receiving complaints relating particularly to sexual offences or domestic violence, do not register the First Information Report (FIR) as mandated by law and instead advise the victim to reconcile with the perpetrator. The police must therefore not try and take on social roles but stay focused on their job of enforcing the law fairly and equally.

2. All-Women Police Stations

Establishing all-women police stations is the main initiative of the state by way of expanding space for women in policing. In October 2009, the Government of Meghalaya passed an order whereby the existing women police cells in each district were to be converted into women police stations and work under the jurisdiction of the concerned Superintendent of Police.⁵⁷ The women police stations were authorised to investigate the following crimes against women and children: rape; molestation; kidnapping/abduction; eve teasing; murder, as well as attempt to commit murder for dowry by burning; murder as well as attempt to commit murder for dowry by other means; cruelty by husband/relative; abetment to suicide; importing of girls below 18 years; importing of girls between 18 to 21 years; immoral traffic prevention act; indecent representation of women according to the provisions of the women (prohibition) act; and missing children cases. The order also calls for crimes against women cells to be set up in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to monitor the work of the women police stations. The concerned Superintendents of Police are required to send monthly reports to the cell.

At present, there are seven women police stations, one each in the following districts:⁵⁸

- East Khasi Hills
- West Khasi Hills
- West Jaintia Hills
- Ri-Bhoi
- West Garo Hills
- East Garo Hills
- South Garo Hills

Four districts – East Jaintia Hills, Southwest Khasi Hills, Southwest Garo Hills, and North Garo Hills – do not have a women police station.

Importantly, women police stations in Meghalaya are authorised to investigate cases including serious offences such as murder for dowry. In several other states, women police

⁵⁷ Government of Meghalaya, Home (Police) Department, Orders by the Governor Notification, dated 14 October 2009, Meghalaya Police, Handbook of Police Circulars wef 2004 up to July 2010: http://megpolice.gov.in/circulars/Police_Circulars.pdf.

⁵⁸ Meghalaya Police, List of Police Stations/BHs/Ops/ICPs, etc. in Meghalaya: <http://megpolice.gov.in/pdf/list-PSs-OPs-BHs.pdf>.

stations only receive complaints and then forward the cases to regular police stations for investigation. This is limiting not just for the women officers who complain of not being given serious responsibilities but is doubly worse for the victim who often has to repeat crime details to different officers in the course of investigation. It is encouraging that Meghalaya has done away with this practice and vested equal responsibility with women police stations as the regular stations.

The concept of women police is being intensely debated in the country. There is a tussle over whether it is more effective to simply increase the number of women police in police stations through dedicated mechanisms such as helpdesks rather than create exclusive all-women police stations. The Model Police Act, 2006⁵⁹ and the 2009 MHA advisory suggested setting up of a “woman and child protection desk” in every police station, staffed as far as possible by women police. Delhi, Kerala, Rajasthan and Telangana are some of the states that have instituted helpdesks. Responding to the difference in opinion across states, both the Parliamentary Committee and the National Police Mission have intervened with suggestions (full details are provided later). The conflict in opinions is yet to be resolved.

Undeniably, empirical evidence strongly suggests that women victims of crime feel more comfortable talking with policewomen. Any planning process to enhance women’s safety must bear this in mind. At the same time, measures that create exclusive spaces or roles for women in policing, such as all-women police stations have several concerns. To begin with, at a practical level, these stations have very limited reach geographically since they are mostly set up at district headquarters including in Meghalaya, making it difficult for victims from distant areas to access it. There are concerns of duplication where women police stations are not vested with the same powers and authority as regular police stations. Women personnel themselves have raised objections to measures that create exclusive women’s roles and spaces within policing on the ground that such measures are often used to ghettoise them and “freeze” their roles on the excuse that “women’s complaints must go to women”. This reinforces stereotypes, delays attitudinal changes within the majority male cohort and prevents the police as a whole from working through policies and practices on how best it can shape itself to respond to the particular needs of half the population. These ill-effects must also be kept in mind to regularly re-assess and strive for the needed balance.

Moving forward, as the state looks to further increase the strength of women police, it must consider a more holistic policy framework for assimilating women into policing. Ad-hoc and ill-conceived measures need to give way to systematic planning and efforts at genuine integration. Starting from recruitment, clear policy measures must be laid down at every stage with specific action plans, timelines, targets and monitoring processes to evaluate progress. As the next chapter demonstrates, there are several problems facing women on duty. These need to be addressed if women are to go beyond tokenism and play a meaningful role in policing.

59 Section 12 (6), Model Police Act, 2006.

Chapter 3:

Experiences and Challenges

This chapter examines policies governing the police through their careers starting from recruitment till promotion in order to identify gaps and barriers women personnel may face.

1. Recruitment

At the state level, direct recruitment in the police takes place at three levels: Constables, Sub-Inspector and Deputy Superintendent of Police. At Constable and Sub-Inspector ranks, direct recruitment takes place for both the armed and the unarmed branches. At the Sub-Inspector rank, direct recruitment is only for a designated number of posts – 20% of the posts in the armed branch and 50% in the unarmed branch.⁶⁰ The remaining posts are filled through departmental promotions. For the post of Deputy Superintendent of Police, recruitment is done by the State Public Service Commission.⁶¹ Unlike many other states, Meghalaya does not have separate cadres for men and women. Both compete equally for vacancies at all ranks. This is very welcome, given that the absence of a common cadre system is a major impediment for women police, as it restricts opportunities for recruitment as well as promotion. Women police in other states have been demanding a common cadre for a long while.

The most important initiative in the state regarding recruitment is the introduction of the Transparent Recruitment Process. The Meghalaya Police Act, 2011 mandates the state government to develop a transparent process “with well-codified systems and procedures which should not be susceptible to any misuse or abuse” for direct recruitment in the non-gazetted ranks.⁶² Accordingly, the state introduced the Transparent Recruitment Process (TRP) Policy in 2012, “involving the use of technological innovations to ensure objectivity and accuracy and eliminate discretionary powers on the part of the recruiting officers as far as possible”.⁶³ The process involves three stages: physical efficiency test; written test; and an interview, with computerised monitoring and evaluation at each stage.

60 Section 24(2) and 29(1), Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

61 Section 4(3), Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

62 Section 4(2), Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

63 Meghalaya Police, Press Note: “Meghalaya police to recruit police personnel through transparent recruitment process”, 8 October 2012: http://megpolice.gov.in/press_release/PressNote_08102012_recruitment.pdf.

Transparent Recruitment Process

The Transparent Recruitment Process (TRP) involves three stages: physical efficiency test; written test; and an interview.⁶⁴

1. Physical Efficiency Test (PET)

- PET is to be video-taped.
- The signature of the candidates is to be obtained in the PET result sheet.
- Results of PET and the score will be recorded through tags attached to each candidate and shared on the same day.

2. Written Test

- Dictation sheets of Constables and answer scripts of Sub-Inspectors are to be sent to police headquarters under sealed cover by special messenger on the same day. The DGP is to ensure these sheets are kept in safe custody.
- Dictation sheets and answer scripts are to be code numbered and sent to outside examiners for evaluation.
- Dictation sheets and answer scripts are not to be destroyed for one year after the announcement of the result of the recruitment.
- For Sub-Inspectors, three question papers are to be prepared by three different paper setters. A committee of officers constituted by the DGP will elect one paper out of these.
- Results of the written test will be uploaded on the department website on a daily basis.

3. Interview

- Interviews are to be videotaped.
- Members of the Interview board will assign separate marks based on objective considerations and the final score will be conveyed to the candidates on the same day.

By way of grievance redressal, candidates can approach the senior-most officer at the recruitment venue or the Chairman of the Central Recruitment Board or write to the Director General of Police.

As such, the process provides equal opportunity for both men and women; however, some concessions have been made for women candidates keeping in mind their physical build. For instance, in the physical efficiency test, women have to complete a 5.5-km race in less than 40 minutes, compared to a 10-km race for men.⁶⁵

Moreover, while Meghalaya does not have a uniform reservation policy for women across the organisation, it has brought in special measures to increase the number of women police. It has reserved 25% of the armed branch posts for women. This has had a significant impact in encouraging women to participate in recruitment drives. It is encouraging that in

⁶⁴ Meghalaya Police, Circular No 48/2011, Transparency in Recruitment Process: http://megpolice.gov.in/circulars/Circular48_2011.pdf; and Meghalaya Police, Press Note, “Meghalaya police to recruit police personnel through transparent recruitment process”, 8 October 2012: http://megpolice.gov.in/press_release/PressNote_08102012_recruitment.pdf.

⁶⁵ Meghalaya Police, Press Note “Meghalaya police to recruit police personnel through transparent recruitment process”, 8 October 2012: http://megpolice.gov.in/press_release/PressNote_08102012_recruitment.pdf.

a recent recruitment of Sub-Inspectors, nearly half the applicants were women; it is also an indication of women's interest and readiness to take on policing jobs.⁶⁶

Changes in the recruitment process and relaxations introduced for women are well known and appreciated by women personnel in general. Those who joined the service over ten years ago recounted how different and closed the process was in their time:

"...During our time we were called from home to join the police."

"Distance (for running the race) for girls was shorter but the interview was the same. We had to go through the Internet to see our names and the date for the personal interview. The process involved a physical test, written test and a personal interview. The written included general knowledge, mathematics, etc."

"It was the same for both boys and girls but the distance in running was shortened for the girls."

In order to encourage more women to join the police service, it is important to recognise and understand various motivations driving women towards a policing job. It needs to be noted, for instance, that a majority of the women do not join the police out of choice.

"I came because of the lack of jobs and it's hard to get jobs. Secondly, I like the uniform because it has power and people are usually scared of it."

"Even me, I didn't want to join but now to serve people facing crimes against women; it's very important to tackle and requires women police to tackle. It was also because of unemployment and there was no other option."

"I admired the police work and I also needed the income."

"It was a necessity."

"I had an aim since my childhood and also my family members like my uncle, grandpa are all police officers, so I was motivated."

Lack of opportunities is not restricted to women alone nor is it specific to Meghalaya. Indeed, men across the country too, join the police under similar pressures. While this points to the need for police reforms in general, it particularly highlights efforts needed to make policing an attractive profession for the female workforce, given their abysmally low numbers at present. In addition to unemployment and lack of opportunities, several women constables joined the force on compassionate grounds, which means in place of their husbands after their death in service. This practice, however, has been discontinued under the Abolition of the Employment on Compassionate Ground Act, 2010.⁶⁷ The last such recruitments were done in 2009, though their appointments took place in 2014.

⁶⁶ Interview with senior woman officer, Meghalaya Police, 12 December 2014, Shillong, Meghalaya

⁶⁷ Government of Meghalaya, Orders by The Governor Notification No PER (AR) 62/2009/54, 2 December 2010: http://megpolice.gov.in/notification/Abolished_employment_compassionate_ground.pdf.

“I got a direct personal interview since it was on compassionate grounds. The personal interview was more relaxed since it was on compassionate grounds and included basic questions like can you handle being posted outside especially when you have children.”

“Actually I joined on compassionate grounds in my father’s place but I had a different ambition. I got the information that I got a job here and I joined but it was not my interest.”

“I came in place of my husband. It was on compassionate grounds. My husband passed away in 2012 and I got the job in 2014. We went to approach for the job continuously.”

“For family support. I never thought I’d join, but I came on compassionate grounds (in place of my husband). There was no difficulty as such. I put in my application and I had to travel continuously but I eventually received a call letter. I also come from a police background.”

While the TRP is a very welcome and important step in creating a level playing field for men and women, the state will have to do a lot more to raise women’s representation, particularly in the absence of a reservation policy. It must reach out to women in all parts of the state, and not just Shillong, through awareness sessions, special drives and wide circulation of vacancy notices. The state should strongly consider filling all existing vacancies in the department with women. According to Meghalaya Police data, the sanctioned strength of the total police force is 12,911 personnel, with an actual strength of 10,956, leaving a vacancy of 1955.⁶⁸ Notwithstanding recruitments that might have taken place since this data was published, the state will significantly improve its standing on gender ratio if the remaining positions are filled only by women.

2. Training

The Meghalaya Police Act has made specific provisions for the state government to draft a training policy to ensure that Meghalaya Police personnel across all ranks are adequately trained to perform their duties, have a thorough knowledge of police subjects, develop professional skills, inculcate the right attitudes and promote constitutional and ethical values among the personnel. Following recruitment, selected candidates undergo intensive training at various training institutes and schools. Training consists of four types of courses: basic induction level courses; pre-promotion, in-service courses; refresher courses; and specialised courses. There is physical training as well as classroom instruction.⁶⁹

Women are not discriminated against in training. They go through the same courses and exercises as men at all levels. On the contrary, most women reported that they were treated like “one of the men” and duties were assigned equally to all cadres. Training standards are the same for senior women police officers as well.

Many women, however, shared that they would like more specialised trainings, specifically on legal remedies and code of procedure to be followed during an investigation. It is unclear whether only women feel that more specialised training is required or if it is a department-

68 Meghalaya Police, Summary rank-wise sanctioned / actual strength & vacancy: <http://megpolice.gov.in/strength/SS-AS-Vac.pdf>.

69 Meghalaya Police Handbook of Police Circulars, wef 2004-july 2010 DGP’s Circular No 24/2009, 27/2010, 23/2009,15/2009,21/2009. pp.121-139.

wide view. Providing equal opportunities for specialised training is crucial, for, under the Meghalaya Police Act, “successful participation in training programmes shall be linked, as far as possible, to the promotion of police personnel of different ranks, and to their postings to different assignments in a structured manner...”⁷⁰

Further, there are many practical problems which women face. During probation, new recruits are inducted into various police stations and outposts throughout the state. Women are not provided with adequate facilities. Some of the women interviewed complained of how they were not provided with quarters during their probation in spite of being assured of these. They had to rent houses on their own accord upon arrival when reporting to duty. Worse, anyone who tried to assert themselves or raise questions was rebuffed by remarks such as: “This is what the job demands” or “You wanted to be treated equally”.

“Well as I have said earlier, before increasing women police there is a need to build better infrastructure such as training centres. Training instructors should be gender sensitive and there should be also women instructors.”

Meghalaya has only two training schools – one for the armed battalion and the other for the unarmed one. This poses considerable inconvenience as training for all ranks is conducted in one of these two places, making it difficult to accommodate the ever growing number of cadres joining the police force each year. The Committee on Police Reforms recognised this as a felt need and noted: “The present system of training of police officers needs revamping at all levels. The existing training institutions are most inadequate to train the ever increasing number of personnel.”⁷¹

“Police training schools here in Meghalaya are male-dominated centres. These trainers are not up to the mark and at the same time are not gender-sensitive. These trainers belong to the old batch where it is very hard to sensitise them and change their mindsets.”

3. Deployment and Allocation of Duties

As a hierarchical organisation, roles and responsibilities in the police are determined by rank and are clearly defined in police acts and manuals. As such, there is no distinction in allocation of duties between men and women. States, however, have carved out special roles and tasks for women to deal in particular with crimes against women.

This is true of Meghalaya as well. A majority of women police at present are deployed at the all-women police stations in the state. Even when posted in regular thanas, women spoke of how they dealt mostly with cases of crimes against women. This is not welcomed by many women, who feel that this process actually deprives them of the exposure required, should they be promoted in the future.

“We want more variety of cases so we can gain more experience.”

Indeed, the study finds very few women serving as district chiefs or heads of police stations.

⁷⁰ Section 67(2), Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

⁷¹ Meghalaya Police, Committee on Police Reforms report, p.16: http://megpolice.gov.in/report_police_reforms.pdf.

Women are made officers-in-charge mainly at the all-women police stations. Only one general police station in Shillong has a woman SHO. The rising rate of registered crimes against women in the state coupled with statutory obligations of the functions to be performed by women personnel in dealing with such crimes, means that till the number of women personnel increase substantially, those in service will be engaged primarily with crimes against women cases. The concerns of being sidelined within the department have been highlighted above. The department needs to take note of the dissatisfaction brewing among women personnel and the strong desire for mainstreaming women's role in policing.

Moreover, while the officers in charge of police stations who were interviewed stated that all duties are accorded equally to male and female police personnel, there is a sense of protection when it comes to allocating duties, especially night patrolling and other night duties. Many times, women are exempted from night patrolling duties. However, if there is an emergency case related to crimes against women, the concerned women personnel are sent for immediately. They are also required to perform specific duties involving escorting women prisoners, interrogation or any other matter concerning women in general.

Notably, a majority of the women interviewed did not complain about being exempted from duties such as night patrolling. They did not feel deprived of responsibilities with the arrangement; on the other hand, it was evident that all of them preferred the arrangement as it gave them time to spend with their families and be with their children at night.

“Being a woman, cooking, cleaning the house and taking care of children are my topmost priority. Even after coming home from a tiring night duty, I still have to do work at home which makes me more tired. But a male constable would just go home and rest or drink with his friends unlike us women. Tired or not tired, we still have to do household chores. But if I get day duty it will be very helpful, I hope my seniors understand women's problems. Also, I find that men constables most of them gave lame excuses such as headache and health issues just to get away from duty, unlike us women constables, we are honest and hardworking. If we say we are sick it means we are actually sick.”

“I am not comfortable while going for patrolling in different areas because the CRPF are trying to do their own will and we used to get scolding, they also used to joke around and we never complain to anyone so far.”

The other concern is lack of proper facilities which further discourage women from taking on certain tasks. Women shared how they faced several difficulties when they were sent for law and order duties, especially during elections, when they had to report to other districts. Proper arrangements in terms of accommodation and other infrastructure facilities were not provided and women faced a lot of difficulties.

“During election duty I have to go to other districts and they do not provide accommodation for us. I was asked to stay in another woman's house and this woman has a family living in a one-room house and there was water shortage too. It was very difficult for me and for the woman too, she must have felt uncomfortable, a stranger coming to her house.”

“Once during election duty I was put in Nonstoin PWD guest house and there was only one bathroom and I had to share it with another male colleague. The next day I complained to the concerned officer because even the BSF came and stayed there on that night. It was uncomfortable.”

There are a number of issues to consider. In societies such as ours, where women continue to be regarded as the primary care giver at home, balancing professional responsibilities creates additional pressure and difficulties for them. Those who choose to work are expected to bear the burden of balancing home and the work front, no matter how taxing. Doing so in policing is more difficult, given the demands of the job. While these pressures need to be recognised, and indeed, some leeway is justifiable, these must not be given at the cost of career growth. Police departments need to consider ways in which women can be supported while at the same time, given necessary exposure and training opportunities to enable their growth. Simply stating family pressures as a cover for not deploying women is no longer acceptable. Measures such as suitable infrastructure support, like crèches at police stations, transport arrangements and housing facilities near their posting station need to be considered to create a supportive environment for women.

4. Infrastructure and Facilities

One of the glaring findings of the study has been lack of basic facilities and infrastructure for women police officers. Both male and female senior police acknowledged that there isn't adequate infrastructure in place to accommodate more women in the police force, and that this is mainly why they hesitate to request for women personnel.

Restrooms/ Toilets

The Meghalaya Police Act, 2011 mandates the state government to provide separate toilets and restrooms in every police station for men and women.⁷² Yet, one of the recurrent concerns raised throughout this study was scarcity of restrooms and toilet facilities for women. Most of the police stations have common restrooms and toilets which are unhygienic and badly maintained. This creates a very uncomfortable environment for women especially during menstruation. Officers of the rank of sub-inspectors and inspectors also shared their concern regarding this. They are compelled to use common toilets used by male and female constables as the only other available toilet is in the room of the Officer-in-Charge who is usually a male and they feel uncomfortable using it in spite of being of the same rank.

"Same toilet for both male and female police personnel. No separate changing rooms."

"The main problem is that there are no separate toilets for males and females."

"We do not have a place to change when we have our menstruation and it becomes hard."

"I was posted in Sohra and in my barrack there is no bathroom. Fortunately, an officer gave me the keys to his barrack to use his bathroom whenever necessary but it's tough when I stay in a different barrack and walk to another just to use the bathroom."

The women in the traffic police have a harder time. Many shared how they have to build a personal relationship with the hotels and shopkeepers within the vicinity just to be able to use the toilets.

"We have to establish a good relation with the public and we utilise the toilets at hotels, shops."

⁷² Section 11(5), Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

There were also instances when the women police would contribute money to buy disinfectants and get the toilets cleaned before using them. It was stated that whenever they asked for extra funds for such basic utilities, the department would state that they did not have sufficient funds.

“... Before the police station was not clean but when I came I requested for linoleum flooring. We didn't have a permanent cleaner at that time so we would clean it ourselves. It's my belief that when people come, the first thing they notice is cleanliness. I would clean my own table and sometimes I would even scold when they do not keep the thana clean. Recently, we got a permanent cleaner and I advised her to use Lizol instead of phenyl because it has a nice smell and now she has gotten used to it and asks for Lizol always. We've requested the department but we were provided with the usual phenyl so I usually end up buying from my own pocket.”

States often complain of lack of funds to improve police station infrastructure. Recognising the importance of proper amenities like separate toilets for women, the centre is giving due policy priority to this issue under the Modernisation of Police Force (MPF) Scheme. As pointed out above, guidelines issued by the Government of India on items to be covered under the MPF scheme lay down detailed instructions on amenities for women police which emphasise proper, clean and hygienic facilities at police stations. The importance of these steps cannot be over emphasised. No matter how basic, amenities such as proper toilets for women is the first step in breaking deep-rooted patriarchal mindsets and transforming police organisations into egalitarian spaces. Meghalaya needs to urgently implement them in order to demonstrate its commitment towards improving working conditions for women.

Accommodation

Another major concern that emerged through the study is lack of accommodation, particularly for women who are posted outside their hometowns. Upon transfer, many women were not allotted accommodation and had difficulties finding it without any assistance in a new area. Quarters, where available, are either too small or are shared with other women constables which is again inconvenient, especially when they have children. Meghalaya has a high number of single mothers. Most of the time they have to leave their children with family members, which explains why they hesitate to take promotions if that involves the possibility of a transfer.

“I have been posted six to seven times across different districts ... it becomes difficult when I have a family.”

“I had a problem when I was posted at Umiam, I had to live alone and depended on one shop for my food and there are times when I had to sleep without eating.”

“I have a two-year-old child who stays with my sister and it's difficult when I meet her only on holidays. I'm currently staying at a rented place with other people and there's no place for my child to stay along with me.”

“My home and children are far, one is ten years and another is eight.”

At the lower ranks, women are not allotted separate barracks in their respective police stations. This is extremely inconvenient for those who would like to change out of their

uniforms before going home or when they get drenched in the rain. Some women have resorted to changing in the lock-ups, due to lack of privacy. Lack of barracks or common rooms for women is also a problem for women on night duty. Most of them express discomfort at having to share the seating area with their male colleagues throughout the night.

“There are no barracks for females and we have to change in any available room and it causes a lot of inconvenience.”

“... No barrack. Women police change in the lock-up and I feel pity for them. Barracks are only for men.”

“We do not have a place to change when we have our menstruation and it becomes hard.”

“... They are saying from the Department that they will provide but till now we are not getting separate rooms and sometimes we must join the table of our officers in their rooms and take some rest.”

“No, sometimes we have to go some place and we have to put on the uniform and when we ask they tell us they have money problems and even at night we have to manage anywhere and in any space we get. I sometimes do night duty. When there are shutdown hours and the office cannot provide vehicles to drop us home and I have to stay with a friend nearby. But if we do have a barrack, it becomes easier we will not have to go home but we can manage in the barracks.”

“... During law and order situations we have to report by five in the morning and stay till evening and it becomes difficult especially without barrack facilities and even if we complain about that, we're on the wrong side.”

Transport

A major obstacle echoed by many women is poor transportation especially during law and order situations such as bandhs, curfews, etc. There is no vehicle to pick them up and drop them back, as a result women police have to walk to and fro in their uniforms which poses a grave threat to them as they become easy targets for unwanted elements. Each time a request is made in this regard, they are rebuffed on account of lack of funds. Moreover, the lack of separate barracks and restrooms for women makes it even more difficult for them to come in civil clothes and change in their respective police stations.

“During law and order situations such as bandhs, we have to report for duty and there are no vehicles to pick us up from home. Even if there are, some do not have petrol.”

Overall, the issue is not merely of poor infrastructure and facilities for women personnel but also a lack of seriousness in addressing the problem. No information is available on how Meghalaya spent the funds allocated under the MPF, specifically for the purpose of improving facilities for women personnel. The attitude of regarding women who raise concerns about their working conditions as troublemakers needs to change. Women cannot continuously be expected to adjust, not just to lack of facilities, but facilities clearly made for men, and yet perform their duties efficiently. With the steady intake of women personnel, the department needs to urgently take corrective measures and allocate necessary resources.

5. Human Resource Facilities

Maternity Facilities

According to the All India Services (Leaves) Rules, a total of 180 days are granted to an IPS officer with less than two surviving children with additional child care benefits. The situation is quite different for Meghalaya state cadre officers. Under Subsidiary Rule 111 of the Meghalaya Fundamental Rules and Subsidiary Rules 1984, the state government has provided maternity benefits for a period of four months to women with less than two surviving children with full pay.⁷³ In such circumstances, it has been observed that their male colleagues are quite empathetic. Pregnant women are refrained from handling stressful cases or tasks and once they enter their second trimester are permitted to report for duty in their civil attire. Although there is no policy in place for wearing the uniform during pregnancy, this is practiced uniformly across police stations.

Meghalaya is yet to adopt the recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission which provides for enhancement of maternity leave of six months (180 days) from the earlier 135 days, besides recommending 15 days of paternity leave along with two years of child care leave.

The study revealed that apart from the maternity leave of 4 months, policewomen were generally not aware of many other policies and notifications. This is indicative of a major gap in the system. While there are several policies in place, many of them are yet to be informed or shared, especially with the personnel at the lower ranks.

Leave and Weekly Days Offs

The current study revealed that application for leave is a long-drawn affair. Many state that they are unable to apply for leave at a moment's notice which makes it difficult, especially for older women with ailments and health complications. As a result, they have to report for duty even when they are not at their best.

“I had high BP one day, before going to work and the doctor had advised rest but I have to come to the office to write my CL and then only will I get to go home... I have to apply for leave at least one day before – I have to show medical certificates and sometimes even medicines.”

The weekly days off are often cancelled. Almost all personnel complained that they could be asked to report for duty at any time, even on their days off. As a result, most of them feel burnt out and unable to balance work and family life.

“I got to know more about the job after joining but one problem I have is that there is no social life...”

“We are on duty 24 hours and 7 days. We would like to get at least one day off.”

⁷³ Government of Meghalaya (REVISION OF RULES CELL) DEPARTMENT, Subsidiary Rules 111, p. 93: http://megpolice.gov.in/acts/state/Meghalaya_Fundamental_Rules_SubsiaryRules_1984.pdf.

Working Hours

Another major factor which affects the police in general is long and irregular working hours. A recent report by the Government of India on introducing an eight-hour shift system in police stations reveals that “90% of police station staff, across states and across police station types, presently work for more than eight hours a day”. The average working day stretched to 11-14 hours per day without any day off.⁷⁴

The situation is no different in Meghalaya. The Meghalaya Police Act, 2011 requires the state government to: “Take effective steps to ensure that the average hours of duty of a police officer do not normally exceed eight hours a day: Provide that in exceptional situations, the duty hours of a police officer may extend up to 12 hours or beyond. In such cases adequate compensation and facilities shall be provided to the police personnel.”⁷⁵ This is yet to be realised as the study revealed that all police officers during induction were told that “they have to be ready to be called for duty at any time, especially when there are cases related to women even after having worked the whole day.”

The low number of women personnel is partly to be blamed for this situation. With recording of cases of crimes against women on an increase, the few women police have to work longer hours in challenging conditions without proper facilities. Female investigating officers in particular struggle to handle cases from more than one police station. This has certain consequences as working long hours implies longer absences from home, making it more difficult for them to balance work and family life. Moreover, contrary to what is mentioned in the Meghalaya Police Act, none of the police personnel mentioned that they were compensated for the extra hours of work. Lack of proper and separate facilities for women at police stations reinforce the difficulties of long working hours.

“...I am the only one in my section and I have to complete data entry and compilation. Even to take sick/casual leave is difficult. I cannot leave my work even for a day otherwise there will be lots of pending work. Before there were two of us ... but they have not appointed anyone to replace my colleague.”

“... We are women police and if there are women-related cases we have to stay overtime with no breaks and come to work again the next day. It becomes stressful.”

“There is difficulty as we have to be ready 24 hours and 7 days...”

“It becomes very difficult when there is overnight duty because even if I stay late at night in the department if there are emergency cases the next day I have to come for the morning duty because there are less women constables.”

“I can't meet my parents often and I miss them. Even if I want to go during the weekend it's too far. My hometown is at the border, Karbi Anglong.”

The situation, however, is quite different in rural police stations and outposts, where police personnel are relatively more relaxed, compared to their urban counterparts. Apart from

⁷⁴ Government of India, Bureau of Police Research and Development sponsored study on, “National Requirement of Manpower for 8-Hour Shifts in Police Stations (2014)”: <http://222.bprd.nic.in/writereaddata/limkimages/412289725-NAtional%20Requiremner%20of%20Manpower%20for%208%20hour%20Shifts%20Police%20Stations.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Section 95, Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

normal duties, their work schedules aren't as stressful or hectic. Quarters are provided for them in the police station itself which is shared by the female staff. Most of the time, they are not required to come for night duty and are called for only when required.

“There is none. It's like this, it is a village so there are quarters and people who work there stay there.”

“Happy we do not get night duty.”

The BPR&D study (cited above) on the need for a shift system for police provides a pioneering solution to the problem of irregular and inordinately long working hours, which in turn, rests on increasing the number of women in policing. The study's primary recommendation is that a shift system (with details and variants prescribed) should be introduced in police stations and a regular weekly day off given to police station staff. To implement this, the endemic shortfall of police personnel must be addressed and numbers increased across the board. The study computed that exactly 337,500 police personnel need to be recruited nationally to enforce shifts in police stations. Pointing to the dire need to increase the representation of women in the police, the study recommends that all new recruitment for this purpose should be of women only. This is truly an innovative and unprecedented policy measure. If implemented in earnest, it could make way for the inclusion of women police while also serving another equally beneficial purpose towards improved policing.

6. Sexual Harassment

In December 2013, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 (SHWAWP) was enacted in India. It superseded guidelines for prevention of sexual harassment introduced by the Supreme Court of India.⁷⁶ The Act seeks to:

- a. Stop sexual harassment from occurring (prevention)
- b. Forbid sexual harassment at the workplace (prohibition)
- c. Set right or provide remedies in cases of sexual harassment (redressal).⁷⁷

Key Features of the Act:

- The Act defines sexual harassment at the work place and creates a mechanism for redressal of complaints.
- Every employer with 10 or more employees is required to constitute an Internal Complaints Committee which has the powers of civil courts for gathering evidence.
- The Committee is required to complete the inquiry within a time period of 90 days.
- The inquiry process should be confidential and the Act lays down a penalty on the person who breaches confidentiality.
- The Act requires employers to develop policies against sexual harassment.

⁷⁶ *Vishaka and Ors v State of Rajasthan & Ors*, AIR 1997 SC 3011.

⁷⁷ North East Network, *Using Law To Address Sexual Harassment Against Women In The Workplace In India – A Guide For Working Women*, 2015, p. 8: [http://www.northeastnetwork.org/sites/default/files/resources/file/SHWAWP%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.northeastnetwork.org/sites/default/files/resources/file/SHWAWP%20(1).pdf).

- There are penalties for employers for non-compliance with the provisions of the Act and repeated violations may lead to higher penalties and cancellation of license or registration to conduct business.
- The government can order an officer to inspect workplaces and records related to sexual harassment in any organisation.

Although there is no national-level data on the prevalence of SHWAWP, NGO studies⁷⁸ have found that 80-88% of women surveyed in different work situations have faced some form of sexual harassment. However, reporting of sexual harassment remains low, as women fear stigmatisation, loss of job opportunities or having to face further harassment.

The police department is also duty bound to implement their obligations under the Act. Meghalaya Police, till date, has not constituted an Internal Complaints Committee as required by the Act. Sexual harassment within the police department is not readily or easily acknowledged. All personnel including senior police officials interviewed stated that sexual harassment within the department does not exist. In the absence of data, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of the problem within the department. In a recent case reported by the media, a senior Meghalaya police official was arrested on the charges of molesting a new woman recruit. While the concerned official in this case stands suspended with an ongoing departmental inquiry against him, the episode clearly shows the problem exists in the department even among senior officials.

Case of Sexual Harassment within the Department ⁷⁹

A senior official of the Meghalaya Police Battalion was arrested on 15 July 2015 on charges of molesting a new women recruit. The incident took place 12 kms from Tura town in West Garo Hills and the victim lodged an FIR in Tura police station. Media reports indicate that the victim reported the matter to the commandant of the Meghalaya Police Battalion who encouraged her to file an FIR. The Tura Police Station registered cases under Section 354, criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty, Section 376, no appeal in petty cases, and Section 511, punishment for attempting to commit offences punishable with imprisonment for life or other imprisonment. The accused officer was arrested the same day and remanded to 14 days of judicial custody. He was suspended from service and a departmental inquiry is ongoing against him.

With regards to reporting such cases, most personnel interviewed responded that in normal circumstance they would report it to the Officer-in-Charge of a police station or directly to the Superintendent of Police of the district. In such a scenario, a lot depends on the approachability of individual officers. It can be particularly difficult for women constables to approach seniors in their own police station who they report to on a daily basis. Often, complaints on sexual harassment invite loose gossip and character assassination of the complainant. Reporting to your immediate line manager makes protecting confidentiality

78 The “Workplace Sexual Harassment Survey,” carried out by the Centre for Transforming India, a non-profit organisation in the Information Technology and BPO/KPO industries: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/casting-couch-in-tech-world/article3563237.ece>.

79 “Cop arrested in sexual harassment case, remanded to 14 days judicial custody,” Meghalaya Times, 15 July 2015: <http://meghalayatimes.info/index.php/front-page/26046-cop-arrested-in-sexual-harassment-case-remanded-to-14-days-judicial-custody>.

and ensuring impartiality even more difficult. It is precisely to overcome these concerns and loopholes in the process that departments must establish complaint committees as mandated by the Act.

It is important to point out here that the Meghalaya Police website mentions a circular on protection of women against sexual harassment at the workplace (Circular No. 1/2013) but the circular deals with instances of eve teasing in public places and directs the police to take suitable steps such as deploying female police officers in plain clothes in public places (like bus stands, cinema halls, parks) and establishing women's help lines in police stations among other steps.⁸⁰ The circular alludes to a bill on sexual harassment at the workplace being considered in parliament, but does not specify suitable steps the police need to take to address sexual harassment within the department. For a department that is otherwise well organised and transparent, this is discouraging. Meghalaya police must fulfil its obligations under the SHWAWP Act, 2013 and allocate adequate resources to set up complaints committee in each administrative unit as laid down in the Act. Any delay in doing so and continuing to rely on internal processes for dealing with such complaints will impede its efforts at increasing women representation in the force.

7. Promotion

Promotions in the police department are generally riddled with problems. Corruption, lack of transparency and inordinate delays in appraisals, stunt promotion opportunities for both men and women. To address these ills, the Meghalaya Police Act, 2011 requires the state government to develop evaluation criteria and a transparent process for promotions.⁸¹ It further specifies at least three promotions to ordinarily be available to all meritorious police personnel. These provisions are commendable and much needed to tackle corruption. A fair and transparent process based on merit will benefit the entire organisation but specially the women who often lose out owing to the influence of extraneous factors on police promotions.

Recently, the Meghalaya Police introduced a slight change in the promotion criteria. For promotion from Sub-Inspectors to Inspectors in the unarmed and armed branches, promotions are to be based on seniority-cum-merit and not on merit alone as instituted in 2010.⁸² This may have an adverse impact on women personnel, because even though the state has almost tripled the number of female police officers, from 174 in 2008 to 489 in 2015, most of the recruitments took place last year. Consequently, there is little scope for women to be promoted on a seniority basis and it may be a while before substantial numbers are able to reach senior ranks. This may serve as a deterrent for new women recruits and lower their morale. The state may wish to consider special short-term measures for fast tracking women's promotions particularly at the ranks of Sub-Inspector and Inspector to tackle the load of crimes against women cases.

Owing to the low number of women in the police and the fact that most of the recruitment was done last year, it is too early to assess what discrimination and biases exist during promotions. One concern however is the reluctance of women in taking promotions in the

80 Government of Meghalaya, Meghalaya Police, Circular No 1/2013: http://megpolice.gov.in/circulars/Circular_01_2013.pdf.

81 Section 24 (1), Meghalaya Police Act, 2011.

82 Meghalaya Police, Office of the Director General, DGP Circular No. 2/2015: http://megpolice.gov.in/circulars/DGP_Circular_No_2-2015_reg-promotion.pdf.

first place. This is largely due to the fact that promotions imply transfers from their home towns and most women find it extremely difficult to leave their families:

“We do not want to accept promotions because in doing so it means transfer and it takes us away from our families.”

Once again, this points to a sense of frustration among women who find themselves unable to avail of career growth opportunities in face of difficulties on the personal front. The department needs to consider various incentives and family-friendly measures to make it easier for women to take on greater responsibilities.

8. Inter-Personal Relationships

On a positive note, aside from structural constraints, women personnel generally did not complain of discrimination or unfair treatment by their male colleagues and boasted of healthy interpersonal relationships amongst police officers. All the women personnel across ranks stated that they have good working relationships with their teammates. In fact, most of them stated that they are treated at par with their colleagues and even by their seniors. They have easy access to their seniors wherein they can lay down their grievances and concerns.

“We are respected by our male colleagues.”

“Everyone respects us because we are women.”

“Our Guruji (Officer-in-Charge) and seniors treat us like family members.”

Many of the respondents, including male officers, are of the opinion that women’s presence in the police station has helped change the attitude of the public towards the police in general. This in turn has helped to make police stations more accessible with more people approaching the police for help in times of trouble, unlike earlier when they were seen as the last resort.

“Women are by nature sensitive, understanding and sober. Hence they can handle cases more professionally. Unlike men who are aggressive in nature and tend to handle cases with insensitivity. Since the police organisation is dominated by a male culture such as alcoholism, corruption and womanising; with the presence of women in the department such things can be curbed.”

“We’ve had feedback that with the presence of women there have been changes. Women are more comfortable to open up to us.”

Chapter 4:

Conclusion and Recommendations

Meghalaya police has made concerted efforts to increase women's representation in their department. Last year in particular saw a significant rise, from 2.87% in 2014 to nearly 4% in 2015. The department's commitment is encouraging and needs to be lauded. Numbers, though important, are not sufficient in themselves. Alongside increasing the number of women personnel, the department needs to assess the problems facing women in their service conditions which are hindering their growth. This study throws light on several such issues. Poor facilities, inadequate training opportunities, unfavourable conditions in outstation postings, lack of proper infrastructure and unfriendly welfare policies are some of the difficulties women constantly grapple with.

Underlying these issues is that despite the good intentions of the senior authorities, there is a serious lack of awareness or misunderstanding of the problems from a gender perspective. During the interviews with senior officials, they acknowledged the problems and challenges that exist for women personnel. However, the difference of opinion between women and men officers on issues such as allocation of tasks, harassment and promotions, reflects the age-old problem of deeply ingrained stereotyping of women being unsuited to hold senior positions in the force. It is believed that policing requires physical strength and nothing else and one has to be aggressive to be able to command respect and perform their duties. These stereotypes need to be eliminated for the force to progress.

NEN's interviews with women officers revealed that they would like to be appreciated for the work they have achieved, in the form of certificates and medals. This kind of appreciation is a form of encouragement and acknowledgement that is truly lacking in the force. The women police need to see the department take steps towards improving their working conditions and knowledge so that they can climb the ranks and be women leaders who can inspire other women to join the force.

Moving forward, the department needs to consider a holistic policy framework for guiding the intake and integration of women into policing. Ad-hoc or piecemeal approaches and initiatives will have limited impact. Recruiting women into policing without having the facilities and policies that accord them equality and address their particular needs in place or a failure to understand and acknowledge the dynamics at play that prevent female officers from progressing will have ramifications for women throughout the organisation.

Recommendations

For Government of Meghalaya

1. Reconceptualise the role of women police:
 - Rethink the segregation of women into specific “women-only” tasks and consider ways of bringing them into mainstream functions
 - Broaden the role of women police beyond dealing with crimes against women
 - Review the usefulness and performance of all women police stations in light of concerns raised by the parliamentary committee reports.
2. Implement guidelines issued under Modernization of Police Force Scheme regarding facilities for women police at police stations.
3. Adopt reservation policy of 33% for women police across ranks within the Transparent Recruitment Process as a special measure.
4. Amend the Meghalaya Police Act 2011 to strengthen gender equality in policing:
 - Specify a target for women representation which should be at least 33% in tune with central government policy
 - Ensure women police officers are entrusted with same duties and powers as other police officers.
5. Formulate a gender policy for the police department to:
 - Guide the process of increasing women representation in policing
 - Lay down strategies for gender mainstreaming including policy targets with set timelines and stipulated institutional roles and responsibilities.

For Meghalaya Police Department

1. Recruitment of women in police:
 - Conduct recruitment drives across the state to advertise vacancies regularly and encourage women from different communities, class and ethnic backgrounds to join the police
 - Conduct an assessment of police strength requirements at police stations and consider making all recruitment from among women only, as per the recommendation of the 2014 BPRD study.
2. Ensure the presence of three Women Sub-Inspectors and ten Women Constables in all police stations as laid down by the Ministry of Home Affairs in its advisory.

3. Improve and provide regular in-career training opportunities:
 - Organise regular specialised courses to ensure women personnel are up-to-date with legal developments
 - Ensure proper facilities for women including separate toilets and suitable accommodation at all training institutions
 - Increase representation of women in training institutions.
4. Improve working conditions for women:
 - Set up separate toilet facilities and restrooms in all police stations, in line with MPF guidelines
 - Make arrangements for adequate transport facilities for all personnel, and in particular women to reduce the problems they face while using public transport.
5. Adopt equal opportunity policy:
 - Ensure desk jobs such as record management, RTI cells, and computer work are not disproportionately assigned to women personnel
 - Provide equal opportunity for women personnel to head regular police stations, and not just all women police stations, and district units
 - Ensure postings and promotions are based on merit alone without any gender bias.
6. Cultivate a gender-sensitive culture within the organisation:
 - Adopt a zero tolerance policy on gender discrimination in the department
 - Develop a standard operating procedure on workplace norms including behaviour, language and practices of men and women police officers.
7. Implement family-friendly policies:
 - Shift system in police stations, including weekly off for all police personnel
 - Supportive maternity, paternity and child care leave policies, which are consistent with Government of India policies.
 - Crèche and day care facilities in all administrative units as per the Modernisation of Police Force guidelines issued by the Government of India.

Annexure

GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE
MEGHALAYA:::::SHILLONG

Letter No. FM/XXI-6/2012/Vol.II/195

Dated Shillong the 4th June 2015.

From : Asstt. Inspector General of Police (E),
Meghalaya, Shillong.

To : ~~Smti. Joy Grace Syiem.~~
Programme Manager,
North East Net Work, Meghalaya.

Sub : **Request for Data information from Meghalaya Police.**

Ref : Letter No. Nil. dtd. 2..2015.

Madam.

With reference to the above, I am directed to furnish herewith the required information as desired.

1. Total number of Women Police & Men Police in Meghalaya as on 1st Jan' 2015 is 12418

Women Police - 489
Men Police - 11929

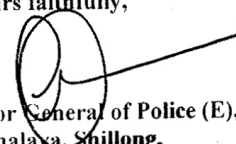
2. Gender disaggregated data with ranks classification of Gazetted officers as on 1.1.2015.

Male		Female
1. DGP - 1	-	1. DGP - 0
2. ADGP - 5	-	2. ADGP - 0
3. IGP - 5	-	3. IGP - 0
4. DIGP - 1	-	4. DIGP - 0
5. SP. Ranks - 28	-	5. SP. Ranks - 3
6. Addl. SSP Rank - 25	-	6. Addl. SSP Rank - 1
7. Dy. SsP. Ranks - 71	-	7. Dy. SsP. Ranks - 7

3. Gender disaggregated data with ranks classification of Non-Gazetted officers as on 1.1.2015.

Male		Female
1. Inspr - 174	-	1. Inspr. - 9
2. SI. 772	-	2. SI. 69
3. ASI 236	-	3. ASI - 10
4. H/C / Hav. - 1491	-	4. H/C / Hav. - 22
5. Consts. NK / LNK - 9120	-	5. Const. NK / LNK - 368

Yours faithfully,


Asstt. Inspector General of Police (E),
Meghalaya, Shillong.

About NEN

North East Network (NEN) is a women's organisation established in 1995 during the mobilisation process for the Beijing Conference. Since its inception, the organisation has been raising women's rights issues, particularly within the developmental and political context of the North East region of India. In its early years, the organisation focused on empowerment, health and livelihood, and issues of violence, both in conflict situations and in the domestic sphere.

NEN has been in the forefront in the region to change developmental discourse from a rights perspective and demand women's inclusion in all political and other decision-making levels. Over the years, NEN has stressed on good governance as a precondition for the enjoyment of human rights and also for addressing gender-based discrimination.

NEN responds to specific needs of women in North East India such as gender budgetary allocations, strengthening support services for women affected by violence and security of women in conflict areas through fact-finding processes and advocacy with the government. In addition it organises trainings, workshops and publishes materials on information related to conflict, peace and women.



North East Network

ASSAM

Head Office

J.N. Borooah Lane
Jorpukehuri
Guwahati – 781001
Assam, India
Tel: 91 – 361-2603833
Email: assammen@yahoo.co.uk

Project Green Hub

'Jonak' Kumargaon
Tezpur – 784001
Assam, India
Tel: 91-371-2252688

MEGHALAYA

Springside, Jingkieng
Nongthymmai
Shillong – 793014
Meghalaya, India
Tel: 91-364-2521221
Email: Meghalaya@northeastnetwork.org

NAGALAND

NEN Resource Centre
Chizami – 797112
Phek District
Nagaland, India
Tel: 91- 9436607403/986284388
Email: Nagaland@northeastnetwork.org

NEN Resource Centre, Kohima
House no. 43, Themezie Road,
Opposite De Oriental Grand Hotel
Kohima – 797001
Tel: 91- 3702 – 260550

NEW DELHI

42, Deshbandhu Society,
15 Patparganj,
Delhi – 110092
Tel: 91-11-22721744

CHRI Programmes

CHRI's work is based on the belief that for human rights, genuine democracy and development to become a reality in people's lives, there must be high standards and functional mechanisms for accountability and participation within the Commonwealth and its member countries. CHRI furthers this belief through strategic initiatives and advocacy on human rights, access to justice and access to information. It does this through research, publications, workshops, information dissemination and advocacy.

Access to Justice

Police Reforms: In too many countries the police are seen as an oppressive instrument of state rather than as protectors of citizens' rights, leading to widespread rights violations and denial of justice. CHRI promotes systemic reform so that the police act as upholders of the rule of law rather than as instruments of the current regime. In India, CHRI's programme aims at mobilising public support for police reform. In South Asia, CHRI works to strengthen civil society engagement on police reforms. In East Africa and Ghana, CHRI is examining police accountability issues and political interference.

Prison Reforms: CHRI's work is focused on increasing transparency of a traditionally closed system and exposing malpractices. A major area is focussed on highlighting failures of the legal system that result in terrible overcrowding and unconscionably long pre-trial detention and prison overstay, and engaging in interventions to ease this. Another area of concentration is aimed at reviving the prison oversight systems that have completely failed. We believe that attention to these areas will bring improvements to the administration of prisons as well as have a knock-on effect on the administration of justice overall.

Access to Information

CHRI is acknowledged as one of the main organisations working to promote access to information across the Commonwealth. It encourages countries to pass and implement effective right to information laws. We routinely assist in the development of legislation and have been particularly successful in promoting right to information in India, Bangladesh and Ghana where we are the Secretariat for the RTI civil society coalition. We regularly critique new bills and intervene to bring best practices into governments and civil society knowledge both in the time when laws are being formulated and when they are first being implemented. Our experience of working across even in hostile environments as well as culturally varied jurisdictions allows CHRI to bring valuable insights into countries seeking to evolve and implement new laws on right to information. In Ghana, for instance we have been promoting knowledge about the value of access to information which is guaranteed by law while at the same time pushing for introduction of an effective and progressive law. In Ghana as and when the access to information law comes into being we intend to build public knowledge in parallel with monitoring the law and using it in ways which indicate impact of the law on system accountability – most particularly in the area of policing and the working of the criminal justice system.

Strategic Initiatives Programme

CHRI monitors member states' compliance with human rights obligations and advocates around human rights exigencies where such obligations are breached. CHRI strategically engages with regional and international bodies including the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, the UN and the African Commission for Human and People's Rights. Ongoing strategic initiatives include: Advocating for and monitoring the Commonwealth's reform; Reviewing Commonwealth countries' human rights promises at the UN Human Rights Council and engaging with its Universal Periodic Review; Advocating for the protection of human rights defenders and civil society space; and Monitoring the performance of National Human Rights Institutions in the Commonwealth while advocating for their strengthening.

This report examines the status of women police in the North East state of Meghalaya in India against the backdrop of heightened policy priority for increasing the role of women police at the national level. Its central premise is that police organizations must open up to women not only to realize the goal of gender equality but also for achieving effective policing, for a police force that is representative of society commands greater public trust and credibility, and is able to respond impartially and fairly to the public. The report reviews policy initiatives and legal developments in Meghalaya on women police, and documents experiences and difficulties they face in their work environment. It concludes with a range of recommendations on institutional reforms needed not just to increase women representation but to create a welcoming environment and to enable them play a meaningful role.

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Delegation of the European Union to India

5/5, Shantiniketan, New Delhi - 110 021

Phone: +91-11-66781919

Fax: +91-11-66781955

Website: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india/index_en.htm

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG **FÜR DIE FREIHEIT**

USO House

6, Special Institutional Area

New Delhi - 110067 (India)

Phone: +91-11-26862064 or +91-11-26863846

Fax: +91-11-26862042

www.southasia.fnst.org

www.stiftung-freiheit.org

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Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

55A, Third Floor, Siddharth Chambers-1,

Kalu Sarai, New Delhi - 110 016

India

Tel: +91 11 4318 0200

Fax: +91 11 2686 4688

E-mail: info@humanrightsinitiative.org

www.humanrightsinitiative.org



North East Network

Springside, Jingkieng

Nongthymmai

Shillong - 793014

Meghalaya, India

Telefax: 91-364-2521221

Email: meghalaya@northeastnetwork.org

www.northeastnetwork.org