

Chapter: 3

Existing Measures for Overcoming Challenges and Suggestions

3.1 Introduction:

For the general masses policing are considered as male dominated service and often young girls are not encouraged by their families to join the service. In traditional Indian families, they prefer professions for girls which are non-transferable and are mostly desk job. Police service for many is assumed to be a stressful job with odd working hours and hence not suitable for girls. Though the stereotypical outlook continues to prevail and changing such mind set will take its own course of time, in today's time the presence and more recruitment of women in police service has become a necessity. Since more women are working outside their household to support their families and also to have a satisfying career, the need for safety and security on the roads has become essential.

Another important reason why police service is said to be not suitable for girls is because of the limited facilities available in the workplace. In the survey all the respondents had raised the issue of poor or no sanitation facilities in the workplace. On occasions when they are doing duty on the road, besides the pollution which they inhale due to heavy traffic, the other difficulty they find is lack of toilets in these areas. In order to overcome such problems the government intervention is required to improve the existing conditions of the police stations and also to have toilet facilities besides the roads. Such upgradations of facilities are required to make women traffic police officers more comfortable at work and this would also lead to efficient service to public.

Further, 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. Simultaneously, provisions for salary perks and promotion opportunities in regard to extra work and gallantry service should be ensured by the police department. This is required because most of the respondents had said that

promotion within the service takes a very long time and for some the limited salary, they are somehow able to make ends meet.

Some special facilities for women should be provided i.e. flexible working hours especially for new mothers who are in service. This becomes essential since the gender roles in a society remain unchanged, and women continue to be the 'care giver' for the family. In the survey except one police personnel, all the other respondents were married and some of them had young children. They found it difficult to juggle responsibilities from workplace to home. Added to that all the respondents revealed that they have to finish all the household chores before they come to work. In order to encourage women to join the police service, crèche facilities should be provided so that they can concentrate more in their work.

Majority of police stations in India have male officers and there is under representation of women. Similarly in case of traffic police as well only a few women personnel are in service. When the 12 student researchers (Annexure – III) visited the different police stations in Guwahati city came to know that women personnel were in minority and only 3 to 7 women were working in each of the police stations. The respondents though worked with majority of male colleagues, they mentioned that the male colleagues were understanding and co-operative at workplace. In case of duty on the roads, it would be more convenient if more women officers are recruited. In the past, hardly women drove on the roads and hence they did not encounter any incidents of rash driving. In last two decades women drivers have increased and if women traffic police are regularly seen on the road then women drivers would feel safe and secure while driving. Also in India when there is a road accident and if it is the women driver's fault, they find themselves in a vulnerable position as the crowd gathers immediately. Under such circumstances the presence of a women traffic police will give confidence and security to the women driver. Moreover, exposure to advance training and workshop should be provided to the women officers so that they are fully equipped with and handle such intense situations of crowd gathering due to accident or mob violence.

The brutal gang-rape and murder of a young woman in Delhi in 2012 is constant reminder to Indian women the dangers of travelling every day. This demand greater

women policing and extended law enforcement. Hence, more representation of women traffic police will encourage women to come out of their homes confidently, so that they are able to pursue their jobs without fear.

Due to heightened attention on women's safety in recent years, 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 Assam, to meet their objectives. Key issues among these are mentioned below (NEN 2016; CHRI¹ 2015):

(a) The Ministry of Home Affairs' Advisories on Women Police:

In 2009, the Ministry of Home Affairs first proposed a target of 33 per cent representation of women in police 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, in 2013, the Ministry 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. More recently, the Ministry has proposed creating Investigative Units for Crimes against Women (IUCAW) at police stations in crime-prone districts across states. The Ministry has laid down that a total of six IUCAWs are to be set up in Assam.

¹ The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, non-partisan, international non-governmental organisation, mandated to ensure the practical realisation of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth. CHRI's objectives are to promote awareness of and adherence to the Commonwealth Harare Principles, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other internationally recognised human rights instruments, as well as domestic instruments supporting human rights in Commonwealth Member States. CHRI furthers its objectives through strategic initiatives and with a focus on access to justice, which covers police and prison reforms, and access to information. It does this through research, publications, workshops, information dissemination and advocacy. The CHRI is based in New Delhi, India, and has offices in London, UK and Accra, Ghana.

(b) 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, Government of India issued guidelines in February 2013 to state governments on items to be covered under the scheme. This clearly lies down that police stations constructed under the scheme must include toilet facilities, crèches and restrooms for women police personnel.

(c) 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'. The first Committee was constituted on 23rd 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.

(d) 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. The conferences have repeatedly stressed the need for increased representation of women and recommended several measures including 33 per cent reservation, special recruitment drives, a common cadre for men and women and better facilities for women.

(e) Assam Vision Document 2016-2025:

Circulated in the run-up to the 2016 Assembly elections in Assam, it is important to mention that the election manifesto (Assam Vision Document 2016-2025) of the current ruling party in Assam, the Bharitya Janata Party (BJP), contained notable policy promises towards women's empowerment. Several of these pertain directly to women in policing. These are:

- (i) Reserving 35 per cent seats for women in all government services of Assam,
- (ii) Incorporating gender budgeting as an essential component in the state budget,
- (iii) Constructing women police stations in every district of Assam, and
- (iv) Ensuring sufficient female police personnel in every police station and district.

3.2 Suggestions and Recommendations:

Poor facilities, unfavourable conditions, lack of knowledge of policies and entitlements and lack of proper infrastructure are some of the difficulties women police constantly grapple with. Despite the good intentions of senior leadership, there is a serious lack of awareness or understanding of these problems from a gender perspective. Proactive changes from either the police department or government are meaningless without a corresponding change in perception and orientation toward gender and equality - both within the service and outside of it; both men and women need an enabling environment; this is especially true for an overburdened force like the police (NEN² 2016).

North East Network has done an extensive work on this area and some of the preliminary recommendations are mentioned as below (CHRI 2015; NEN 2016):

² 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 is based in Guwahati, Assam, and has offices in Meghalaya and Nagaland.

A. Recommendations for the Government of Assam:

1. Reconceptualise the Role of Women Police:

- (i) Rethink the segregation of women into specific 'women-only' tasks and consider ways of bringing them into mainstream functions,
- (ii) Broaden the role of women police beyond dealing with crimes against women, and
- (iii) Review the usefulness and performance of the All Woman Police Stations in light of concerns raised by.

2. Implement guidelines issued under Modernization of Police Force Scheme regarding facilities for women police at police stations.

3. Increase the reservation policy to 33 per cent for women police across ranks in line with the central advisory.

4. To ensure there are no disparities, withdraw the 10 per cent reservation for women Sub-Inspectors and Constables.

5. Amend the Assam Police Act 2007 to strengthen gender equality in policing by:

- (i) Specify a target for women representation which should be at least 33 per cent in tune with central government policy, and
- (ii) Ensure women police officers are entrusted with same duties and powers as other police officers.

6. Formulate a gender policy for the police department to:

- (i) Guide the process of increasing women representation in policing, and
- (ii) Lay down strategies for gender mainstreaming including policy targets with set timelines and stipulated institutional roles and responsibilities (NEN 2016).

B. Recommendations for the Assam Police Department:

1. Recruitment of women in police (NEN 2016):

- (i) Conduct recruitment drives across the state to advertise vacancies regularly and encourage women from different communities, class and ethnic backgrounds to join the police service, and
- (ii) Conduct an assessment of police strength requirements at police stations and strongly consider making all recruitment from among women only until 33 per cent representation is achieved.

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:

- (i) Organise regular specialised courses to ensure women personnel are up-to-date with legal developments,
- (ii) Ensure proper facilities for women including separate toilets and suitable accommodation at all training institutions,
- (iii) Increase representation of women in training institutions, and
- (iv) Rotational duties. Having a proper shift system in place would decrease the work load and improve productivity. This would necessitate more recruitment.

4. Improve working conditions for women:

- (i) Proper infrastructure in the police station like rest rooms, barracks, etc.,
- (ii) Toilet facilities and lights (for those on night duty) in all Traffic points,
- (iii) Adequate supply of masks, life jackets, ORS, water etc., and
- (iv) Proper and adequate living quarters.

5. Adopt equal opportunity policy:

- (i) Ensure desk jobs such as record management, RTI cells, and computer work are not disproportionately assigned to women personnel,
- (ii) Provide equal opportunity for women personnel to head regular police stations, and not just all women police stations, and district units, and
- (iii) Ensure postings and promotions are based on merit alone without any gender bias.

6. Cultivate a gender-sensitive culture within the organisation:

- (i) Adopt a zero tolerance policy on gender discrimination in the department,
- (ii) Establish Internal Complaints Committees (ICC) to oversee sexual harassment complaints in every district with immediate priority, and guarantee that they are properly trained to take on their role,
- (iii) Ensure there is wide publicity and awareness of the redress mechanisms available under the prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace Act,
- (iv) Develop a standard operating procedure on workplace norms including behaviour, language and practices of men and women police officers, and
- (v) Relax the uniform requirement for senior ranks for pregnant women (as in the lower ranks where pregnant women can wear saris).

7. Implement family-friendly policies:

- (i) Shift system in police stations, including weekly off for all police personnel,
- (ii) Supportive maternity, paternity and child care leave policies, which are consistent with Government of India policies, and widely circulated among all women police personnel, and
- (iii) Crèche and day care facilities in all administrative units as per the Modernisation of Police Force guidelines issued by the Government of India (NEN 2016).