

## *Chapter - 2*

### **CHALLENGES OF WOMEN TRAFFIC POLICE IN GUWAHATI CITY**

#### **2.1 Introduction:**

A United Nations' (UN) Women report of 2011 estimates that, “globally, women average just 9 per cent of the police, with rates falling as low as 2 per cent in some parts of the world. On average, women do not make up more than 13 per cent of the police force in any region”. Kerala was the first Indian state to have all women police station in 1973, beginning with the first woman inducted into the then Travancore Royal Police in 1933. Thereafter recruitment of women into the police in other states began only after independence, and even then it was sporadic at best (CHRI 2015).

A group of twelve students from Department of Political Science Fifth Semester Major Course from Handique Girls' College, Guwahati shouldered the responsibility to do a survey for a project on the challenges of women traffic police in Guwahati city (Table: 2.1). Through the project we had the opportunity to interview 22 women traffic police, to learn and understand their everyday experiences and challenges at workplace and home.

**Table: 2.1 (Group Members Field Visit)**

<b>Sl No.</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Location-Police Stations Visited</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>
1.	A	Lataasil, Ulubari, Bhangagarh, Pragjyotishpur, Chandmari and Paltanbazar	08
2.	B	Panbazar	04
3.	C	Dispur, Panbazar, Basistha and Noomati	10
		<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>

Source: Field Survey

In order to have an in-depth study about the project within a short duration of time we have decided to divide ourselves in three groups (i.e. Group A, Group B and Group C) (Annexure – III). For our purpose, we had done field survey on the major locations in Guwahati City as mentioned in Table: 2.1.

The findings obtained from the use of questionnaire, the interviews (inter-actions) and informal discussions are discussed here in three different parts such as: (I) the personal background, (II) the observations, and (III) the challenges of the women traffic police officers. Since the survey is conducted by dividing the researchers in three groups (Annexure – III), the observation and challenges of each group is dealt simultaneously (Annexure - II).

## I

### **2.2 The Personal Background:**

In the present study, the backgrounds of the police personals were examined by using the following factors:

- (i) Age Group,
- (ii) Educational Qualification,
- (iii) Religious Composition, and
- (iv) Income and Marital Status, etc.

#### **(a) Age Group:**

In the survey, 80 per cent of the women traffic police personals were in their mid thirties or early forties, and they were in service for 10 to 15 years. Through the researcher's discussion with the respondents they came to know that the number of women personals in the lower wages was more because more women were recruited in the lower levels.

#### **(b) Religious Composition:**

From the study it was revealed that all the women traffic police respondents are belong to Hindu community.

**(c) Educational Qualification:**

As per the data collected from the field survey it was come to our knowledge that around 63 per cent respondents were intermediate pass outs (HS) and 37 per cent were University Graduates. A few of them said that they did not have professional qualifications to apply for other jobs and for that reason they had joined in the police service.

**(d) Marital Status:**

As per the field survey data, it is found that 90 per cent of the respondents were married and 10 per cent were still unmarried. The women personnel who had a family said that the job is both demanding and challenging for her and it was difficult to manage both professional and a household tasks.

**(e) Reason for Joining the Force:**

The reason for joining in the police force particularly as women traffic police can be divided broadly into three major factors such as: (i) 65 per cent of the respondents said that they had joined this profession as because they had a personal interest in it, (ii) 25 per cent of them said they had joined it because the job of the police being a government job, guaranteed long term security, and (iii) 10 per cent said that it was a random choice for them. Majority of women respondents were agreed that it is a good career option and they said that more women should join in this service. When asked if women traffic police officers need specific training in order to make them equipped for the special duties, 63 per cent of them said positive. They believe that training courses make them motivated and more capable to handle difficult situations at workplace.

## II & III

### **Group - A**

#### ***Observations:***

Group A had a pleasant experience and found that women traffic police were very friendly and were eager to answer the questions as asked for. Through an interactive session it was revealed that for most of the respondents to become a traffic police was not their first career option or choice but nevertheless they continued to work.

#### ***Challenges:***

As per the field survey, two of the women police stationed at Latasil said that they have faced frequent power cuts for which they face problems during work hours. Also the office rooms are very small to work comfortably. The women traffic police said that sometimes they are suppose to perform additional duty for which they are not getting extra payment and in case if they wish to register a complain there is no such mechanism to do so for the same. However, the second police station i.e. Ulubari, where the researchers had visited, found that all the basic amenities are available and the women traffic police officers were also happy with their work.

One important observation experienced by the researchers was the challenge which the women traffic police officers had faced is lack of proper urinal facility at work place. Also the monthly salary which they received was not sufficient in comparison to their hard work. At the same time the respondents mentioned that the promotion procedure in service is tedious and takes prolong time for them.

### **Group - B**

#### ***Observations:***

Group B had visited Panbazar Police Station. The station is adjacent to Fancy Bazar and located few kilometers away from the banks of the Brahmaputra River. The four researchers aimed to explore and examine working environment of the women traffic police here. The researchers had an unique experience here this station as observed that

the office had an amiable atmosphere and irrespective of their hierarchical positions the employees co-operated with each other without discriminating themselves on the basis of caste, creed, gender etc. Here, the total four numbers of respondents were quite friendly and co-operative towards the researchers. It was observed that they were sincere and hardworking in their profession. The respondents appeared empowered and liberated women in nature.

### ***Challenges:***

Some of the challenges which the respondents shared were lack of proper and hygienic sanitation facilities in office as well as at the time of traffic duty. For a monthly menstrual cycle the women traffic police are allowed for three days leave, as said. In an incident narrated by one of the women traffic police (helper) who had chosen not to take leave during her menstruation, one of the male colleague (male traffic police) refuses to accept any eateries from her, believing in superstitions that a women is impure when she has her menstrual cycle.

The majority of the respondents had families to look after and sometimes it hampers their normal work. Another problem which they encounter frequently is while doing traffic duties on the roads is air pollution. Even though the respondents take preventive measures by wearing a mask but still sometimes they cannot avoid but inhale harmful gases released from vehicles.

### **Group - C**

#### ***Observations:***

The third group visited traffic departments of Dispur, Basistha and Noomati police stations. Since there were no women traffic police in Noonmati on the day when the researchers went to collect data, they collected data from Dispur and Basistha only. In Dispur, the total women traffic police strength was 15, out of which 8 were present in the office and 4 were outside on duty on the day of visit. Whereas in Basistha station the total strength was 8 and 6 were present in the office and 4 were outside on duty on the day of visit. Here, the researchers observed that in comparison to men traffic police, the women traffic police employees were less in number and some of them were on leave.

### ***Challenges:***

When the researcher's team went for field visit to the said police stations, the atmosphere at workplace was not congenial. It was found that there was male dominance and observed low dignity towards their female counterparts though the respondents tried to convince the researchers that their male colleagues were helpful, supportive and understanding. Here, the respondents were not felt comfortable to interact and fill up the questionnaire in front of their male colleagues. Also the respondents had shown a suspicious and reclusive attitude towards the researchers due to intrusion between their working hours. The respondents did not cooperate and were curious if such answering of questions would pose any threat to their service record. Hence, they refrained themselves from answering any questions.

One of the common daily problem which all the women traffic police come across is lack of sanitation facilities in the police stations and outside on duty. Most of the respondents were not content with their professional but still continued to work and did not look alternative employments.

Finding these different issues and challenges faced by the women traffic police in Guwahati city and with the opportunity to speak to women in the traffic police in Guwahati city, we have their specific insights into the difficulties they face which are common observation for all of us (i.e. all groups). These include (NEN 2016):

- (i) With no provision for drinking water, the women shared they do not drink water while on duty. There is no arrangement to store their belongings while on duty. Long hours spent standing could be detrimental to their health,
- (ii) They face serious problems at night. There is no light in most of the traffic points. Often drivers cannot see the signal and accidents are frequent,
- (iii) Traffic Police women cannot keep money receipts with them. When somebody breaks a traffic signal and gets a penalty, they cannot provide money receipts to them, and
- (iv) The public does not treat them with respect.