

## **COMMUNITY POLICING IN BANGLADESH: PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICES**

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### **Abstract**

Community Policing is an alternative method of proactive policing and strategy of Bangladesh police. The core philosophy of community policing is to establish a peaceful community life by collaborative efforts between police and community. The present study is intended to evaluate the community policing in Bangladesh in regarding its philosophy. Secondary data source have been used to fulfill the objective of the study. Descriptive and qualitative methods have been used to describe the data. The study revealed that community policing had been practiced in our territory in different ways from early period to present days. But in modern forms community policing was introduced firstly in 1990, Mymensing district in Bangladesh. At present community policing has been practicing in different districts in Bangladesh without considering the actual philosophical aspects of community policing such as community partnership, organizational change and problem solving. To ensure safety and security of community as well as maintain law and order of society the philosophical aspect should be considered for implementing effective community policing in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Policing, Community policing, Philosophy, Community partnership

### **Introduction**

Community policing is a strategy for encouraging the public to become partners with the police in controlling and preventing crime. It ensures public security by performs their duties in a fair, honest, and impartial manner. In exchange, the public assist the police with information about crime, criminals, and circumstances and spend their time, resources, opinions and moral support for crime prevention programs (Bayley, 2005). Trojanwicz and Bonnie Bucqueroux (1992) have defined community policing as a philosophy and an organizational strategy that promotes a new partnership between people and their police. It is based on the premise that both police and the community must work together to identify, prioritize, and solve contemporary problems such as crime, drugs, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and overall neighborhood decay, with the goals of improving the overall quality of life in the area (Champion and Hooper, 2003). In a community policing approach, the police require to work intimately with the public as one of the partners of the community. The key doctrine behind the community policing is that it tries to establish a strong partnership, rapport, mutual trust and sense of understanding between the police and the public and tries to reduce the gap between these two actors of society. The universally accepted cornerstone of any relationship is trust and in a democratic environment

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trust is vital to keep equilibrium between a citizen and its government. Ultimately, mutual police community relationship acts as an important indicator to carry this trust from both sides. In this sense, the practice of effective community policing can play a significant role in reaching at the root level of society and gaining the faith of general public. These interactions collectively shape the public's perception towards police efficiency and police's good will for working in society.

Historically, the idea of community policing was originated in 1829 from Sir Robert Peel's principle of modern policing "the police are the people and the people are the police". Peel believed that prevention of crime could be accomplished without interfering into the lives of citizens and his idea of crime prevention helped to establish the modern concept of community policing. Both community policing and problem oriented policing were originated in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a result of a series of crisis in policing. First, the police community relations problems of the 1960s had created a crisis of legitimacy as local police departments were isolated and alienated from important segments of the community. Secondly, experiments found that there were limits to the ability of traditional police patrol to deter crime. Thirdly, it was discovered that only a small part of police work was related to criminal law enforcement and that most police work involves order maintenance and service activities (Walker and Katz, 2002). Finally, experts began to recognize the importance of citizens as coproducers of police service. The idea of community policing came into practice in Britain after the Scarman Report on Brixton disorder in 1984. He introduced the idea of policing by consent. Later in USA and UK the term and practice of community policing evolved. Initially it was treated as problem solving policing. Since 2004, the policing in Britain have been totally taken its shift to community policing. It is proved to be a holistic method of policing where police and the community worked together for the benefit of the community (Gaffigan, 1994). The philosophy of the community policing believes that through the sociological process of evolution, the civilization will reach to its maturity and at that stage, policing and community will meet to a mutual, symbiotic partnership. The Japanese community police force in police stations is mainly composed of officers posted at police boxes (known as Koban) or residential police boxes (known as Chuzaisho), and those assigned to radio patrol cars. Some community police officers in a police station are assigned to police guard posts, check posts and police station-based patrol units. In addition, each prefectural police headquarters has a railway police unit, a communications command center, police vessels, and police aircraft. The main characteristics of the community police are: (i) to become part of the local community and engage in activities that are closely related to the daily life and the safety of residents, (ii) to let community residents know about the presence of police officers and carry out neighborhood watch and prevention activities such as patrols, (iii) to be the first to respond to any emergencies. For most community residents, community police officers are both tough crime fighters and friendly protectors. They call them "omawari-san" (Dear patrol officer) with a degree of respect and affection. The term conveys the image of someone who is gentle but strong, like a big brother or uncle.

The study here focuses mainly the philosophical aspect of community policing and tries to measure how much portion of the philosophy is being practiced in Bangladesh in reality. Besides, the study attempts to make an evaluation and find out the obstacles of community policing in Bangladesh.

### **Methodology**

As the study is qualitative in nature, secondary sources like related books, articles, newspaper columns, laws have been reviewed to explain the main philosophy of community policing and make an evaluation of community policing in Bangladesh. The findings of the study have been analyzed through descriptive methods.

### **Philosophy of Community Policing**

#### *The philosophical roots of community policing: Broken Window Hypothesis*

The philosophy of community policing first originated from the Broken Window Hypothesis of Wilson and Kelling in 1982. According to broken windows hypothesis, police should focus resources on disorder problems specially that creates fear of crime and lead to neighborhood decay. The image of broken windows symbolizes the relationship between disorder, neighborhood decay, and crime (Willson and Kelling, 1982). Besides, if necessary steps aren't taken to prevent crime in the root level of the society, the rate of crime will increase gradually. So to prevent crime and disorder, it is necessary to take action before occurring crime and when it is in preliminarily stage. The philosophy of community policing also fits with this proposition as the main objective of community policing is to prevent crime from the root corner of the society from initial stage by building partnership and friendly relationship with the members of society while traditional policing largely focuses on crime after it has been occurred. The most important difference is that community policing represents a major change in the role of police. While the police have traditionally defined their primary mission in terms of crime control, community policing seeks to broaden the police role to include such issues as fear of crime, order maintenance, conflict resolution, neighborhood decay, and social and physical disorder as basic functions of the police (Walker and Katz, 2002). Philosophically community policing focuses on three most commonly discussed components: community partnership, organizational behavior and problem solving.

#### *Community Partnership*

The philosophical aspect of community policing focuses in establishing mutual trust between police and community and in this point community partnership acts as a major component. In community policing, the police become an integral part of the community culture, and the community assists in defining future priorities and in allocating resources. To develop community partnership, police must develop positive relationships with the community, must involve the community in the quest for better crime control and prevention, and must pool

their resources with those of the community to address the most urgent concerns of community members. Community partnership means adopting a policing technique that exceeds the standard law enforcement emphasis. This broadened outlook recognizes the value of activities that contribute to the orderliness and well-being of a neighborhood. These activities could include: helping accident or crime victims, providing emergency medical services, helping resolve domestic and neighborhood conflicts (e.g., family violence, landlord-tenant disputes, racial harassment), working with residents and local businesses to improve neighborhood conditions, controlling automobile and pedestrian traffic, providing emergency social services and referrals to those at risk (e.g., adolescent runaways, the homeless, the intoxicated, and the mentally ill), protecting the exercise of constitutional rights (e.g., guaranteeing a person's right to speak, protecting lawful assemblies from disruption), and providing a model of citizenship (helpfulness, respect for others, honesty, and fairness (Gaffigan, 1994).

Bayley, in his seminal book "The Police for the Future" maintains that two elements are needed to successfully implement partnership between the police and the public: consultation and mobilization. Through consultation the situation of crime control and prevention of crime can better be improved if community and police consult each other on different issues, identify the problems and solve accordingly (Bayley, 1994). In case of Mobilization, despite having limitation of police in preventing crime and disorder, community policing has mobilized the community for support. Forms of mobilization can be programs like neighborhood watch, operation id, and crime stoppers. Mobilization also includes collaboration of different agencies with police in preventing crime and disorder (Walker and Katz, 2002).

#### *Organizational Change*

Community policing demand organizational change for two reasons: to stimulate and encourage officers to perform community policing functions and makes organization more flexible to develop community partnership and problem solving. To successfully implement community policing structure, culture and management aspect of organizational changes are needed. Structurally community policing organization is decentralized. Culturally it focused organizational reforms such as training, promotional standard, evaluation standard etc. In managing perspective, it is told that community policing organizations are characterized by having more managers and fewer supervisors. (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1992)

#### *Problem Solving*

Problem solving is the processes through which the specific concerns of communities are identified and through which the most appropriate remedies to abate these problems are found. Problem solving is a broad term that implies more than simply the elimination and prevention of crimes. Problem solving is based on the assumption that "crime and disorder can be reduced in small geographic areas by carefully studying the

characteristics of problems in the area, and then applying the appropriate resources.” and on the assumption that “Individuals make choices based on the opportunities presented by the immediate physical and the police and the community must be collaborators in the quest to encourage and preserve peace and prosperity (Gaffigan, 1994).

### *Community Policing in Bangladesh*

Community policing, a relatively new concept in Bangladesh, is being explored by not only the police, but also NGOs and community based organizations, as a way to bring the community and the police together in resolving problems at the community level. Before the origin of formal community policing in Bangladesh, police would work in community level to ensure safety of villagers and their property at night known as *Chowkider and Dafader*. Formally, community policing system was first introduced in Mymensingh district of Bangladesh. This innovative approach was initiated by senior police officials posted at Mymensingh District Police Headquarters in the early 1990's in response to the poor law and order situation of the area. In 1992 a, community-based policing in a form of Town Defense party (TDP) activities commenced and still continue today as a model of proactive policing. The strategy is based on the principle of the police and the community finding solutions together not only in response to current problems, but also as a pre-emptive measure. The initiative is fully owned by the police and the community, decisions are taken jointly and funds are locally raised to support the activities (UNDP, 2009).

Regarding the structure of community policing, there is an advisory council at district level. It consists of District Police Superintendent, additional District Police Superintendent and Assistant District Police Superintendents. This council can co-opt important and interested persons in the committee. This council sits at least once a month to review law and order situation of the district and to take necessary steps. The thana (local government administrative unit) consists of one convener, one treasurer and six members. The union or ward unit consists of one convener, one treasurer and six members. This unit provides decision/instruction after reviewing law and order situation at thana level. This unit also decides requirement of patrol police and how patrol police perform their functions. At the very grassroots neighborhood level, a patrol team of 12 persons consisting of members from ansar, village police, village defence party, village security guards is formed. This number may be more or less depending on requirement. This team basically patrols in neighborhood and provide information to police to stop illegal activities. To maintain law and order, a police sub-inspector under supervision of the officer-in-charge of the station, usually forms relevant committees, maintains records and involves community patrol units (Hasan, 2005).

### *Evaluation*

Although, it is a positive initiative by Bangladesh Police that they could start community policing since long ago during the year 1990 and now community policing is being practiced

almost all districts of the country but the question remains how much extent of the actual philosophy of community policing has been practiced since its origin in Bangladesh. We have already found different efforts of Bangladesh Government and different international organizations for building capacity of community policing and modernize it and it has been successful in many extents. It has already increased the number of personnel, increased its activities in village level, introduced some programs like open house days, seminars, rally on different public occasions, short training, baseline survey on police community relations. Despite all of this it has been facing noticeable shortcomings in philosophical point of view of community policing and wide range of public acceptance.

One of the main philosophies of community policing is community partnership. According to the philosophy police will work proactively in order to find the root causes of crime and disorder and solve them by consultation with community members. But still this philosophy is not practiced in Bangladesh in large extent. There is a marginal gap of partnership and communication between police and public in question of problem solving, strategy setting and improving relation. In addition, local partnership like involvement of different community organization such as local youth groups, women's groups, civil society and other interest groups are rarely involved in community policing. Although some programs like open house day have been introduced to increase more police public relationship, still very few members see it as being a joint problem solving initiative. It has become apparent that local police believe that a community police partnership is associated with activities intended to address particular problems and is primarily concerned with acquiring resources to solve those problems. For some police officers, the introduction of community policing simply meant that the community should help them in combating crime. The Government, strategy builders and key stakeholders should focus more on this issue. The relation can be improved by regular consultation and meeting between police and community, organizing different seminars, cultural programs, dramas etc.

Secondly, community policing demands organizational change. But it is a matter of disappointment that still practice of community policing has been ongoing without any major organizational set up in Bangladesh. Simply by means of community policing we understand community policing is a philosophy of policing that opens up the police agenda locally to the influence of grass root communities expectations and priorities. It is mainly a philosophy not a strategy (Wisler and Onuwudiwe, 2009). The main challenge for the successful implementation of community policing in Bangladesh is the weak implementation capacity within the organizations, structural weaknesses with respect to multi-sectoral involvement, coordination, policy monitoring, evaluation and scarce internal resources (UNDP, 2009). Firstly to improve the organizational set up of Bangladesh police, overall police department's policy and strategy should be changed. Only change in local level will not give any permanent solution. In top priority basis, Police Act 1861 needs to be amended as it was principally aimed to administer a static, immobile and backward rural society living in villages and small

towns. In addition to being under the senior police hierarchy, the police superintendent of a district was simultaneously subjected to the lateral control of the district magistrate. The act also principally aims at the preservation of status quo; and it lays major emphasis on maintenance of order and avoidance of breach of peace. It over emphasizes the constabulary functions of the police as against the professional aspect of crime (Huda, 2009). Bangladesh police, with their present law, rules and regulations is an immensely bureaucratic organization. So, inserting decentralized philosophy of community policing is nearly impossible. To make a room for community participation, Bangladesh Police must change their existing police act. Without changing the existing centralized police structure, community policing can never be practiced. In case of Pakistan, they have already made a new act "Police Order 2002" to restrict the power of superintendence stated in Police Act 1861 to ensure that the police perform its duties efficiently and strictly in accordance to law. The Police Order 2002 seeks to replace the ruler driven police with a community based police through the institutional mechanism of Public Safety Commissions at national, provincial and districts level (Huda, 2009). It must be understood that the program of community policing is not a program of only the police department. It is rather, a program of the whole community. So, the community mobilization is one of the major tasks for the community policing advocates. But the fact is that at present the Bangladeshi approach of community policing is exclusively a police activity. Neither the Government nor the non government forces except the police are engaged in community policing (Raja, 2008). Besides, special fund is needed to materialize the community policing philosophy as still enough funds is not allocated for the development of community policing. Further, Bangladesh Police have an acute shortage of human resources. They can hardly perform their routine works with these resources. The community policing program demands extra manpower. So, fresh recruitment of officers, for the implementation community policing program, is needed. The police officers also needs a effective training on community policing in all levels as there is little training on community policing at present. The power of field level community police also needs to be increased. If the power of field level officers are not increased and if they are not provided enough power of taking free decision the philosophy of community policing is curbed. In Bangladesh, the practice of community policing is still in primary stage. There is no national guideline for implementation of community policing in field level and there is no legal obligation in law for implementing community policing. Only in section 42-45 of CrPC it is told that people can assist police and magistrate in certain cases. As per regulation 32 of PRB, UP chairmen and members being public representatives can seek help from people in policing activities. (Razzak, 2010). Moreover, sometimes political leaders and members like local leaders, UP Chairman, UP members, try to interfere in works of community police and try to pressurize them in their work. This kind of practice must be stopped. Local police officers are not yet familiar with the concept of community policing and do not have clear understanding of recent policies changes that have been implemented within Bangladesh Police.

Regarding the philosophy of problem solving, community police in Bangladesh tries to response in specific issues but the response is not always proactive in nature. The concept of problem solving in proactive basis is not still practiced widely. Very few recognize that community policing is also about problem solving, transparency and accountability of the police service to the community that they serve (UNDP, 2009).

### Conclusion

According to the principle of policing and expectation of the community, police should be a service-oriented organization in an independent and democratic atmosphere. Providing service according to requirements of community should be the core philosophy and duty of police. Although the core philosophies of community policing is still not practiced in Bangladesh due to some limitations, ultimately it will be exercised in reality one day. It is the eventual demand of people and the success of crime prevention largely depends on its philosophical practice. Under these circumstances, for establishing a better police-public mutual relationship, co-operation, partnership, problem solving, changes should be made in national strategy of policing, training manual, mind set-up, curriculum, conduct and activities of Bangladesh Police. Through establishing and practice of proper community policing philosophy, police can easily bring success in operational level and regain public support and acceptance. Thus, in a democratic environment like Bangladesh both police and public will be benefited.

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