

Relevance of Community Policing in Manipur

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Community policing is a new addition to the law enforcement agencies which aims to establish partnership between local police and the people they serve. The immediate aim of community policing is to mitigate and prevent crime which in turn enhances the faith of community in police. It is a kind of policing in which the community and the police help each other in maintaining law and order and solve community problems in the society. Many states and Union Territories (UTs) have undertaken various initiatives to practice community policing in their respective states and UTs. This study attempts to examine the challenges for law enforcement agencies in Manipur and understand the concept of community policing. It also tries to study the relevance of community policing in Manipur and provide suggestions for effective implementation of community policing in Manipur.

Keywords: Community Policing, Ethnical Problem, Insurgency, Village Defence Force

Challenges for Law enforcement agencies in Manipur

Peace and order are the pre-requisite for any state for progress and development. The state of Manipur which was once described as the jewel of India, Switzerland of the east, a flower on the lofty height and paradise on earth, has been facing serious law and order problems in recent times.¹ There is a serious threat to the peace, order and stability due to many problems. The main problems are insurgency, drugs and ethnic problems.

The emergence of insurgency in Manipur can be traced to the emergence of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in the early 1950s. The insurgency groups of Meitei communities were started in the 1960s with the formation of United National Liberation Front (UNLF) on 24th November 1964. After that many insurgent groups like the People's Liberation Army (PLA), founded on September 25, 1978, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) set up on October 9, 1977 and the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) that came into being in April, 1980 have emerged in the valley areas consisting of four districts of the State. Following ethnic clashes between the Nagas and Kukis in the early 1990s, a number of Kuki outfits were formed. Several other tribes, such as the Paite, Vaiphei and Hmars have also established their own armed groups.

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Similarly, Islamist outfits like the People's United Liberation Front (PULF) have also been founded to protect the interests of the 'Pangals' (Manipuri Muslims).² Presently there are 35 (12 active, 18 at ceasefire and 5 inactive) insurgent groups operating in the State of Manipur. And the main objective for every Under Ground (UG) group is to get independence and have their own separate nation.

The problems of insurgency help in the growing rate of unemployment in the state. The case of extortion is also become common in the state as all the insurgent groups have extorted money from all places including educational institutes, health centres, private farms and well to do peoples. The act of extortion of UGs has reached to such an alarming stage that every person has to negotiate with them. Naga insurgent groups which are operating from the hill districts have been demanding taxes on the use of the roads in the two National Highways (NH-2 and NH-37) of Manipur and give punishment on not paying. There are also incidents of killing of non-Manipuris by the militants.

Between 1992 and 2012, at least 5841 people were killed in insurgency related incidents in Manipur. However, the number of fatalities is showing a decreasing trend. In 2008, there were 485 insurgency-related fatalities which decreased to 416 in 2009, in 2010 it fell down to 138, in 2011 it get down to 65 but in 2012 it increase to 111.³ Details of insurgency related killings in Manipur for the last ten years is given in the following table.

Table no. 1
Insurgency related killings in Manipur for the past ten years

Year	Civilians	Security Personnel	UG's	Total
2003	27	23	148	198
2004	40	41	127	208
2005	138	50	143	331
2006	107	37	141	285
2007	150	40	218	408
2008	131	13	341	485
2009	77	18	321	416
2010	26	8	104	138
2011	25	10	30	65
2012	25	12	74	111
Total	746	252	1647	2618

Source: SATP⁴

Drug is another big problem of Manipur. The state shares a long 352 kilometers international border with Myanmar in the east and south which upgraded hill tracts only giving foot passes and through these passes drugs are smuggled from Myanmar to Manipur. Then the narcotic drugs known as heroin is further smuggled to other parts of India. A small portion of the heroin being smuggled through Manipur is consumed locally. Thus, drug addiction is become one of the main problem in Manipur. It has become a threat only second to underground movement in the State. Drug addiction claimed many lives

of boys and girls.

Alcohol is another form of intoxicant widely use in Manipur. The Scheduled Caste of Manipuri society such as people of Sekmai, Andro, Phayeng, Khurkhul are making alcohol as traditionally and culturally in their houses. From these places the local liquor are supplied. There are thousands of liquor addicts in the state. Spasmo Proxo (SP) tablet is another intoxicant item which is used by many youngsters in the society. The tablet has almost the same intoxicating effect with heroin. Nowadays, beginner abusers of Manipur are switching on to cheap and easily available substances such as dendrite and correction fluids (Kores Eraz-ex) to enjoy self-satisfaction. The changing trend calls for urgent attention of parents for saving the young siblings from destruction of mindset.⁵

Internal ethnic problems also create a big challenge for the law enforcement agencies in Manipur. Manipur is a land many different ethnic groups which comprises of 29 recognised tribes belong to Nagas and Kukis. The Meiteis and Meitei Pangal (Muslim) are the general class people. In Meitei community also there are many Scheduled Caste groups of people. The main problem is that, the people of every community formed groups themselves to make themselves bigger and stronger. It resulted in ethnic conflict among the groups in the society.

In the present day Manipur communities started forming their own armed groups firstly, to guard the community form the onslaught of the bigger communities so that they would not be succumbed in the hands of another community at times of ethnic clash as was happened during 1990s between Meiteis and Muslims in the whole state, Nagas and Kukis in the whole of state and the Thadou-Kukis and Paites in Churhandpur District.⁶ And, currently the much covert Meitei-Naga tension shows the complexity of the relationship and the factors determining the same. The prominent cause for the development in the latter is due to fast expanding 'Naga nationalism'.⁷

The community based organisations of Manipur have been very influential in and have often played significant role in the containment of conflict. When the news of the visit of NSCN-IM general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah to his native village Somdal in Ukhrul district of Manipur on the first week of May 2010 spread all the civil organisations of Meitei community like Meira Paibis (women torch bearers), All Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO) and United Committee of Manipur (UCM) protested and demanded the state Government not to allowed Muivah to enter Manipur. The Manipur State Cabinet on April 30, 2010 decided not to allow the entry of Muivah in Manipur as it considered that there are possibilities of disturbances in the state if the NSCN-IM leader comes to Manipur. After the Manipur government denied entry to Muivah, various Naga tribal groups such as All Naga Students Association, Manipur (ANSAM) and United Naga Council (UNC) launched an indefinite economic blockade in National Highways of Manipur.⁸ Such kind of problems are becomes very common in Manipur.

From the above discussions it is found that Manipur has many problems and in addition to these problems Manipur has the fourth highest rate (32.4) of violent crimes in India but, it has recorded highest rate (27.4) of IPC crimes as reported by National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) in 2011 and it is also recorded that Manipur has the lowest rate (11.7) of disposal of IPC crimes by the police. It can be said that there is an urgent need of change in the functioning of law enforcement agencies particularly police in Manipur.

In this situation the system of Community Policing is the most suitable system and it would help in reducing crime rate and maintenance of law of order in the state.

What is Community Policing

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organisational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.⁹ It is a style of policing in which community renders their share and contributes ideas in the society by assisting the police in preventing crime and disorder and promotions of security. Under the new concept, crime control and law and order management are recognised truly participative function, with the total involvement of the community or the local neighbourhood with the police in identifying and resolving issues that give rise to crime and disorder.

Thus, community policing aims at achieving more effective crime control with the involvement of community of the area. It is generalist rather than a specialist style of policing, emphasising a co-operative relationship between the police and the community. The effectiveness of this type of policing is measured in the degree of public cooperation received and by the absence of crime and disorder in the society.

Components of Community Policing

There are three components of community policing namely;

1. Community Partnership
2. Problem Solving
3. Organisational Transformation

Community Partnership

Community partnership signifies adopting a policing perspective that surpasses the standard law enforcement emphasis. This enlarged outlook recognises the value of activities that contribute to the orderliness and well-being of a neighbourhood. These activities could include: helping accident or crime victims, providing emergency medical services, helping resolve domestic and neighbourhood conflicts (e.g., family violence, landlord-tenant disputes, or racial harassment), working with residents and local businesses to improve neighbourhood conditions, controlling automobile and pedestrian traffic, providing emergency social services and referrals to those at risk), 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). Building trust needs persistent efforts and effective public relation campaigns. But trust must be achieved before police can assess the needs of the community and construct the close ties that will engender community support.

Problem Solving

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 assump-

tion that “Individuals make choices based on the opportunities presented by the immediate physical and social characteristics of an area. By manipulating these factors, people will be less inclined to act in an offensive manner.”

Organisational Transformation

The changes that a community policing agency must make in its management, organisational structure, personnel practices, and technology and information systems in support of community policing are referred to as organisational transformation. The community policing philosophy focuses on the way that departments are organised and managed and how the infrastructure can be changed to support the philosophical shift behind community policing. It encourages the application of modern management practices to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Community policing emphasises changes in organisational structures to institutionalise its adoption and infuse it throughout the entire department, including the way it is managed and organised, its personnel, and its technology.

Community Policing Practices in India

The concept of community policing has been gaining momentum in India too and several police organisations across the country have been adopting this concept over the years. The Mohalla Committee Movement Trust is one of initiatives taken by Mumbai Police after the 1992-93 Hindu Muslim riots that paralysed Mumbai (Bombay). The primary task of the committee members is to maintain more than cordial relations between the two communities, largely Hindus and Muslims. The Parivar Paramarsh Kendra, which was started on October 10, 1995 by Madhya Pradesh Police focuses on resolving family conflicts. It is done by identifying the causes that contribute to family discord. Community policing in Assam was started on July 3, 1996 when a meeting of the citizens under Panbazar Police Station in Guwahati to discuss the concept of neighbourhood watch scheme and promote community participation in policing. The initiative was known as Prahari. Maithari is an initiative which was launched in 2000, by the Andhra Pradesh Police throughout the state. The mission of Maithri was to render courteous, compassionate and caring responsive police personnel and increase public confidence in police with respect to maintenance of peace and order and build in a feeling of safety from crime. The Friends of Police (FOP) is a holistic and pro-active concept that lends a psychological approach to policing. It was started in 1993 in Ramnad District of Tamilnadu. Any member of the public, male or female who is not involved in civil or criminal case can become a member of FOP. The members of FOP can provide useful information leading to solving of crimes. FOP members can also prevent any abuse of police power because of easy accessibility to the station house officer and other senior personnel. Sahatya is an experiment that has been conceived as a service delivery platform to resolve, through counselling, disputes within family and also between neighbours. Community involvement has been kept as its prime objective. It started in 2001 in Nadia district, West Bengal. Punjab police on the recommendations of Punjab Governance Reforms Commission has launched a community policing initiative called Saanjh Project in 2011. Through Saanjh Project, the citizens are provided dignified access to police

related services and a forum to implement community oriented programmes. In UT of Chandigarh the police have been undertaking community policing initiatives from time to time. It has established a Cell named Community Relations Unit (CRU) for this purpose. Some of the community policing initiatives of Chandigarh police include the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme; Mass Contact Programme with the community leaders; opened Facebook Profile where citizens are asked to post information/photographs of Traffic violations; 'Young Heroes for Safe City' - a programme for sensitising the residents of the city about crime and their preventive measures by involving youth; and organisation of sports activities like a golf tournament and gully cricket league.

Community Policing Practice in Manipur

As the law and order situation in Manipur is not normal the system of community policing is very important in the state. But, no community policing initiative has ever been practiced formally in Manipur till now. But, the Village Defence Force (VDF) can be regarded as a kind of community policing as it was started with the participation of community in the maintenance of law and order in the state.

Village Defence Force (VDF)

Village Defence Force is an initiative taken by the Manipur Government for the participation of community in order to face the problems of UGs in the villages. The Village Defence Force (VDF) came into existence in Manipur in 2009. The VDF force is a result of the incident at Heirok village of Thoubal District. During the festival of Holi in 2008 some armed underground personnel fired in a crowd and killed some innocent peoples. After the incident the people of Heirok demanded for arms to protect themselves from such kind of crisis and they alleged that they had reached the limits of patience of being abused by UG outfits.

In response to the demand of the people of Heirok the Manipur Government approved recruitment of 300 Special Police Force. A select group of young men of Heirok were selected and trained briefly prior to their deployment as Special Police Force in Heirok under police command. The original concept was to give basic weapon handling training and a modest monthly stipend, and that these Special Police Forces were to operate within their locality, under police command, to nullify UG excesses.

In January 2009 the State Government took a decision to convert the Special Police Forces to VDF and also agreed to recruit VDF for other districts also. Then Special Police Force was renamed as Village Defence Force (VDF) and the original concept was reviewed as a means of providing temporary employment with basic monthly incomes to the unemployed youth. A person has to undergo a three month training course.¹⁰

In the initial period the VDF personnel were deployed only in the valley districts but now they are deployed in all the districts of Manipur. There are 10,009 VDF personnel are working in Manipur. The details of district wise deputation are given in the following table:

Table No.2
Details of Number of VDF personnel in districts of Manipur

S.No.	Name of the District	Number of VDF personnel
1	Imphal West	2050
2	Imphal East	2050
3	Thoubal	2500
4	Bishenpur	1350
5	Churachandpur	600
6	Chandel	300
7	Ukhrul	300
8	Senapati	559
9	Tamenglong	300
10	Total	10009

Source: The Imphal Free Press¹¹

The VDF is not a separate organisation. They are more like a force and to help the police in maintaining law and order in the state. They are attached to the District Police Headquarters of the state. The VDF personnel are posted in the different villages of Manipur. The numbers of personnel are different as per the population of the district. There is no rank system in VDF force. They are regarded as the same rank.

Functions of VDF

The main function of the VDF is to maintain law and order in the particular village or town in which they are posted and to help the police in protecting crime in the village. The main functions of the VDF are given below:

- To protect the village from any anti-social elements.
- To maintain law and order in the village.
- To help the people of the village particularly in times of crisis.
- To work as a link between police and citizens.
- To help other security forces when needed.

Criticism of VDF

The VDF were meant to serve in the villages but, most of the personnel are posted in the towns of the districts. The force was established to protect the villagers from any trouble in the village, posted in the towns gives no sense at all.

The VDF personnel were given only three months training as compared to the nine month training which are given to police personnel. After that he is introduced into service alongside regular police personnel. How can a common man consider them as par police personnel?

The introduction of VDF has resulted of another problem for public. VDF personnel were received only Rs. 4500 (inclusive all the allowances) as a result VDF men have continuously abused whatever little authority is entrusted upon them to collect money from the civilians. Some cases of VDF personnel for wrongdoing are discussed below:

- On August 15, 2011 a tussle was broke between villagers of Chaironthong, Imphal East District and VDF personnel as one rickshaw driver was allegedly pushed into the

river by VDF personnel and drowned to death.¹²

- In another case, A 20-year old youth of Sagolband Bijoy Govinda, Imphal West District suffered a bullet injury on the left leg in firing by a Village Defence Force (VDF) personnel deployed for duty in the area on September 28, 2011.¹³

- One personnel of Village Defence Force was arrested by personnel of 3 IRB posted at Sagolband Tera Kheithel along with 53 pieces of SP Capsule and 8 pieces of N-10 tablets on March 21, 2012.¹⁴

- On August 25, a VDF personnel was caught with a stolen Honda Activa near Model Club in Chingamakha by the locals.¹⁵

- In yet another case, one VDF personnel posted at Manipur Central Jail, Sajiwa and functioning as mess commander was arrested while trying to smuggle four packets of Khaini in his jungle boots inside the jail on November 2, 2012.

From the above discussion it is found that the Village Defence Force (VDF) was started with the aim that it will work as a link between police and citizens and help the citizens at the time of crisis. But, it turned out to be a problem rather than a solution to the problem as many cases of wrongdoings are reported against the VDF personnel. In this scenario Village Defence Force (VDF) cannot be treated as similar to and synonymous with the community policing system prevalent in different states of India. The beauty of the system, the purpose it serves, the style of functioning are not found in this organisation. So far, they are not able to do their job. The need of the hour is to establish a cordial relationship between police and people as involvement of the community is very important in maintenance of law and order and it will surely help in introduction of community policing initiatives in the state which is very important for a better future. Some suggestions for the effective implementation of community policing in Manipur are given below.

Suggestions for effective implementation of Community Policing in Manipur

- In the state like Manipur the urgent need is to establish a Community Relation Unit to bring out community policing initiatives in the state. The State Government and Police should bring out some agreement to practiced community policing in Manipur.

- The Police department need to conduct crime analysis, host focus groups, surveys. Because these analyses will help them in developing more informed approaches to reducing crime disorder problems and introduction of community policing.

- Community engagement is a primary element in community policing strategy. So, police department should make partnership with the civil organisations of Manipur regarding the community policing initiatives. It will help in more participation of community.

- The police departments should use educating the community as a tool in advancing community policing. Through education, community members will become knowledgeable about crime-prevention techniques and become better able to act as a partner in crime prevention and reduction efforts with law enforcement.

- The police department should open Public Grievance Cell at every police station. It will help in understanding the problems of the community.

- The police department has to initiate the community policing practices through coordinated efforts of school and college students and other wings like NSS and NCC. The concept of community policing should be introduced to school and college syllabus.
- The police department must organise games and sports and other campaigns regularly for the participation of community.

Lastly, in the state like Manipur where the rate of crime is very high, crime prevention should be recognised as an important police function. But the police can do little without community cooperation and assistance. So, the police must take the initiative and show the way to assist the community to meet its responsibility.

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