

# **The Mumbai Police Community Policing Initiatives for the Years 2001-2002**

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## **ABOUT THE CITY OF MUMBAI**

Mumbai is a cosmopolitan city with a large influx of migrants from other states of the country. The population of this city as per the latest census is 1,19,14,398. Though Mumbai is the capital of Maharashtra, the Maharashtrian population in this city is estimated to be only 42% of the total population. There are areas of extreme affluence like Malabar Hill, Colaba and Bandra in the city, co-existing with the middle class localities and the poorer sections. About 49% of the city's population is estimated to be living in slums. On the religious front, the traditional mistrust between Hindus and Muslims keeps the city's police on its toes. As a result, policing the city requires an approach of anticipating problems even from events which take place outside Mumbai, in the rest of India and even in the neighbouring countries. Mumbai is the economic capital of India and all persons living in the city are involved in a major way with shaping the economy of the nation. Due to this, keeping the city free from tension and making it safe against criminals is the most important task for the Mumbai Police. Mumbai has a police force of about 39,000 officers and men for its large population of 1.2 crore.

## **PROGRAMMES TO FURTHER POLICE-PUBLIC COOPERATION**

In order to evolve the best possible practices for effective policing in the city, it was felt that the people should be engaged in a continuous dialogue with the police. It was also important that the 39,000 strong police force be energized

and motivated to continue this dialogue with the community. With these objectives in mind, two high-visibility, short-term programs were conducted viz., 'Crime Prevention Week', in December 2000 and 'Communal Harmony Week', in January 2002. One new long term community policing program called *Mohalla Panchayat* (Resident's Jury) was started in mid May-2001, initially in the Port Zone of Mumbai Police, and later extended to the other areas of the city, to empower the local people to tackle their own quarrels and petty crimes with the helping hand and guidance of police officers of the local police station. Another long term program earlier started by NGOs and the Mumbai Police together for maintenance of communal peace in the city, called *Mohalla Ekta* Movement (Communal Amity Movement) was reinforced and strengthened.

In order to communicate the Police Commissioner's Appeal to be people-friendly and orient the police services towards the relief of common people, to the rank and file of all Police stations, printed posters of the Appeal were put up at all Police Stations. To make this appeal result oriented, specific programs were formulated during the Crime Prevention Week and Communal Harmony Week, such as

- 1) '**Visit us Day**', which encouraged the residents of the respective Police station areas to visit their Police station, meet the officers, be educated about the equipment in use in the Police station and generally see how a Police station functions.
- 2) **Seminars**, inviting area residents to hear and interact with eminent speakers on topics concerning the crime scenario and communal harmony in the city, were organized by local police units, during both, Crime Prevention Week and Communal Harmony Week.
- 3) **Street plays** drawing upon the policemen's experiences of causes and effects of crime, were organized and performed on street corners at fifty locations all over the city. These skits attracted huge crowds and appreciation was received from viewers in the form of letters and feedback.
- 4) '**Runs**' and '**Human Chains**' were organized by the local police units with local residents all over the city in support of the Crime Prevention Week and Communal Harmony Week programs. Prominent citizens participated along with police officers.

5) **Police public interactions** at Beat level were conducted intensively by Police station officers during the Crime Prevention Week.

On a continuing basis, in order to inculcate the importance of involving the community participation in problem solving by the police, periodical (Weekly) reports of public interaction programs conducted in Police stations are called for by the Commissioner of Police.

For engaging the peoples' attention in our efforts, the needs and expectations of the common people from the police were identified. Obviously, people expected a clean, corruption free and impartial police force in the city, which they could feel free to approach, when in distress. To address this need, we felt the Mumbai Police should first be made approachable and people -friendly. We identified certain areas for focusing our efforts viz.

- a) Senior citizen's safety.
- b) Spreading our in-house expertise on *modus operandi* of criminals of common types of crime affecting this city.
- c) Formulating programs for dealing with the large number of minor, non-cognizable types of complaints received at the police station and
- d) Boosting the voice of the secular minded people of this city against communal hatred.

To these ends, the Crime Prevention Week, with its fallout of the 'Senior Citizens' Safety Program', the Communal Harmony Week, with the resultant reinforcement to the Police Station *Mohalla Ekta* committees (Communal Amity Committees) and the *Mohalla Panchayat* Program ( Residents' Juries) were the highlights of the Community policing oriented efforts of the Mumbai Police during the year 2001-2002.

## **WE APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE TO HELP US HELP THEM**

### **1. CRIME PREVENTION WEEK**

This was held between 18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2000 to focus the attention of citizens of Mumbai, on being security conscious and to help the Police keep the city safe and free of crime. This week-long programme involved holding of four seminars on topics concerning the city's crime problems, interaction meetings of Police Station Officers with the local residents, poster and advertising campaign on precautions to be taken by the common man against crime, street plays performed by police officials on cause and effects of crime, painting, essay and slogan writing competition on crime prevention for school children and showing of short films on common modus operandi of criminals to the local residents.

Large number of residents participated in the 'Run for the safety of Mumbai' organized all over the city by the local police units. Some programmes aimed at generating goodwill for police, such as friendly cricket match between Mumbai Police and crime reporters, and Police Band Displays were also a part of the Week.

The seminars organized on topics, 'Policing the Slums', 'Impact of Visual Media on Social Order', 'Role of NGO's in Crime Prevention' and 'Public Participation in maintaining Communal Harmony', generated a lot of public debate on the subjects. These seminars acted as a platform for local residents to air their views to senior police officers and policy makers. A compilation of the material of these discussions has led to the crystallization of the thinking of the police leadership on these concerns of the city.

Schools and neighbourhoods were encouraged to bring children to the Police stations and interact with police men. This has brought down the fear of police in the minds of children and law-abiding citizens of the city. Children were encouraged to think about crime and its prevention when they sat for the painting, essay and slogan writing competitions conducted during the Week. A book on police from a child's point of view called '*Chhota Police*' (Little Policeman) was published on this occasion.

Street plays depicting causes and effects of turning to crime, were performed at fifty street junctions by the police officials of this city and elicited tremendous response from the large crowd of viewers.

The effects of the efforts put in by Mumbai Police in organizing the Crime Prevention Week in December 2000 were felt all through 2001 and even now. The public-police interface was permanently incorporated into Police functioning. The senior citizens' safety program was conducted on a continuing basis by all Police stations, after the Crime Prevention Week. The Crime Prevention Week, thus laid the foundations of social policing in Mumbai city police.

## **2. COMMUNAL HARMONY WEEK – 2002**

This Week was organized jointly by the Mumbai Police the *Mohalla Ekta* Committee Movement (Communal Amity Movement ) Trust and Tata Institute of Social Sciences for raising awareness for the need of Communal Harmony and futility of communal mistrust in the city in the wake of September 11, 2001 strike by *Al Qaida* in U.S.A. The idea behind organizing this Week was to unite the secular and good, law-abiding citizenry of the city and raise their voice against the communal elements. This Week led to generation of discussions and ideas on various facets of Communal Harmony during the five seminars held all over the city. The seminars discussed topics like 'Dimensions of Communalism in India', 'Disaster Management during Communal Riots', 'Responsibility of NGOs during Communal Strife' and 'Knowledge for Harmony in the 21st Century'. An Inter-Religions Faith Meet was also organized wherein eminent speakers of different faiths spoke of the basic oneness of all religions teachings. The citizens welcomed this Week by forming 'Human Chains' in their localities and organizing 'Run for Communal Harmony' in their areas along with the local police station officials. A major fallout of the Week was the communal peace, which Mumbai experienced in February & March 2002 , when the entire country was tense due to the Ayodhya temple/mosque dispute and when the neighbouring state of Gujarat erupted with communal frenzy on a large scale.

### **3. MOHALLA EKTA COMMITTEES (Communal Amity Committees)**

There exist *Mohalla Ekta* Committees, formed of secular and socially conscious citizens with prominent citizens as the guiding spirits, under every Police station in the city. These committees meet at regular intervals, especially when communal tensions are anticipated. The members of these committees help the police in keeping communal peace in the raising a strong voice against communalism. Their meetings are attended by police officers. The volunteers visit sensitive areas along with police officers to settle disputes which have bearing on communal peace.

### **4. MOHALLA PANCHAYAT PROGRAM (Residents' Jury)**

This community policing initiative was started by the Port Zone of Mumbai Police, in mid May -2001. A study was made of the grievances of the local people coming to the Police station. It revealed that the people had a large number of complaints, which were non-cognizable in nature, for the remedy of which they required police assistance. Being non-cognizable complaints, the police could not take any legal action in those matters without the permission of the Judicial Magistrate, which is a lengthy and time-consuming process. As a result, there was frustration in the local population that their Police station was inactive regarding most of the common complaints of the people. If the police did act, it was perceived to be the result of being bribed or pressurised by the interested parties of the disputes.

In order to address this problem, we decided to take the non-cognizable complaints (NC) registered at the police station to the respective localities for solution, instead of the earlier tedious route. Accordingly, committees of socially active local people were formed in different localities of the police station and each such committee was headed by one Police Inspector of the Police Station. NCs of that area were taken up for discussion at the weekly *Panchayat* (Jury) meetings, which were held in the concerned localities. Decisions on the NC were taken by *Panchayat* (Jury) members after hearing both the parties and under the legal

guidance of the Police Inspector. (For more details on this programme, please see <http://www.geocities.com/nsaravade/CommunityPolicingInSlums.htm>).

This program has encouraged not only the people of the localities to solve their own problems by common consent but also made the local Police Station officers more responsible and accountable to the local population. This community policing program has identified the needs of the local people and addressed those, by seeking the community's involvement. As a result of the program, the interaction between the local police station officials and the locality people has increased tremendously. A lot of goodwill was felt towards the police by the local residents and the confidence level in the transparency of police actions, was high in the area. Since it is an on-going program, the members of these committees have become a friendly interface for the police, for communication of advice, controlling disorderly situations and also for gathering of intelligence on crime matters. The framework of this program is so designed that the members of the *Panchayat* (Jury) will be annually changed to incorporate newer members from the same locality, so that by rotation, all residents who do not have a criminal record, would have an opportunity to take part in this endeavour to solve their area's minor crimes and tensions.

### **[WHAT HAVE THESE INITIATIVES DONE FOR THE MUMBAI POLICE](#)**

The Crime Prevention Week and Communal Harmony Week were focused programmes to invite the people's attention to help them in making the city safer. The ideas and discussions generated in these programs have helped the police in formulating strategies for controlling crime and maintaining communal peace in the city. As a follow up to these programs, to continue education of the people on concerns of crime, we have undertaken distribution of informative and useful pamphlets to the citizens of Mumbai on various topics like senior citizens' protection, security awareness for car users, safety for Housing Society residents, Business establishments etc.

There is also a much better and effective interaction between the people and police of the city for maintaining communal peace, due to the awareness raised by the Communal Harmony Week. The *Mohalla Panchayat* Program is devised

entirely as a need-based program to increase accessibility of the police to the common people. All these community participation programmes, have resulted in a better dialogue for the city police with the people of this city. This improved communication in turn had led to unification of the forces of good in this city to suppress the bad elements. The continuous dialogues, have helped keep the city peaceful even in times of extreme provocation like rumours of burning of the Muslim holy book "Quran" in North India in mid 2001, attack by terrorists on the Indian Parliament in December-2001 and the serious and extended communal riots of Gujarat in February/ March-2002.

Fallouts of this improved communication process have even resulted in bringing NGOs working for different social causes in the city, to act as extended arms of the police in reaching services to the people. Thus, we were able to mobilise and influence large sections of people including eminent opinion makers who spoke in the various seminars, Non-governmental organizations who have an influential presence in Mumbai and even the common man living in the slums of Mumbai, to join hands with police to fight off crime.

## **EVALUATION**

The initiatives of the Crime Prevention Week and Communal Harmony Week have yielded a number of laudatory letters from both, common citizens and the opinion-makers of the city. For raising awareness on certain issues and to remove misgivings about police while increasing the peoples' confidence in the city police, these initiatives have yielded full results as shown by the manner in which the city responded with peace and no tensions in spite of provocative situations existing outside the state during the second half of 2001 and February 2002.

Regarding evaluation of the *Mohalla Panchayat* Program, this has been done with tabulation of the number and type of NCs recorded at the participating police stations of Sewree and Wadala in Port Zone, during the entire period of existence of the program. Halfway through the first year of the program, comments of the *Mohalla Panchayat* members of Sewree as well as the Police

Inspectors of Sewree Police Station, participating in the program, were taken on the utility of the program. An analysis of this data by comparing with earlier periods shows that the numbers of NCs recorded has dropped in many localities of the police station. The responses taken from the Inspectors and the jury members of the program indicates that this reduction may be due to permanent, satisfactory settlement of disputes by the *Panchayat*. However, evaluation of the success of such a program cannot be correlated only with reduction in number of NCs recorded. Increased satisfaction and confidence levels of the residents, in their police station, may also lead to recording of more number of NCs due to increased approachability of the police to the people. A more significant indicator of performance of the program is the number of repeated NCs recorded for the same dispute i.e. inability of the *Panchayat* to settle a dispute. On this front, there have been no repeat NCs on the same dispute in the Sewree police station during the operation of this program. The following table shows a compilation of statistics six months before and six months during the operation of the *Mohalla Panchayat* program in Sewree police station:-

<b>Six months preceding the programme</b>	<b>No. of NCs recorded</b>	<b>Six months during the programme</b>	<b>No. of NCs recorded</b>	<b>No. of NCs resolved</b>
Jan. 2001	121	June 2001	110	13
Feb. 2001	93	July 2001	88	56
March 2001	143	Aug. 2001	68	17
April 2001	115	Sept. 2001	88	32
May 2001	110	Oct. 2001	95	39
<b>Total...</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>Total...</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>157</b>

The written responses received from both the jury members as well as police officers participating in this program have all been positive and shows increased satisfaction level regarding transparency of police work in this locality.

## **WHAT DID WE LEARN**

The initiatives taken by Mumbai Police, in finding ways and means to hear the city's voice and communicate with the people of Mumbai through all these programs has sent the right message down the rank and file of Mumbai Police, that police is accountable to the people in its actions and that police require the support of the people in order to be effective. At the same time, these initiatives have also made the people realise the importance of forming self help groups in solving their own problems with proper guidance of the police authority. These initiatives have underlined the importance of continuous dialogue between police and the community for effective policing to create a safer community in Mumbai. The response of the city to provocative events of Gujarat riots in February 2002, rumours of burning the Muslim holy book 'Quran' in the latter half of 2001 and terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001, was peaceful due to the active efforts of the good citizenry along with the Mumbai police to act together to prevent rumour-mongers from taking the upper hand.

Increased participation of the community leads to a greater transparency and accountability in the functioning of the police. At the same time, the community also understands the constraints of police work. Thus, greater sense of partnership between people and the Police develops.

There is an important lesson for other government agencies to learn, in our initiatives to improve our communication with the people we serve. The government is perceived, most importantly, as an essential service provider and enforcer for the laws of the land, besides doing its other functions like collection of revenues etc. Since the responsibilities of the Administration are closely linked to the living conditions of the people, their satisfaction with the quality of services rendered by Government agencies should be the fulcrum around which the activities of the Government are designed. The present system of dumping indifferent services on the common citizenry, by all agencies of the Government, including police, has led to distrust and low expectations of the people from the Administration. Improved communication with the community can lead to improved relations with more expectations from and consequently better performance of the Government agency. Obviously, the long term fallouts of such

measures are a more participative society which takes an active interest in its own welfare.

All agencies of the Government can expect a much better performance for themselves, if they can identify through a better communication process the needs of the people that they serve. Obviously, every such community based program has to be tailored to the local situation, in order to ensure active participation of the people.

The key phrases, therefore, are '**needs identification**' of the people, '**delineation of constraints**' faced by authorities and '**goal fixing**' by both police and people, while formulating any community policing strategy that will work.

*(Note: I wish to put on record the support and encouragement given by Mr M.N. Singh, the Commissioner of Police, Mumbai during implementation of my ideas and experiments with Community Policing, while serving as Deputy Commissioner of Police, Preventive, and later as Deputy Commissioner of Police, Port Zone.)*