

Benchmarking and Strengthening the Role of Women in Police in Karnataka

National Law School of India University

The National Law School of India University (NLSIU) proposes a research study that seeks to conduct a comprehensive review of the status of policewomen in the state and identify actionable strategies that are time-bound, feasible and holistic. We propose to do this in **two sequential phases spread over one year**. The two phases will include:

Phase 1 (2 months) Baseline Assessment: The first phase will seek to establish a baseline in terms of women's existing numbers, deployment and organizational policy framework as a start;

Phase 2 (10 months) Ground Assessment: Following the baseline assessment, the second phase will involve an assessment of challenges which women face on a daily basis – both at the field and policy/systemic level – with a view to recommend actionable strategies for improving working conditions. To some extent, the research will also throw light on the attitude and views of supervisory officers on the role, importance and integration of women into policing.

The field-driven research aims to produce comprehensive resources on policewomen in the state, deepen understanding of issues and challenges on the ground, and provide clear roadmaps for the police department towards effective gender mainstreaming.

1. Context

Since 2009, increasing women's representation in policing has gained prominence in the policy discourse in India. A major reason is reform in criminal law beginning from 2009 that brings in expanded statutory functions to be performed by women police personnel. The changes require the presence of women police at multiple stages of the legal process for victims of sexual offences, and for women suspects.

Towards realizing these legal requirements, the Government of India (GoI) adopted, for the first time, in 2009, the target of 33% representation of women in the police.¹ The GoI recommended to states that they take affirmative action to this effect. While some states had reservation for women in the police in place before 2009, it was a spur to states to adopt reservation targets. As on 2020,² official data shows that nine states³ and all union territories except Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have adopted 33% reservation; five states 30%,⁴ and

¹ Advisory on Crimes against Women, F. NO.15011/48/2009-SC/ST-W, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 4.9.2009, https://mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AdCrime-Agnst-Women170909_3.pdf.

² Ministry of Home Affairs, Bureau of Police Research and Development, *Data on Police Organizations as on 1.1.2020*: <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/202101011201011648364DOPO01012020.pdf>.

³ Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, and Sikkim.

⁴ Assam, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand.

five states have 20% or less reservation.⁵ Bihar stands out with 35% as its target, while Goa, Haryana, Kerala and Mizoram do not provide any reservation for women.

Karnataka has adopted 25 percent reservation for women in its police service. As on 1.1.2020, the state reported 6896 policewomen in total (civil and armed), constituting 8.28 percent of the state police. 88 percent of the total civil policewomen strength is at the constabulary ranks (Constable + Head Constable), and less than 1 per cent at the leadership ranks (SP and above). The main investigating ranks (ASI/SI and Inspector) have 730 women against a total of 1051 police stations. In other words, 321 police stations will not have a single woman Investigating Officer at any given point. In 2013 the Ministry of Home Affairs advised that there be at least 3 women Sub-Inspectors in each police station.⁶ To meet this standard, Karnataka will need 3153 women SIs to cover all its police stations. At present, the state has just 376 women SIs.

We recognize the Karnataka Police is making concerted efforts to increase women's strength. Achieving its laid down target of 25%, and the standard of 33% adopted by the central government and several other states, will require coordinated efforts at multiple levels. It will require year after year recruitment on a large scale at *each* entry rank in order to develop a critical mass of women *across* the organization. It will require providing robust facilities, at all levels. It will further require effective policies that root out gender-based discrimination and create an enabling environment for women.

Our proposal to do a thorough review of policewomen's strength, issues and challenges in the state is aimed at identifying actionable strategies that are time-bound, feasible and holistic, and will be useful for the department in ensuring equitable integration of women.

2. Proposed research

We propose to complete the research in two sequential phases over a period of one year, culminating with a comprehensive report with clear findings and recommendations aimed at achieving equitable integration of women into the police. The study will depend on Karnataka Police providing access to primary data, policy documents, and for us to be able to interact with men and women police officers across ranks/operational positions in focus group discussions and interviews. At the conclusion of each phase, we propose to hold a review workshop to present our findings and chalk out actions plans for their implementation in collaboration with the Karnataka Police. Taken together, we encourage the Karnataka Police to consider this groundwork as the foundation around which a holistic policy on women can be drafted in the future.

PHASE 1: Baseline assessment of women representation in the Karnataka Police

As the first step, we propose to conduct an assessment of the existing status of women in the Karnataka Police. This will involve: a) a mapping of the proportion of women represented at each rank as well as in each police unit, department and districts within the state; b) rate of retention of women in the police vis-à-vis men; and c) a compilation of departmental policies specifically pertaining to women in police aimed at providing special facilities, service

⁵ Arunachal Pradesh (10%), Karnataka (20%), Meghalaya (6%), Tripura (10%), and Uttar Pradesh (20%)

⁶ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Advisory (2013), D.O. No. 15011/21/2013 – SC/ST – W: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/AdvisoryWomenPolice-290513.pdf.

conditions, training, budget or any other provision to support the professional growth of women.

This baseline assessment will serve multiple purposes. It will provide a holistic picture of **existing strength of, and level of institutional preparedness for,** women in Karnataka police. Specifically, the mapping will throw light on variations across districts, units and ranks in terms of the number of policewomen available. This will be helpful in determining yearly recruitment targets for the state as well as identifying units/districts that require prioritizing, in an initial order of preference, in terms of recruitment and deployment of women personnel. A review of the retention rate of women will help point out patterns, if any, including recurring levels at which women may be leaving the police service. Finally, compiling existing departmental policies and service rules will help situate the level of institutional preparedness to create an enabling environment for women.

Together, all these will provide the department a basis for future planning and strategizing, and enable us to identify the districts/units to be visited for holding interviews with women police, for the second study under this proposal.

Objectives

- To develop a baseline of existing number of women in the police that can be used for laying down yearly targets for recruitment;
- To identify deployment patterns based on current posting of women in the police;
- To take stock of institutional measures in place for creating an enabling environment for women.

Parameters

The baseline assessment will be based on **latest data (as on the start date of the study)** as well as existing departmental policies on women in police. Specifically it will cover the following parameters:

1. Data on gender breakdown
 - Rank-wise number of men and women in total police (civil + armed);
 - Rank-wise total number of men and women personnel in each a) unit; b) district; and c) police station;
 - **Total number of women heading police stations, districts, departments**
 - Rank-wise total number of men and women personnel in each commissionerate;
 - Caste and religion wise break up of existing women strength, if available;
 - Rank-wise sanctioned and actual strength of women in All-Women Police Stations;
 - Rank-wise total number of men and women applicants against total number of men and women recruits in the past five years (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020);
 - Rank-wise total number of women who *voluntarily* left the police service (since 2016)
2. Departmental policies
 - Recruitment rules (Constable, Sub-Inspector, DySP ranks);
 - Transfer and Promotion rules;
 - Reservation rules for women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes;
 - Maternity and childcare;
 - Facilities for women in police;
 - Role and functioning of All Women Police Stations;
 - Any other relevant document

Methodology

The baseline assessment will be based on data and information provided by the department. NLSIU will seek the assistance of researchers well-versed in Kannada as required in compiling information shared.

Timeline

From the time the data is made available, the baseline assessment will be completed within two months.

Output

The baseline assessment will be included in the final study report. NLSIU will further be open to assisting in the process of developing specific action plans that seek to lay down district-wise recruitment yearly targets with the objective of meeting the reservation target within a specified time period.

PHASE 2: Report on ground assessment of challenges facing policewomen in Karnataka

We propose to follow up the baseline assessment with a ground assessment of challenges confronting policewomen at different levels within the police service. This is important as research in India and other jurisdictions reflects that women in the police face distinct service-related challenges owing to social, cultural and organizational pressures. While increased numbers will have some positive impact on the working environment, numbers alone will not address institutional barriers that may be hindering women's active participation. In fact, increased numbers in the absence of improved institutional conditions will only cause greater stress on policewomen, and the department as a whole. Addressing these barriers requires systematic planning if efforts aimed at promoting women's active role in policing is to have effect and be sustainable. The ground assessment seeks to do this by drawing upon the lived realities of policewomen at different levels to highlight day-to-day difficulties, levels of satisfaction with various institutional measures, and lack of congruence between women's expectations and ground realities. In doing so, it will frame actionable supportive measures for the department to consider to improve working conditions.

Objectives

- Identify and highlight social, cultural, and institutional barriers facing women in the police at each level;
- Provide targeted recommendations and actionable measures for increasing the intake of, and improving the working conditions for, women in the police;
- Highlight good practices with regards to ensuring a safe and equitable working environment for policewomen;
- Analyse variations across districts in terms of women's role and participation.

Parameters

The study will assess the following administrative and governance aspects to document *distinct* challenges women face, highlight gaps in department policies and strategies, and recommend solutions:

a. **Recruitment processes:**

- Prohibitive, discriminatory provisions and obstacles in recruitment policies and procedure at each entry rank at the state level;

- Frequency and accessibility of police recruitment drives including timely, advance notice and safe and easy access to the recruitment camps/venue.
- b. **Transfer policies:**
 - Intra and inter-district transfer policies and/or special departmental norms, if any;
 - Support measures available to help women balance family and professional responsibilities.
- c. **Facilities, services and benefits:** Availability and easy access to the following:
 - Separate, clean and functional toilets for men and women at every police station and unit;
 - Designated rest rooms at police stations;
 - Well-equipped, staffed, clean and safe crèche facilities, as mandated under the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2018
 - Housing pool specifically for policewomen.
- d. **Allocation of duties:**
 - Types of duties assigned to men and women at different levels;
 - Types of cases assigned to men and women investigating officers;
 - Staffing decisions for all-women police units and/or responding to CAW; linked to this, women's views on whether internal processes of consultation required.
- e. **Promotion:**
 - Treatment in decisions on heading police stations, districts and departments;
 - Perceptions of attitudes of supervisory officers;
 - Opportunities available to attend special courses;
 - Composition of promotion boards.
- f. **Training:**
 - Experiences during induction training with fellow recruits;
 - Facilities at training institutes/attitude of faculty towards women;
 - Opportunities available to attend refresher courses;
 - Need for a specific module on gender equality at induction for both men and women.
- g. **Culture within police services:**
 - Quality of working environment;
 - Attitudes and perceptions of colleagues and supervisory officers towards women;
 - Level of attention to women-specific needs and concerns by police leadership.
- h. **Sexual harassment at workplace:**
 - Nature and extent of the harassment within the department;
 - Knowledge and understanding of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, the definition of sexual harassment, remedies available, and obligations of the police department;
 - Levels where Internal Complaints Committees are available and their functioning;
 - Attitude and commitment of the department to provide a safe working space for women.

Methodology

Research for this study will depend on access and permission to visit and interview policewomen, as well as men and women supervisory officers, across districts by Karnataka Police. NLSIU will work closely with the department in determining the scale of the study and identifying districts to be covered. To arrive at credible and representative findings, NLSIU proposes **to cover at least 10-12 districts from different parts of the state for the fieldwork.** In selecting districts, we will look at a) proportion of policewomen across districts; b) demographic and socio-economic profile of the district; and c) logistical feasibility and available resources.

In each district, a major focus will be to interview as many policewomen as possible and feasible at the time. We will do this either by assembling women at one common place for interviews/discussions, or visiting at least 50% of the police stations where policewomen are posted. In drawing up the sample of policewomen, we will strive towards representation of/from:

- ✓ All ranks with a focus on DySP to Constable ranks where state government has direct responsibility;
- ✓ All postings including police station, PCR vans, district headquarters, special wings, police headquarters;
- ✓ Varying years of experience;
- ✓ Diverse mix of socio-economic background.

Research methodologies will include:

- **Focus Group Discussions:** In each district, we will hold FGDs separately with women at the constabulary ranks and women investigating officers at the ranks of ASI/SI/Inspector. We would like to hold these without the presence of the SHO in order to capture honest feedback of field-level officers.
- **Face to Face interviews:** These will be held mainly with supervisory officers (male and female) including Station House Officers, district SP, as well as heads of the recruitment and administration departments.
- **Perception survey:** A survey will be administered to all police officials (male and female) we meet in order to measure perceptions on women's role in policing, challenges faced, discrimination within the organization, impact of training, and improvements in service conditions and institutional culture. The survey will use Multiple Choice Questions only. In developing the survey questionnaire, NLSIU will work closely with the department, the Advisory Group (see Section 4 below) as well as seek inputs from experts.
- **Validation meeting:** On completing the fieldwork, NLSIU proposes to hold an interaction with relevant officials within the department to present preliminary findings and gather feedback. The main purpose of this is to ensure accuracy in information shared as well as finalise recommendations together.

Timeline

Ten months including fieldwork, report writing, review, final editing and formatting.

Output

The findings of the assessment will be presented in a report, along with a set of recommendations providing actionable steps, towards addressing the challenges women are facing. Additionally, short briefing papers may also be considered for the purpose of profiling any new policy measure taken by the department specifically to support women's professional growth. This will be mainly for the purpose of facilitating information exchange both within the department as well as across states.

3. Research Team

3.1. NLSIU team

The team at NLSIU responsible for implementing the proposed research will include:

Prof Sudhir Krishnaswamy, Vice-Chancellor, NLSIU: The director will have the overall responsibility to oversee the proposed activities, dialogue with the police leadership, provide substantive inputs, and evaluate progress throughout the duration of the collaboration.

Devyani Srivastava, Project Lead: will have primary responsibility for designing, planning and overseeing proper implementation of the proposed activities, supervising the research team, guiding the writing of the reports, monitoring progress, making course corrections, ensuring timely and thorough reporting, and providing substantive lead to the work.

Junior Fellows (2): will be responsible for conducting the research including holding interviews, administering the survey, analyzing findings and writing the two reports. The person will also liaison with the department, share regular updates, and facilitate briefing meetings.

3.2. Advisory Group

To guide and steer the proposed studies, we propose the constitution of an Advisory Group for the research. This will comprise 5-6 members with relevant knowledge of policing, administrative reforms, police service rules and related policies, gender mainstreaming, affirmative action policies and gender action plans. Both NLSIU Faculty and external experts will be a part of this group. We propose quarterly meetings of the Advisory Group.

The Karnataka Police leadership will be updated on the Group's advice and suggestions.