

## **Case Study: Parivartan- A Programme for the Safety of Women and Children by the New Delhi Police (India)**

### **Background**

The New Delhi Police started the '[Parivartan](#)' (*change*) intervention in August 2005 to take action against rape and domestic violence in India's capital. The Programme involves women police officers conducting community awareness and sensitization activities against rape and domestic violence in densely-populated, low-income areas of the city.

The main objective and all activities of the programme are targeted towards reducing the growth rate of crimes against women and children by 25 percent annually. The initiative started in the North West district, where the incidence of violence against women was highest among the 9 districts of New Delhi. For example, in 2005, 29% of the total rape cases were reported from North West district. The initiative has since spread to the North and Outer districts of the city. It was designed by the New Delhi Police, in collaboration with civil society, including academics, human rights activists and non-governmental organizations. The program is targeted at the community level, especially in densely-populated, low-income areas, where vulnerability of women and children is high.

Prior to the start of the programme, incidents of sexual assault and rape against women had been on the rise in New Delhi. The incidence of rape had been increasing at an annual rate of 18 per cent from 2001-2005. The national media labelled Delhi as the 'rape capital of India', and the international media portrayed the capital as an unsafe city for women. Three widely publicized cases of rape which took place in moving vehicles in Delhi led to increased police patrolling. However, the police leadership came under tremendous pressure by the media and civil society to provide a more strategic and structured intervention targeting the root causes of gender-based violence. The Joint Commissioner of Police issued a directive to the Deputy Commissioner of the North-West district to develop a programme to contain rape and sexual assault in the city.

### **Process**

The blueprint of Parivartan was developed by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, in collaboration with the [Centre for Social Research](#), the Director of the non-governmental organization [Jagran](#), the Head of the Department of Sociology of Delhi University and gender experts. It responded to a variety of problems identified in the city, including:

- the 18% annual increase in reported incidence of rape in Delhi from 2001-2005.
- the particularly high levels of violence from the North West district (29% of the total rape cases reported in 2005) compared to the other 8 districts in Delhi.
- the overwhelming majority of sex-offenders (95%) being relatives/ neighbours/ friends of the survivors, although the fewer cases of rape by strangers was usually highly violent in nature.

- the high incidence of domestic violence, dowry deaths, child abuse, kidnapping and abduction in the community.
- the lack of sensitivity and need to improve conduct by male officers toward survivors.
- the poor community perception of law enforcement agencies, and secondary victimization often faced by survivors at the police stations.
- the overall lack of awareness by survivors of the law and their rights to support services available, such as free legal assistance, women help lines, counselling centres, temporary shelters, etc.
- the perception that public spaces (e.g. roads, bus stands, parks, subways, etc.) were quite unsafe for women.
- the harassment of survivors and witnesses by perpetrators, which often led to acquittal of cases.

Parivartan's mission is to change the mindset of society toward women to: substantially reduce violence against women, particularly rape in New Delhi and create an atmosphere of safety, wherein women feel safe and secure.

The Programme endeavours to build a sustainable partnership with society to create a safe and violence free environment for women and children by:

- effectively deploying women police officers in sensitive beats (the smallest operational area for police with a population size of 10,000 to 50,000) to address women and children's grievances.
- organizing awareness activities to sensitize the community and obtain their feedback and suggestions;
- forming women safety committees to widely disseminate the Parivartan campaign; provide a forum for women to register their complaints; and discuss community-related issues and personal safety concerns;
- organizing self-defense training programmes to empower women and girls;
- motivating women and girls to report cases of sexual assault; and
- sensitizing male police personnel on crimes against women and girls.

In 2005, 20 beats were selected out of 200 in the North West district for the first phase of the intervention, considered *hot spots* for gender-based violence given the high incidence in these areas. On average, two women police officers are posted in each beat. The female officers, formally known as 'Women Beat Constables', are supervised by the Deputy Commissioner of Police. Following a two-day orientation workshop, the officers are deployed in the selected beats. They are considered the 'ambassadors of change' of the Parivartan programme.

## **Activities**

A monthly schedule of daily activities is prepared by the Deputy Commissioner for Women, which include the following:

- **Deployment of trained female police constables** into communities to lead implementation of the various Parivartan Programme activities, which included approximately 50 women officers in the North West District during 2010-2011. The police implement door-to-door awareness-raising, support the women safety committees and organize self-defence training programmes for women in the community, with 12 sessions conducted in 2009 and 13 in 2010.
- **Public awareness programmes** such as awareness lectures, screening of short documentaries/movies on various issues concerning crime against women and children were conducted, with approximately 237 activities in 2009 and 297 in 2010.
- **Door-to-door policing** by female officers focuses on interacting with women in the community in order to identify and address any grievances raised by women. The officers also try to build women's confidence of their own safety within the community through the distribution of safety literature.
- **Sustainable partnerships** between officers and community members are developed through the formation of women safety committees that serve as an important component of community policing. Each committee has approximately 20 local women selected by the female constables, and a leader selected by the members leads monthly meetings of the committee. The meetings are a platform to report problems faced in the community and help in gathering criminal intelligence in the area. Some women are also trained to act as community counsellors to expand the outreach of the awareness campaign on safety of women and children both within and outside the home.
- **Pantomime performances** are organized by the organization [Jagran](#) to raise community awareness on rape and sexual assault (*Hadsa*), domestic violence (*Ramkali ki Kahani*) and drug abuse among children. The performances aim to use and develop pantomime theatre and other forms of performing and visual arts for communication, awareness and analysis leading to behavioural and social change. The organization has developed its own indigenous form of pantomime as a tool of communication targeted at those who are poorly educated and/or illiterate to transcend barriers of gender, age, religion and literacy to talk about social and development issues within the community. Each of the three performances is 15 minutes and interacts with the audience through a question and answer format. This ensures active participation of the targeted audience and reinforces the key messages depicted in each play. The use of pantomime theatre is also used to create dialogue and communication leading to partnerships among different community stakeholders. The performances reinforce a positive image of police as crime prevention agents, which helps to strengthen the concept of community policing. During 2009, 84 pantomime performances were organized followed by 44 in 2010, and as a result of these performances, there have been stronger linkages between women in the community and the female police.

- **Educational institutions** play a vital role in changing and shaping the attitudes of students towards various issues in society. Through the non-governmental organization [Swanchetan](#), Parivartan supports awareness-raising presentations in schools, colleges and universities on issues of adolescence, domestic violence and child safety. The lectures also include preventive measures that can be undertaken by children, especially adolescent girls, teachers and parents with regard to the safety of women and children. The sessions begin with an explanation of situations of risk that children may experience and use role plays to help children practice how to respond to a potential perpetrator and some safety measures to protect themselves. Topics that might not be discussed at home such as 'good touch' and 'bad touch' are also explained through the presentations. Five sessions were conducted in 2009 and four in 2010 in educational institutes.
- **Training and sensitization of male personnel** takes place within each police station, conducted by fellow officers. In 2009, 12 trainings were held, followed by 8 in 2010.

### **Challenges**

Some of the challenges encountered in the implementation of Parivartan include:

- There was initially limited engagement on the issues from male officers, which required the initiative to develop additional sensitization activities internally within the police.
- Some senior professionals were reluctant to commit to the intervention due to a limited understanding of the intervention's purpose.
- There was concern among some women police officers about being deployed to high-crime areas, which required additional dialogue with the Deputy Commissioner to reassure them about their safety and the importance of their role in the programme. The concerns also resulted in an initial deployment of both male and female officers to facilitate the transition of the female officers' presence within the targeted beats and communities and strengthen their confidence engaging with the communities.
- The demand for safety literature and publicity on the initiative far exceeded the availability of such material.
- The increased community awareness in the selected areas resulted in significant demand for legal counselling, shelters, health care and other services, which highlighted the acute shortage of these services.
- The programme's reliance on funding from a central government budget allocation to the New Delhi Police has affected Parivartan's full implementation and does not ensure the initiative will receive sufficient support over time. For example, due to increasing costs, the pantomime performances were stopped for the last half of 2010.

## **Results and lessons learned**

- Pro-active community policing partnerships have led to greater empowerment of women. The formation of women safety committees, door-to-door awareness campaigns and distribution of safety literature by female officers has led to greater engagement of women and increased information exchange with the female police officers about potential sexual assaults. This has improved the intelligence available to women police to inform their crime prevention efforts, and is important as female officers frequently respond to sexual assaults cases.
  - The initiative has been recognized by the Government's Department of Information Technology for its quality management systems, with accreditation by the International Organization for Standardization and was nominated in 2007 for the IBM 'Innovations in Government' Award by Harvard University (United States of America).
  - By using a tailored culturally-sensitive approach with the Pantomime performance, community audiences have demonstrated a higher level of 'recall and retention' of issues regarding women and children's safety.
  - Staff involved in the intervention should demonstrate genuine integrity in engaging on the issue and leaders should ensure there is honest commitment towards the achievement of goals. The roll-out of women constables has demonstrated the potential for improving the police image and strengthening police-public relations.
  - Involvement with civil society is crucial. Active involvement from various social scientists, gender experts, human rights activists, and other members of civil society in partnership with the Delhi police greatly contributed to the design and implementation of the Parivartan Programme. The programme also improved civil society collaboration with the Delhi Police, by recognizing the role of and technical support required by highly qualified professionals in addressing violence against women, such as the use of the organizations focused on the issue, such as [Jagran](#) for pantomime theatre and [Swanchetan](#) for school presentations.
  - Awareness-raising programmes by police should be prepared to respond to the potential increase in demand for survivor services such as orders of protection, counselling, legal assistance and shelter, with support to service provision or strengthening of referral mechanisms integrated as part of the programme design with clear budget allocations. This may also include support to strengthening mechanisms for enforcing the relevant laws to ensure that the programme is not jeopardized by unmet expectations.
  - The need for a strong monitoring framework is critical for measuring a programme's effectiveness. While the programme was able to show a change in reported rapes through the crime statistics, baseline studies are also needed to measure changes in attitudes and behaviours over time, which is a significant aim of the intervention.
- See [videos](#) developed through the Parivartan Programme (in Hindi).

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**Sources:** Interviews with North West District Deputy Commissioner Jaiswal; Dr. Sagar Preet Hooda, former Deputy Commissioner of the New Delhi Police; and Ms. Manju, responsible for Parivartan cell in the North West District; and New Delhi Police. [Parivartan](#) website.