

DISCUSSION PAPER

TOWARDS EQUALITY: PRIORITY ISSUES OF CONCERN FOR WOMEN IN POLICING IN ASSAM

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COMMONWEALTH HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE



NORTH EAST NETWORK

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INTRODUCTION

Police departments must foster diversity, inclusion, and equality of opportunity for all within their ranks. In India, women comprise nearly half the population, but are poorly represented in the police across most states.

Set in the context of the state of Assam, this discussion paper outlines priority issues of concern in relation to the situation of women in the Assam Police. These are grounded in the lived experiences and perspectives of women police themselves, gleaned through interactions with women police across ranks and in different units. Specifically, it examines issues of concern linked to:

- women's representation in the police
- general trends in deployment of women and the degree of opportunities available to them
- working conditions and the challenges women face

We begin this paper by briefly outlining the organizational structure of the Assam Police and the current legal and policy framework – both Central and state – in place that sets standards and benchmarks for women's representation in the police. We move on to discussing highlights of the extent of representation of women in the Assam Police through available statistics (as of 2016), and presenting the priority issues of concern which are affecting women's working lives and opportunities for growth within the police. Finally, we provide a set of preliminary recommendations towards bettering the conditions and opportunities for women police.

This is an outcome of collaboration between the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and the North East Network (NEN).¹ A byproduct of CHRI's regional research on the status of women police in South Asia², this work especially builds on NEN's long-running work and advocacy with the Assam Police on gender issues, particularly training on the needed police response to domestic and sexual violence and building conceptual clarity on women's rights issues.

Our ultimate aim is to champion the inclusion of women in policing – towards the larger goal of gender equality on the utilitarian ground that in today's policing most police functions can be performed by either gender with little evidence to support the myth that policing is a "man's work".

¹ This is a second collaboration between CHRI and NEN on women police in the North East states. In 2015, NEN and CHRI published a joint report looking at the situation of women police in Meghalaya, which can be found at: http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/download/1456300420Rough%20Road%20to%20Equality_Meghalaya%20Police_03-02-16.pdf

² This culminated in CHRI's regional report, titled "*Rough Roads to Equality: Women Police in South Asia*", which examines the status of women police in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives. It provides a comprehensive assessment of the barriers women police face, and recommends ways to strengthen gender equality within police departments. It was published in August 2015 and can be found at: <http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/download/1449728344rough-roads-to-equalitywomen-police-in-south-asia-august-2015.pdf>

Using this discussion paper as a medium for consultation, we intend to integrate these priority concerns, along with issues tabled in an interactive discussion held in Guwahati on 14 December 2016, into a final position paper by NEN and CHRI.

ASSAM POLICE: ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

Given the quasi-federal nature of police organisation in India, state police forces are supervised by centrally-appointed officers belonging to the Indian Police Service, an All India Service which is recruited, trained and managed by the central government. These officers occupy the ranks of Deputy/Superintendent of Police and above and are responsible for overall supervision and management of policing functions within their stipulated jurisdictions. Police positions that are filled by state governments include upper subordinate ranks (Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors, and Assistant Sub-Inspectors) who work generally at the police station level and do much of the crime investigation work, and the police constabulary which consists of the bulk of police strength and carry out tasks like patrolling, guard duties, and public order duties. The head of the police force is the Director General of Police who is responsible to the state government for administration of the police force.

The rank structure is largely as follows:

1. Director General of Police (DGP)
2. Additional Director General of Police (Addl. DGP)
3. Inspector General of Police (IGP)
4. Deputy Inspector General of Police (Dy. IGP)
5. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP)
6. Superintendent of Police (SP)
7. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP)
8. Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) / Deputy Superintendent of Police (Dy. SP)

State Cadre

1. Inspector of Police
2. Sub- Inspector of Police (SI)
3. Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police (ASI)
4. Police Head Constable
5. Police Constable

Assam is divided into 34 police districts and 1 Commissionerate.

For further specialization of police work, the Assam Police has 16 branches: 1) Assam Police Radio Organisation, 2) Battalions, 3) Police Commissionerate, 4) Criminal Investigation Department, 5) Village Defence Organisation, 6) Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, 7) Assam Police Housing Corporation Ltd, 8) River Police, 9) The Bureau of Investigation (EO), 10) Border, 11) Special Task Force, 12) Railway Police, 13) Special Branch, 14) Fire and Emergency, 15) Chief Minister's Special Vigilance Cell, and 16) Training and Armed Forces.³

3 Assam Police website, Branches, <http://assampolice.gov.in/departments/index.php>

The Assam Police is further divided into armed branches. Each police district has an Armed Police Reserve unit functioning under the direction of the District Superintendent of Police, which is the armed wing of the district police to “deal with an emergent law and order problem or any violent situation in the district, and for providing security guards or escort of violent prisoners, or such other duties as may be prescribed”.⁴

There are also Armed Police Battalions across the state, “to be deployed under specific orders of the Director General of Police, to aid and assist the civil police in dealing with virulent and widespread problems of public disorder or other forms of violence, needing deployment of armed police beyond the resources of the District Police”.⁵

There are some differences in the rank nomenclature of the battalions. A commandant, equivalent in rank to Superintendent of Police, shall head each Armed Police Battalion. The commandant shall be assisted by a Deputy Commandant, equivalent in rank to Additional Superintendent of Police, who will be the Second-in-commandant of the Battalion. Each Battalion shall be divided into an appropriate number of Service Companies and a Headquarters Company, each of which will be headed by an Assistant Commandant, equivalent in rank to Deputy Superintendent of Police.⁶

Section 28 of the Assam Police Act, 2007 states there should be “women units” among these armed branches.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

There are legal drivers that require the Central and state governments to address the inclusion of women as a matter of necessity and of right.

Non-discrimination and gender equality are fundamental principles enshrined in the Constitution of India. The Constitution not only guarantees equal rights in all spheres including civil, political, social and economic to women, it also empowers the state to adopt measures for positive discrimination in favour of women. Several articles in the Constitution guarantee equality and protect the rights of women.

Article 14: Equal protection of the laws within the territory of India

Article 15(1): Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them

Article 15(3): Empowers the state to make special provision for women and children

Article 16: Guarantees equal opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.

4 Section 30, Assam Police Act 2007

5 Section 29, Assam Police Act 2007

6 Section 31, Assam Police Act 2007

Other than constitutional obligations, the legal framework on policing comprises: police laws, manuals and regulations, criminal law and procedure, special laws; and government and/or departmental advisories/orders/circulars/notifications.

Police legislation

In terms of police laws, the Police Act of 1861 is still in force at the Centre, and being a colonial-era law, it is silent on the need or role of women in the police. Gender was addressed for the first time only in 2006 under the Model Police Act drafted by the Government of India to serve as a template for new police laws across the country. The Model Act called for “adequate gender representation in the composition of the police service” and required “each police station to have a Women and Child Protection Desk staffed, as far as possible, by women police personnel, to record complaints of crimes against women and children and to deal with the tasks relating to administration of special legislations relating to women and children”.⁷ Although this is a step forward, the Model Act, 2006 does not explicitly mention gender equality as a core principle governing the police service nor does it define “adequate representation”.

In 2013, a second Committee re-examined the 2006 model and produced a new draft Model Police Act in 2014. The 2014 model takes greater account of the need for diversity in policing and for more equitable representation of women, but still does not include proportions.⁸ As a result, none of these models influence the numbers on the ground.

Assam Police is governed by the Assam Police Act, 2007.⁹ The Act provides for women’s representation in general terms in stating, “the composition of the Police Force shall, as far as possible, reflect adequate representation of all sections of society, including gender representation”. It fails to lay down any specific provisions on how to reach “adequate” gender representation or set any standards to uplift women police.

Criminal law and procedure

While police laws do not provide much guidance on the role of women police, criminal law and jurisprudence has over the years considerably expanded statutory functions to be performed by women police personnel. These range from requiring the arrest of a woman to be made by a female police officer;¹⁰ search of a woman reasonably suspected of concealing any article by another woman only;¹¹ and in relation to sexual offences including assault, harassment and rape, recording of the victim’s statement is preferably to be done by a woman police officer.¹² New laws relating to sexual crimes against children and women were passed in 2012 and 2013 respectively, giving exclusive functions to women police in the registration

⁷ Section 12(6), Model Police Act, 2006.

⁸ Section 10(2) of the Draft Model Police Act, 2014 states that the composition of the police service “shall, as far as possible, reflect adequate representation of all sections of society, provided that the number of women in the Police Service be adequate and be decided in consultation with the State Police Chief”.

⁹ Assam Police website, Service Acts, http://assampolice.gov.in/include/pdf/assam_police_act2007.pdf

¹⁰ Section 46 (1), Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, inserted by Act 5 of 2009.

¹¹ Section 100 (3), Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

¹² Section 157 (1), Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, inserted by Act 5 of 2009; Section 161 (3), Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, inserted by Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013.

of complaints and recording of victims' statements.¹³ Meeting these requirements calls not just for an increase in the number of women police but also deliberation on a suitable policy framework, including a review of police laws, to properly guide and monitor the increase of number of women across departments.

National-level policies

Due to heightened attention on women's safety in recent years, the Government of India has taken several initiatives emphasising the need for states to increase the number of women in their police forces. Although not binding, these initiatives place a duty on all states, including Assam, to meet their objectives. Key among these are:

1. The Ministry of Home Affairs' Advisories on Women Police

In 2009, the Ministry of Home Affairs first proposed a target of 33% representation of women in police with the aim of improving the responsiveness of the law and order machinery in dealing with crimes against women. This has since become a key thrust of the Centre's policy. To achieve this target, in 2013, the Ministry recommended each police station to have at least three women Sub-Inspectors and 10 women Constables to ensure that women's help desks are staffed at all times.¹⁴ More recently, the Ministry has proposed creating Investigative Units for Crimes against Women (IUCAW) at police stations in crime-prone districts across states.¹⁵ These units will be constituted on a 50:50 cost-sharing basis between the Centre and the state, and are to have around 15 specialised investigators dealing specifically with crimes against women. Of the 15 staff, at least a third (which means five) is required to be women personnel.

The Ministry has laid down that a total of six IUCAWs are to be set up in Assam.¹⁶

These advisories, though not binding, serve as a useful benchmark for states to bring more women into their police forces. For effective implementation, states need to draw up recruitment plans which take into account the proposed target for women police and allocate necessary funds and resources to meet the target. With crimes against women on the rise in the state, it can no longer afford to remain noncommittal.

2. Modernisation of State Police Force Scheme

Encouragingly, the policy push for more women police is not just restricted to increasing numbers. Emphasis is also placed on improving amenities for women police, particularly at the police station level. Under the Modernisation of State Police Force Scheme,¹⁷ the

¹³ See Sections 24 and 26 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012; and the proviso to Section 154, Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

¹⁴ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Advisory dated 22 April 2013, D.O. No. 15011/21/2013 – SC/ST – W: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/AdvisoryWomenPolice-290513.pdf.

¹⁵ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Advisory dated 5 January 2015, 15011/72/2014 – SC/ST – W: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/CrimesagainstWomen0601.PDF.

¹⁶ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Advisory dated 5 January 2015, 15011/72/2014 – SC/ST – W: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/CrimesagainstWomen0601.PDF.

¹⁷ Modernisation of Police Force Scheme is a scheme of the Government of India to provide financial support to state governments to modernise their police forces. It started in 1969 and covers expenses incurred on items such as weapons, equipment, upgrading of police stations/outposts, forensic science laboratories and training

Government of India issued guidelines in February 2013 to state governments on items to be covered under the scheme. This clearly lays down that police stations constructed under the scheme must include toilet facilities, crèches and restrooms for women police personnel.¹⁸ Detailed instructions on amenities for women police were again issued in May 2014 where states were directed to include in their action plan for 2014-2015:¹⁹

- Suitable toilets for women police personnel including separate hand-washing and shower facilities with adequate supply of water at existing police stations, outposts and barracks. Wherever it is not possible to provide access to permanent toilets, portable toilets need to be provided. These must be installed securely and be provided with lockable doors, lighting and ventilation.
- A restroom at every police station for women personnel. The room needs to be separate from other parts of the workplace and it should be clean, secure and located at a convenient place close to other facilities, such as the toilet. The room should be large enough with proper ventilation to use as a change room also if required. Facilities may be provided for storing clothes and personal belongings with lockable shelf-storage and coat/shirt hanging space.
- The room and toilet should be reasonably accessible to women police officials so that their security is not compromised.

It is essential that adequate resources are allocated to and spent on implementing these policy directions to address the current dire situation.

3. Parliamentary Committee Reports

In 2012-2013, and again in 2014-2015, the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women took up the issue of women police to “review the working conditions of women police in India”. The first Committee was constituted on 23 September 2012 and comprised 20 members of the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and 10 members of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House). The term of the Committee is one year and is reconstituted every year. This was the first effort by a Parliamentary Committee to examine the issue of women in policing. The Committee’s findings and recommendations not only provide a strong impetus to improve the gender ratio within police organisations but also, importantly, point out the changes in the organisational structure and policies which have to go hand-in-hand for women to play a meaningful role in policing.

infrastructure. For more details, see Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India: <http://mha.nic.in/policemodern>.

¹⁸ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (2013), No. 21011/23/2013-PM-1: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/ImpModPoliceForces_120314.PDF.

¹⁹ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (2014), Police Modernisation Division, No. 21011/27/2014-PM-1: http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/PM-I-280514.PDF.

Parliamentary Committee Report on “Working Condition of Women in Police Force”:

State of Follow-Up

The Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women published two reports on women police. The first, published in September 2013 titled “Working Conditions of Women in Police Force”,²⁰ reviews steps taken by central and state governments to increase representation and improve working conditions of women in the police forces.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, on behalf of the central government, along with state governments made submissions before the Committee which then laid down a series of recommendations for follow-up action. The Committee’s substantive recommendations are interspersed throughout this chapter. In December 2014, the newly constituted Committee²¹ published its second report²² on action taken by the government on its recommendations. Of the 14 recommendations from the first report:

- Nine were accepted by the government. A number of these were communicated to the states in the advisory issued in August 2014 which asks states to initiate special recruitment drives, ensure basic amenities such as restrooms and toilets for women personnel at every police station, provide equal opportunities to women personnel particularly in allocation of duties, and effectively deal with reported cases of sexual harassment.²³
- On three recommendations, the Committee expressed disappointment with the government’s response and replies. These include linking of modernisation funds granted by the Centre to the states with the progress achieved in increasing women’s representation in the police force; constructing residential accommodation exclusively for women police personnel; and seeking time-bound Action Taken Reports on implementation of resolutions passed in the National Conferences for Women in Police (details below). The Ministry has either held these steps as unfeasible or has not yet finalised any specific measure.

²⁰ Parliament of India, Lok Sabha, Committee on Empowerment of Women (2013), Twenty-First Report of the Fifteenth Lok Sabha on “Working Conditions of Women in Police Force”, [hereafter referred to as Parliament of India, (2013), Twenty-First Report of the Fifteenth Lok Sabha], p. 13: http://164.100.47.134/lsscommittee/Em-powerment%20of%20Women/15_Empowerment_of_Women_21.pdf.

²¹ The Committee on Empowerment of Women for 2014-2015 was constituted on 1 September 2014 for a term of one year. It consists of 20 members of the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and 10 members of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House).

²² Parliament of India, Lok Sabha, Committee on Empowerment of Women, (2014), Second Report of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha, “Working Conditions of Women in Police Force” (Action taken by the government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Empowerment of Women (2012-2013)...), [hereafter referred to as Parliament of India, (2014), Second Report of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha], p. 23: http://164.100.47.134/lsscommittee/Empowerment%20of%20Women/16_Empowerment_of_Women_2.pdf.

²³ At present, this advisory is not available on the MHA’s website. All references to it have been taken from the Parliament of India (2014), Second Report of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha: http://164.100.47.134/lsscommittee/Empowerment%20of%20Women/16_Empowerment_of_Women_2.pdf.

- The government's reply is awaited on two recommendations. These include suggestions on gender modules to be incorporated in police training of different cadres, and performance audits of All-Women Police Stations.

4. National Conferences for Women in Police

Since 2002, women police personnel have been demanding better policies and amenities to address their difficulties in service. Every two years, the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), a wing of the Ministry of Home Affairs, organises a national conference for women in police in collaboration with a state police force, bringing together women police across ranks and states.²⁴ The conferences have repeatedly stressed the need for increased representation of women and recommended several measures including 33% reservation, special recruitment drives, a common cadre for men and women and better facilities for women.

The national conferences are an important platform for facilitating discussions on policy reform and need to be held more frequently. Much more needs to be done by way of implementation of its recommendations. At the end of each national conference, a set of recommendations are put forward which are then circulated to states and union territories by the central government. Action-Taken Reports (ATR) are required to be submitted to the MHA but this is not done regularly. For the sixth national conference, for example, only 17 states/UTs submitted the ATR.²⁵ On other occasions, states have also disagreed with certain recommendations such as introducing a shift system. The central government itself was lacklustre in following up on ATRs; it only requested for ATRs six months after the national conference in 2014.²⁶ The central government must, at the very least, put in place a mechanism to follow up on recommendations including laying a strict timeline for states/UTs to submit ATRs.

State-level policies and initiatives

There are a number of state-level laws, policies and initiatives which directly impact women police in Assam. Please note this is not an exhaustive list of **all** the initiatives which have been piloted and established.

A brief description of some of these follow below.

²⁴ Six conferences have taken place so far: New Delhi (2002), Mussorie, Uttarakhand (2005), Panchkula, Haryana (2009), Bhubaneshwar, Odisha (2010), Thrissur, Kerala (2012) and Guwahati, Assam (2014).

²⁵ Parliament of India, Lok Sabha, Committee on Empowerment of Women, Second Report of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha, "Working Conditions of Women in Police Force" (Action taken by the government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Empowerment of Women (2012-2013)...), December 2014, p. 23.

²⁶ Parliament of India, Lok Sabha, Committee on Empowerment of Women, Second Report of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha, "Working Conditions of Women in Police Force" (Action taken by the government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-First Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Empowerment of Women (2012-2013)...), December 2014,, p. 25.

1. The Assam Women (Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts) Act, 2005

This Act provides reservations for women in government services and posts, including all offices of the state government, public sector undertakings, educational institutes, industries, businesses, and/or occupations, owned, controlled, managed, or aided by the state government. The only exception is for posts in the Assam Judicial Service (Grade I). The Assam Police is thereby bound to reserve vacancies for women under this Act.

Section 4 of the Act provides for 30% reservation for women against vacancies in all services and posts to be filled up by direct recruitment. This is subject to two specific requirements. First, this is inclusive of the statutory reservations provided to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), as well as persons with disabilities. Second, 30% of this 30% reservation shall be for women of unreserved category. This implies that 70% of the 30% reservation for women shall be for women from SC/ST/OBC communities as well as persons with disabilities, and the remaining 30% for women in the unreserved category. In principle, this break-down of reservation for women from different segments, which maximises inclusivity, is welcome.

Section 4 states, verbatim:

“At the commencement of this Act, 30 percent of the vacancies in respect of all appointments to the services and posts in the establishment which are to be filled up by direct recruitment shall be reserved for the women candidates:

Provided that the aforesaid reservation shall be inclusive of the reservation provided statutorily or otherwise to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes (Plains), Scheduled Tribes (Hills), Other Backward Classes, More Other Backward Classes and persons with disabilities within the respective reserved category:

Provided further that 30 percent reservation of the vacancies in respect of the Women for the remaining unreserved category of candidates shall be available to the Women of unreserved category only”.

But this framework also creates gaps. It is a matter of concern that the state government can exempt “specialized” services and posts from reservation for women on the ground that these may require specific experience or specialization.²⁷ This rests on the assumption that women may not be equipped or qualified for certain police jobs – this goes against the spirit of equality of opportunity for women. Unfortunately, as the state government has given itself this power under the Act and it can be invoked, it is imperative that any exemptions are as limited as possible and clearly justify the rationale for excluding women on objective, not baseless, grounds.

²⁷ Section 5, Assam Women (Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts) Act 2005. Exemption of any service or post must be notified in the Official Gazette.

Further, the Rules²⁸ to the Act indicate that if the needed number of women candidates to fill the vacancies reserved for women do not come forth (both in the reserved and unreserved categories), these can be filled by male candidates. While this is an understandable practical consideration as vacant posts need to be filled, allowing this shortcut also diminishes a dedicated push to achieve the reservation for women. The overriding effort of both the police department and state government must be to fill the reserved vacancies for women with women. Without resolute political will, the needed representation of women in the police in Assam will not be achieved for decades to come.

2. 2011 Notification by Department of Personnel

Reservation for women in the Assam Police specifically took a hit in 2011. In that year, the state Department of Personnel issued a notification which decreased the reservation for women from 30% to 10% for the ranks of Sub Inspector of Police and Constables, for both the armed and unarmed branches.²⁹ The reason provided for this substantial decrease was “in view of the special nature of duties of these personnel and prevailing situation in the state”. The notification has been issued using the power to exempt granted under Section 5 of the Act, and it reflects the very dangers pointed to above. The reasoning is vague and suggests that women are not fit for these ranks with no specificity or objective grounds provided. Most alarmingly, it is a very broad exemption that significantly reduces the scope for women to reach the posts of SI and Constable.

3. Veerangana Unit

A special unit within the Assam Police with a specific mandate to police crimes against women, called the Veerangana unit, was established in November 2012. It was created in the aftermath of the widely publicised molestation case on 9 July 2012 in which a gang of men brutally molested a 21-year-old girl outside a pub, in full public view, for over 40 minutes.

A draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)³⁰ states that the unit is to be deployed to counter crimes against women like outraging modesty and molestation. Notably, the Veerangana unit is not mandated to conduct investigation, but rather, it seems, to take action on the spot. Their modus operandi include bike and foot patrolling (with or without weapons), raids, and posing as decoys to take action against perpetrators.

Part of its mandate is also to expand the role of women police in Assam, and it is comprised only of women. As per the SOP, the unit is to comprise at least 70 women Constables drawn from various armed Battalions (which means the Unit is not being utilised as a channel to recruit more women into the police). The unit is placed only in Guwahati. The total strength of the Unit as of February 2016 was 60 Women Constables.³¹

²⁸ Rule 3(4), Assam Women (Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts) Rules 2005

²⁹ Notification, Memo No. ABP.61/2010/26, Department of Personnel (Dispur, Guwahati), dated 11 January 2011

³⁰ We received a copy of the Draft Standard Operating Procedure for the Beerangana Unit through a Right to Information request.

³¹ Reply of RTI Cell, Office of the Director General of Police (Assam), *Reply of RTI application sought vide Memo No. G(RTI)/VI/16/2016/2, dated 25-02-2016*

All Women Police Station Guwahati

There is one more police-led initiative to respond to crimes against women established in Guwahati – the All Women Police Station Guwahati. Established as far back as 1993, the all women police station was established in the office and premises of the Panbazar Police Station and was to draw its all-women staff from among the women police in Assam.

4. Assam Vision Document 2016-2025

Circulated in the run-up to the 2016 Assembly elections in Assam, it is important to mention that the election manifesto (Assam Vision Document 2016-2025) of the current ruling party in Assam, the Bharitya Janata Party (BJP), contained notable policy promises towards women's empowerment. Several of these pertain directly to women in policing. These are:

- reserving 35% seats for women in all government services of Assam
- incorporating gender budgeting as an essential component in the state budget
- constructing women police stations in every district of Assam
- ensuring sufficient female police personnel in every police station and district³²

With the BJP at the helm of political leadership in Assam, it is imperative to keep the party committed to and accountable for these promises. Notably, making good on the promise of 35% reservation for women in all government services would necessitate not only withdrawing the decreased reservation for women at the posts of Sub Inspector and Constable, but increasing 30% reservation to 35% altogether.

THE NUMBERS AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLICING

Women Police across India

While no state or union territory has yet achieved the centrally-set target of 33% reservation of women, some, such as Chandigarh, Tamil Nadu and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have made considerable progress at 17%, 13% and 12% respectively (see Table 1) whereas efforts are underway in many other states towards improving the status of women police.

As on 1/1/2015, according to the annual statistics published by the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), the total strength of police in Assam stood at 51,915. Unfortunately, Assam ranked the lowest in India in terms of representation of women in its police at just about 1%.³³

³² Bharitya Janata Party (Assam), *Assam Vision Document 2016-2025*, pages 30 and 45-46, <http://bjpassam.org/pdf/vision-document.pdf>

³³ Bureau of Police Research & Development, Government of India, *Data on Police Organisations as on January 1, 2015*, Chapter 12: Women In Police, pp. 133-142

Table 1: State-wise Strength of Women Police as a Percentage of the Total Police Force³⁴
(As on January 1st 2015)

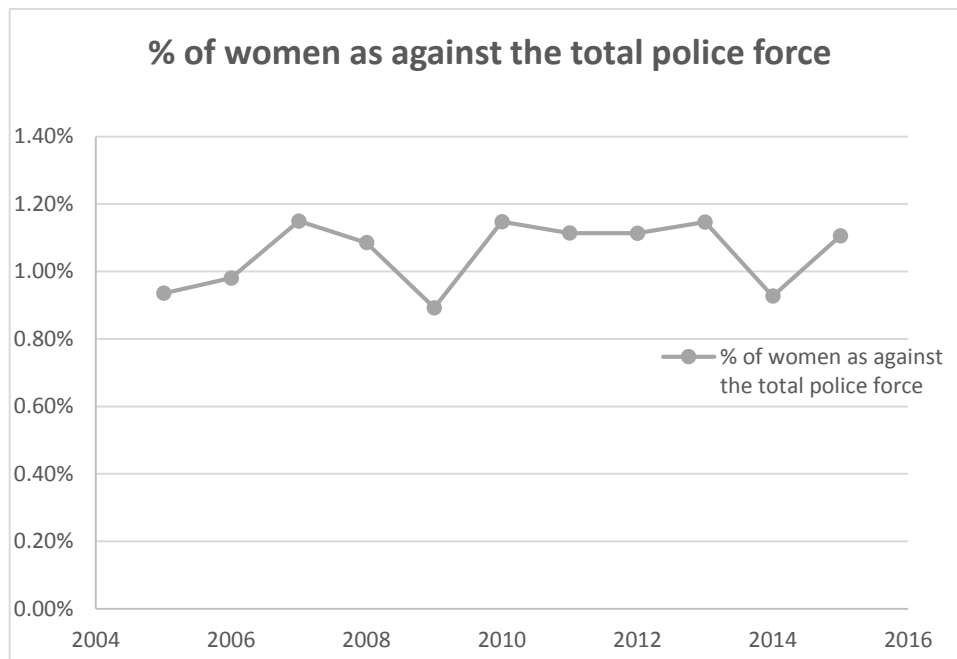
State/UT	Total Strength of the Police	Total Strength of Women Police	Percentage of Women in Police	All-India ranking
Chandigarh	5,991	1,018	16.99	1
Tamil Nadu	1,12,649	14,224	12.63	2
A&N Islands	3,865	445	11.51	3
Himachal Pradesh	13,784	1,546	11.22	4
Maharashtra	1,79,676	19,690	10.96	5
Lakshadweep	305	32	10.49	6
Daman & Diu	351	34	9.69	7
D&N Haveli	253	24	9.49	8
Orissa	49,992	4,292	8.59	9
Delhi	77,083	6,458	8.38	10
Manipur	24,939	2,039	8.18	11
Uttarakhand	18,850	1,521	8.07	12
Sikkim	4,801	353	7.35	13
Rajasthan	95,225	6,853	7.2	14
West Bengal	65,746	4,713	7.17	15
Arunachal Pradesh	11,305	790	6.99	16
Punjab	75,671	5,210	6.89	17
Haryana	41,690	2,651	6.36	18
Kerala	49,437	3,023	6.11	19
Mizoram	9,515	560	5.89	20
Goa	6,791	378	5.57	21
Jharkhand	56,488	3,036	5.37	22
Madhya Pradesh	90,628	4,782	5.28	23
Karnataka	73,746	3,843	5.21	24
Puducherry	3,272	164	5.01	25
Chhattisgarh	55,215	2,628	4.76	26
Tripura	23,852	1,077	4.52	27
Uttar Pradesh	1,65,040	7,220	4.37	28
Meghalaya	12,418	489	3.94	29
Gujarat	73,313	2,835	3.87	30
Andhra Pradesh	56,884	2,075	3.65	31
Bihar	70,858	2,354	3.32	32
Jammu & Kashmir	69,215	2,264	3.27	33
Telangana	48,475	1,402	2.89	34
Nagaland	21,863	275	1.26	35
Assam	51,915	574	1.11	36

³⁴ All of this data is taken from Chapter 12 (Women In Police) of Data on Police Organisations 2015

Women Police in Assam

In fact, BPR&D data over a ten-year period (2005-2015) reveals that the representation of women in the Assam Police has barely moved over 1%, remaining consistently low over a decade (see Table 2).

Table 2: A projection of women police strength in Assam over a ten year period³⁵



Significant jump in overall representation in 2016 in the Civil Police (unarmed branch)

According to statistics as of 1st January 2016, the number of women in the civil police scaled up to a total of 1744. While these increased figures are only for the civil police or unarmed branch of the Assam Police, they will surely push up the representation of women. At the same time, it is of concern that 90% of the women in the civil police are at the Constable rank, similar to the trend across the country where the majority of women personnel are in the constabulary.

³⁵ This has been compiled on the basis of the annual reporting of BPR&D data from 2005 to 2015.

Table 3: Gender disaggregated data as on 1st January, 2016³⁶ of women's representation in the civil police

No.	Ranks	Sanctioned Strength Men	Actual Strength Men	Sanctioned Strength Women	Actual Strength Women
1	Director General of Police (DGP)	3	3		-
2	Additional Director General of Police (ADGP)	16	13		-
3	Inspector General of Police (IGP)	14	4		-
4	Deputy Inspector General (DIGP)	15	11		-
5	Additional Inspector General of Police (AIGP)/Superintendent of Police (SP)/Commandant	111	102		8
6	Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP)	96	73		5
7	Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP)/ Assistant Commandant (AC)	408	294		49
8	Inspector – Unarmed Battalion (UB)	591	480		3
9	Sub-Inspector (SI) (UB)	2755	2185	34	92
10	Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) (UB)	2155	1961	22	19
11	Head Constable (HC) (UB)	1876	1423	11	31
12	Naik (UB)	798	554		2
13	Constable (UB)	14507	10790	652	1535
	Total	23345	17893	719	1744

Notably, as is clear in the table, the actual strength of women Constables exceeds the sanctioned strength. In our interactions, we found this is because vacancies for men were converted into vacancies for women. Approximately 1035 posts were converted from vacancies for men to recruit women under the Constable Rank, finally leading to a total of 1535 women Constables in place by early 2016. As per this data, with the total number of women in the civil police at 1744, women comprised 9.75% of the total strength of the civil police in early 2016. This total of 1744 women in the civil police alone exceeds the total strength (armed and unarmed branches) of women in the Assam Police from the years 2005 to 2015, where the total numbers of women never exceeded 635 (see Table 4).

This is certainly an overall gain, but a close examination of representation at each rank better reveals the extent of inclusion of women in the civil police in a disaggregated way. As mentioned, women are concentrated at the constabulary at 90% (this includes the ranks of

³⁶ Please note that this data was received by NEN through a Right to Information request from the RTI cell of the Office of the Director General of Police. There were some discrepancies in the computations in the data received, which were cleared up in a telephone call with the RTI cell. The data presented in Table 3 is based on the fresh computations done by us following the phone call with the RTI cell.

Head Constable, Naik and Constable). This means, there is no other rank at which women's representation has reached even 8%, much less 10%. Women are at their second highest representation at the rank of Sub Inspector at 5%, and then at Deputy Superintendent of Police at 3%. Only 1% of Assistant Sub Inspectors are women. And the rest of the ranks are at less than 1% - with 0.4% at Inspector General of Police, 0.3% at Additional Superintendent of Police, and the lowest at the rank of Inspector with 0.2%.

Table 4: A comparison of the representation of women against men in the Assam Police (civil + armed) 2005-2015



PRIORITY ISSUES OF CONCERN

This section identifies select priority issues of concern that lay out some of the systemic hurdles and challenges that women police face. Again, this is not an exhaustive list but touches on some of the major issues at play.

1. Recruitment

The Centre has set the benchmark of 33% representation of women in the police. In other advisories as listed above, the Ministry of Home Affairs has recommended that each police station should have at least three women Sub-Inspectors and ten women Constables to set up fully staffed women's help desks in police stations. More recently, the Ministry has proposed creating Investigative Units for Crimes against Women (IUCAW) at police stations in crime-prone districts across states, with the specific direction to Assam to establish six IUCAWs. Assam itself has set the benchmark of 30%, with the reduction to 10% for women at the ranks of Sub Inspectors and Constables.

Even with the reduced reservation at those ranks, and the gains made in 2016 at the constabulary level of the civil police to increase women's representation, there is no doubt that active and targeted recruitment is the need of the hour to bring a greater gender balance to the Assam Police.

A beginning can be made through the creation of additional posts of women Sub-Inspectors and Constables – the data of sanctioned posts as of January 2016 reveals that sanctioned posts for men far outnumber sanctioned posts for women in these ranks. There is no doubt that the conversion of vacant posts for male Constables into posts for women Constables led to the surge in the numbers of women Constables in early 2016, but it is not known if this was done in a planned way.

The importance of targeted planning, actionable measures, and consistent monitoring to fill the reservation quotas for women cannot be overstated. Achieving a gender balance and more equitable representation of women should be seen as a desired aim to be achieved in a systemic manner, and not as a technical concession to central advisories or the reservation policy. We recognise that this objective will take time because recruitment is only possible against vacancies, as they arise, or against new sanctioned posts. This makes it all the more necessary for the state government and the police department, particularly the State Police Recruitment Board, to begin intermediate planning and set benchmarks to consistently monitor the addition of women into the police, at the separate levels. The state should strongly consider filling all existing vacancies in the department with women exclusively.

Lastly, any push for greater recruitment of women must recognise the specific needs of women, the demands on them, and the efforts needed to make policing an attractive and satisfying profession for the female workforce. Women police themselves told us that women are not encouraged to look to police as a job, either by their peers or families. For women, marriage prospects can decline, while men do not face this hindrance and in fact prospects probably go up. This is certainly a wider public perception which the police department has

little control over, but both the government and police department must recognise the extra and special efforts which have to be made to even build women's enthusiasm to join the police. This necessitates reaching out to women in all parts of the state through awareness sessions, special drives and wide circulation of vacancy notices.

2. Training

Women police shared that there were no separate trainings for women and the basic training provided is the same for all ranks. It was pointed out that almost all trainers are male, as trainers from within the police have to be of Inspector rank. This needs to be addressed, particularly from the larger point of view of enough opportunities for women police to reach upper subordinate ranks like Inspector.

While the Assam Police has done a good job of mainstreaming gender sensitisation and awareness into police training with wide ranging and relevant topics, particularly through the efforts of civil society groups like NEN, it is felt that even the existing gender training is not effective. More training on diverse subjects, and with new and interactive methodologies, is required. One respondent summed it up when she said:

“Any discussions on gender issues remain conference room talk. It is not given importance. And it is never practiced.”

3. Deployment and allocation of duties

On a positive note, through our interactions with both men and women police, there is a heightened perception that women are now a visible part of the police. The example of traffic police in which many officers are women, and thereby visible in policing, was repeatedly referred to. Many women officers, particularly, concurred that the women traffic police have outshone their male counterparts.

At the same time, women police largely feel they face prejudices based on their gender, which manifests in different ways. Many feel they have a difficult time being taken seriously from the get-go and the task of proving yourself is heightened for women police. Within the obvious lack of women in critical ranks as pointed out by the data above, generally in terms of deployment, there were positive views that women are assigned challenging police work – for example night patrolling, chasing stolen vehicles, apprehension of coal trucks. Women are also included as part of counter-insurgency operations, often which last for some days so the challenges for women are greater in terms of being away from their households. It is interesting to note that women-specific issues like menstruation and pregnancy were considered hindrances in challenging circumstances. Women personnel in lower ranks expressed the desire to be seen as contributing more to difficult operations.

At the same time, there is a practice of relegating administrative tasks to women personnel; or ordering women personnel to do menial chores like serve tea at official functions:

“In our functions only the women constables will be in chadar mekhela (traditional attire) carrying trays of tea. I quarrelled about this, it is changing slowly. They always select good looking girls for such work and place them as PR constables or receptionists.

We never said we did not want tough jobs.”

This requires honest introspection by seniors and the leadership to root out a deliberate tasking of administrative or any other jobs to women solely on the basis of gender or notions of femininity.

Safety concerns were expressed. Women Constables shared they are often put on night duty, and then they need to have a male Constable with them, which not only requires extra resources but also exposes the relative vulnerability of women. While most women police feel a sense of pride and security when they are in uniform, it is not always enough to deter violence against them. Traffic police and Veeranganas often face violence even in broad daylight. These concerns must be addressed in the most practical ways by seniors and leadership.

Lastly, there was a running thread in the conversations with women police particularly that while equality in duty deployment is important, this also must take gender specific issues into account. For instance, pregnant women did not receive support from their immediate senior – leaves granted for medical check-ups were cancelled last minute and even to take earned leave was difficult. Many women feel that during pregnancy, women should be given office duties. A real recognition of the need for equality between men and women in the police will counter discriminatory or biased responses to issues like this which will inevitably crop up. It is to note that the department has relaxed uniform requirements during menstruation or childbirth at the constable level – women are allowed to wear saris. There is no direction for a similar provision in the higher ranks:

“Men have a support system at home and that helps them in their professional lives. For women it is unfortunate that only a few are lucky enough to have that. It is not just an organisational problem, it is also social.”

4. Lack of knowledge among women police of entitlements or internal redress mechanisms

Many women police are not aware of relevant internal policies or entitlements they are due. For example, in 2015, at the time of our interactions with women personnel, the state government increased maternity leave from 3 months to 6 months and adoption leave was provided for a year.³⁷ While some of the women knew of the maternity leave they were entitled to, the change and increased maternity leave was not known. Many did not know of the departmental procedures required to avail of maternity leave.

³⁷ Link not operational as of 5 December 2016:

<http://online.assam.gov.in/documents/230917/1293447/FEG.11.2013.53++Dtd+7th+January+2015>

The Veeranganas, particularly, were not made aware of any policies and did not have any information about the benefits they were due. The unit itself had very little documentation of their policies and requirements.

The lack of knowledge or awareness of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act) 2013 was glaring. Most personnel in the lower ranks were not sure what constitutes sexual harassment at the workplace or what instances merit complaints. The Chair of an internal complaints committee was not sure why she was chosen or what her responsibilities were.

5. Inadequate facilities (toilets and housing)

A recurring concern was the absence of separate toilets for women. Most police stations have common restrooms and toilets which are unhygienic and badly maintained. In fact, a 2014-2015 audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, for the Social General Economic (Non-PSUs) Sectors of the Government of Assam, revealed lack of basic amenities in 24 checked police stations. Separate restrooms for women police personnel were not available in 18 Police Stations.³⁸ This is only a small number of police stations in the state.

Many police women suffer from Urinary Tract Infections because of prolonged unsanitary working conditions. This is a serious health issue for women which can be addressed through the needed infrastructure and maintenance of hygiene levels.

The need for better housing for lower ranks was reiterated many times over. The housing facilities in place are in shambles. One woman shared that she had to wait for 4 years before she was given accommodation.

The dearth of housing is particularly problematic when transferred to a new post. Since quarters are not available and searching for a rented house takes time, women police shared that they are forced to stay in a hotel for quite some time. This is costly and no reimbursements are made by the department. In rural areas where hotels or good houses on rent are not available, accommodation is a major issue.

6. Sexual Harassment

“Where there are women, there is sexual harassment. Nobody complains.”

There is an overwhelming view among women police that the requirements of the 2013 Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act) have not been met. The Act was notified at the Centre in 2013, the Assam Police took two long years to establish an Internal Complaints Committee in 2015. However, a large number of women police officers are unaware of the Committee’s existence.

³⁸ Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Social, General and Economic (Non-PSUs) Sectors for the year ended 31 March 2015, Government of Assam (Report No. 1 of 2016): [http://www.cag.gov.in/sites/default/files/audit_report_files/Assam %20Social General and Economic Non P SUs Sectors Report 1 %202016.pdf](http://www.cag.gov.in/sites/default/files/audit_report_files/Assam_%20Social_General_and_Economic_Non_P_SUs_Sectors_Report_1_%202016.pdf)

Also, the ICC has been set up at Assam Police Headquarters in Guwahati (NEN is the external NGO member). To date, this is the only ICC set up by the Assam Police. This means there are no complaints mechanisms in place at all for the lower ranks. It is very difficult for women in distant districts to come to Guwahati to complain. It is imperative that ICCs are established in all the districts of the state.

Women in the lower ranks particularly feel sexual harassment is rampant in the police department, but they are hesitant to say this publicly. Women have complained about dirty jokes and the use of derogatory slang words by senior officers in the presence of women. Women unequivocally said men in the armed battalions are badly behaved and disrespect women. Sexual harassment is common there.

As mentioned, there is stark lack of knowledge among women police of cases registered and the redress mechanisms provided for under the Act. This leads to many women believing that cases are not being registered. Where complaints are taken forward, the follow-up is not shared with the complainant.

Complainants are discouraged for various reasons. Perceived loss of dignity, fear of being viewed with derision and the attitude of the society that blames women for their own victimisation are often too daunting to overcome, amplified by the lack of institutional support from within the police department. It must be noted that the Veeranganas and the traffic policewomen, being in direct contact with the public, sometimes have to face sexist remarks from the public.

7. All Women Police Station

As said above, there is one all woman police station in the entire state, in Guwahati. It has a specific mandate to look at specified crimes against women. Apparently there are directives to establish more all woman police stations, but no information is available.

Women police mostly view the all-woman police station concept as a good initiative that has been shoddily implemented. Because of the low numbers of women police, the all-woman police station is grossly understaffed. It suffers from both poor infrastructure and gross neglect. Women police in fact do not want to be posted at the all-woman police station because the staff is hugely overworked.

A woman who acted as Officer-In-Charge of the all-woman police station found that there was only one Investigating Officer and that was the OC herself. There were no other IOs, only constables and Havildars. To make arrests, the staff would take a male police colleague from Panbazar police station. The all-women police station's jurisdiction extends to all the 21 police stations in Guwahati, and they function with only one IO. There is one vehicle and that too is in a deplorable condition. The IO is expected to go all over Guwahati, which is not just daunting but impossible.

The all-woman PS cannot meet its mandate. All crimes against women cases are to be registered at the all-woman police station, but this is not possible with only one. So women-

related cases get registered anywhere, diminishing the locus standi of the all-woman police station.

The same officer shared that there is a proposal to set up a women's cell in every police station, which will be run by women (she knew it had been sent for approval but does not know if it has been accepted). The proposal included a separate building for the women police officers in each Police Station. While she felt this would be a good initiative, she cautioned that any such proposals cannot be realised in the face of the dearth of women Sub Inspectors.

Women police recommended that all-women police stations should be set up in every district. Better training should be provided to the police women in all-women police stations with knowledge of new laws and other developments imparted at short intervals. Better infrastructure also needs to be built for them to be more effective and proactive.

8. Women in traffic police

With the opportunity to speak to women in the traffic police in Guwahati, we have their specific insights into the difficulties they face. These include:

- With no provision for drinking water, the women shared they do not drink water while on duty. There is no arrangement to store their belongings while on duty. Long hours spent standing could be detrimental to their health.
- They face serious problems at night. There is no light in most of the traffic points. Often drivers cannot see the signal and accidents are frequent.
- Traffic Police women cannot keep money receipts with them. When somebody breaks a traffic signal and gets a penalty, they cannot provide money receipts to them.
- The public does not treat them with respect.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Poor facilities, unfavourable conditions, lack of knowledge of policies and entitlements, and lack of proper infrastructure are some of the difficulties women police constantly grapple with.

Despite the good intentions of senior leadership, there is a serious lack of awareness or understanding of these problems from a gender perspective. Proactive changes from either the police department or government are meaningless without a corresponding change in perception and orientation toward gender and equality- both within the service and outside of it.

Both men and women need an enabling environment, this is especially true for an overburdened force like the police.

Preliminary recommendations follow below.

For the Government of Assam

1. Reconceptualise the role of women police:
 - a. Rethink the segregation of women into specific “women-only” tasks and consider ways of bringing them into mainstream functions
 - b. Broaden the role of women police beyond dealing with crimes against women
 - c. Review the usefulness and performance of the All Woman Police Station in light of concerns raised
2. Implement guidelines issued under Modernization of Police Force Scheme regarding facilities for women police at police stations.
3. Increase the reservation policy to 33% for women police across ranks in line with the central advisory.
4. To ensure there are no disparities, withdraw the 10% reservation for women Sub Inspectors and Constables.
5. Amend the Assam Police Act 2007 to strengthen gender equality in policing:
 - a. Specify a target for women representation which should be at least 33% in tune with central government policy
 - b. Ensure women police officers are entrusted with same duties and powers as other police officers.
6. Formulate a gender policy for the police department to:
 - a. Guide the process of increasing women representation in policing
 - b. Lay down strategies for gender mainstreaming including policy targets with set timelines and stipulated institutional roles and responsibilities.

For the Assam Police Department

1. Recruitment of women in police:
 - a. Conduct recruitment drives across the state to advertise vacancies regularly and encourage women from different communities, class and ethnic backgrounds to join the police
 - b. Conduct an assessment of police strength requirements at police stations and strongly consider making all recruitment from among women only until 33% representation is achieved
2. Ensure the presence of three Women Sub-Inspectors and ten Women Constables in all police stations as laid down by the Ministry of Home Affairs in its advisory
3. Improve and provide regular in-career training opportunities:
 - a. Organise regular specialised courses to ensure women personnel are up-to-date with legal developments

- b. Ensure proper facilities for women including separate toilets and suitable accommodation at all training institutions.
 - c. Increase representation of women in training institutions.
 - d. Rotational duties. Having a proper shift system in place would decrease the work load and improve productivity. This would necessitate more recruitment.
4. Improve working conditions for women:
- a. Proper infrastructure in the police station like rest rooms, barracks, etc.
 - b. Toilet facilities and lights(for those on night duty) in all Traffic points
 - c. Adequate supply of masks, life jackets, ORS, water etc.
 - d. Proper and adequate living quarters.
5. Adopt equal opportunity policy:
- a. Ensure desk jobs such as record management, RTI cells, and computer work are not disproportionately assigned to women personnel
 - b. Provide equal opportunity for women personnel to head regular police stations, and not just all women police stations, and district units
 - c. Ensure postings and promotions are based on merit alone without any gender bias.
6. Cultivate a gender-sensitive culture within the organisation:
- a. Adopt a zero tolerance policy on gender discrimination in the department
 - b. Establish Internal Complaints Committees to oversee sexual harassment complaints in every district with immediate priority, and guarantee that they are properly trained to take on their role
 - c. Ensure there is wide publicity and awareness of the redress mechanisms available under the prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace Act
 - d. Develop a standard operating procedure on workplace norms including behaviour, language and practices of men and women police officers.
 - e. Relax the uniform requirement for senior ranks for pregnant women (as in the lower ranks where pregnant women can wear saris)
7. Implement family-friendly policies:
- a. Shift system in police stations, including weekly off for all police personnel
 - b. Supportive maternity, paternity and child care leave policies, which are consistent with Government of India policies, and widely circulated among all women police personnel
 - c. Crèche and day care facilities in all administrative units as per the Modernisation of Police Force guidelines issued by the Government of India.

About the Organizations

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, non-partisan, international non-governmental organisation, mandated to ensure the practical realisation of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth. CHRI's objectives are to promote awareness of and adherence to the Commonwealth Harare Principles, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other internationally recognised human rights instruments, as well as domestic instruments supporting human rights in Commonwealth Member States. CHRI furthers its objectives through strategic initiatives and with a focus on access to justice, which covers police and prison reforms, and access to information. It does this through research, publications, workshops, information dissemination and advocacy.

CHRI is based in New Delhi, India, and has offices in London, UK and Accra, Ghana.

North East Network

North East Network (NEN) is a women's organisation established in 1995 during the mobilisation process for the Beijing Conference. Since its inception, the organisation has been raising women's rights issues, particularly within the developmental and political context of the North East region of India. In its early years, the organisation focused on empowerment, health and livelihood, and issues of violence, both in conflict situations and in the domestic sphere.

NEN has been in the forefront in the region to change developmental discourse from a rights perspective and demand women's inclusion in all political and other decision-making levels. Over the years, NEN has stressed on good governance as a precondition for the enjoyment of human rights and also for addressing gender-based discrimination.

NEN responds to specific needs of women in North East India such as gender budgetary allocations, strengthening support services for women affected by violence and security of women in conflict areas through fact-finding processes and advocacy with the government. In addition it organises trainings, workshops and publishes materials on information related to conflict, peace and women.

NEN is based in Guwahati, Assam, and has offices in Meghalaya and Nagaland.