A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROCESS: CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY POLICING PRACTICE IN DHAKA METROPOLITAN POLICE, BANGLADESH

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Abstract

Community participation is one the fundamental tenets of community policing practice. In relation to community policing, community participation implies to a process in which residents act, voice their opinions, and take responsibility for crime prevention. However, one of the key issues in policing literature is how this process is constructed and maintained. Hence, understanding the process of community participation is critical to the implementation of contemporary community policing. Keeping this in view, a case study was conducted in 2018 to explore and examine the process of community participation in the context of community policing practice in the Uttara Division of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Bangladesh. Forty-Five participants from police, community and community-police forums were interviewed to have their knowledge and experiences on this critical issue. The study found that the community participation process began with the formation of Community-Police Forums (CPFs) through to the implementation of crime prevention programmes. Various forms of police-community meetings were found to facilitate community to contribute to crime prevention. Participation in Uttara community policing was, however, found more stereotyped in practice and took place in varying levels. The process of community participation was police-driven, and community role was, in most cases, defined by the police.

Keywords: community participation, community policing, crime prevention

Introduction

Community participation is now an important issue in relation to the implementation of public service delivery, including policing. Since the late 1970s, social

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science researchers such as Goldstein (1979) and Myhill (2006) have developed many theories and enriched literature on this topic. With the change of modes of criminality, crime prevention has gained acceptance over control of crime (Razzak, 2010). Crime prevention initiative - a proactive policing approach - has been accepted as a comparatively effective policing strategy in many countries including Bangladesh (Hoque, 2011). This approach entails to the over-arching concept of community policing. Therefore, community policing has been adopted widely in line with Police Reform Programmes (PRPs) undertaken all areas of Bangladesh Police.

Sociological theories suggest that crime prevention and community participation are two core components of community policing practice. Myhill (2006), for example, argues that community policing practice is untenable without community participation. Other theorists also identify community participation as a fundamental tenet of the implementation of community policing. The impact of community policing on crime relates to the level of community effort involved (Mirsky, 2009). However, employing community effort is linked to the way in which police-community relations are constructed and maintained (Mirsky, 2009; Wilson & Petersilia, 2004). Specifically, understanding and ensuring community participation is critical to the effective practice of community policing.

Difficulty around the implementation of community participation is linked to the conceptual ambiguity of community policing, as it has different meanings to different people. Community participation is context-based. In relation to community policing practice, participation of community is also programme-based. Therefore, there should be a consensus between police and community as to the specificity of crime prevention programmes. Once agreed, the stakeholders (police and community) need to determine how they will play their respective roles. Hence, establishing partnership with community is a critical issue in the implementation of community policing. Around community participation, one of the contemporary debates is how community people do participate in this policing approach. This article explores and critically examines community participation process in community policing practice in one of the police areas of Uttara of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

Literature review

In many countries throughout the world, uniformed police are the principal agency of the state for ensuring peace and security. In Bangladeshi society, the dominant

mind-set of the people has until recently been that the responsibility for crime prevention and civil order maintenance solely falls on the police acting according to traditional or conventional policing practices (Hoque, 2014; Razzak, 2010). Traditional policing of law enforcement is now considered inadequate to deal with crime and criminality (Hoque, 2011, 2014; Razzak, 2010; Reiner, 2010). Therefore, community policing has been endorsed in policy and is being practised all over Bangladesh as one of the strategies of crime prevention and is a preferred option to formal crime control (Bangladesh Community Policing National Strategy, 2010).

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, senior officials of the Bangladesh Police have shown much interest in the implementation of community policing for crime prevention (Hoque, 2014). Community policing extends the traditional role of the police and incorporates the community to play a pivotal role in policing itself (Myhill, 2006; Oliver, 2008). However, confusion as to definition and practice prevails both within the police and within communities wherever it is practised. Cordner (2004) and Hoque (2014) argue that the police merely utilise existing operational tactics or engage in public relations exercises to support their claim that they have adopted and implemented community policing. For example, the arrest of a drug dealer as a problem-solving tactic or the organising of public relations activities, such as 'blue light disco' and 'adopt-a-cop', do not constitute actual community policing practices (Myhill, 2006).

According to Reiner (2010), an ideal community policing practice provides for the provision of a police-community partnership. The aims of this partnership are for the police and community to collectively identify local problems and their solutions. Hence, problem solving, and police-community partnership are two basic components of community policing. However, scholars such as Fleming and O'Reilly (2007) and Wallace (2011), observe that community policing practice in terms of problem-solving with community involvement seems rhetorical rather than actual. In fact, problem solving and public-police partnership, the two main aspects of community policing, have diverse meanings and far-reaching implications.

Participation, a very critical issue in any public policy, is a process for influencing decisions that affects the lives of citizens and an avenue for transferring political power. It also provides a mechanism for ensuring the receptivity, sensitivity and even accountability of social services to the consumers. According to Armitage (1988), citizen participation is a process by which citizens act in response to public concerns, voice their opinions about decisions that affect them and take

responsibility for changes to their community. All these definitions share the fundamental aspects of this concept, that is, the distribution of power between participants – privileged and unprivileged – to jointly determine choices for their quality of lives.

Rogers and Robinson (2004, p.2) define community participation as "the opportunity, capacity and willingness of individuals to work collectively to shape public life". They also state that community participation encompasses a variety of approaches. In these approaches, public service bodies empower citizens to consider and express their views on how their particular needs are best met. These may range from encouraging people to have a say on setting priorities through shaping, supporting and sharing decision-making with them in relation to defined services.

In relation to effective participation, some basic and relevant questions have been asked in the literature. Five, in particular, are worthy of consideration: (i) who participates; (ii) what do people participate in; (iii) why do people participate; (iv) how does participation occur; and (v) how can participation be built? (Reid, 2000; Scott, 1998). Effective and successful participation lies in the answers to these questions. There is no one right way to achieve effective participation. Simplistically, there is no standard set of criteria for a particular form of participation (Crosby, 1996).

In the context of community policing, Community participation can be secured through various community policing programmes (Miller, 2011; Skogan, 2006). The wider police literature suggests that community participation is intended to be secured via 'neighbourhood policing' (Scott, 2000; Sampson, 2004; Sagar, 2005). There are some other programmes such as citizen patrol (Choi, 2013) and problem-solving (Myhill, 2006; Reiner, 2010) in which community members can participate in relation to community policing practice.

As established, there is no single or fixed format for community participation that can be followed in any public sphere. However, securing community participation is linked to the way in which police-community relations are constructed and maintained (Mirsky, 2009; Wilson & Petersilia, 2004). Therefore, the trajectory of this study is to examine the community participation process in a particular policing area and community settings. In this study, the Uttara division of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police has been selected for examining community participation process.

Methodology

Selection of research sites and methods for data collection are two important factors in any study that are required to be discussed. Two vital issues acted as driving factors for selecting the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) for this study. One is demography and the other is the importance of the DMP as one of the vital police units in terms of the level and the nature of crime. The capital Dhaka is the fastest growing megacity in the world with a population of over 18 million (Dhaka Population 2020). It is estimated that density exceeds 23,234 persons per square kilometre within Dhaka's municipal boundary, as against approximately 1265 persons per square kilometre in the rest of the country (Bangladesh Population 2020, Dhaka Population 2020).

The DMP is one of the single largest units of the Bangladesh Police force. There are some thirty-five thousand police personnel, accounting for approximately 20 per cent of the total force of the Bangladesh Police, who are attached to this unit. For better management of crime and operations, the DMP is divided into eight crime divisions. Each division comprises several (generally 4 or 5) police stations. For this study, the Uttara Division was selected for the following reasons.

The choice of this division is based on diversity in local communities; namely, urban, sub-urban and semi-rural. Geographically, Uttara lies along the northern part of the Dhaka municipality area. During the 1980s, Uttara was built as a planned square grid residential suburb called 'Uttara Model Town'. In recent years, with the increasing influx of people moving into the city, Uttara has evolved into a bustling town.

It is one of the most significant crime division areas in respect of crime statistics and crime trends, the diversity of people who live there, its geographic features, and the fact that it is the location of many businesses, administrative and educational establishments and social organisations (Ahmed, 2002; Ahmed, Hossain, Khan, Islam, & Kamruzzaman, 2011; Bangladesh Police Crime Statistics, 2015). This is also significant because it provided access and support for the study.

The qualitative method has been adopted for this study. As the nature of this study was to seek data about the perceptions and experiences of the participants in relation to the way community participation takes place, it indicated that an in-depth and thorough investigation of the phenomena was required. For the purposes of this research the qualitative method was determined as the best option.

In qualitative enquiries the number of respondents is necessarily small (Bauer & Gaskell, 2003). In community policing practice, two groups of people - police personnel and local community members - are the usual actors. In the context of Bangladesh, community-police forum members are also important actors as they facilitate and promote police-community cooperation. As such, three groups of people - community members, police personnel and members of community-police forum/committee - were selected as participants in this study. Semi-structured interviews of 45 participants of these three groups were taken throughout 2018 in Uttara, Dhaka.

Findings and discussion

This article explores the way community participates in community policing practice in Uttara area of DMP. The study finds that the community participation process begins with the role the community plays in setting up Community-Police Forums (CPFs) through to the implementation of crime prevention programmes. Hence, this section first articulates the formal and structural means of community participation, in particular the formation, structure and purposes of CPFs. It then examines CPF-police interaction and their collective role to organise community residents to participate in community policing programmes.

Representative participation through structural forums in Uttara

In the context of Uttara, community participation occurs at both a formal and a structural level. The CPFs consisting of members from the community and the police serve as the platforms facilitating police-community interaction. Besides representing the communities, the forums also serve as a bridge to link the police with the communities. As a 'voice' of the community these convey community needs and aspirations to the police in order to seek a response. Through the CPFs, community participation takes place at varying levels ranging from the sharing of information to decision making. The CPFs' role is also pivotal in organising the community to participate in various programmes such as community patrol, community-police meetings and problem-solving approach. The following sub-sections articulate the structure and constitution of the forums.

Organisational structure of the forums

Community-Police Forums were constituted in areas of all police stations throughout the Uttara division to establish a partnership between the police and

the community. The forums/committees sit at three levels. The Uttara division coordination committee sits at the top. Below this is the *thana* (police station) Coordination committee and ward/sector CPFs sit at the bottom. There are 33 ward/sector CPFs working at the neighbourhood level. Uttar Khan, Dakhin Khan and Turag thana areas are divided into wards, while Uttara West is divided into sectors. The forums at this level are called ward or sector CPFs.

Division and thana coordination committees primarily serve to coordinate ward/ sector forums. It is noteworthy that ward/sector CPFs play the most critical implementing role of community policing practice. CPF participants noted that this level of representative body was first formed to implement community policing in Uttara. However, after a few months, the police set about constituting thana and Uttara division coordination committees that resulted in the creation of three levels of forums/committees. The ward CPF participants attributed that the formation of the coordination committees was entirely initiated by the police. Opposing the necessity of multi-level forums, they argued that an effective working partnership could better be created between front-line police and ward/sector CPFs, which are the primary level of community representatives.

Senior police officers, however, argued that it was necessary to have a relative structure of forum/committees to establish ease of communication and working relations. They indicated the difficulty on the part of senior police management to establish and maintain continual communication with ward/sector CPFs because these were many in number and located in neighbourhoods. It can, therefore, be perceived that the police preferred to have multi-structural committees relative to the hierarchical police structure. Such an initiative reflects Bobov's (1999) argument that the police generally seek to engage with the sections of society with which they are comfortable.

The process for the constitution of forums

The process and scope of community participation in the constitution of forums was revealed in this study. CPFs in Uttara were first formed in 2007 under the direction of the Police Commissioner of the DMP, with the provision of reconfiguring every two years. In order to establish the forums, local police in cooperation with community elites and local government representatives called public meetings in convenient places at which the police explained the concept of community policing, its objectives and benefits, and focused on the importance of CPFs.

The thana Officers-in-Charge (OCs) first selected the president and the secretary of a forum in the presence of the community people attending the meeting to reflect wider community participation and approval in order to achieve credibility and acceptability. Then the president and the secretary nominated other members from the participants of the meeting, who were later approved by the police after verification of their local acceptance.

The procedure of forming the forums seemingly reflected community participation. However, there was out flaws in the procedure, as the police had subtly manipulated the meetings attended by community people. Community participants noted that the meeting schedules were not widely advertised and that those who attended were not representative of the wider community. Further, selection of the forum president and secretary was police driven, as the police did not call for nomination of candidates or allow community members to propose their own. Hence, the selection procedure for choosing the forum president and secretary restricted options for choosing other more acceptable and qualified ones from among several candidates.

Similarly, nomination of members by the president and the secretary did not reflect community people's choice, as the police defined the number of members. Nomination of forum members was largely a personal choice of the president and the secretary. Verification of the nominated members did not involve community voting or any other way that reflected their approval. Thus, the community could not play any role in deciding who should be in the forums, other than merely attending the meetings. Such passivity of the community's role contradicts Blunkett's (2003) view that participation is a democratic process that promotes active citizenship. However, this procedure for constituting CPFs was mainly followed in Turag, Uttar Khan and Dakhin Khan, whereas in Uttara West a different approach was used.

The approach employed was based on an existing model for electing representatives. Uttara West communities are organised and clustered in different geographic sectors. Each of the 9 sectors has its own *kalyan samity* (welfare committee) to perform civic functions to ensure quality of life. The executive committees of each kalyan samity are elected by the sector residents. Only house-owners, whether male or female, are the voters who can cast their votes to elect members of the samities every two years. A committee of 15 to 21 members is grouped into several sub-committees. The security sub-committee is responsible for the safety and security of the neighbourhoods. This mode of governance has been in place in Uttara West

since before community policing was introduced in Uttara. However, this practice later intersected with community policing since its inception.

The study revealed that the police initially insisted that the kalyan samity committees help them form sector CPFs by following the same procedure used in Uttar Khan, Dakhin Khan and Turag. The community members, however, argued that there was no need for constituting separate CPFs because there already were security sub-committees. They rather suggested that one police officer and a few additional community members could be incorporated into each of the existing security sub-committees to constitute them as the sector CPFs. Thus, the security sub-committees became two entities: the security sub-committee of each kalyan samity and the sector CPFs. Thus, the sector CPFs appeared to have more legitimacy and approval of the community compared to ward CPFs. The legitimacy of the sector CPFs is based on the fact that community residents of Uttara West elect them through voting.

The election process of each kalyan samity in Uttara West seemed more democratic and in which the police could not interfere, as was the case in other areas of Uttara. Rather community residents enjoyed the opportunity to elect their chosen people for the kalyan samity. The study found that around 70 per cent of the community residents used to cast their votes. In this sense, the community of Uttara West had the opportunity, capacity and willingness to participate in the process of electing the kalyan samity, which according to Rogers and Robinson (2004), are the fundamental elements underpinning effective participation.

Furthermore, in respect of the kalyan samity elections, the community was the authority in a process that Arnstein (1969) refers to as 'citizen control'. However, this authority was not equally shared with female members of the community, as their participation was lower than their male counterparts in both the electing of forum members and in attending forums. This happened even in this fairly democratic practice in Uttara West. Structural dominance and gender discrimination might be attributed to this uneven participation.

Additionally, there seemed to be a gradual decline in democratic practice in forming the coordination committees. Thana coordination committees were formed in a 'token' form of consultation with ward CPF presidents and secretaries, as the police had prepared a list of the members beforehand, while the Uttara division coordination committee was formed in a closed-door environment. Lesser community participation was involved in choosing to form comparatively hierarchical committees. The police role in forming these committees can be

referred to as a *planner-led scientific-technical process* providing no room for public participation (Sager, 1993). This is not consistent with the process of selecting people's representatives in modern democratic practice (Rodan, 2012).

Community organising initiatives

Community participation in creating CPFs has been discussed beforehand. CPFs reflect representative participation of community. The most important role CPFs play is to organise community residents to participate in various types of police-community meetings. The objectives of community participation in these meetings are to facilitate information sharing and consultation for crime prevention, and also to establish police-community partnership in various community policing programmes. The Uttara police in collaboration with CPF members initiated and implemented various programmes such as the Open House Day, anti-crime meeting and community-police forum Meeting.

Open House Day

Open House Day (OHD) held once a month at police stations was an open forum at which both police and community members talked about community concerns. This innovative approach had been in practice since 2007. The aim of this approach was to turn police stations to people-oriented and trusted social institutions by overcoming century-old fear and distrust. This approach was said to be an important tactic of bringing the community close to the police. The OHD provided venues for information sharing and consultation in relation to solving various social and crime problems and also contemporary social issues likely to affect community safety. Such police-initiated interaction with the community is opposed to traditional police response to people's call.

The OHD initially generated significant levels of enthusiasm among community residents to attend. The patrol officers, CPF members and local government representatives, usually informed them of OHD schedules orally while some senior and respected people were notified through letters from the police stations. Senior officers such as the Deputy Police Commissioner (DPC) or an additional DPC often attended the OHD to increase its significance and motivate more people to attend.

The important feature of the meeting was that it was presided over by someone from the community elite, while the senior police officer acted as a moderator.

Such protocol was followed to give an impression to the community people that the meeting was not entirely controlled by the police. Such balance of control over the meeting, as stated by police interviewees, was made simply to create an environment favourable for both police and community people to freely exchange views and opinions.

As to the trend of community attendance in the meetings, no supporting documents were available in the police stations of this study area. However, the police participants indicated that there was significant level of attendance during the initial two years. The attendees were encouraged to talk about different social issues and to illicit responses from the police. Their participation reflects the community's pressing need for a redefined police role.

However, there had been a gradual downturn of public attendance. Few explanations for the downturn were derived from interviewees. Firstly, The OHD schedules, be it held during weekdays or weekends, overlapped personal and daily work schedules of community residents. Secondly, the repeated change of meeting schedule, due to unavoidable engagement in order maintenance duties, led to a communication gap between police and community residents. The OCs sometimes were not able to inform community residents ahead of time regarding rescheduling the date, as they had to organise meetings at instant directives of senior officials. Therefore, only few known and readily available residents were invited to the meetings. Consequently, they could not actively participate to provide necessary input in the meetings. DuBois & Hartnett (2002) in relation to citizen participation similarly argue that trying to involve random people off the street is not effective. Thirdly, a particular group of people seemed more enthusiastic to attend the OHD and tended to influence it at their own interest rather than focusing on common community concerns. Consequently, level of attendance of the wider community gradually declined.

Nevertheless, regardless of these limitations, this programme initiative for organising community people can be viewed as an innovative idea and an important component of community policing. Although this initiative is used to foster community confidence in the police, its underlying philosophy is not consistent with the principle of the *Community Policing National Strategy* which promotes a process of 'going back to the community' to facilitate their participation in policing. Rather, it seems an initiative of 'bringing the community close to the police'.

Anti-crime meeting

The Anti-crime meeting (ACM) was seen as an important initiative of community participation in Uttara. This seemed distinct from the OHD in that the event takes place in neighbourhoods providing a way of 'going back to the community'. After the commencement of community policing the ACMs were initially organised to raise people's awareness about their role in local crime prevention. The ACMs were later intended to get the community residents involved in information sharing and as a consultation process to identify local problems and solutions.

According to the *Community Policing Service Manual*, ACMs should be held in every neighbourhood once a fortnight or at least once a month. The study, however, found that the frequency of meetings did not meet the ideal. One OC, for instance, informed he only organised a monthly meeting in one of the nine neighbourhoods, resulting in one meeting per neighbourhood every nine months. However, the participant also noted that although the OC was the deciding authority to hold the meetings, it was the CPF who organised the community residents for it. Therefore, it seems that the level of attendance largely relied on the level at which they could organise the community.

Compared to the OHD, more people numbering around 100 attended each of the ACMs. Of note was the presence of women (approx. 5-6 per cent) and teenagers (approx. 20-25 per cent). Despite not taking active part, their presence marked a distinct feature, as they did not attend the OHD. In addition to proximity, there were also other reasons for public interest in such meetings. It was believed that police presence created interest and curiosity, particularly among women and teenagers. Social networks also seemed a crucial factor for gradually enhancing the level of community attendance, as residents would feel the 'need' to attend if they believed their neighbours were at the meeting.

In terms of the proceedings of the meetings, the police seem to dominate by asking people about community concerns and problems. There were only a few members who raised some issues related to an upturn in house burglary and the irregular police patrols in their neighbourhoods. This low level of participation was also found in the study by Myhill, Yarrow, Dalgleish, & Docking (2003) on the quality of community engagement by police authorities in the United Kingdom, suggesting that communities do not always have a say in policing even if they would like to participate.

The study found police assuring participants to look into the problems and asked the CPF members to enhance community patrols. However, community residents were tired of the stereotypical police response (i.e., they would look into it), as they did not see any noticeable improvement of the situation. The nature of the police response is similar to the findings of Skogan's (1994) study evaluating the effectiveness of community participation in the Chicago community policing programme. As in Uttara, the residents would raise specific complaints and the police would say they "would check on it" (p.16). This is also supported by other studies by Myhill et al. (2003) and Skogan (2000).

Given the existing frequency of meetings, the level of community attendance and the quality of participation, it can be argued that the meetings did not provide much scope for consultation and decision making on the problems that the residents usually face. Through these meetings the police tended to collect information of crime to be used more in traditional policing operations rather than in collective actions of community policing. Organising these meetings can be, however, viewed as the process of creating a sense of collectiveness among the community residents and a partnership between the police and the community to work together.

Community police forum (CPF) meetings

The third programme initiative of organising community residents to participate in community policing practice in Uttara is the CPF meetings. Held usually once a month in the CPF offices located in respective neighbourhoods, the forum meetings served as formal, structural platforms for both the CPF and the police to work together and also to share responsibility for crime prevention.

Community residents were invited to attend the meetings so that they could formally notify them of problems. They could also decide about which problems they were able to address at their level and what should be referred to police for legal action. They also emphasised the police presence in these meetings as a means to justify to community residents the authority of the CPF to formally deal with local problems.

Therefore, The OCs deputed at least one officer, preferably the related beat officer and also sometimes the thana CPO, to support CPFs to organise their meetings. This reflects the police initiative to empower the CPF with authority to address social problems in the community. It can also be seen as an initiative to help the community residents turn to the CPF members and build community cohesion and promote collective action and community ownership.

Community participation in crime prevention programmes

Besides the process of forming community representational forums/committees and different forms of police-community meetings to organise community residents for promoting police-community cooperation, this article explored how the community got involved in crime prevention programmes in Uttara. This article also examined different levels and forms of community participation in crime prevention programmes such as Neighbourhood Watch and, more specifically, community patrol and problem-solving approaches.

Community patrol

Of all the forms of community participation investigated, community patrol is perhaps the most visible of the efforts promoting community safety across Uttara. Community patrol in Uttara was generally performed by a group of civilians who were, depending on the location, either paid security guards (non-resident or resident) or residents who volunteered their time to ensure the safety of a defined area. It is important to note that the residents in Uttara West first initiated community patrol by deploying security guards, even before the introduction of community policing. This initiation was made in the context of a lack of visibility of the police in the newly built neighbourhood. This patrol was, however, later reinforced with police support after community policing had commenced. The sector CPFs coordinated all things related to community patrol such as the selection and employment of security guards, supervising and coordinating their duties and collecting money from households and payment.

By contrast, the community people themselves performed community patrol in Turag, Dakhin Khan and Uttar Khan, although a few non-residents were employed, particularly in marketplaces. However, most of the community residents perform patrol duties for money, as the patrollers were economically marginalised. Similarly, not all residents of these areas were financially able to pay for community patrol. Therefore, it was evident that not all households in Turag, Uttar Khan and Dakhin Khan participated.

Besides paid patrollers, there were also volunteers patrolling in Turag and Uttar Khan. Some of the volunteers took part in joint foot patrols with the local police during the night along streets in Turag that were difficult for the police to patrol alone, due to a shortage of available officers. Senior police participants of Uttara

division suggested community patrols in Turag, and Uttar Khan involved more community residents compared to Uttara West and Dakhin Khan. In these areas the residents who volunteered patrolled along with paid security guards and police. In this sense, Turag and Uttar Khan community patrols seemed more organic and participatory. In addition, because of the volunteerism and joint initiatives with police, they appeared unique and distinct to community patrol in Uttara West and Dakhin Khan. In these later cases, patrol was performed either by paid non-residents or by some residents along with non-residents who were equally paid. The different patterns in relation to community participation in patrols across Uttara are set out in the following table.

Table 1: Distinct features of community patrol in Uttara

Locations	Features of patrol
Uttara West	• Patrollers are non-residents and paid. • All residents provide equal financial contribution to patrols.
Uttar Khan, Dakhin Khan & Turag	• Patrollers are both residents and non-residents. • All residents do not provide financial contribution and the contribution is not also equal.
Turag & Uttar Khan	• Some resident patrollers are volunteers. • A joint patrol is performed by the community and police in Turag only.

Although there were different levels and types of participation, contribution of all concerned from different positioning can also be seen as an important element of the community collective action. However, the distinct attributes that the study explored was the organising process of community patrol across Uttara. In case of Uttara West, initiation of community patrol even before the introduction of community policing was an effort to mobilise collective efficacy through an internal social process (Cordner, 2010; Grinc, 1994; Sun, Triplett, & Gainey, 2004). In contrast, collective efficacy in the form of community patrol in Turag, Uttar Khan and Dakhin Khan was not mobilised through an internal social process, it was rather brought about through a cooperative process in which the police played a facilitative role (Forester, 1999; Nalbandian, 1999; Potapchuck, Crocker, & Schechter, 1998).

Mediation – a traditional problem-solving tool

In the context of Bangladesh, mediation has a long tradition of practice (Hoque, 2014). Literary documents suggest that in Bangladesh local government representatives, such as the chairman and members of the Union Parishad or village headmen in rural areas and ward councillors in municipal areas, traditionally play the mediating role to resolve disputes and improve the relationship between the parties involved (Hoque, 2014; Police Regulations Bengal, 1943).

However, with the inception of community policing, the ward CPFs principally mediate many social disputes as a result of its practice. However, some disputes are mediated by joint initiatives of the police and CPFs; while local government representatives such as the municipal ward councillors and the chairman of the Union Parishads are legally empowered to resolve disputes (The Local Government (Union Parishads) Act, 2009).

Some of the problems addressed through mediation by CPFs related to landlord-tenant disputes, land dispute between neighbours, outstanding debts, and even domestic violence across Uttara. Mediation as an important problem-solving tool was used to assist parties to avoid conflict and unwanted involvement in litigation.

Although mediation is regarded as a tradition in community justice procedure and reflects community collective action, and ownership and the guardianship of community leaders, this study revealed paradoxically the dual police role of facilitating and controlling community-managed mediation. For instance, one CPF participant observed:

> *The police have defined what types of social disputes we can mediate. Generally, land disputes and minor problems between husbands and wives that the police feel bothered by are referred to us to settle. The police have restricted us to impose any fine or other forms of very minor punishment that was traditionally exercised by the community leaders for long in our society.* (CPF participant, Dakhin Khan)

This situation reflects police control over the operational jurisdiction of the CPF. The police authored *Community Policing Service Manual* and *Community Policing National Strategy* have simultaneously empowered the CPFs to mediate social disputes yet also disempowered them by taking away their traditional arbitration authority. Such experiences can be described as the 'paradox of empowerment' (Skelcher, 1993) and the 'cycle of disempowerment' (Hart, Jones, & Bains, 1997).

It also reflects the uneven power relations and the conflict of authority, both of which are not consistent with Myhill's (2006) proposal that the police need to empower the community to effectively participate in the policing process.

Conclusion

This article has explored and discussed the community participation process in community policing practice in Uttara. In line with the principle of, and the provision outlined in, the *National Strategy* and the *Service Manual* the participation process was initiated with the establishment of the CPFs. Then various forms of police-community meetings, and finally crime prevention programmes such as community patrol and mediation of social disputes have been articulated. In the process of each participating events, both community and police role have been critically analysed.

Community role in forming CPFs was seen limited and constrained. Only few police choose community elites could play police defined role in this regard. Constitution and composition of the forums were mostly police driven. Inviting people to the meetings for forming forums can be deemed as a means of gaining merely community approval. Although a quite different picture could be seen in case of Uttara West where community residents were more organised to elect security committees since before commencement of community policing. Therefore, it can be concluded that wherever police initiated to organise community residents to participate, the latter's role was defined by the former.

Moreover, the establishment of the CPFs and the coordination committees in Uttara engendered the construction and reinforcement of the social hierarchy associated with the police interest in creating multi-level community representative groups such as ward/section CPFs and two hierarchical levels of coordination committees. Regardless of the importance and necessity of the coordination committees, multi-layered community representation appears to have reinforced the existing social hierarchy. Police intention and interest in creating such structural hierarchy can be interpreted as the attempt of bureaucratising the participation in terms of operational process. The operational process of community participation within the structural hierarchy appears to have established hierarchical control and vertical accountability among the forums and committees.

Police-community meetings in Uttara appeared to be one of the key strategies for community participation. Homogeneity and acquaintances of residents seemed

positive attributes to be used for better attendance in the meetings in Uttara. However, scepticism remained as to the sustainability of community participation in these police-community meetings. Gradual downturn was the evidence of it. Police control over the frequency of meetings and selection of agenda and participants could be attributed to this.

Nevertheless, the meetings were seen as engaging the community principally to provide crime information to the police. The collection of information about crime and other social problems from the community residents was a basic and regular characteristic of community policing. Police tended more to seek information from people than to share it with them. Consequently, communication and information sharing were problematic. The police had a conservative attitude towards information sharing, particularly on the perceived need for secrecy to ensure investigation and operational outcomes. Therefore, without the active practice of information sharing, consultation and decision-making remained unfulfilled goals. The Uttara police tended to control the opportunity for the community to take part in consultation and decision-making.

However, police had a strategic partnership with only a few members of the forums or committees, particularly for decision-making about community patrol. On the other hand, they seemed to have partnership with the community patrollers in terms of only performing patrol together, as the latter were not usually invited to participate in decision-making about patrolling issues. Thus, the participation of the Uttara community was found to have been taking place at different hierarchical levels and to differing extents reflecting inequality. Briefly, participation in Uttara community policing was more stereotyped in practice and is represented by five levels -   educating people about the event, informing, limited consultation, controlled decision-making and partnership in a limited sphere. In most cases, community could participate to the levels and types that the police defined.

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