

# Community-Based Policing

## Improving Public Security through Increased Citizen-Police Collaboration



Bangladesh has experienced a sharp deterioration in public security in recent years, with a surge in incidents of robbery, extortion, assault, intimidation and gender-based violence. At the community level, the poor, women and ethnic minorities are especially vulnerable to crime, but they are reluctant to seek police assistance due to a lack of trust in law enforcement. Tensions and misunderstandings in community-police relations are exacerbated by a lack of opportunities for citizens to dialogue with the police. Simultaneously, citizens have little appreciation for the challenges that police face, including inadequate equipment, limited training, low salaries, and long work hours under difficult conditions.

Although often prioritized less than traditional development goals, public security underpins the ability to derive benefits from economic development and enhance the quality of life in Bangladesh. Financial and material improvements are increasingly understood to be dependent on sound security policies that permit citizens to take advantage of advancement opportunities. Police and citizens have a joint responsibility to ensure the safety of their communities, and longstanding barriers of apathy and mistrust must be broken down and replaced with opportunities for communication, strategic planning and problem solving.

Notwithstanding current challenges, the Bangladesh Police has taken some steps toward reform, including the creation of various village level community policing projects. Moreover, in 2008, under the previous caretaker administration, the police created a mandate for community policing throughout the country.

The Asia Foundation has been collaborating with police and citizens since 2004 on this effort at the community level in the Bogra district in the northwest, and Jessore and Madaripur in the south. The hallmark of this program is community-level engagement that, when coupled with national, divisional and district-level reforms, increases trust and partnerships between police and citizens. However, while some progress has been made, significant work remains to be done.

### COMMUNITY-BASED POLICING PROGRAM

Building on past experiences, in January 2011, The Asia Foundation launched a new 3-year Community-Based Policing (CBP) Program with the generous support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The goal of this initiative is to continue to work with police and citizens, as well as in collaboration with other international donors, to improve public security through increased citizen-police cooperation. As part of this effort, particular emphasis is being placed on Community Policing Forums (CPF) in 518 villages and municipalities evenly distributed across all 124 sub-districts in the northwestern Rajshahi and Rangpur Divisions.

The Foundation is cooperating with five implementing partners on this program: Association for Community Development (ACD) in Rajshahi, Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK) in Gaibandha, Light House in Bogra, Manab Kallyan Parishad (MKP) in Thakurgaon and RDRS Bangladesh in Rangpur. Together, this network of organizations is working to:



### BANGLADESH

The Asia Foundation has been working in Bangladesh since 1954.

The CBP program builds on decades of Foundation support for the work of local NGOs in the fields of human rights and access to justice, community legal service delivery, alternative dispute resolution and legal empowerment.

This program expands on past experience to promote community policing at the divisional, district, and village levels.

- **Strengthen Police Responsiveness to Citizen Needs.** Through holistic knowledge, attitudinal and skill based development, CBP is fostering law enforcement's understanding of the role community policing plays in increasing citizen support, and their ability to apply it in day-to-day operations.
- **Increase Citizen Engagement and Trust in Law Enforcement.** CBP is empowering citizens to participate in crime prevention activities through Community Policing Forums. These ward-level police-formed CPFs serve as critical bodies for joint police-citizen activities, especially in the areas of gender-based violence, human rights and disaster responsiveness.
- **Expand the Mandate for Community-Based Policing as a Strategic Priority.** CBP is encouraging a strategic dialogue among senior police, civil society and policy makers to widen the political space for participation in the reform process, and enhance community policing's legitimacy and chances for institutionalization.



Community-Based Policing is a philosophy that reshapes traditional police management and operational strategies through collaborative relationships between citizens and police. It applies a problem-solving approach that is both responsive to the needs of the community and sensitive to the challenges that police face in performing their duties. By creating spaces and opportunities for citizens and police to discuss their respective views, CBP helps police and citizens develop the trust, respect, and communication necessary to solve public security challenges.

For further information on Community-Based Policing please contact:  
 Hasan Mazumdar, Country Representative (hmazumdar@asiafound.org)  
 or Shanna Tova O'Reilly, Program Director (soreilly@asiafound.org)

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**HEADQUARTERS**  
 465 California Street,  
 9th Floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94104 USA  
 Tel: (415) 982-4640  
 Fax: (415) 392-8863  
 info@asiafound.org

**WASHINGTON, DC**  
 1779 Massachusetts Ave., NW  
 Suite 815  
 Washington, D.C. 20036 USA  
 Tel: (202) 588-9420  
 Fax: (202) 588-9409  
 info@asiafound-dc.org

**BANGLADESH**  
 House #5  
 Road #8  
 Baridhara  
 Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh  
 Tel: + 880 (2) 882-6941  
 Fax: + 880 (2) 882-6134  
 tafbg@asiafound.org

[www.asiafoundation.org](http://www.asiafoundation.org)