

Police Performance and Public Perception: Impact Evaluation

Background

In their effort to improve the professionalism, transparency and responsiveness, the Rajasthan Police undertook a comprehensive reform initiative targeted at various aspects of policing in the state. The three-year collaborative project between Rajasthan Police and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA was a major initiative. Primarily focused at police station level reforms this project aimed to develop and evaluate a set of police reforms with following objectives:

1. Enhance police performance
2. Improve public opinion
3. Gather objective information about crime rates and police performance.

Interventions

The project started in Sept 2005 with a preliminary survey to identify the problem areas. In depth interviews were conducted with police officers of all ranks, constabulary, members of public including slum dwellers, shop keepers, lawyers, judges, executive magistrates, media etc. The reports of various police commissions as well as available literature on police reforms were extensively consulted. The survey indicated that police is often seen as corrupt, lazy and arbitrary by public. Besides this, the self-perception of police was also found to be negative as they themselves felt overworked, unappreciated and victims of political manipulation. The deliberations following the result of survey led to the identification of the following interventions:

1. **In-service training program:** This included modules on:
 - a. Professional enhancement of investigating officers with inputs on improving the competence level and use of scientific techniques.
 - b. Improving public relations with inputs on 'soft skills' such as communication, mediation, stress management, motivation, team building, leadership, attitudinal change, nutrition, health etc.
2. **Community Observers:** Introduced for the first time, the community observers were local volunteers chosen to sit in the police station for approximately three hours in the morning and evening (peak hours), with the sole purpose of observing the activities within the police station. They had access to all parts of the police station including the lock up area. The presence of the observer would have many positive impacts: increasing

public awareness of the roles of the police, improving police behavior, and encouraging citizens to visit the police station.

3. **Weekly day off and Duty roster system:** Under this, the entire staff in selected police stations (except the SHO) received one day off every seven days. In addition, each person was given the opportunity to perform all the duties at the police station on a roster basis. The goal was to create a transparent and fair system of work allocation that would lead to lower stress, more flexibility, reduced corruption, better informed constabulary and higher overall productivity.
4. **Freezing of transfers:** All administrative transfers in the police stations were prohibited for a period of one and half years since frequent transfers (due to outside interference) had adverse effect on professional and family lives of police personnel.

The choice of the above mentioned reform initiatives was done keeping in mind their cost-effectiveness, simplicity (as they were to be implemented by SHOs of various police stations), sustenance and the fact that they were capable of generating evidence of success. In Feb 2006, the pre-pilot experimentation of these initiatives was launched in eleven police stations in Jaipur North, Jaipur East, Jaipur Rural and Sikar districts. After three months of successful execution, these initiatives were further scaled up to 150 police stations in eleven districts across Rajasthan: Ajmer, Alwar, Barmer, Chittorgarh, Pratapgarh, Dholpur, Hanumangarh, Jaipur City East, Kota City, Nagaur, and Udaipur for a period of one and a half years.

During the course of this project, around 350 investigation officers (Inspectors, Sub Inspectors and ASIs) were trained on a weeklong module at Rajasthan Police Academy Jaipur for improving their skills on investigation. Also, 2000 police personnel (all ranks) were trained on soft skills, via a three-day module, to improve public relations with the help of IL&FS (ETS).

Study Design

The goal of this project was not only to implement these reforms, but also to provide scientific and quantitative evidence of their effectiveness. Therefore within each district, the police stations and respondents were selected randomly into treatment and control samples. Data collection was done through baseline and end line surveys with continuous monitoring during the implementation period. The random selection of police stations and respondents ensured that the effectiveness of each of reforms is measured in an unbiased manner.

The project was completed in June 2008. The results from the analysis of the data are now available. The main findings are summarized below

Findings on Crime in Rajasthan, 2008:

- Percentage of households that were victims of crimes vary dramatically across districts:

District:	% Households victim to at least 1 crime
Ajmer	7%
Alwar	8%
Barmer	3%
Chittorgarh	10%
Dholpur	18%

District:	% Households victim to at least 1 crime
Hanumangarh	7%
Jaipur	10%
Kota	13%
Nagaur	4%
Udaipur	5%

- Of these crimes, 71% are never reported to the police
- In cases when the crime is reported to the police, an FIR is registered 72% of the time. Thus 21% of crimes occurring in households lead to FIRs being registered with the police.

Results of Project Interventions:

Increasing duration of police postings improves relations with the public:

- In stations where transfers were frozen, 19% fewer respondent reported fearing the police than in control stations
- In stations where transfers were frozen, 8% fewer police staff members complained of poor treatment or disrespect from the public
- In stations where transfers were frozen, 30% more crime victims reported to be fully or mostly satisfied with the police.

Communications and public relations training increases satisfaction of crime victims:

- Although on average only 27% of victims are satisfied with police investigations, training all police station staff more than doubles satisfaction—increasing it to 58%.

Investigation training for officers improves the quality of crime investigations:

- Crime victims in police station where officers received extra training report that police were more proactive in investigating—collecting more evidence, interviewing more witnesses, and making more arrests.
- In independent reviews of case files by retired police officers, cases investigated by officers who had received extra training were graded 13% higher in their use of scientific investigation techniques.

Freezing of transfers reduces staff grievances:

- Police staff in stations where transfers were frozen were more likely to respond positively on a variety of questions regarding fairness and transparency in the police.
- Freezing transfers made respondents less likely to complain of instability and uncertainty in postings.

Giving a weekly day off to police staff increases satisfaction:

- Police staff in stations that received a weekly off reported being more satisfied with their jobs than in control stations

Rotation of Duties makes constables more skilled at a variety of tasks:

- When given a test of their knowledge of basic police duties and information, constables at stations with duty rotation scored higher than those at control police stations.
- Constables at stations with duty rotation reported having higher levels of expertise in a wide range of duties as compared with those in control police stations.

Recommendations:

- **National Crime Victimization Survey:** A national crime victimization survey carried out every two or three years, helping us identify problem areas as well as providing data that could be used for assessing effectiveness of reform policies. Our survey provides a template for how this can be done
- **Freezing of Transfers:** Increasing transfer time appears to have significant effects on public relations, as well as decreasing staff grievances. Although this is often presented as a politically difficult reform, this project has shown that it is both feasible and beneficial and as such is recommended as a permanent goal.
- **Training:** Both investigation training and public relations training showed positive effects on public satisfaction and crime investigations. These interventions are straightforward to scale up and should be extended to the remaining Rajasthan Police staff.
- **Weekly Off/Rotation of Duties:** These interventions showed some effect in increasing staff moral and flexibility (in that more staff members were trained for each task). However, these effects did not generate significant changes in more traditional indicators of police performance.
- **Community Observer:** The community observer intervention had no effect on public perception of the police, potentially due to the short duration of the study, or with issues related to implementation. As such it cannot be recommended.