

A model policy for women in the police

This article is related
to General Studies-Paper -I
(Social issues) & II (Social
justice)

The Hindu

Writer- Aditi Datta (Senior Programme Officer, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative) and Nikita Bukhar (Research Officer, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative)

14 Mar, 2019

"It must ensure equal opportunities for women in all aspects of policing as well as a safe and enabling work environment."

Women constitute about 7% of the police strength in India. This number is expected to rise, with many States and Union Territories providing for 30% (and more) reservation for women in the police in specific ranks. However, this is not enough. The discourse on mainstreaming women in the police by making policing inclusive, non-discriminatory and efficient in India is missing in policy circles.

Need for policies

One way to mainstream women in the police is to develop a model policy that will challenge the deep-rooted patriarchy in the institution. Unfortunately, till now, not a single State police department has attempted to even draft such a policy. Thus, neither the Central nor State governments can get very far by merely adopting reservation to increase gender diversity without considering the need for policymaking. A model policy, while laying the foundation for equal opportunities for women in every aspect of policing, should also strive to create a safe and enabling work environment. Without this, all other efforts will remain piecemeal.

One of the first steps to ensure a level playing field for women in the police is to increase their numbers. Merely providing reservation is not enough; police departments should develop an action plan to achieve the target of 30% or more in a time-bound manner. This also applies to States that have not provided a quota as yet. Departments should also undertake special recruitment drives in every district to ensure geographical diversity. To achieve the target, the police should reach out to the media and educational institutions to spread awareness about opportunities for women in the police. Current data reveal that most women in the police are concentrated in the lower ranks. Efforts should be made to change this. The impulse to create women-only battalions for the sake of augmenting numbers should be eliminated.

Second, the model policy should strive to ensure that decisions on deployment of women are free of gender stereotyping to facilitate bringing women into leading operational positions. At present, there appears to be a tendency to sideline women, or give them policing tasks that are physically less demanding, or relegate them to desk duty, or make them work on crimes against women alone. Women police officers should be encouraged to take on public order and investigative crimes of all types, and should be given duties beyond the minimum mandated by special laws. Desk work too must be allocated evenly among men and women.

A major burden of family and childcare responsibilities falls on women. Yet, police departments still lack proper internal childcare support systems. Departments need to be mindful of this social reality and exercise sensitivity in making decisions on transfers and posting of women personnel. As far as possible, women should be posted in their home districts in consultation with supervising officers.

Most State police departments have received funds under the Modernisation of State Police Forces Scheme for providing separate toilets and changing rooms for women, and for constructing

separate accommodation for women with attached toilets in all police stations and units. Police departments must ensure the best use of this fund.

Preventing sexual harassment

Police departments must also ensure safe working spaces for women and adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination and harassment, in order to make policing a viable career option for women. Departments are legally bound to set up Internal Complaints Committees to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace. Departments must operationalise the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013.

Some of these suggestions have already been made by the National Conference of Women in Police. However, Central and State governments have not yet developed or adopted a comprehensive framework towards achieving substantive gender equality.

GS World Team...

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

What is it?

- In 2013, the Vishakha guidelines set by the Supreme Court were superseded by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- This act was passed by the Lok Sabha on 3 September 2012 and by the Rajya Sabha on February 26, 2013 to prevent the sexual harassment of women.
- This act was enforced on December 9, 2013, but this act was approved by the President on April 23, 2013.

Vishakha Guidelines

- This is a set of guidelines for prevention of sexual harassment of women at work place, determined by the Supreme Court of India in 1997.
- Accordingly, a complaint committee should be formed by the employer at the workplace.
- All employers should be aware of the laws and must stop harassment in any form.
- There should be no adverse environment for women at the workplace.
- The oppressed person can ask for the transfer of the person or the convicted person.

Provision of the act

- For more than 10 employees in all offices, there should be a compulsory complaint committee to deal with complaints there.

- Two members of the staff should have experience of social work or legal knowledge.
- Also, one member of the Complaint Committee should be from non-governmental organizations related to issues related to sexual harassment. Fifty percent of the nominated members should be women.
- The cases of sexual harassment at the workplace must be resolved by the complaint societies within 90 days. Otherwise, the penalty will be imposed, which can cancel the registration or license of the office.
- The person accused of sexual harassment can be sacked. Apart from this, if the allegations prove to be false, the complainant may have to face similar sentence.
- Under section 26 (1) of this Act, a person can be fined with a fine of Rs 50,000 for his role and infringement of duties.
- As a punishment, there can be imprisonment or fine up to 1 to 3 years.
- As sexual harassment is considered a crime, the victim should report to the officers.

According to statistics

- The number of women in police in India is only 7% at this time.
- There are only 586 women police stations across the country to hear the crimes against half the population of India. That is, there is not even a women police station in every district.
- According to the Bureau of Police Research and Development, there are only one lakh 20 thousand women police in India.

Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

1. Consider the following statements-

1. In India, the participation of women in Police department is only 7 Percent.
2. Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act was implemented on December 9th 2013.

Which of the following statements is/ are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

Q. Which aspects should be given importance by the central and state governments to increase women participation in Police department in India? Discuss.

(250 Words)

Note: Answer of Prelims Expected Question given on 13 Mar. is 1(b)

