

Balochistan Police Initiatives for Gender Responsive Policing

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Abstract

The Balochistan Province in Pakistan is the nation's largest with a sizable population and significant law enforcement responsibility. Balochistan has taken considerable steps to improve the status and opportunities for women working in law enforcement. These efforts, and initiatives and recommendations for further improvement will be thoroughly delineated.

Keywords: Women in Policing; Law Enforcement; Gender Responsive Policing; Pakistan; Balochistan

Introduction

Balochistan, covering 44% of Pakistan's total land mass with 347,190 sq. km. of area and with an approximate population of 8 million, is one of the four provinces of Pakistan. It is bordered by Afghanistan to the north and north-west, Iran to the south-west, Punjab and Sindh to the east, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas to the north-east and the Arabian Sea to the south. Quetta is the capital and the biggest city of Balochistan.

The Balochistan police agency is responsible for policing the 'A' areas in the province of Balochistan, which is about 5% of the total area and encompassing 70% of the total population. The current police force consists of 33,088, which is 0.4136 % of the province's population. According to official police data, the total recorded number of crimes in 2010 and 2011 were 8,008 and 8,094 respectively. Currently, in addition to ordinary street crimes, the Balochistan Police are faced with challenges of serious and organized crimes like terrorism, sectarian killing, target killing, insurgency, attacks on law enforcement personnel, kidnappings for ransom, enforced / involuntary disappearances or missing persons, recovery of dead bodies, and drugs-trafficking. They are also responsible for providing security to foreigners and NGOs within the area, and to take care of regional highways and critical facilities.

Despite limited resources, in terms of manpower and logistics, the police organization in Balochistan remains committed to promoting the welfare and well-being of all its officers and subordinate staff, especially female police personnel. While the issue of women police officers had been a neglected sector of our police until recently, some promising steps for their advancement, enhanced promotion, increased capacity, adequate training and education, and their safety and protection at work place have been implemented. A

comprehensive discussion of some of these initiatives taken for the welfare and improved job satisfaction of women police officers will follow.

Attracting more Women to the Police Profession

It has been difficult to persuade women to join the police in Balochistan in the current phase of serious disturbances and insurgency. The socio-economic and religious atmosphere of the province continues to present some serious challenges. However, police administrators within Balochistan have taken considerable measures to provide assurance and security to the aspirant women who want to join the law enforcement organization and the fight against crime and in becoming defenders of human rights for the weakest segments of society, especially women and children. The police in Balochistan are regularly interacting with the educated women in different social and academic circles to stand up to situations when females are strangled by tribal taboos and gender discriminatory cultural practices. Even more intimidating has been the attempt at empowering women to join the police. The police department is open to all candidates provided they fulfill the criteria and meet the requirements of merit. If women can join politics, sports, business, NGOs, the arts, and the media, then why not the police? Government policy makers have been flexible as it relates to age, height and qualification in the recruitment process for women in Balochistan, but there is a strong need for a concerted effort for widespread sensitization and an effective campaign by the Central Police Office and other relevant stakeholders to attract more women to the police profession.

A considerable number of women have joined the police department in recent years, but it is often felt as if the police department is only a male oriented agency. A meeting with various NGOs was held in August 2012 at the Central Police Office of Balochistan in Quetta to look for ways and means to motivate women residing within Balochistan province to join the police service. All the participants appreciated this initiative coordinated by the Balochistan Police and promised to motivate females to join the police. A questionnaire was designed and provided to participants for collecting the feedback of regional women about their perceptions on joining the police. It is believed that the outcome of this research will assist law enforcement administrators in devising an effective strategy as to how to attract more and more women to the police profession.

Training and Education

Females can clearly do and accomplish what men can, yet it is also a fact that the women of Pakistan and especially of Balochistan are not very exposed to and are not aware of the sophistication and patterns of modern day

crimes and the ways and means to counter them. In addition to basic police courses at the Police Training College in Quetta, other specialized courses like civil defense, first aid and traffic courses are being organized for female police officers to enhance their ability to tackle such assignments efficiently and professionally.

The women police officers of Balochistan police have been given a chance to visit and meet with female colleagues from other countries, and for the first time two well educated local female police officers have been nominated for foreign training courses through the coordination of Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS), Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) at the US Embassy in Islamabad. This ultimately will establish a pattern and standard for future foreign training for Pakistani female police officers, clearly something that had been neglected in the past.

The Balochistan female police officials have also been nominated and facilitated to attend courses, workshops and conferences especially arranged for the better understanding and handling of the crimes committed against women. This will provide them an interactive process of learning and an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences with other stakeholders. Locally, the police organization has provided them with driving skill and safety training at the Recruit Training Centre, in Kachmore, Quetta. Fifteen women police officers have been trained to ride motorcycles for patrolling in Quetta city and five motorcycles have also been allotted to Capital City Police in Quetta specifically for them. The impact of these initiatives can be observed within the days and months to come.

Enhanced Transport Facilities

The present day challenges of life are no longer the same as those that prevailed in the past. Women do not prefer to work at police stations far from their homes, especially due to the lack of transport facilities. Their pick and drop from home to the workplace safely is one of the major issues that had to be arranged. To address this sensitivity, the Balochistan police agency has provided women police officers with ample and adequate transport facility and options for the same purpose, with enhancements anticipated in the near future.

Charter of Duties

The usual work of the police involves the prevention of crimes, the investigation of cases, and the prosecution of criminals. This is a challenging task and is included within the formal code of conduct, a mandate for anyone who is a member of the police. Efforts are now being made to revise the charter of duties with proper job descriptions that will be appropriate and comfortable for the women police members in Balochistan.

The policy makers of the Balochistan police have decided to assign many female officers to non-uniform jobs i.e. administrative assignments (e.g. computer operators for PROMIS/PAFIS projects, driving license issuance, associated investigation officers in VAW cases, receptionists in police stations, record keepers in police stations, etc.) which will not only improve the visibility of these women, but may also bring a soft image of law enforcement and policing to the people. The police are gradually implementing this distribution of duties which is very much appreciated by the women police colleagues as reported to the regional senior offices.

The police department has posted a number of female constables as school teachers in the Police Grammar School in Quetta for teaching and imparting knowledge to the students. This has also been well received.

Women police officers are also involved in supervising and working in the Child and Women Protection Centre at the office of the Capital City Police Office in Quetta, which was established in 2006. They are also working in the Police Child Protection Centre at Jinnah Town in Quetta, which was established in 2009 in collaboration with Save the Children and a local NGO for providing services to victims of child abuse and juvenile offenders, and to collect data on these efforts.

Gender Responsive Policing as a Policy Option

In the male dominated society of the traditional province of Balochistan where different tribal systems are prevailing, women have not been allowed to work with the men in society, and this has not been appreciated in most of the tribal areas due to their closed society traditions and customs. Despite these social, political and tribal obstacles, the Balochistan police service has decided to opt for “Gender Responsive Policing” as a policy option and have implemented it into practice. The Gender Responsive Policing policy has been received from the National Police Bureau. It had been designed by GIZ with other stakeholders and has been adopted with steps taken to implement its provisions as much as possible within the limited means and resources. Recommendations made at the First Women Police Officers conference held in April 2011 in Islamabad were also taken into consideration for guidance and implementation. For example, a female DSP in the Capital City Police (CCP) in Quetta from the Balochistan Police has been nominated as a member of Board of Women Police Network at the national level and eight women police officers have been nominated as members of the Women Council in Quetta.

Moreover, an Action Plan Committee comprising of seven senior police officers and a female DSP was constituted in August 2012 in order to implement the directives of the Gender Strategy for Police 2012-2016, formulated by the National Police Bureau, Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan in collaboration with GIZ through the Gender Responsive Policing

Project. The committee is working on the strategy guidelines to improve the Gender Responsive Policing in Balochistan, which have been identified as:

- Improve the representation of women in the police;
- Develop capacities and competencies of women police officials;
- Enhance the role, positioning and visibility of female police officers;
- Cultivate a gender sensitive work environment;
- Assimilate gender learning into police training; and
- Enrich policing services with a gender equality perspective.

Meetings have been regularly held at the Central Police Office in Quetta to evaluate the progress and implementation of this policy.

Women Reporting Centre

A women's ability to claim protection from violence is constrained because of certain social, cultural, legal and economic inequalities, and by gender bias within the police and judiciary. The fear of being degraded during reporting, investigation and prosecution often restrains victims from opting for legal recourse. Violence against women (VAW) hence remains acceptable, even normal, in many communities.

The Balochistan police service has made the protection of the rights of women and girls an equally as important responsibility of the police. The Balochistan police agency is committed to fulfill its mandate of protecting women and girls, and undertaking the necessary measures to improve its procedures, protocols and processes in dealing with such violations. To address this issue, a Women Reporting Centre (WRC) has been established in October 2011 in the City Police Station in Quetta. This accomplishment is not only a milestone for gender responsive policing, but also provides hope for all oppressed women. The staff of the Women Reporting Centre has responded to every reported case against women's dignity and has attempted to protect them from future violence. Soon this Centre will be developed into a proper Women Police Station with more authorization to deal with cases of women rights violations. The funding for the construction of a new building for the WRC has already been approved by NAS of the US Embassy, with construction to be completed within the coming months.

Future Strategies

In addition to the above, the Balochistan Police intend to take the following steps to improve the work environment for women working in the police department and in an effort to sensitize male colleagues on gender issues as well:

- i.** To indicate an overall target over the next 5 years for increasing the employment of females with a fixed quota of 5% women police officers within the Balochistan Police including the Balochistan Constabulary in Quetta;
- ii.** To develop a five year (2012 – 2016) recruitment plan for female police officers within the agency rank structures, including women constable teacher assigned throughout Balochistan by observing 5% quota in refraction;
- iii.** Rules will be sufficiently relaxed for enrollment of women constables in the police department (except in Quetta district) by establishing flexibility as it relates to age, height and other qualifications;
- iv.** Female police officers will be assigned to police stations where the PROMIS (Police Record and Office Management Information System) has been installed;
- v.** Volunteer women police officers will be selected for Elite Police Training;
- vi.** Female police officers will be provided with wireless telecommunication devices where it is deemed necessary during duty hours;
- vii.** A complaint mechanism for the acknowledgement of grievances and for solution of problems will be devised and institutionalized in line with the Gender Responsive Policing policy;
- viii.** Noteworthy NGOs will be contacted to motivate the women of Balochistan for serving in all districts of Balochistan Police;
- ix.** Women police personnel will be sent to attend courses of capacity building, and efforts shall be made to establish a separate campus for them similar to the Police Training College in Chung, Lahore;
- x.** Quarterly meetings of women police officers will be held in the Conference Hall at the Central Police Office to discuss difficulties being faced by them. The Female DSP will prepare a report of the meeting points for the perusal of the Additional Inspector General of Police (Administration). The problems raised by female law enforcement personnel in their quarterly meetings will be discussed, and decisions will be taken in the six monthly meeting of the GRP – Action Plan Committee;
- xi.** Every female police officer will provide her contact / cell number to the Female DSP, so that the Female DSP could provide timely assignment information;
- xii.** A strong recommendation will be made to the Government of Balochistan for the creation of one post of “Female Superintendent of Police;”

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- xiii. The quota of Female Probationer Assistant Sub Inspectors will be increased;
 - xiv. Female police officers will be considered eligible for nomination to a UN Mission after completion of “D” Course and other required criteria;
 - xv. Those female police officers who are law school graduates will be posted/ attached as Law Instructor at the PTC / RTC;
 - xvi. The Computer Based Training (CBT) Course of one week duration will be arranged in PTC Sariab in Quetta for all female police officers;
 - xvii. It is imperative that a Female Police Station be established in the city of Quetta. The Assistant Inspector General Establishment will immediately submit a proposal for the establishment of this female police station;
 - xviii. The pick up and drop off of female police officers from their respective duty points will be facilitated and more transport facilities will be provided to them as soon as possible;
 - xix. Separate facilities or rooms will be allocated to female police staff in Police Lines in Quetta and newspapers and television will also be arranged for them; and
 - xx. Courses on the use of modern devices/computers and other training programs involving various skills needed for professional work will be arranged for female police officers.

It is hoped that a joint venture of all stakeholders and the commitment of senior police officials will bring a change in attitude towards criminal justice and police related gender issues and the problems affecting women police personnel in Balochistan. Some major preliminary steps have been taken and there is commitment that there will be more improvement in the future. There has been a leap in the right direction which will go a long way in ensuring the enhanced participation of women in the police services and in addressing female problems and the victimization of women. The provision of advocacy, support, facilitation, training, and equipment in making these initiatives and programs successful will always be welcome.

About the Author:

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