



ASSAM POLICE

Citizen Committees An innovative model of Community Policing in Assam



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A few words -

Nagarik Samiti (Citizen Committee), a unique idea in participatory policing was conceptualized and put into practice in July, 1996 by Guwahati City Police. As the city police chief of that time I could see lot of support and enthusiasm of ordinary citizens for this endeavor. I am happy to note that in a short span of time, the idea spread and Nagarik Samitis were formed in all police stations of our state. It has been one of the most successful and talked about participatory policing projects in the country. A drop somewhere became an ocean.

I wish the project all the best.

Kuladhar Saikia.
(KULADHAR SAIKIA)



The Birth

Ensuring a common platform to allow for peoples' participation in various spheres of law enforcement has been the underlying guiding force behind the initiative of Citizen Committee (Nagarik Samiti) in the state of Assam. The birth of Nagarik Samiti (Citizen Committee) dates back to 3rd July 1996 when the then Superintendent of Police, Guwahati City Shri Kuladhar Saikia, IPS, conceived and conceptualized the idea of a participatory platform for effective policing. In the first meeting with a cross section of citizens of Guwahati at Panbazar Police Station, the idea was mooted and with support from all the first Nagarik Samiti was launched on 3rd July 1996. In the following days police stations at Bharalumukh, Paltan Bazar, Dispur, Noonmati, Jalukbari witnessed the formation of such Samitis in the city. In no time the experiment spread to other city police stations resulting in wide acceptance by the people.





The Need

The whole experiment had been the result of the fact that inadequate trust of public in police puts immense hurdles in prevention and detection of crime and management of law and order. The police image in the eyes of public is far than satisfactory. The trust deficit between the law enforcers and the law abiding citizens not only demotivates the police but isolates the common people. And the police mostly end up working in an environment devoid of public goodwill. This results in inadequate information and feedback, and a very little or no co-operation from the public. The society facing the challenges spanning decades of insurgency and ethnic strife the existing police-public co-operation needs to be further strengthened. The participatory relation between the citizens and the law enforcing agencies can play a crucial role in catalyzing the mutual assistance in crime and law and order management.





The Organisational structure:-

As per the initial structure of Citizen Committee every police station was to have such a committee. However as the structure was made to be flexible depending on the local need and conditions, efforts were made to have such committees



ward wise to widen the scope of functions. In 2016 the initiative of Nagarik Committees was declared to be a state level project and all police stations in the state were to form such committees. All over the state now there are police station based Nagarik Committees. The President and the other members are to be selected by consensus. The O/C of the PS is the ex-officio secretary of the committee and has to attend its monthly meeting. SsP of districts and the C.P.(Guwahati City) attend quarterly meeting. But in cases of emergent need arising out of upcoming events/festivals meeting of the Committees may be convened. In monthly meetings generally the civil and crime related matters are discussed and ways and means of solving them are deliberated upon. Now there are Nagarik Committee in all 62 wards of the city and in all other police stations of the state and police is working in close co-ordination with them to prevent and control crime in society.



The brief layout of organizational structure of Nagarik Committee is shown below:-

- One Nagarik Committee in each police station
- A person of repute is to be selected as the chairman of the Nagarik Committee
- O/C of PS ex-officio Secy.
- I/C of OP Asstt. Secy. of Nagarik Committee

Nagarik Committee members are residents of the ward/police stations, and no person shall be involved in any civil or criminal case, and it is essentially voluntary. The Superintendents of police of the districts take active role in ensuring that citizens representing different section of people are included in the committee.



Aims and objectives:-

The brief aims and objectives of Nagarik Committee are shown below:-

- To involve the public towards evolving a society with peace and tranquility in liaison with police
- To help police - In prevention & detection of crime
In maintenance of law and order
- To strengthen existing police-public relationship
- To ensure public participation in law and order plan with respect to celebration of big events, mega festivals and functions.



These aims are laid down by keeping in mind the overall intent, purpose and participation to deliver beneficial outcomes both for the police and the host community. These attainable goals and objectives are setup after the discussion with various communities followed by careful consideration of their problems.

Achievements

These committees are now spread in all the 343 police stations of Assam and are holding regular meetings and sessions. This community policing model has been appreciated for its role in assisting the local police for law and order enforcement, crime prevention and detection of different crimes. There are examples galore where such Nagarik Committees have successfully participated in managing the conglomeration of huge crowd gathered during mega festivals like Ambubachi Mela, Jonbeel Mela, Cricket and other sports events of International level apart from the local PS level functions. In a number crimes there are instances where committed members of such committees with active collaboration of public have provided useful leads through real time inputs assisting investigation process.





Twenty three years from its beginning, the Nagarik Committee is yet to see a data management system indicating its quantitative contributions. However, there is a strong need to develop a blue print of data management system to streamline data on the performance of Nagarik Committee. In absence of accurate data, the huge contribution of Nagarik Committee cannot be undermined and can be summarized in the following manner:-



A) The members of Nagarik Committee provide useful informations acquired during their daily routine and interactions with the people. They furnish relevant informations on matters related with updation of National Register of Citizens(NRC), drug abuse, human trafficking, cyber crime, mob lynching and violence cases, hooch tragedy, witch hunting, ethnic violence, domestic violence, agitations, that enormously help police. Many a times, the information given by them led to the arrest of criminals and recovery of stolen goods.

B) They act as a check on misuse of power by police at police station level because many members had direct access to Senior officers.



C) Many monthly, bimonthly and quarterly meetings were regularly attended by the members of Nagarik Committee and this has created attitudinal and perceptual changes within the police and among the public. The ripples of changes have increased friendly relation and mutual respect between the police and the public.

D) Nagarik Committees' massive contributions become evident during celebrations of Republic Day, Independence Day, VIP visits and mega events like Ambubashi Mela, football matches, cricket matches etc. They in sync with VDP played very vital role in creating social awareness against rumours, drug abuse, communal tension etc.



Conclusion

The functioning of Nagarik Committee offers tremendous opportunities to make the community work as a force multiplier. If Nagarik Committee works efficiently, it not only enhances the information base for the police but also makes people realize the complexities faced by the police in law enforcement.

Let us strive hard to strengthen Nagarik Committee throughout length and breadth of Assam in innovative ways. Let us make this a strong institution of Community Policing in the state.