



Kuladhar Saikia, IPS



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A few words

Her neighbours have branded her a 'witch'.

The community members believe she is the root cause of all ills and evils - natural or other calamities, medical emergencies or epidemics or any other ominous things that occur in the village.

This is good enough cause to chalk out a concerted game plan to insult, humiliate, inflict mental and physical torture, and socially ostracize her -

in Assam she is a Daini, in Chhattisgarh she is called a Tonhi. The nomenclature may be different across the states but it is the same horrific stories of persecution and rights violations mostly on women.

Project prahari was conceived and initiated in August/2001 in a remote village Thaigarguri of Kokrajhar district when an acute need was felt to tackle and curb social menaces like Witch Hunting born out of social prejudices in a more holistic manner involving different stakeholders like women groups, science clubs, social activists including law enforcers. People's power was sought to be harnessed in a participatory framework where they were involved in productive ventures where community decision-making processes were to be encouraged with the local police playing the role of change-agent. Perhaps this is the reason why this project has been termed as 'Being a Change Agent' in the placement of Harvard Business Review case study displays. This successful experiment spread to all over the state when it was declared as a state level police project. Presently it's domain has encompassed other social issues like creation of public awareness against mass-lynching and violence, drug-abuse etc.

I am happy that Project Prahari has been recognized as a movement of the people-friendly policing due to the untiring efforts of the Assam Police personnel.

I wish it further success in the days to come.

Kuladhar Saikia
(KULADHAR SAIKIA)

...This is a great project. ...an example of how community policing and community development are mutually reinforcing.

- Prof. Drew Hyman,
Pennsylvania State University, USA.

...I was quite impressed with the effort...it serves at least two purposes: gives a humane face to the police and makes the development work in the chosen villages much easier to implement from the point of view of the people.

- Sandeep Pandey, Magssasay Award winner,
while interacting with PRAHARI villagers.

...Project PRAHARI involving a comprehensive approach towards community development in backward areas generates a lot of interest within us...we shall not be found wanting in extending our contribution to Project PRAHARI.

- P.K. Mitra, General Manager (Commercial Banking),
State Bank of India (NE Circle).

...I was simply amazed at the novel initiatives taken by Assam Police like Project PRAHARI. ...You have opened new vistas not only for Assam Police but also for the Assamese people.

- S.K. Dutta, Addl. Director General & Inspector General of Police,
Intelligence Branch, West Bengal.

...Assam Police has undertaken a very innovative 'Community Policing Project'. ...The police have also been enlisting the support of social activists.

- Sankar Sen, IPS (Retd.), Former Director, National Police Academy,
Former Director General, National Human Rights Commission.

...It focuses on containing violence not through use of force but creating social conditions free from intolerance, superstition and prejudices.

- R.S. Mooshahary,
Director General, National Security Guard.

...Community Development Programme undertaken by the Assam Police to eradicate social maladies.

- Manmohan Singh,
Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha.

...This is a great initiative.

- N.M. Kishore,
World Bank.

...We were dacoits. ...police has approached to help us. ...we surrendered. But our villagers were not accepting us. Police through Project PRAHARI assimilated us with our community and are trying to develop our village.

- Netai Mian, Azad,
Khagail Village, Karimganj.

...we are going ahead by taking different developmental schemes under Project PRAHARI.

- Dipali Basumatary,
Vice President, Project PRAHARI, Thaingerguri.



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Birth of a Mission

The spine-chilling incident of brutal killing of five innocent villagers in the name of witches in the later part of the year 2000, in Thraigarguri village stirred the conscience of law-enforcing agencies and demonstrated their helplessness in preventing such happenings. These problems are accentuated by terrorist elements to their benefits due to inhospitable and socially isolated terrain which kept police at bay. Shri Kuladhar Saikia, an official of Indian Police Service, who has just joined in August, 2001 as Deputy Inspector General of Police, in the Western Range, had made critical and objective analysis of these phenomena and conceptualized an approach to Community Policing which would hit at the root cause of the social malady so that the law enforcement agency can play a major role in preventing recurrence of such incidents.



This is the birth of the initiative called **Project PRAHARI** which is an acronym for " People for Progress" in local language. With the initial success at Kokrajhar, the Project has spread to other villages after Shri Harekrishna Deka, DGP, Assam Police declared it to be a state level initiative . Now every police district under this Project is selecting a village which may be either crime infested or communally sensitive or terrorist prone or may be a village which is socially underprivileged.

As crimes and terrorist violence as a result of acute poverty and social ignorance have been affecting the daily policing in this part of land such initiative has given immense potential to other public agencies to learn and adopt such system of community participation and decision

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making in solving the day to day problems afflicting the lives of under developed and backward communities. Because of frequent interactions with the community members, a bridge of friendship and mutual co-operation has been built between the police and the communities. This



has resulted in more accountability of the law enforcement agencies to the public and in turn police is being benefited by the intelligence inputs coming from the community members leading to reduction and prevention of crime and terrorist violence, social tension and ethnic conflicts. As the initiative Project PRAHARI encourages sustainable development BY PARTICIPATION, it has been a silent movement to make use of human potential for community development and establishment of a crime free community where police has been recognized as one of the important stakeholders.

Objectives

-  Prevention of Social conflict, delinquencies and eradication of superstitions and prejudices like witch hunting, black magic etc.
-  Empowerment, knowledge accessibility and capacity building for vertical mobility.
-  Social participation, decision making, development and management.
-  Foster community ownership of development.
-  **Bottom up** strategy in contrast to the “trickle down effect”.
-  Building Social capital through inclusion.
-  Reconnecting the individuals with community, and communities with the government and economy.
-  A Face to the Uniform.

Community Partners

Local Police would play a pivotal role in the network of Community Partners involving different development agencies, NGOs, village institutions, providers of credit facilities and existing youth clubs & women organisation.

Selection Criteria

In selection of a village under the project the local police would be guided by the following considerations:-





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- A) A criminal/terrorist prone area.
- B) Communally sensitive pockets.
- C) Backward and isolated village with predominance of socially under privileged classes.

Change Agent

The Police would act as a Change Agent in this process of people friendly policing. The aim of such endeavour is to infuse a sense of empowerment to the people to resolve the conflict situations affecting their daily life by means of community participation, decision making and mobilizing local resources to achieve sustainable development.

Action Plan

To meet the objectives of this initiative, networking between different developmental agencies are started at the behest of the local police, who plays the role of a catalyst in the whole process of development and social advancement. The action plan devised by different stakeholders in Community Management Group is brought by police to the notice of governmental agencies, NGOs, social activists and financial institutions so that an integrated approach to sustainable development is achieved by using infrastructural and manpower resources of the police and the community. This initiative has been taken in several rural areas of the State where the twin problem of social isolation and terrorism has been affecting the social life. Regular meetings of the Community Management Groups have been organized for planning, implementation and feedback. Awareness campaign for people led development, literary camps, health education sessions organized by local police have motivated the communities to go for community participation in developmental activities.



Management

The following management would coordinate and oversee the progress of the project at the state level.

- I. Director General of Police, Assam Chairman.

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2. All Deputy Inspector General (Ranges) would act as Range Nodal Officer to coordinate between Prahari villages within the Range.
3. Superintendent of Police in the district would act as district Nodal Officers.
4. The Officers in-charge of Police Station would act as Thana level Nodal Officers.

Results revisited

CHANNELISING PEOPLE'S POWER

No more the villagers from Surfanggunguri, Kolabari, Chilsili bari, Kharbhujā look up to others for assistance in managing the natural community resources that they are endowed with for betterment of



community life and living. Local Police brought them on a common platform to resolve group conflicts to activate an abandoned and dilapidated canal for more than a decade running through their villages. In a record time of 25 days, they dug up, cleaned and repaired the 5 km long **Longa Canal** by mobilising peoples' power without outside help in the form of either materials or equipments or financial assistance.

Now water flows through these villages irrigating their land, allowing them to cultivate more than one crop in a year. Through **PRAHARI** Water User Committee they will manage the canal and the water resource. This effort has been replicated by the villagers of Dohsingimari under Golaghat district when they decided to dig up one km long canal to get water from the river for irrigation. The people's power and strong motivation for vertical mobility of the community members were the only resources they had in their mission under **Project PRAHARI**.

ENHANCING CAPACITY BUILDING

To increase their capacity to utilize local resources, crafts & skills and knowledge, they needed input of market driven strategies to stay on the path of sustainable development. Villagers of Thaigarguri, Islampur, Kolabari, Demdema along with others 7(seven) villages in Kokrajhar District were trained in sericultural occupation, weaving, and modern agriculture techniques through multi agency approach. Experts from National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad exposed the weavers to latest and trendy designs. Apiculture has become a popular means of livelihood in Betbari village of Bongaigaon district. Village youths of Taiphaneng village in Tinsukia district are being imparted lessons in





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driving by police drivers . Encouraged by the gesture of The Cane and Bamboo Technology Center (UNIDO) , a team of youths from Betbari, Shipansila and Sarapara (Bongaigaon district) received advanced training in bamboo craft, making of venetian blinds and other products having market demand.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Victims of underdevelopment, illiteracy and social prejudices are learning the lessons of emancipation and empowerment under the umbrella of **Project PRAHARI** . Not only the women have majority

participation in Community Management Group of the village but are also mandatorily holding important offices in the CMG and in the discussion held at Community Centres, so that the silent majority has a voice and a role in decision making regarding formulation of Action



Plan ,implementation and management of community accounts . Exposing them to the knowledge of maternity and reproductive health and medical education has stopped the menace of witch hunting in the area where local quacks were ruling the roost .

CREATING FORWARD LINKAGES

The lack of marketing network has been a bane on the development process . To ensure marketing outlet in a competitive environment, the local police is playing an important role in liaising with different marketing agencies in reaching out to the upmarket consumers in the town and cities . Stalls displaying and selling products bearing the signs of traditional craftsmanship are a regular scene in the trade fairs, Brahmaputra Beach Festival , NEDFI haat etc..

CAMPAIGNING AGAINST SOCIAL PREJUDICES

The project has offered the villagers a platform to launch a proactive strategy against social prejudices . The villagers of Thaigneguri who had witnessed and perpetrated the massacre of five innocent villagers branding them as witches have taken the pledge to launch public awareness mission against recurrence of such brutality by visiting different localities and villages and interacting with their brethren to dispel such superstitions and social maladies . The recent killing of a woman in the

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village of Goabari , Bongaigaon district prompted the Thaignerguri people to visit and persuade them from abstaining from such heinous onslaught on human rights.

IMPACTING CRIME SCENARIO

Engagement in positive developmental activities has resulted in the incidence of crime plummeting . Straying of youths into criminal gangs



due to underdevelopment and lack of meaningful economic opportunities has been marginalized. The extremists lost public support in these areas after launch of **Project PRAHARI** and Police are being fed with actionable inputs for operations against extremists. The II dreaded dacoits of Khagail village of Karimganj district gave up their arms and illegal activities and came forward to participate in community projects and embraced

the good will of the community .In Basdhar village of Hailakandi dist. a number of fugitives surrendered before the Police with the promise to work for peace and prosperity of the community. The Community Centres in all the Prahari villages by the CMG with the help of local resources has become a meeting point for resolution of conflicts , ethnic disputes and disharmony.

NETWORKING

A Conference on Development and Community Policing at Guwahati, the State capital, provided the villagers under **Project PRAHARI**, a unique opportunity for creation of a social network. NGO's, social activists, and experts of developmental studies instructed and imparted valuable inputs in open house session with the villagers at the prestigious Shankardev Kala Khestra.. Magsaysay award winner, Sandeep Pandey and executives of Lizzat Papad group among others, shared views with the villagers. A visit to the Horticultural Research Station, Pachauli nursery, and mushroom production centre etc exposed them to new economic opportunities.



FACE TO THE UNIFORM

The impact of Project PRAHARI was not only felt by the villagers but also by the lowest rung of police who underwent an attitudinal change

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bringing about a paradigm shift in police- public relationship. There is greater and more open interaction between the community and law enforcing agency manifested by a sensitivity and mutual trust not seen earlier.

FIGHTING ILLITERACY

Rather than looking in askance to outside agencies, villagers of PRAHARI learned to mend their places of learning . Repairing of existing school buildings, arranging basic facilities, persuading the drop outs to rejoin, making headway in adult- literacy and an acute awareness of education for all—became a mission. In the PRAHARI villages of North Lakhimpur dist. a library was established – laying the pillars of a sound educational system.

PRESERVING THE ENVIRONMENT

Large scale plantation of ecologically suitable varieties and economically fast growing species in all PRAHARI villagers emphasized the need of preserving the elements. Charcoal of high calorific value is being thought of as a commercially viable by product through management of bamboo waste—in Sipansila, Betbari and Sarapara villages of Bongaigaon district. Children in villages like Thaigeruri and others in Kokrajahr dist. Planted fruit bearing trees around their schools—thus imbibing young minds with the concept of community management of forestry.

APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

The traditional technologies and skills are being improved upon for increasing their production and productivity . Villagers of Kharbuja and Chirkut used local materials with improvised technique for harnessing excess water to irrigate their land. Technology Institutes are being roped in for adapting the technique and production process for local needs. In collaboration with IIT, Guwahati, priority sectors have been identified for upgradation of rural technology in select villages.



VILLAGE COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The remote and cut off PRAHARI villages are no longer isolated and inaccessible —thanks to the police public effort. The only resource the Lauripara villagers had —the strong motivation , will and community strength when they built the 3 km long road connecting them to the outside world. Similar actions were replicated in the villages of Tai-Phaneng in Tinsukia dist, Tengapathar in Lakhimpur district, Sialmari in Kokrajahr dist and dozen others.

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BUILDING BRIDGE OF FRIENDSHIP



A sense of belongingness and commitment to the community members from law enforcing agencies has dispelled the ageold phobic reaction to the police by the villagers. The co-operative action between the CMG and the police force have resulted in construction and repairing of structures across the rivers facilitating communication and symbolizing the bridges of friendship. Now, the children from Sarapara village can reach to their school at Betbari crossing the river Kachua over the 200 ft long wooden bridge made possible by the joint endeavour of Bongaigaon District Police, Developmental agencies and local villagers. No more the school kids run the risk of falling in the river which was a frequent occurrence in the past, when in the name of bridge there was only a lone bamboo hung precariously. At Nayak Gaon in Kokrajhar, Police and villagers can now boast of repairing the dilapidated bridge disrupting the communication between Kokrajhar and Dhubri districts.

HEALTH & HYGIENE

Besides the visits by medical check up teams, the villagers learned of reproductive & maternity health & hygiene from reputed NGO's. Popularisation of low cost sanitary system in villages of Hailakandi district, fixing of deep tube wells in villages of Kokrajahr district, sensitization regarding free health opportunities available in Govt. hospitals were some measures significantly improving the quality of life of hapless villagers. Exposing them to the knowledge of maternity and reproductive health and medical education has stopped the menace of witch hunting in the area where local quacks were ruling the roost.





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❖ PROJECT PRAHARI RAISES VOICE AGAINST GENDER-VIOLENCE

- In a joint effort by the CID and Project Prahari of Assam Police in association with the National Institute for Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCID), a workshop was held to chalk out a strategy to prevent crimes against women. The workshop, which saw the participation of law-enforcement officers, NGOs, women groups, civil society members, researchers, etc, was highly successful in spreading awareness about gender violence and the means to tackle the same. Some of the families of such victims were also present in the workshop where social activists from across the State were also invited.

During the course of the workshop, researchers, experts, police officers and lawyers talked about the nitty-gritty's of the situation and the means to ensure justice to victims of such incidents. Valedictory function was graced by the Director General of Police (DGP) of Assam Police.



- Project Prahari of Assam Police also joined hands with the Assam State Women Commission to work jointly against the menace of witch hunting and remove superstitious beliefs amongst people living in remote areas. Work shop cum awareness camp was attended by the chairperson and members of the commission along with prahari villagers at Habrobari, under Sefanguri P.S on 14th June, 2011 so that awareness against witch hunting can be created.



"We all know that Project Prahari of Assam Police which started in the year 2001 had played an important role in containing such crimes arising out of superstitions like witch craft. This project by Assam Police has been successful in achieving the objectives of addressing to the causative factors sustaining the social delinquencies in the state in the

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form of witch craft, killing. It is also learnt that the stake holders in the mission of Project Prahari are the community members, existing village institutions, development agencies, financial institutions, NGOs. In this regard Assam State Commission for Women would like to play an active role to carry the mission forward by creating a bond of joint partnership with the Assam Police in the endeavour Project Prahari. Also, it is our belief that people from social action groups should be included in this mission to broaden the platform of fight against such social maladies & prejudices like witch craft". (Chairperson, Assam State Commission for Women, 26th April, 2011).

- "Request you kindly to involve "Prahari" as an associate NGO of the Assam State AIDS Control Society to implement the AIDS prevention programme in the Assam Police and also in the community". (Assam State AIDS Control Society, Guwahati, 2nd February 2005)

❖ **ROLE IN ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION AGAINST WITCH HUNTING**

Another landmark achievement for Project Prahari of the Assam Police was its active role in suggesting measures for the preparation of the draft legislation against witch hunting. A legislation to protect probable victims of witch hunting had been a long-standing demand in the State. This demand finally became a reality when it was enacted as a law by the State government in the year 2015.



❖ **PROJECT PRAHARI: DEFINING SMART POLICING**

Project Prahari got a shot in the arm when it received widespread acclaim during the national seminar on SMART Policing at Guwahati in the year 2015. The regional conference was organized by BPR&D, Government of India and was attended by officials from different parts of the country. During the conference, all the participants hailed Project Prahari in the context of SMART policing in the country.





PRAHARI GETS NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

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Project Prahari: An initiative in community policing

In village after village in Assam, a unique community policing initiative is changing the face of society and encouraging community participation for sustainable development.

From a small beginning in a remote backward village in militancy affected Kokrajhar district of Assam, Project Prahari, an acronym for 'people for progress' is now a state level initiative. The aim of the project is to infuse a sense of empowerment in the people to

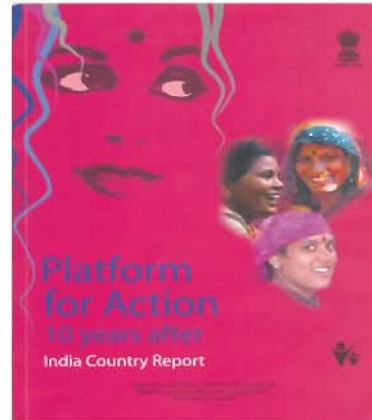


resolve conflict situations affecting their daily lives by means of community participation, decision-making and mobilising local resources to achieve sustainable development.

Thrust areas range from income generation ventures for women and youth, infrastructure development, education, health and hygiene and adaptation of technology to local needs. Community management groups with representation of all groups and majority participation of women are constituted in each village. This group draws up an action plan tuned to the needs of the community. The police act as change agents facilitating networking and tie-ups with developmental agencies.

The success of the project is evident in each of the 43 villages where it has been implemented. The village communities have built roads, bridges, irrigation canals, repaired dilapidated schools and started income generation ventures. Crime in the area has decreased, dacoits have been rehabilitated and unemployed youth have channelised their energies into making better lives for themselves and their communities.

The country status report "Platform for Action: After 10 years" published by Ministry of Human Resources Development, Department of Women and Child Welfare, Govt. of India and presented to UNO, General Assembly meeting in 2005 has highlighted the achievement of the Project Prahari as a successful model of women empowerment.



- Faculty members from the Management institute INSEAD, Singapore interacted with villagers from Thaignerguri, Kalabari, Betbari, etc. of Kokrajhar and ngagaon as part of field visits for case study formulation on the project. The team also made a journey over the Bridge of Friendship built by the Prahari villagers over the Kachua river at Betbari. A case study is made out on the Project Prahari by INSEAD, Singapore for global distribution in the educational and Management Institutes. The case study on Police as change agent through Prahari is made available by Harvard Business Review since the year 2015.



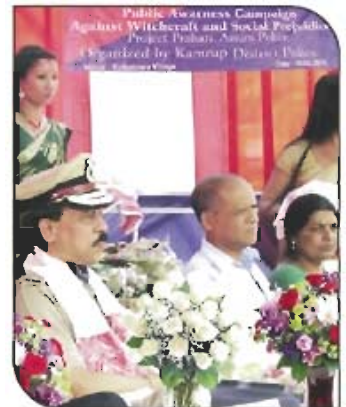
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- Students and Researchers on Conflict Transformation and Peace Building Studies from Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University, visited Prahari villages in Kokrajhar and interacted with the villagers. "I want to say how grateful we are that you have so generously agreed to facilitate a visit of some of the students of Conflict Transformation & Peace building program at Lady Shri Ram College to visit Assam and witness first hand the remarkable initiative for community peace building that have been put in place by the police force and your own commitment to take the process further for the development of the state". (Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Principal, Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi)
- Probationers belonging to IAS visited the Prahari villages as part of field level study.
- On invitation, the Prahari model was presented at the 3rd Asian Criminology Conference at TISS, Mumbai, Institute of Economic Growth (Delhi University), Jamia Milia University, Tezpur Central University, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Indian Institute of Public Administration, National Community Policing Workshop at National Police Academy, IIT, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy under National University of Singapore, reputed Management institutes in country and abroad.
- Prahari roped in OKD Institute of Social Change and Development to make a study into the dynamics of Witch Craft related offences and the policy prescriptions for prevention of this social menace.

❖ **IMPRESSION ON PRAHARI: A NOTE BY THE VISITING IIT FACULTIES**

"... A total of 13 spinning spindles were there in the community centre. Around 6 were working and remaining had some simple mechanical problems. The visiting team advised how to maintain the DG set (electricity is not available in the village) and the spinning units. Besides there were quite a few looms presently operated at different residences by the weavers. The weavers were found to be very enthusiastic and receptive to ideas. Professor Das had a session with the weavers and he suggested many tips for improvement in quality of the products and also for higher productivity. Dr. Kakoty briefed about utility and production of Biogas & Vermicompost. Mr Mili, SDPO, assured the visiting team of all help for the scheme. The team was very much impressed by the activities of PRAHARI as well as the villagers..





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Then the team went to another PRAHARI village, namely Islampur, a Rabha tribe dominated village. A school premise was arranged for a meeting where all the visitors were felicitated with traditional handloom products. Here weaving activities were going on and the villagers informed that some weavers had gone to some other places including Darrang district for providing training for weaving of traditional garments.



...Prof Das stressed about quality development and value addition of the woven clothes. For this, he offered to train a few weavers at IIT Guwahati. In this context he also explained about the improvised loin loom developed in IIT Guwahati and the advantages of using it. The Mahila Samiti also showed their bank account where they have deposited the sale proceeds from their products. They sold products not only locally but also in NEDFi-hut and Sankardeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati. About 100 people attended the meeting. The third PRAHARI village visited by the team was Kolabari. The community center was impressive as about 12 looms were seen busy.

Through an informal chat the villagers were told about the training programme to be imparted in IIT Guwahati. The villagers expressed their willingness to participate in these programmes. Finally the team arrived at Sherfangguri police station and discussed about the visit..."
(Impression of Prahari villages visited by IIT Guwahati team, comprising Dr S K Kakoty, Associate Professor, Mechanical Engineering, Mr A K Das, Associate Professor, Department of Design, of IIT Gauhati and Mr Mohan Ch. Bora, Project Engineer, TBU of KVIC, IIT Guwahati.

❖ FROM THE DGP'S DESK TO THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS OF POLICE

➤ A concerted awareness drive may be undertaken in the vulnerable areas as a part of Project Prahari under the jurisdiction of your district as an immediate and urgent strategy to curb social prejudices and resultant crimes. Apart from taking appropriate police actions as per the law and ensuring speedy investigation and disposal of such cases, it is imperative that



you undertake the following actions as part of Prahari strategy to contain this social menace:

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(i) Interactive sessions with local people may be organized at the Thana-level where reasons for prevalence of such practices may be analysed and respectable people of the locality, Social Action Groups of repute, Mahila Samittees, Media, Science Clubs, Psychologists, Students and Youths may be spread into spread awareness against these evil practices.

(ii) Medical camps may be organized occasionally with the help of local Medical officers and other voluntary health organizations to take care of the immediate health needs in the interior areas.

(iii) Audio /Visuals/Street Plays with these themes in mind may be organized with the help of local artists in some of the vulnerable areas.

(iv) Educated and socially aware people may be requested to lend their hands in the campaign through meetings, speeches, songs and writings.

(Khagen Sarma, IPS, Director General of Police, Assam, 3rd November, 2014)

➤ "Since its inception in August, 2001 at Thaignerguri village in Kokrajhar district, Project Prahari by Assam Police has been successful in achieving the objectives of addressing the causative factors sustaining militancy and social delinquencies in the State. The strategy adopted in the project focuses on community participation, decision making

and management of community assets and worth through community policing. The stakeholders in the mission are the community members, existing village institutions, developmental agencies, financial institutions, NGOs, etc where the police is playing the pivotal role of a Change Agent. To ensure sustainability of the Project, the management of the Project has been institutionalized by having a State-level Nodal officer to co-ordinate between the village-level initiatives.





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You will be happy to know that Project Prahari, along with the Assam State Commission for Women, have proposed joint action programmes which will be assisted by different social action groups, NGOs and other development agencies.

In this regard, you are requested to take active role in expanding Project Prahari to already affected villages and to vulnerable areas to prevent occurrences of such cases." (S. Barua, IPS, Director General of Police, Assam 29th April, 2011)



- "You are aware that the special effort through Project Prahari, a community policing project of Assam Police, which has earned lot of goodwill from the public and attracted media attention, has impacted a number of villages positively in the prevention of such crimes as the project allows community participation in control of crimes. Formation of Prahari committees in the identified vulnerable villages would help in gathering regular intelligence regarding the gradual development of a potential crime situation. Every vulnerable village may have one village Prahari committee to keep a vigil over such developments. The committee should include 6/7 members from students/youths and women groups and other progressive elements of the village and the Officer-in-Charge of the local Police Station should develop good rapport and liaison with these members to get to know the community happenings of the village." (D.N. Dutt, IPS, Director General of Police, Assam, 7th September, 2006)



- "You aware that Assam Police Initiated Project Prahari in 2001 with the object of people friendly policing. The project generated lot of good will and spontaneous responds from the public resulting in better crime control and reduction of violence.

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This initiative has been widely acclaimed in several all India platforms. A letter of appreciation for Hon'ble President of India and special mention of the project in the "Platform for Action : India Country Report" submitted by the Govt. of India to general assembly session of the UNO, Newyork recently have earned laurels for Assam Police. Your active involvement in taking the project to more than 50 odd villages across the state has made this possible.

In this backdrop, i would like to request you to take accelerated initiatives for the spread and sustainability of the project on following lines:

1. Frequent visits to Prahari villages and interactions with the villages are to be carried out.
2. Periodical assessment of the progress of the project should be done.
3. Devise a mechanism for spread of the project from this nuclear villages." (P.V.Sumant, IPS, Director General of Police, Assam)

❖ **ECHOES**

- "Project Prahari is an example of how to bring economic and social development together by working with communities, and how such initiatives can tackle long-standing ill practices such as this. **Kuladhar Saikia, IPS, Additional Director General of Police and Nodal officer, Prahari, Assam addressing the Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi on the topic 'Witch hunting: The unarticulated stories of rights violations' (August 24, 2012)**



- "It is worthwhile to mention here that initiatives such as the ongoing Project Prahari, an Assam Police initiative where local police act as a change agent to facilitate community participation in prevention and detection of crimes which affect the lives of rural women in the form of social prejudices like witch hunting etc. and militancy related violence need to be encouraged to cover more extensive areas of social backwardness and isolation."(Report of Task Force On Crime Against Women, A multidisciplinary committee constituted by Govt. of Assam in 2013)





PROJECT PRAHARI : AN UNIQUE ENDEAVOUR IN PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP:

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The Project Prahari has, to a great extent, neutralised the militants' influence and crime situations arising out of social prejudices prevailing in these socially disadvantaged areas. The initial success of this

community policing initiative has received favourable response from other police forces in the country also. The letter of appreciation by the Hon'ble President of India on the performance of the Project has boosted the moral of the Assam Police. The officers of the department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances and Pensions, Govt. of India had visited some of the Prahari villages in August, 2003 for documenting this Project as one of the good practices in governance. The SVP

National Police Academy, Hyderabad has documented the Project in "Compendium on good practices in Community Policing" for emulation in other states. In the prominent management schools in the country and abroad, the Prahari Model is being taught as an important case study in ushering in changes in people friendly governance.

In a recently held meeting in Guwahati, several civil society organizations and social action groups along with Assam State Women Commission have resolved to work in collaboration to take forward the works under Project Prahari to more underdeveloped areas of Assam. There have been large number of media reports-both electronic and print - appreciating this endeavour bringing in changes in project villages. The Micro Mission dealing with Proactive Policing under the National Police Mission has recommended Project Prahari as a viable community policing model for implementation in the Left Wing related violence areas.

The Project Prahari has thus emerged as a significant community policing initiative, strengthening all efforts at the community's involvement in deciding its security needs and also reorienting the policing at the cutting edge levels with command devolution.



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MEDIA SPEAK

❖ "On noticing Project Prahari making a difference, former DGP adopted it as a state-wide project for Assam Police. Today, it is operational in villages across various districts affected by witch hunting..." **(The Hindu, 23/3/12)**

❖ "The Prahari model has resulted in the formation of a coalition of different stakeholders in... A very significant effect of this model has been on two fronts: One is creating a feeling of community ownership of social assets like communication infrastructure, roads and school buildings. This has led to accessibility to interior areas and spread of education. School buildings destroyed by terrorists have been repaired by villagers, the disturbed educational system has been restored and superstitions are being removed. The second, is creating health awareness. The villagers have been encouraged to approach modern healthcare facilities rather than taking recourse to unqualified



quacks since a lot of times, the problem of witchcraft arises due to avoidance of modern medicine," **(The Statesman, 4/09/15)**

❖ "Project Prahari now the Assam Police's pet project and embraces as many as 60 villages of the State. Activists under this banner have been creating awareness against such practices in rural areas and also trying to educate people in general and empower women in particular." **(The Tribune, 8/08/15)**

❖ "... Because of its relentless fight against social prejudices, the project managed to draw the attention of the media and civil society." **(Pittsburgh News.philadelphianews Sierraleone Times, 4/07/2015)**

❖ "Assam police have also intensified its special drive to curb this social crime. Code named Project Prahari, the crusade includes community policing measures, besides regular awareness campaigns among tribal chiefs and village elders. The police campaign is now focusing on educating villagers and holding meetings in areas dominated by tribal people where this primitive practice of witchcraft is still going strong." **(The New Indian Express, 20/11/2008)**

❖ "Project Prahari has brought together different stakeholders... on a common platform." **(GulfTimes, 20/02/2014)**

Assam police's initiative sets tone for unconventional policing

Dacoits turn sentinels of peace

COXIMMUM

Forwarded: April 20: In a village after village in the Assam, a kind revolution is changing the face of lawless superstitious society and giving a new meaning to the traditional village.

Consider this, in Khaliali village of Karimganj district, former dacoits are now actively working as village policemen and helping the people to deal with the common law.

Indeed, just two years after its launch, Assam police's additional Project Prahari has brought back smiles on the faces of thousands of people and proved the very old saying.

An acronym for 'people for progress', Project Prahari first got under way at Thangapuri village in Kokrajhar district in September 2001. Karimganj, Assam, is 200 km from the border with Bangladesh.

After witchcraft was eradicated in Thangapuri, police chief Isha Krishna Deka made Project Prahari a state-level peace and development initiative as part of the community policing scheme and extended it to 50 villages across the state.

The rate of insurance-related crime has declined in eight villages under the Assam police initiative in Karimganj district. Before Project Prahari was launched, nine persons had been killed or injured in these eight villages in 2001.

Project Prahari entered Karimganj some two-and-a-half years ago and immediately succeeded in lowering the crime rate. In 2002, only three persons were killed or injured in the area. This year, only one such incident has been reported and that a little abduction has taken place since last year.

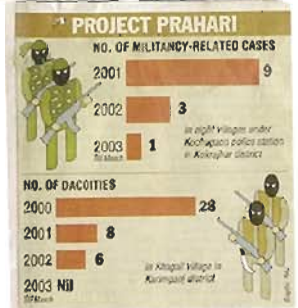
Such a noteworthy change in the social life through the unconventional policing is also aimed at encouraging the youth to be involved in constructive activity in the village.

In Khaliali village of Karimganj district, 11 dacoits surrendered and volunteered to work for Project Prahari. "These dacoits are now helping the police to keep track of the grassroots level. They are searching other dacoits to surrender and help police forces," B. M. Singh, commissioner of the 7 Division of Assam, said.

Work in the social office for Project Prahari.

After 10 Project Prahari, the number of dacoits in the Khaliali area was 10 in 2001-02. After the project was launched, such incidents came down to eight in 2002 and six in 2003. No such incident has been reported since then.

In Khaliali, the public response to Project Prahari has encouraged Deka to continue to work in the Karimganj area. The initiative could see more the project because it was successful in the development of these remote villages, which had long been neglected by government agencies.



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A SCHOLASTIC EXPLORATION

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'... During the last 15 years of its experience with Prahari, Assam Police felt the need for a detail study into the issues relating to the superstitious belief like witch hunting . Accordingly, OKD Institute of Social Change and Development was entrusted to conduct a study regarding this.

We earnestly hope that the Report of the Research Study into the dynamics of witch hunting and its prevention strategies by the team of researchers from OKD Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati would be of immense help not only to the law enforcement agencies but also to the members of criminal justice system, students and scholars as well as the social action groups...'

Khagen Sarma, IPS

DGP, Assam

6th Novemebr, 2015

Excerpts from the Report of OKD Institute of Social Change and Development, 'Witch Hunting in Assam: A Report' --

'...The concept of witch or witchcraft existed from time immemorial. Of the numerous irrational and superstitious belief systems historically grappling human society, witchcraft is one. Witchcraft broadly refers to the practice of and belief in magical skills and abilities of people having some esoteric knowledge. The Malleus Maleficarum⁵, which vividly describes the evil acts of witches and ways to exterminate them offers insight into the fifteenth century mindset regarding black magic and sorcery and of the savage efforts to stamp out witchcraft in Western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Witch histories of Europe and America, which was commonly referred to as the early modern witch craze, ended in around 1700s, while it continued in some of the developing world including India. Deluge of studies, especially by the western scholars (mainly from African and European sources) led to new emphasis on prevalence of such beliefs across the globe with wide geo-diversity. Especially European witchcraft debate opened newer explanations of witchcraft prevailing in European and African societies. ...'



Witch-Hunting in Assam

A Report



Prepared by
OKD INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT
GUWAHATI



Under the aegis of
ASSAM POLICE

November 2015

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❖ **RECENT CAMPAIGNS AGAINST SUPERSTITIONS/WITCH**

As part of Project Prahari, public awareness campaigns against social delinquencies are being organized in many vulnerable areas of Assam from time to time. The campaigns are in the forms of public meetings, health camps, workshops, street plays, etc, in association with different stakeholders like NGOs, social activists, Mahila Samittees, local VDPs, educationists, civil society members, media, etc.

In recent times, the following villages were chosen for their vulnerability and the local police officers and SPs took charge of organizing several campaigns/ activities in these areas.

VILLAGE/AREA	DISTRICT	ACTIVITIES
Lahorhat (Palashbari), Boko	Kamrup	Two street plays were staged in these remote areas to create awareness about witch hunting.
Kukurmara (Chhaygaon)	Kamrup	Public meeting held by Assam Police to remove superstitions regarding witch hunting. Health camp organized by Kamrup district Police and attended by DGP of Assam and other Sr. Police officers.
Adabari Handique Gaon (Simaluguri), Demow PS, Towkok TE (Namtola PS)	Sivasagar	Awareness campaigns held in these areas in the presence of Range DIG, senior citizens, social workers, writers, Circle Officers, VDPs, etc
Dimalu TE (Baghjan PS), Koomsong TE	Tinsukia	Awareness campaign in presence of Tea Gardens labourers and village defence party members.
Chabua TE, Kolakowa Miripather HS (Borboruah PS)	Dibrugarh	Awareness campaigns held amongst tea garden workers and others.
Jorhat PS, Pulibor PS, Teok PS, Bhagamukh PS, Mariani PS, Titabor PS, Majuli PS, Garmur PS, Jengraimukh PS, Borhulla PS	Jorhat	Awareness meetings held in these area in presence general public, police administration, civil society members, VDPs and eminent personalities





Project PRAHARI

ASSAM POLICE

Fact Sheet

In all PRAHARI villages, the Community Management Groups (CMG) are functioning in close association with the local Police. Plantation, medical education camps and campaign against social maladies/ delinquencies are common features in these villages. However, the fact sheet focuses on the area specific unique activities in 47 villages.

VILLAGE	DISTRICT	ACTIVITIES
Tai-Faneng	Tinsukia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Construction of 4 km gravel road and a bamboo bridge. ·Training in Modern agricultural and horticultural technique and utilization of Kishan Credit Card. ·Food preservation techniques. ·Masroom production and cultivation of citrus fruits for commercial purpose.
Ning Gam	Tinsukia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Repairing of the connecting road to the village. ·Steps taken for land settlement in the village. ·Campaign against opium addiction and treatment of addicts with the help of NGOs. ·18 Tribal youths given lesson on driving through Police Drivers.
Bokahola	Dibrugarh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Community Cultivation of Rice in 50 bighas land by using modern techniques. ·School building and the connecting road repaired. ·Community cultivation of Pumpkin along the abandoned river beach of Brahmaputra being in process. ·Two fishery operated by women members. ·Horticultural nursery set up and managed by women members.
Kamarkuchi	Morigaon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Imparted training in Tailoring, Embroidery to un-employed women and By-cycle repairing to youths. ·Helped in formation of women self help groups for self-employment. ·Joint farm management of degraded forest area for Rubber plantation with forest officials. ·Linkage of police co-operative with the village weavers for buy back of handloom products. ·Distribution of weaving loom by NGOs to women groups.
Da-Singimari	Golaghat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Making of two community fisheries along with 38,000 finger-lings. ·Two community duckeries. ·Community management of plantation around the fisheries.



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VILLAGE DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

Madhu-Soulmari	Dhubri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Re-building of music school. ·Distribution of reading materials to poor students through NGOs. ·Training in Eco-conservation. ·Construction of bridge in progress.
Naribheta, Rangapani	Dhubri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Re-building of lower primary schools.
Basdhar Part-I,	Hailakandi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Riot victims of 1990 Communal clash getting rehabilitated by employment generating schemes through agencies/NGOs. ·Utilization of low cost sanitary system for good hygiene. ·Surrendered criminals motivated for participation in community development works.
Tengapathar	NorthLakhimpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Library cum Community Hall.
Borkola Bagicha	Darrang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Youths engaged in Fishery , Duckery and Poultry farms. ·Reconstruction of local school building to a pucca one. ·Plantation of valuable trees. ·Micro-credit through self help group.
Baragharia, Bebezia, Rajapukhuri, Singmari, Panjan	Golaghat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Launching of lift irrigation system by digging 100 mt. channel.
Thaigerguri	Kokrajhar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Community Cultivation of horticultural crops. ·Plantation of Som trees in 20 Bihgas of Community land and maintenance of community Seri cultural nurseries. ·Production of Eri yarn on community basis. ·Weaving jointly at community center. ·Re-building of lower primary school. ·Training of repairing the spinning machines.
Betbari Sarapara	Bongaigaon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Construction of 200 ft long wooden bridge. ·Building road from village to the main road. ·Cultivation of spices. ·Apiculture . ·Community weaving. ·Training of youths in bamboo craft. ·Community piggary.





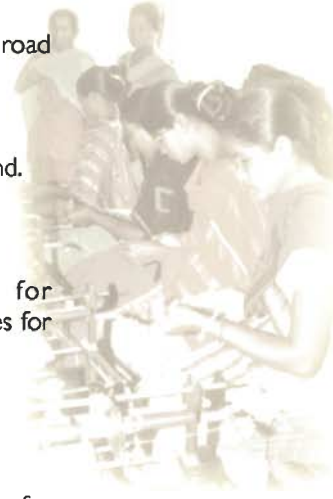
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VILLAGE	DISTRICT	ACTIVITIES
Khagail	Karimganj	·Linkage between police consumer co-operative and the village weaver society for marketing for sale of products. ·Active dacoits prompted by the project to surrender and engaged in community development works. ·Setting up of horticulture garden. ·Allotment of houses under Indira Awas Yojana.
Deulkuchi	Kamrup	·Building of a community fishery. ·Masroom cultivation. ·Golden cow scheme through state bodies. ·Distribution of spinning machine. ·Making of a community loom center.
Kolabari	Kokrajhar	·Community weaving center. ·Establishment of Co-operative Marketing agency. ·Participation in community cannal making for irrigation.
Islampur	Kokrajhar	·Self-employment through community weaving. ·Sale of village product through Co-operative marketing society.
Samaguri, Baniagaon, Majuli,	Jorhat	·Construction of residential houses for homeless through developmental agencies. ·Community fishery. ·Re-building of road connecting to neighboring areas.
Lauripara	Kokrajhar	·Tailoring and embroidery by the women group. ·Setting up of hand pumps for providing potable water. ·Construction of 3 km long road to connect the village to the town.
Nayakgaon	Kokrajhar	·Re-building of wooden bridge for inter district road communication.
Hariamukh	Nagaon	·Provision for drinking water facility. ·Re-construction of village road and school building. ·Plantation of fruit trees.
Lakhipur	Nalbari	·Community fishery under process. ·Formation of weaver society. ·Linkage of police consumer co-operative with community marketing society for sale of village products.

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VILLAGE	DISTRICT	ACTIVITIES
Bhetapara	Sonitpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Repairing of school building and road communication. ·Educational tours organized for students. ·Community wells for drinking water. ·Commercial plantation on community land.
Debargaon, Kalaigaon, Kulguri,	Kokrajhar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Construction of earthen dam for management of natural water resources for irrigation.
Athaiabari, Sinsilibari, Sarfanguri (east), Chirkut,	Kokrajhar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Jointly completed 5km Long Canal for harnessing water for agricultural purposes. ·Improved traditional irrigation system through bunding.
Sialmari, Padmabil, Balaphunga, Nepalpara, Nausali, Lungsung,	Kokrajhar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Re-construction of 100mts main road which was washed away by flood. This road was the lifeline of these villages connecting to the NH. · This has opened new avenues for the villagers interms of trade & commerce, social interaction, economic opportunities, etc.
Nilakh	Dhemaji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Soil conservation measures undertaken. ·Youths engaged in anti-flood measures. ·Reclamation of degraded land for community plantation.
Demdama	Kokrajhar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Community weaving center setup. ·Artisans engaged in loom making.
Dariduri Muolhoi	Goalapara NC Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Community weaving center. ·Harnessing of Natural water resources by building reservoir and links to meet drinking water scarcity.





THE RESPONSE-

....One strong realization for the law enforcing body under the umbrella of Prahari was the potentiality of women in contributing to the overall development process of the society and especially eradicating evil practices including witch hunting. Prahari saw larger participation of women in the Community Management Groups (CMGs) in the villages, under the Project. It was encouraged that women should hold

important offices in Prahari villages, so that this normally silent partners could have voice and take active part in preparing the action plans and also manage the community accounts. Dipali Basumatary the Secretary of CMG of Thaugarguri village told this researcher how actively she and her friends took part in the activities under the Project starting from plantation activities to keeping accounts... Another impact of Prahari was giving them through organization of health camps the much needed knowledge about maternal and reproductive health, which they gratefully acknowledge... Engagement of the law enforcing agency in the developmental activities of the



backward areas had many positive impacts including the reduction of both the unlawful and criminal activities and insurgency related cases among the community. The overall underdevelopments, deprivations, lack of avenues for gainful economic activities, meaningful engagement of the youths, are some of the obvious reasons that make fertile grounds for emergence of such activities. Other important factors that lead to rise of a militant or terror groups are ethnicity, religious and cultural assertions etc, which have much deeper roots. The police operating in the State have to face all these critical challenges in protecting the lives of people. Prahari not only helped tackle the insurgency related issues, but also affected the general criminal tendencies in those areas. With coming of Prahari into the villages, not only made it difficult for the extremists to operate but also reduced the overall criminal and antisocial activities. For instance, eleven dreaded dacoits of Khagail village of Karimganj district gave up their arms and illegal activities and came forward to participate in community projects and embraced the goodwill of the community. Indeed, the former dacoits are now actually serving as village policemen and helping the people combat crime at the grassroots level.. Project Prahari helped the police, especially those in the lowest rung to go through a kind of attitudinal changes, which brought about paradigm shift in police-public relationship. All these led to greater and more open interactions between the community and law enforcing agency manifested in higher sensitivity and mutual trusts, never seen earlier. A villager in Betbari village of Bongaigaon district made a significant statement in this regard. He said that "Prior to that (meaning Project Prahari) we did hardly trust police and had fear for them. But through Project Prahari, we came closer to the police and understood that they are not bad and that they work for the good of people"...

It must be admitted that Prahari, has a lot of potential in combating social evils like witch hunting, crime and militancy. It is true there is a general dissatisfaction among the public with the traditional law enforcement practices, because of varied reasons, including their overall attitude towards public and corruptions prevalent in the system. Prahari initiatives manifested better acceptance of the law enforcement agency at the field level... (Excerpts from the Evaluation Study on the Effectiveness of the Project Prahari, independently carried out by OKD Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, Assam: November 2015)

Project PRAHARI

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...an Assam Police Project that began as a PR exercise has ended up reducing crime, creating jobs...

-THE INDIAN EXPRESS,

... 'Joint persuasion by the police and community members resulted in criminals laying down arms and weapons'.

-THE HINDUSTANTIMES

...Assam Police's initiative sets tone for unconventional policing. ...In village after village across Assam, a silent revolution is changing the face of the once superstition-ridden society and giving a new mantra of life to hardened criminals.

-THETELEGRAPH

... The project does not entail the state police to pump in money. ...Community management groups have been formed with locals in the adopted villages to maintain and sustain the project.

-THETIMES OF INDIA

Project Prahari bid to make villagers equal partners in development.

-THE ASSAMTRIBUNE

... 'Now the Assam Police's Project Prahari encourages people to understand and appreciate the fruits of empowerment, community participation, decision making and development and changing of community potentials to socially meaningful purposes'.

-THE ASIAN AGE

...Plea to launch 'Project Prahari' along Indo-Bhutan border...

-THE NORTH EASTTIMES

...A development project by policemen in Assam has helped people get over superstition and lead better lives...

-DECCAN HERALD