JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

EMPOWERING POLICING: ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

BAIDYA NATH MUKHERJEE
baidyanath.mukherjee@aurouniversity.edu.in
Assistant Professor of Law at AURO University (India) and Doctoral Fellow at Christ University, combines academia with a knack for research, adorned with over 7 years of experience in academia. His brilliance shines through 10+ research papers in esteemed journals. He has also edited a book on "Law and Emerging Issues" published by Routledge, other books include "Recent Trends and Challenges in Law" by Cambridge Scholar Publishing and "Rethinking Police Reforms" by Springer Nature . He crafts knowledge in publishing book chapters and presenting research papers at International Conferences. A sought-after speaker in national constitutional rights programs, his expertise spans international law, human rights, and intellectual property. A radiant presence in international and national law conferences, he enriches discussions in workshops and round tables.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1165-3432.

MEERA MATHEW
meera.mathew@christuniversity.in
Associate Professor at the School of Law - CHRIST (Deemed to be University) - Delhi NCR (India). Before this, she was working as an Assistant Professor (senior grade) at Symbiosis Law School, NOIDA, the constituent of Symbiosis International (Deemed University). She is a gold medalist, did the five-year integrated law of B.S.L, L.L.B from I.L.S College, Pune University and completed her LLM from Indian Law Institute, New Delhi with first rank. She pursued Ph.D. from the Indian Law Institute and one of her chapters as a working paper had been referred to in the Indian Law Commission's Consultation Paper about "Sedition". Further, she also presented research papers at Stanford University (USA), Glasgow University (Scotland), Maltepe University (Turkey) and Howard University of Kwazulu Natal (South Africa). Before joining academics, she worked as a Legal Associate at Infosys, Bangalore (Legal Division) where she was involved in reviewing Software Licensing Agreements inked by the company. She also worked as a Junior Advocate and fought for cases concerning human rights. Moreover, she is a visiting faculty for the Diploma Programme of the Indian Law Institute and Indian Institute of Mass Communication. Her areas of interest are technology law, media law, criminal law, women, justice & human rights. She has many national and international journal (SCOPUS indexed) publications to her credit.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0886-9961.

United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 emphasizes the eradication of violence, while Goal 16 underscores the need for robust and stable judicial institutions (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, 2016). The effectiveness of a nation's police force in attaining these objectives is significantly influenced by its composition and culture. The inclusion of a diverse workforce, especially ensuring equitable female representation at all levels of the policing command structure, stands as a critical factor shaping the culture of a police force. Nonetheless, many law

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 15 N.º 2

November 2024-April 2025, pp. 479-487
Notes and Reflections
Empowering Policing: Advancing Gender Equality for Achieving Sustainable Development
Goals
Baidya Nath Mukherjee, Meera Mathew

enforcement agencies persist as traditional, male-dominated hierarchical institutions (Rabe-Hemp, 2017). In India, only 10.5 percent of police officers are women (Chawla, 2022), a figure significantly lower than in countries like England and Wales, where women make up 36.8 (Clark, 2023) percent of the police force. Additionally, the upward mobility of women to top police positions has seen a decline.

This article explores the impact of female representation within police forces on effectively managing domestic and sexually violent crimes, which disproportionately affect women. It will examine barriers to female recruitment and advancement, proposing recommendations to enhance opportunities for women in policing. By doing so, the article aims to enhance women's access to justice, aligning with UN goals.

1. Introduction

A profound examination of the objectives outlined in the 63rd Commission for the Status of Women and the United Nations' sustainable development goals, particularly Goals 5 and 16, reveals a consistent thematic emphasis on "elimination" and "equality" (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, 2016). These pivotal terms are intricately linked to the eradication of violence directed towards women and girls and the advocacy for equal opportunities for leadership across all tiers of decision-making within political, economic, and public spheres. The pursuit of transparent and ethically guided policing emerges as a critical component in realizing the ambitions of eliminating violence against women and fostering a stable government. Transparent ethical policing acts as a linchpin in creating an environment where instances of violence are minimized, and trust in governmental institutions is strengthened. This trust is instrumental in achieving the broader goals of the Commission for the Status of Women and the UN's sustainable development objectives, harmonizing the principles of elimination and equality.

The gender landscape within India's police force has experienced a sluggish transformation over the past decade. While there has been some progress, as indicated by the Bureau of Police Research and Development, with the proportion of women in the civil police force rising from 4.9% in 2010 to 12% in 2020 (Radhakrishnan, 2021), this growth still falls significantly short of the government's recommended target of 33%. Moreover, the representation of women in higher ranks remains dismally low, hovering at 8.7% (Chawla, 2022). Pervasive patriarchal biases persist within the force, casting a shadow over the experiences of policewomen who often find themselves marginalized and deemed unsuitable for field assignments (Tripathi, 2020). Additionally, the inadequate provision of fundamental infrastructure, such as separate restroom facilities for women in many police stations, exacerbates the challenges faced by female officers (Bhartiya Stree Shakti, 2017). These systemic shortcomings hinder not only the professional growth and effectiveness of policewomen but also impede the overall advancement of gender equity within law enforcement.

Nevertheless, concerning advancements within the police forces of India, the trajectory of women ascending to the highest ranks exhibited an initial positive trend. However,

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 15 N.º 2
November 2024-April 2025, pp. 479-487
Notes and Reflections
Empowering Policing: Advancing Gender Equality for Achieving Sustainable Development
Goals
Baidya Nath Mukherjee, Meera Mathew

this momentum faltered, leading to a failure to attain any semblance of gender parity at the executive officer level (Nayak, 2022). This pattern of restricted and inconsistent progress in women attaining senior and commanding positions is not unique in India; it mirrors similar challenges witnessed in the United States (Guajardo, 2015), as well as in Australia and New Zealand (Prenzler et al., 2010).

2. Methodology

The nature of this research study is descriptive, and the methodology employed in this paper relies on an extensive review of the literature concerning the status of women within the policing culture of the country. The study critically examines the role of women in law enforcement, evaluates existing policies aimed at safeguarding and fostering the continued participation of women in police professions, and assesses the current landscape and challenges they face. The research exclusively utilizes secondary methods, obtaining data from sources such as research papers, publications, websites, and survey reports.

3. Literature Review

While there have been numerous research studies conducted in various areas of gender studies, there is a scarcity of research on women in the police force in India. Critical examinations of the challenges experienced by women in this profession are limited and have not received sufficient attention. The available studies on this subject are few, and a select few are referenced here.

The article "Police Culture and the Integration of Women Officers in India" (Natarajan, 2014) points out that despite increased representation of women in the police force and their broad exposure to a wide range of duties, they are still negatively perceived by their male counterparts. This negative perception seems to have been internalised by women, many of whom reported that they prefer a traditional policing role. The findings suggested the government to re-evaluate the gender integration policies and focus on gender-sensitive allocation of duties. The study by Garima Siwach (Siwach, 2018) advocates the theory of representative bureaucracy which implies better outcomes for a section of society through increased representation of women in public decision-making bodies. According to the Tata Trusts' 2019 report titled "Status of Policing in India," (CSDS, 2017) the representation of women in the Indian police force remains low, standing at 7.28% as of January 1, 2017. The report highlights a lack of gender sensitivity within the force and a failure to address women's specific needs. The underrepresentation of women exacerbates gender stereotypes and biases within both the police force and among women who interact with law enforcement. None of the states have achieved the 33% benchmark set by the Ministry of Home Affairs, with Tamil Nadu boasting the highest representation of women at 12.9% in 2016. Additionally, the report notes shortcomings such as the absence of separate restroom facilities for women and inadequate institutional childcare provisions like crèches within police administrations.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 15 N.º 2

November 2024-April 2025, pp. 479-487
Notes and Reflections
Empowering Policing: Advancing Gender Equality for Achieving Sustainable Development
Goals
Baidya Nath Mukherjee, Meera Mathew

The articles "Women in Police: Employment Status and Challenges" (ANDHAWA & NARANG, 2013) and "Gender Discrimination: Beliefs and Experiences: A Comparative Perspective of Women and Men in the Delhi Police" (Sahgal, 2007) indicates that women in the police force are often relegated to auxiliary roles rather than mainstream policing tasks. They are commonly assigned duties such as telephone operation, typing, escorting women prisoners, or investigating minor offenses involving women and children. These studies highlight the ongoing underrepresentation of women in law enforcement, with women not being deployed on field missions to the same extent as their male counterparts. At the 7th National Conference of Women in Police (NCWP) organized by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), it was revealed that women encounter a glass ceiling in terms of promotion, largely due to the separate cadre system for men and women at subordinate ranks. Only a limited number of positions at the head constable, sub-inspector, and inspector ranks are designated for women officers. The scarcity of women in senior leadership roles within the Indian police force paints a bleak picture of gender parity in law enforcement.

Despite gaining entry into traditionally male-dominated police forces, women continue to face challenges in their quest for equality. They often find themselves relegated to inconsequential positions, assigned unfulfilling tasks, provided with inadequate training, and encounter resistance from their male colleagues.

4. Gender based Crimes

While women may be less prone to general violent crime, they face a disproportionate risk of experiencing domestic and sexual violence. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the total number of crimes against women amounted to 4.4 lakh cases, marking a 4% increase from the previous year (NCRB, 2023). On average, 50 cases were reported every hour, totaling 1,220 cases in a single day. The report highlights Delhi as having the highest crime rate against women in the country, with 14,247 cases recorded in 2022, resulting in a rate of 144.4, surpassing the national average of 66.4.

In the realm of criminal justice syatem, there is a growing acknowledgment of emerging sexual assault offenses, including but not limited to female genital mutilation, modern-day slavery, and forced marriage, all of which exhibit elevated levels of victimization among women. The observed upticks in recorded crime rates related to these specific offenses may stem from advancements in recording procedures, as well as heightened public awareness surrounding these types of crimes. Nevertheless, given the gendered and disproportionate victimization associated with these crimes, the rises in crime rates predominantly reflect an escalation in offenses against women. Consequently, law enforcement agencies must be equipped to mount an effective response to the growing number of female victims and address their specific needs. It is imperative that they apprehend offenders, ensure justice for the victims, and work towards preventing further escalation of violent criminal activities, in line with the objectives outlined in the UN's sustainable development goals.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 15 N.º 2

November 2024-April 2025, pp. 479-487
Notes and Reflections
Empowering Policing: Advancing Gender Equality for Achieving Sustainable Development
Goals
Baidya Nath Mukherjee, Meera Mathew

While the available research is scarce, it suggests that female officers possess specialized skill sets that prove more advantageous in areas such as community relations, support functions, and investigations related to child protection and vice, as opposed to the more conventional domains within law enforcement (Dick & Metcalfe, 2007).

As of January 1, 2021, in India, Chandigarh led with the highest representation of women in its police force, constituting 22.1 percent of the total. Tamil Nadu and Ladakh followed closely, with 19.4 and 18.5 percent of women officers, respectively. Conversely, the lowest percentages of women police officers were observed in Jammu and Kashmir (3.3 percent), Tripura (5.2 percent), and Meghalaya (5.9 percent). In the central police services, women's representation lagged even further behind, accounting for merely 3.4 percent of all members across nine specialized forces. Notably, the Railway Protection Force exhibited the highest representation at 8.9 percent, while the National Security Guard recorded the lowest representation at a mere 0.6 percent. The overall distribution of female staff suggests a notable concentration in states specializing in addressing vulnerability and gender-based violent crimes, such as child protection and domestic and sexual offenses. Conversely, a smaller proportion of female officers are represented in more traditionally masculine areas of policing, including the National Security Guards (0.6 percent) and the National Disaster Response Force (1.4 percent) (Chawla, 2022). While addressing the gendered disparities in policing specializations is crucial, it is equally imperative for police services to harness and deploy their workforce capabilities to address the most significant areas of threat, risk, harm, and need. The persistent rise in reported rates of sexual and domestic violence underscores the urgency for police forces to effectively deploy their resources to prevent and mitigate such violent crimes, aligning with the objectives of UN Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Therefore, the emphasis on increasing female recruitment has never been more critical, given that female officers often excel in roles pertaining to these areas. Additionally, it is paramount to ensure that female officers receive comprehensive training and support to deliver high-quality services to female victims and effectively pursue justice against perpetrators.

5. Robust and resilient police leadership

Studies have demonstrated that diversity and an egalitarian ethos within the executive boards of corporate entities lead to enhanced effectiveness, productivity, and decision-making (Creary et al., 2019). Similarly, such principles hold true for policing. It would be immensely advantageous to transition from the prevailing "groupthink" characterized by predominantly white, male, and autocratic senior officer stereotypes to a senior leadership team that is markedly more diverse and reflective of the communities it serves.

Increased diversity in senior ranks, including greater representation of female leaders, correlates with heightened levels of procedural justice and police legitimacy among citizens. When a police force mirrors society and upholds principles of equality and fairness within its own ranks, it is more likely to extend fairness to its constituents,

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 15 N.º 2

November 2024-April 2025, pp. 479-487
Notes and Reflections
Empowering Policing: Advancing Gender Equality for Achieving Sustainable Development
Goals
Baidya Nath Mukherjee, Meera Mathew

thereby fostering social peace and cohesion. This alignment with the fundamental objective of law enforcement—ensuring strong and stable institutions—resonates with UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Novich et al., 2018). Although several positive action initiatives have been undertaken in the past decade, the dearth of diversity in the senior echelons of Indian police forces has been acknowledged as a major obstacle to fostering community confidence and creating a police service that genuinely mirrors the communities it serves. Establishing robust and dependable law enforcement institutions that engender trust within communities poses a formidable challenge in the absence of a sustainable framework for diverse senior leadership within police forces.

6. Strategy for Reform

Numerous obstacles to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of female police officers and staff have been identified. The progression of women in law enforcement is heavily influenced by the enduring presence of the 'old boys' club' mentality and the exclusionary machismo culture within the police force. Additionally, factors such as stringent physical fitness requirements and caregiving responsibilities further compound these challenges. Traditionally, policing was viewed as a lifelong career path, typically beginning at a young age and spanning thirty years or more, with officers starting as constables and gradually advancing through the ranks. However, contemporary attitudes towards work have shifted, particularly among the millennial generation. Policing agencies have had to adapt to meet these changing expectations by offering alternative entry and exit points. In response to evolving workforce demographics, policing organizations have diversified career pathways to attract a younger and more diverse workforce. Unlike the traditional trajectory starting as a constable, individuals now have the option to join at different ranks. Moreover, flexible arrangements, such as mid-career breaks and reduced service requirements, may be introduced to accommodate varied lifestyles and career aspirations. Accelerated police programs, featuring fast-track initiatives and direct entry to higher ranks, have emerged as particularly appealing options for women. These programs circumvent the extended timeline typically associated with ascending through traditional ranks and offer greater flexibility and promotional support. Creating a policing environment that values the importance of maintaining a work–life balance is crucial for both the recruitment and retention of female staff. Presently, all police forces have implemented flexible working policies and strategies. These initiatives are designed to keep staff on maternity or carer's leave informed about legal and force-related updates. Furthermore, to facilitate a smoother transition upon their return to the workplace—often a period of heightened anxiety—staged re-entry programs with enhanced support need to be put in place.

Additionally, it's imperative to offer training, mentoring, and guidance tailored specifically for women officers to enhance their skills and confidence within the force. Adequate infrastructure, facilities, and equipment catering to the needs of women in police stations, including separate toilets, changing rooms, and uniforms, are essential for their comfort and professionalism.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 15 N.º 2

November 2024-April 2025, pp. 479-487
Notes and Reflections
Empowering Policing: Advancing Gender Equality for Achieving Sustainable Development
Goals
Baidya Nath Mukherjee, Meera Mathew

Equally important is the creation of a safe and supportive work environment for women, one that is free from harassment, discrimination, and prejudice. Implementing policies and protocols to address any instances of misconduct or bias ensures that all officers can perform their duties effectively and without fear of mistreatment.

7. Suggestion and Conclusion

7.1. Gender based violence

The Sustainable Development Goals, specifically targets 5.2, 5.3, 16.1, and 16.2 as outlined by the United Nations in 2016, primarily focus on eliminating violence, particularly violence against women and children. A crucial aspect of achieving this goal is fostering trust between victims and law enforcement agencies, encouraging victims to report incidents to the police.

To build this trust, it's imperative that police forces are truly representative of the communities they serve, with high levels of gender equality across all ranks and throughout the organization. Prioritizing positive action in the recruitment and retention of officers specializing in gender-based crimes should be a key policy for police forces. This approach ensures that victims feel supported and understood, thereby increasing their willingness to come forward and report instances of violence.

7.2. Strong and stable judicial institutions

Targets 5.5 and 16.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals aim to ensure the full and effective participation of women in political, economic, and public life. In this context, police services should implement diverse and flexible talent management schemes to support the advancement of under-represented groups within the force, facilitating their progression in promotion and career pathways. These schemes should encompass best practices such as mentoring, continuing education, mindfulness initiatives, and the establishment of supportive networks. Furthermore, it is essential for police forces to annually publish their workforce statistics, promoting transparency and accountability.

Decisions regarding senior policing appointments should be conducted through an open and transparent process, overseen by a diverse appointments panel inclusive of community representatives. This process should be made public, allowing for scrutiny and ensuring inclusivity in decision-making.

Under goal 5C, the UN calls for the adoption and reinforcement of policies and legislation to promote gender equality. One proposed measure is the enactment of legislation mandating all police forces to disclose gender pay gap statistics. This would provide visibility into the degree of gender parity across all ranks within police forces, facilitating efforts to address disparities effectively.

Sustainable Development Goal 16 emphasizes the significant impact of corruption on institutions, particularly highlighting the judiciary and police. Target 16.6 specifically aims to establish effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels. To achieve

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 15 N.º 2

November 2024-April 2025, pp. 479-487
Notes and Reflections
Empowering Policing: Advancing Gender Equality for Achieving Sustainable Development
Goals
Baidya Nath Mukherjee, Meera Mathew

this, cultivating diverse senior leadership teams within police services is essential. Such teams play a pivotal role in promoting transparent and accountable organizational cultures, serving as a deterrent against the establishment of corruption and autocratic leadership styles.

References

Andhawa, G., & Narang, K. (2013). Women in Police: Employment Status and Challenges. *ASCI Journal of Management*, *42*(2), 38-51.

Bhartiya Stree Shakti. (2017, 3). *Tackling Violence Against Women: A Study of State Intervention Measures*. Ministry of Women & Child Development. https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Final%20Draft%20report%20BSS_1.pdf

Chawla, A. (2022, August 25). *GenderStats 13: Women's representation in India's police force – CEDA*. CEDA. https://ceda.ashoka.edu.in/genderstats-13-womens-representation-in-indias-police-force/

Clark, D. (2023, October 11). *Police rank distribution England and Wales by gender 2023*. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/382525/share-of-police-officers-in-england-and-wales-gender-rank/

Creary, S., McDonnell, M.-H., Ghai, S., & Scruggs, J. (2019, March 27). *When and Why Diversity Improves Your Board's Performance*. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2019/03/when-and-why-diversity-improves-your-boards-performance

CSDS. (2017, August 10). *STATUS OF POLICING IN INDIA REPORT 2019 STATUS OF POLICING IN INDIA REPORT 2019*. Common Cause India. https://www.commoncause.in/uploadimage/page/Status_of_Policing_in_India_Report_2019_by_Common_Cause_and_CSDS.pdf

Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations. (2016). *THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development*. Sustainable Development Goals. https://sdgs.un.org/goals

Dick, G. P., & Metcalfe, B. (2007, 3). The progress of female police officers? An empirical analysis of organisational commitment and tenure explanations in two UK police forces. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *20*(2), 81-100. 10.1108/09513550710731463

Guajardo, S. (2015, 7). Women in Policing: A Longitudinal Assessment of Female Officers in Supervisory Positions in the New York City Police Department. *Women & Criminal Justice*, *26*(1), 1-17. 10.1080/08974454.2014.997418

Natarajan, M. (2014, 6 1). Police Culture and the Integration of Women Officers in India. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, *XVI*(II). https://doi.org/10.1350/ijps.2014.16.2.333

Nayak, R. C. (2022). Women in Policing: Their Gendered Representation and Engendered Police Space Inhibit the Prognosis Behind Women Policing. *ILI Law Review*, (Summer Issue), 313-340. https://ili.ac.in/pdf/15._Ramesh_Nayak__F__-EDITED.pdf

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 15 N.º 2

November 2024-April 2025, pp. 479-487
Notes and Reflections
Empowering Policing: Advancing Gender Equality for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals
Baidya Nath Mukherjee, Meera Mathew

NCRB. (2023). *Crime Against Women (States/UTs)*. NATIONAL CRIME RECORDS BUREAU. https://ncrb.gov.in/uploads/nationalcrimerecordsbureau/custom/1701935135TABLE3A1.pdf

Novich, M., Kringen, A. L., & Hunt, G. (2018, 1 24). "They Can't Search Her": How Gender Imbalances in the Police Force Contribute to Perceptions of Procedural Unfairness. *Feminist Criminology*, *13*(3). 10.1177/1557085117753669

Prenzler, T., Fleming, J., & King, A. L. (2010, 12). Gender Equity in Australian and New Zealand Policing: A Five-Year Review. *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, *12*(4), 584-595. 10.1350/ijps.2010.12.4.211

Prenzler, T., & Sinclair, G. (2013). The status of women police officers: An international review. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, *41*(2), 120. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2012.12.001

Rabe-Hemp, C. (2017). *Thriving in an All-Boys Club: Female Police and Their Fight for Equality*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Radhakrishnan, V. (2021, August 28). Data | Women make up only 12% of India's police force. *The Hindu*. https://www.thehindu.com/data/women-make-up-only-12-of-indias-police-force/article61424612.ece

Sahgal, P. (2007). Gender Discrimination: Beliefs and Experiences: A Comparative Perspective of Women and Men in The Delhi Police. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, *9*(1), 135-152. https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1292&context=jiws

Siwach, G. (2018). Crimes against women in India: Evaluating the role of a gender representative police force. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3165531

Tripathi, S. (2020, 4 6). Patriarchal beliefs and perceptions towards women among Indian police officers: A study of Uttar Pradesh, India. *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, *22*(3). 10.1177/1461355720905612

How to cite this note