

Impact of Community Policing Initiatives in Naxal Regions of Chhattisgarh

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the implementation and impact of Community Policing Initiatives in Chhattisgarh, specifically within Naxal-affected regions of Bastar and Dantewada. Traditionally, the police have functioned primarily as a law enforcement body tasked with maintaining public order and conducting anti-Naxal operations. However, this study highlights a significant shift in the police's role from purely enforcement-oriented duties to becoming community development and welfare agents. The study investigates how police officers are engaging with local communities through various welfare and outreach programs aimed at building trust and cooperation. These initiatives seek to reduce the gap between the police and the public, foster participation, and counter the influence of Naxalite ideology by offering an alternative narrative based on development and inclusion. Drawing on field-based examples from Chhattisgarh, the paper illustrates how community policing has emerged as an effective tool to enhance state presence, gain public confidence, and support long-term peace and development in conflict-affected areas. The research underlines that such efforts are essential for restoring normalcy, promoting participatory governance, and strengthening internal security in regions impacted by insurgency.

Keywords: Community Policing, Initiatives, Trust Building, Internal Security, Counterinsurgency, Chhattisgarh, Bastar, Dantewada, Naxal affected regions

1. INTRODUCTION

Since India became independent in 1947, the country has made a lot of progress, including in the area of community policing, with increased efforts to bridge police-public relations, especially in fast-growing urban areas and through the deployment of sophisticated technology. However, some parts of India, especially rural and tribal regions, have not seen equal development. Tribals and forest-dwelling people living in remote places have often felt neglected. They feel that the government programs did not benefit them and that their daily struggles were ignored. This feeling of being left behind gave rise to disappointment and anger. Groups named Naxalites used this anger to build a strong movement against the government. These groups claimed that they would advocate for the rights of the poor people. Over time, Naxalites gained significant influence in many regions of the country, and the areas they controlled became known as the Naxal-affected belt or Red Corridor.

Raipur, the capital of Chhattisgarh, is one of the places close to the **Red Corridor** (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana). Raipur city itself is modern, but the rural and forest areas around it have seen Naxalite activities for many years. Bastar and Dantewada are two districts in Chhattisgarh that have experienced ongoing Naxalite activities due to their dense forests and challenging terrain. These areas have long been

hotspots for insurgent movements, with locals often caught in the conflict. In these areas, policing becomes very tough as it is not just about fighting rebels or catching criminals, but about winning the trust of the people.

When local communities lack belief in the police, they are more inclined to support Naxalites. Therefore, community policing has emerged as a crucial strategy to rebuild trust and foster cooperation. Community policing means working with the people rather than working against them. The police and the community come together to solve issues and problems. They communicate with each other, listen to each other and find ways to make the area safe. The idea is that people should feel that the police are their friends, not strangers. When this happens, crime goes down and peace is restored. In places where there is violence and mistrust, like the Naxal-affected areas near Raipur, community policing can be a Turning point. Community policing means working with the people rather than working in isolation from them.

This research will examine how community policing initiatives have impacted the Naxal areas of Bastar and Dantewada. It will look at whether these initiatives have helped the police connect with people. It will also check if crime and violence have decreased due to these efforts. This study is important because if community policing is effective in Chhattisgarh, it can be used in other troubled areas too. Understanding how community policing can reduce fear, improve trust, and bring development is the main aim of this project.

The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD, 2022) presents community policing as a collaborative model between the police and the public aimed at proactive crime prevention and public safety enhancement. However, the Compendium notes that implementation remains inconsistent across India due to a lack of dedicated policy frameworks, institutional resistance to decentralization, and limited community awareness.

1.1 Background

The Naxal movement in India began in 1967. It began in a small village known as Naxalbari in West Bengal. Some Communist Party members thought that the poor were not being assisted by the government. In their opinion, the situation would only change by means of an armed struggle. Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal, and Jangal Santhal were some of its leaders. Its leaders thought that the land needed to be seized from the wealthy and awarded to poor tribals and peasants (Dutta, 2017).

The Naxal movement gained momentum quickly from West Bengal to other states like Kerala, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh. The Naxalites concentrated mainly in the forest and rural areas where government infrastructure was weak and the masses were dissatisfied. The movement became more disciplined and stronger with time. Naxalites were active in almost 180 districts of India by the year 2009, and the Red Corridor became a serious internal security threat (Government of India, 2022).

In 2010, Naxal violence was at its peak. Government personnel and police were targeted on a regular basis. The worst attack was in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district, where 76 CRPF personnel were ambushed to death. The government then realized that tougher measures were required to curb this issue. The State and Central Governments initiated security operations against the Naxals as well as began work towards development. Roads, mobile towers, and schools began to appear in the villages (Sethi, A. 2021). In Chhattisgarh, the government launched several programs under community policing. These included activities like sports tournaments, free medical camps, skills training programs, and meetings between police and villagers. The idea was to make the police more visible, friendly, and accessible to the people. When the people start seeing the police as protectors rather than enemies, the influence of Naxals naturally weakens.

Thus, community policing came into focus not just as a law enforcement tool but also as a way to bridge the trust gap between the state and the citizens. It aimed to address the anger and fear that had triggered the Naxal movement for decades. This study will now look more deeply into what community policing really means and how it can help in places like the Naxal-affected regions of Chhattisgarh.

1.2 Relevance of this study

Studying the impact of community policing in Naxal-affected regions like Chhattisgarh is very important today. Even though violence has reduced over the years, the basic problems that caused Naxalism are still present in many villages

This study is important because it talks about **building peace without fear**. For too long, peace in Naxal areas was thought of as something that could only be forced by using more security forces and guns. This study is important because it focuses on making the police more people-friendly. In democratic countries like India, the police are supposed to serve and protect the people, not dominate them.

The study will give important lessons about **how to connect development with security**. Many times, development projects are started without involving local people. Roads, mines, and industries are built, but the villagers do not get jobs or benefits. This study also has value because it looks at **long-term change**, not just short-term victories. Many security operations in the past celebrated when a few Naxal leaders were caught or a few villages were "liberated." But often, after some time, the problems returned. Real change needs to happen slowly and deeply.

One more reason for the importance of this research is that it can **help policymakers make better decisions**. When ministers, secretaries, and senior officers see clear proof that community policing works, they are more likely to support it. They might pass new laws, give more funds, or arrange better training for officers. Another important point is that this study **gives a voice to the people**. Many times, research focuses only on what the government or police think. But real success is measured by what the people feel.

1.3 Research Problem

- Naxalism remains one of India's major internal security threats.
- Traditional policing methods have not fully addressed the root causes of Naxalism and employ force as a means of action.
- Lack of trust between law enforcement and local communities hinders effective policing.
- Need to study the impact and influence of community policing and whether it can be used as a sustainable solution

1.4 Objective of the study

- To analyze the role of community policing in countering Naxalism in affected regions.
- To examine various community policing initiatives undertaken by the government.
- To assess the effectiveness of these initiatives in reducing crime and improving public trust.
- To identify key challenges in implementing community policing in Naxal-prone areas.

1.5 Research Questions

- How does community policing impact security, trust, and crime prevention in Naxal-affected regions?
- What are the key challenges in implementing community policing in Naxal-prone areas?
- What are the best practices and lessons learned from existing community policing programs in Naxal-affected states?'

1.6 Study Area – Bastar and Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh

Bastar and Dantewada are two of the leading districts in southern Chhattisgarh, famous for their dense forests, tribal populations, and rich cultural heritage. Though they are endowed with natural beauty and resources, these areas have long been affected by Naxalite (Left-Wing Extremist) insurgency and hence they are at the core of India's internal security issues. The government has been actively working on community policing and development activities to bring back peace and foster inclusive growth in these areas.



Figure 1: Map of Chhattisgarh
Source- Wikipedia

2 . Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The research uses a qualitative research design to examine the effect of community policing interventions on three dimensions: security, public trust, and local development in the Naxal-affected Bastar and Dantewada districts of Chhattisgarh. The research draws on descriptive and analytical methods, seeking to learn about the actual application as well as the perceived effects of community policing initiatives. By integrating field-level observations with analysis of secondary data, the research aims to give a holistic account of how the programs impact peace-building and governance in conflict-afflicted tribal areas.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

Primary Data: Primary data was collected from semi-structured interviews with purposively selected police officials directly engaged in community policing initiatives in the region. They were asked about their experiences, perceptions, problems encountered, and the perceived effect of their interventions on community-police relations and general local security. The semi-structured format provided room for probing deeper into certain themes without deviating from a consistent line of questioning.

Secondary Data: Government agency reports, like those of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Chhattisgarh Police. Research papers, press articles, and NGO reports related to Naxalism and Community Policing. Police officials engaged with community activities such as "Amcho Bastar Amcho Police", "Ghar Vapsi" etc. Local administrative officials and activists

2.3 Area of Study

The study was carried out in Bastar and Dantewada, two southern districts of Chhattisgarh which have been worst hit by Left-Wing Extremism (LWE). These districts are not only hotbeds of tribal culture and natural wealth but also hotspots of Naxalite violence of the last two decades. Owing to the ongoing insurgency and socio-economic exclusion, both areas have seen the introduction of community policing schemes to foster police-tribe confidence, decrease violence, and enable development. The research targets specifically those areas where such activity has been ongoing, to determine their realistic effect on ground realities.

2.4 Data Analysis

The information gathered from interviews and secondary sources was analyzed with thematic analysis, a qualitative research technique that assists in the identification, analysis, and reporting of common patterns or themes within the information. Below are the major themes that were identified such Trust development between police and tribal populations, Decrease in violence and conflict situation, Involvement of communities in civic and development programs, Rehabilitation under schemes such as Ghar Vapsi, Barriers and challenges, including insufficient resources, cultural mistrust, and logistical difficulties in inaccessible terrains

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1 Community Policing

Community policing is a way of policing where the police and the people work together like partners. In traditional policing, officers typically visit the site of an incident, perform their duty, and then return. In contrast, community policing involves officers being regularly present in the neighbourhood, engaging with residents even in the absence of any criminal activity. They listen to issues like domestic fights, alcohol-related disturbance, property disputes, missing street lights and suspicion of unfamiliar people. Many times, resolving these small issues early helps prevent bigger crimes in the future

Community policing works on four main ideas. First is **philosophy**, which means the beliefs behind it. The idea is that people should have a say in how they are policed. Second is **strategy**, which means making plans to work closely with people, focusing on preventing crime and keeping areas safe for a long time. Third is **tactics**, which are the everyday actions like foot patrols, community meetings or setting up help centers. Fourth is **organization**, which means the police department itself needs to change a little by training officers for better communication, planning, and trust-building (Cordner, 1999).

Community policing is also known as community-oriented policing. The CP has a public relations department and has a series of cause-and-effect relationships that are detrimental to both the police and

the constituencies they serve and protect. Community policing is a strategy that focuses on building a partnership between police and the community.

Community policing acknowledges that law enforcement alone cannot solve public safety issues. It promotes collaboration with various stakeholders to develop solutions through problem-solving and build public trust. Community involvement is essential in identifying and addressing safety concerns (Skogan, W. G,2006).

3.1.1 Objective of community policing

The main aim of community policing is to build a strong relationship between the local community and the police. This approach believes that crime can be controlled better by involving the community actively. Community policing also tries to improve people's quality of life by emphasizing their daily concerns, such as safety, fear, and disorder.

3.1.2 Role of community policing in India

Community policing in India involves a collaborative partnership between the police and the locals to identify and solve the problem, increase public safety, and build trust and mutual respect between law enforcement and the community. It has become an essential part of India's overall policing strategy. The roles of community policing in India are:

1. Community policing aims to prevent crime by addressing its root causes, including social and economic factors like poverty, healthcare, lack of access to education, and unemployment. Community policing helps build trust and cooperation between the police and the community member ,which can enhance law enforcement effectiveness.
2. It encourages community members to actively participate in crime prevention and law enforcement. Community members can help the police in preventing and solving crimes .Community policing uses local knowledge to prevent and solve crimes. Community members often possess valuable knowledge that can help the police to prevent and solve crimes. In India, where people can be diverse and complex, community policing can help police officers to better understand the local context and adjust their way of working to local needs. Nag, S. (2021).
3. Brogden and Nijhar (2005) give a detailed description of community policing as a decentralized, participatory crime prevention model to build public trust. The major obstacles to the implementation of community policing are the absence of policy support, authoritarian policing cultures, and endemic public distrust. The success of such programs is highly dependent on systematic planning, effective monitoring, and active participation of the community. Loopholes such as uneven leadership, absence of resources, and absence of public awareness dilute its effectiveness. The study believes that greater transparency, accountability, and use of technology can enhance police-community relations, particularly in Naxalism-affected areas where trust deficits are high.

3.1.3 Need for Community Policing

The idea of community policing emerged because traditional policing methods have become less effective in dealing with crime. In the past, police mostly reacted to crimes after they happened. However, as crime patterns have changed and become more complex, it is necessary to find new and better ways to prevent crime before it occurs.

In today's world, society is changing rapidly, and law enforcement faces increasing challenges. Crimes are becoming more frequent and violent, making it difficult for the police to handle public safety alone. Community policing provides a practical solution by encouraging cooperation between the police and the

public. By working together, they can build trust, prevent crime, and create a safer environment for everyone.

Mitra and Chakrabarti (2016) study police-public relations in Guwahati to explore broader issues in community policing in India. Based on their study, they find that while a few are positively inclined towards the police, most feel alienated, with little community interaction. Even though technology has the potential to improve relations, most people are not even aware of police websites and emergency numbers. The study concludes that improving community outreach, transparency, and utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) tools are imperative to effective community policing. These conclusions are particularly relevant to Naxal-hit areas, where the trust deficit must be filled. A holistic approach through awareness campaigns, optimum utilization of technology, and interaction with the people can transform policing from a reactive to a preventive force.

Dery et al. (2022) examine the effect of community policing in rural Ghana and offer lessons applicable in the Indian Naxal scenario. The research identifies crime prevention, public safety, and cooperation as central ingredients of effective community policing. Community policing has been found to deter crime and foster trust in some areas, but role ambiguity and initial distrust remain challenges. Practical interventions such as neighborhood watch, lectures, and public meetings have central roles in improving security. While the research is on Ghana, the research shows that effective community policing is founded on continued efforts, good community partnerships, and adaptive local initiatives. These are highly applicable to improving community policing in India's Naxal regions

3.1.4 Evolution of Community Policing

Crime is a community issue and not a police issue

Before the 19th century, in ancient societies, ensuring law and order was a collective responsibility. The villagers depended on an informal security patrol and a local leader to prevent crime and safeguard community safety. The first formal police force was established in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel in London. It gave birth to contemporary policing.

In the early 20th century, police officers became more centralized, as they were focusing on crime control rather than public engagement. The introduction of radios and patrol cars improved the efficiency, but distanced the police from the communities.



Figure-2 Evolution of community policing

Source: Evolution of Community Policing: A Comprehensive Overview – Officer Survey- Public Police Survey L Community Surveys L Employee Morale Surveys

The history of policing in India depicts a transition from centralized control to community involvement. It started during Ancient India under the Mauryan Period (322–185 BCE), where there was an organized system of police maintained by officials recruited by the king. During Medieval India, policing was decentralized to some extent, with village chiefs and community leaders being responsible for maintaining peace at the local level.

During British rule, a more centralised and strict police system was brought in by the Indian Police Act of 1861, which was control-orientated rather than public service. Post-Independence, the system was regarded as colonial and outdated. To correct this, the National Police Commission (NPC) was established in 1977 to propose reforms. One of the significant consequences was the introduction of the Community Policing Scheme in 1994, which promoted cooperation between police and society. Since the 1980s, India has transitioned towards the Modern Community Policing Era with an emphasis on building trust, partnership, and proactive problem-solving in policing.

3.1.6 Elements and Principles of Community Policing

The basic elements of community policing are listening to the public, welcoming their involvement, and utilizing feedback from citizens in their daily operations. Increasing police presence makes them become well-acquainted with locals. Building meaningful relationships fosters a growing sense of comfort, trust, and appreciation for police personalities and for the service they render to citizens.

Police focus on the causes of crime rather than the symptoms. Officers use a constructive problem-solving approach to identify why a particular crime exists in a community. Fostering such working relationships ensures achieving set objectives through effective collaborations, while officers' zoned assignments enable immersion into specific regions to tackle unique local issues residents face (Cordner, 1995).

Community policing exacerbates the scope of traditional policing, which centered on the arrest of suspected criminals, to include problem-solving, alleviating fear of crime, and making the community feel safe. It changes the image of police officers from enforcers to partners, helpers, and problem-solvers. As such, officers are required to work closely with the communities they serve, not only during crises but continuously to foster trust and sustain relationships. It also makes policing easier because people become the eyes and ears of the police. When there is strong trust, even young people feel proud to work with the police and stay away from crime or insurgent groups.

At the national level, the old Police Act of 1861 does not mention community policing at all. After a Supreme Court case called *Prakash Singh v. Union of India* (2006), a draft Model Police Act was made, which talks about community policing. But that draft has not been made into a law yet. Because of this, many community policing efforts in India are temporary and vanish once immediate problems are solved (Mission National Police, 2023)

Thus, community policing is a strong tool for the police to win hearts and minds. It is not about giving up control. It is about sharing responsibility so that crime, fear, and anger can be reduced together. In the next sections, we will see why traditional policing alone is not enough in Naxal-affected areas and why community policing might be the answer we are looking for (Ferguson City, 2020).

3.2 Naxalism

Naxalism is a violent movement started by a group of people who claim to fight for the rights of poor farmers and tribal communities. It began in 1967 in a village called **Naxalbari** in West Bengal, which is why these groups are called **Naxalites**.

Naxalites believe in communist ideas and want to bring change through **armed struggle**. They mainly operate in **forest and hilly areas**, where they recruit local people by taking advantage of their problems like **poverty, land disputes, and lack of jobs**. Over time, Naxalism has spread to several states in India and is seen as a **major threat to national security** because of its violent attacks on police, government offices, and infrastructure. Naxalism is a Maoist insurgency based on socio-economic disparities, mostly concentrated in regions of the **Red Corridor**. The Red Corridor is the area in central and eastern India where Naxalite violence and influence are most intense.

Kumar (2017) examines the causes of Naxalism as an actual internal security threat to India, driven by poverty, underdevelopment, and Maoist ideology. The paper highlights how marginalized tribal communities in the "Red Corridor" are exposed to recruitment due to socio-economic disparities and external manipulation. Kumar is of the view that military actions alone will not be sufficient to combat Naxalism and suggests an integrated strategy with development schemes, dialogue, and security operations. The study recommends the employment of community policing as a bridge to foster trust, address local grievances, and avoid the spread of Naxal influence. It highlights that development-based empowerment and interaction with people are key to long-term stability. This perception is in tune with the overall view that socio-economic engagement, and not force alone, is key to neutralizing insurgent movements.



Figure-3 Red Corridor

Source-Stratfor. *India's Red Corridor*

3.2.1 Evolution of Naxalism

The beginning of Naxalism began in 1967 in the Naxalbari village of West Bengal. India's socio-economic progress over the last 30 years has made it one of the fastest-growing democracies across the world. However, three internal conflicts have constituted a major challenge to national security and development: the Jammu and Kashmir conflict, separatist movements in the Northeast, and the Naxalite insurgency. Of these, the Naxalite movement, which began in the late 1960s, continues to be one of the most intractable dangers to India's internal security.

Naxalism began with the Naxalbari uprising in 1967 in West Bengal, where landless peasants, jarred by the communist ideology, revolted against feudal landlords. India inherited the colonial land tenancy system, which transferred ownership of vast land to a handful of elites, two decades post-independence. According to the 1971 Census, almost 60 percent of people were landless, while 4 percent of landlords owned most of the agricultural land. The movement was inspired by Marxist ideals and sought to redistribute land and empower marginalized communities. Shah, A. (2010)

Although security operations are part of the government's strategy, experts emphasize that militarization alone will never be the solution. The paper advocates for an integrated approach involving development, social justice, and security policies. Community policing is part of this approach because it is a tool for bridging distrust, inclusive development, and building governance reforms. Singhal's analysis makes the argument stronger for tackling the insurgent causes in preference to merely applying force Singhal, V. (2014).

The Rise of the Movement

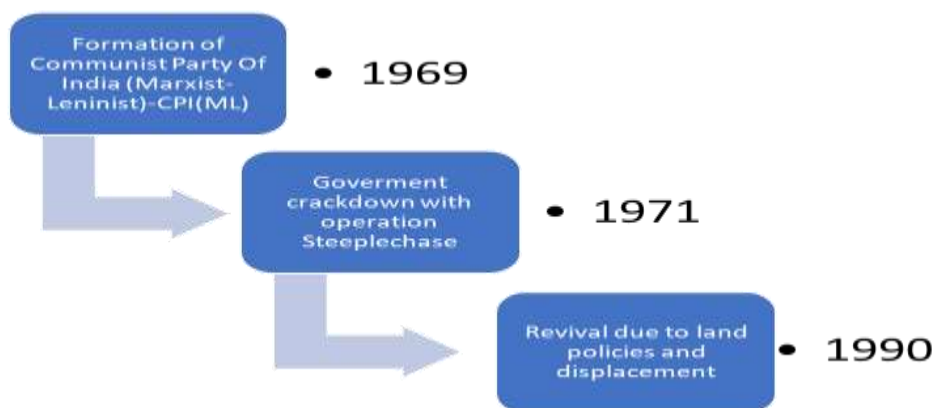


Figure 4: The Rise of the Movement Of Naxalism
 Source: *A Historical Introduction to Naxalism in India*

The rise of the Naxalite movement in India represents a significant shift in left-wing extremism, from a minor peasant revolt to a protracted insurgency. The movement became formalized in 1969 with the establishment of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) or CPI(ML), under the ideological influence of Maoism. This new political identity structured the previous Naxalbari rebellion of 1967, in which peasants without land revolted against feudal landlords. The government responded with strong military action, undertaking Operation Steeplechase in 1971, a massive operation to neutralize Naxal formations. Although momentarily dented, the movement again gained steam in the 1990s, especially because of land acquisition policies that displaced vast numbers of rural and tribal people.

The 1990s revival was driven by growing discontent at inequality, neglect of tribal people, and forced evictions from mining and industry projects. These economic and social problems intensified the alienation of the state and local communities, allowing Naxal groups to find it simpler to mobilize support. A turning point was reached in 2004, when the two most dominant Naxal groups united to become the Communist Party of India (Maoist). This merger greatly enhanced the organizational power and operational capacity of the insurgents, particularly in areas now referred to as the Red Corridor. The

emergence of this movement thus represents a complicated combination of historical grievances, ideological conflict, and socio-political failure to deal with tribal and rural development.

The National Law University, Jodhpur (2010) report condemns the operations like "Operation Green Hunt" as ineffective measures to solve the Naxalite issue. Instead, it suggests adopting development and good governance reforms. The report discusses that poverty, land disputes, and government indifference drive citizens to the Naxalite movement, while locals get trapped between security agencies and insurgents. Community policing seems a more viable option by winning the confidence, improving local security, and facilitating development. By taking steps to close the gap between citizens and the state, the study finds that long-term peace can be maintained. The findings give more priority to long-term engagement in community outreach and participatory governance in the affected conflict area.

Venkatesh (2020) refers to how Naxalism inflicts damage on children in conflict zones, notably through the induction of child soldiers into rebel groups like Bal Sangathan. The study shows that Dalit and Adivasi children, who are already marginalized by poverty, are often pushed into rebel forces. India has constitutional protection and child welfare legislation but weak enforcement. Venkatesh thinks punitive action will not work; rehabilitation, education, and reintegration programs must be implemented. Community policing can be a critical factor in the identification of vulnerable children, community building through trust, and alternative solutions to violence. This perspective points to the broader social benefits of community policing beyond crime reduction, into the protection of human rights and the empowerment of youths in Naxal-affected areas.

3.2.2 Issues in Naxalite-prone regions

The Naxalite-affected regions, like parts of Chhattisgarh, face very complicated and serious issues. These problems are not recent problems. They have been developing for many years because of the way the local people have been treated and due to the difficult conditions in which they live. To understand why Naxalism became strong in these areas, we need to look carefully at these problems.

One of the biggest issues is rights over land and forest. Tribals and forest dwellers have lived in these forests for generations. They consider the forest, the rivers, and the land as their own. They maintain the forests, use their products, and live in balance with nature. But when outsiders came for mining, industry, or government initiatives, many tribals lost their land. Forest laws restricted their rights to collect forest produce, cut wood, or use land for farming. The government declared these measures were needed for conservation or development, but for tribals it meant losing their homes and their livelihoods.

Another big problem is lack of development. Basic services like clean water, health care, good roads, electricity, and schools are missing in many villages. Some villages do not even have proper roads connecting them to nearby towns. During the rainy season, many places become completely cut off. When government schemes are announced, they often do not reach the people.

There is also a trust gap between the government and the people. In many places, people feel that the government comes only when it wants to take something from them – land, minerals, or votes. Otherwise, it forgets them. Even when police or officials come, they are often seen as outsiders who do not understand the local language, culture, or traditions. Sometimes the police, while searching for Naxals, behave roughly with common villagers too. This creates fear and hatred. Instead of feeling protected, people feel attacked by the very government that is supposed to help them.

Fear and violence are daily realities in Naxalite areas. Villagers are caught between the Naxalites and the police. If they help the police, the Naxals punish them. If they support the Naxals, the police suspect them.

Many innocent people suffer in this crossfire. Families live in constant fear. They do not know whom to trust.

Another issue is a lack of jobs and income. Agriculture alone cannot support large families. In the absence of other opportunities, people are forced to migrate to cities in search of work. Those who stay behind are often unemployed or underemployed. Naxal groups offer money or power to poor youth, which attracts them to pick up guns instead of books or jobs.

Infrastructure projects like roads, dams, and mines are seen with suspicion by local people. Even though such projects promise jobs and development, often local villagers are not the ones who benefit. Outsiders get jobs, and locals are displaced without proper compensation. This deepens the anger and frustration.

Lastly, there is a lack of communication. The government often speaks a different language than the people. Messages of schemes, rights, or grievance systems do not reach the people. Even when some efforts are made, people are too scared or unsure about approaching government offices. Because of all these reasons, Naxalism found a strong support base among the neglected and angry sections of society. Over time, what began as a movement for land rights and justice turned into a violent insurgency. Today, the fight is no longer only about rights but also about control over territory, resources, and ideology.

Solving the Naxal problem is not simple. It is not just about sending more police or using more force. It is about winning back the trust of the people. It is about ensuring that they feel secure, respected, and heard. Community policing becomes very important here. It provides a way for the police and government to start building bridges with the people. It offers a method to create trust where fear and anger have existed for years. It helps the police to not just enforce the law but also become partners in the community's development and well-being. Banerjee, S. (1984)

3.3 Issues faced in traditional policing

Policing in Naxal-hit regions, such as regions around Chhattisgarh, is quite unlike regular law and order policing in urban areas. Conventional policing, which emphasizes the use of force and stringent control, has not been that effective in such regions. Actually, at times, they have even worsened the situation. To realize why community policing is essential, first, we need to realize the problems of the conventional system of policing.

1. One of the most serious problems is that conventional policing produces fear instead of confidence. In Naxalite areas, most people already feel the government does not care about them. When police arrive with guns and vehicles, they appear more like an army than guardians. Villagers who have never received regular visits from teachers, doctors or government officials suddenly see highly armed police.

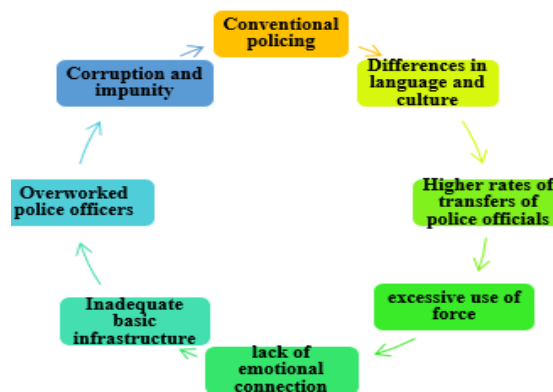


Figure 5 Issues faced by traditional policing

Source: Thakre, A 2014

2. Differences in language and culture are another huge issue. A large number of officers deployed to these regions are from other regions of India. They are not aware of the tribal languages spoken in the region. They do not recognize local traditions or festivals.
3. Higher rates of transfers of police officials worsen the situation. Police officers are frequently transferred in many Naxal-affected areas. A police officer may begin establishing a good rapport with villagers, but before that rapport is well established, he or she is transferred to another location. Next, a new officer arrives who has to begin from scratch. Villagers tire of recounting their issues repeatedly to new faces. They lose hope over time that anything will improve.
4. Another grave issue is the excessive use of force. Conventional policing in conflict zones tends to overuse raids, combing operations, arrests, and sometimes rough handling. Though the intention is to apprehend Naxalites, innocent people are sometimes caught in the crossfire. There are instances where villagers have been beaten, arrested on false charges or humiliated.
5. Inadequate basic infrastructure and resources also undermine traditional policing. Police stations located far from populated places are small and insufficiently equipped. There are not enough vehicles, communication equipment, and basic materials available to the officers. Most of the areas are so deep within forests that it becomes impossible to reach them in time.
6. Overworked police officers are another hurdle. In the majority of states such as Chhattisgarh, too few police officers exist for the population they serve. The number of police is far less per 100,000 citizens compared to what is needed (BPR&D, 2023). Officers work long hours with little rest in hazardous conditions and are stressed, tired. With officers stretched, they deal exclusively with emergencies and cannot do work in the communities even if it is something they wish to pursue.
7. Corruption and impunity have also damaged the police's image. Villagers in some instances have been subjected to bribes, discrimination or political pressure by police officials. If the police are perceived as unfair or dishonest, they lose public confidence. People may choose to resolve issues in Naxal "courts" instead of approaching the police.
8. The lack of emotional connection between the police and the people has been a silent but strong problem. People need to feel that the police care about their daily life, their children, and their safety. If police are only seen during raids or arrests, villagers never get to see their human side. Without emotional trust, even good officers find it hard to get real support from the community.

Traditional policing has tended to treat places such as Bastar villages as "enemy territory." This kind of thinking builds a huge wall between the police and the public. Rather than acting together against crime, both suspect each other. This serves the Naxals, who want people to remain angry and scared. It is also essential to learn that conventional policing strategies may suit other cities that have various problems. In cities, you can install CCTV cameras, keep speedy patrolling vehicles, and keep the law and order in place through prompt reactions. But in the interior of forests and among individuals who already feel neglected, such city models of policing fail to deliver.

There needs to be a gradual but persistent process of winning hearts and minds. The public needs to view the police officers as friends who reside among them, assist them in times of need, join in festivals with them, and hear them out in times of trouble. Force must be reserved for extreme situations and not employed as the default mechanism. That is why alternative methods such as community policing become highly necessary. Community policing does not discard the necessity of law enforcement but introduces a level of partnership, trust, and cooperation. It makes the police more accessible, empathetic, and responsive. James, R. (2020)

B Thakre (2014) offers an insightful empirical analysis of the effectiveness of community policing through its application in Nagpur, an indirectly affected city of Naxal insurgency. The study highlights that resource availability, training of the officers, and active participation of the community play a key role in the success of policing. Significantly, Thakre highlights the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure public trust. Still, issues like lack of training, lack of public awareness, and patchy implementation continue to plague it. Hypothesis testing in the study indicates that community participation results in more effective crime prevention, even in the presence of external destabilizing factors. This empirical model provides a template for the implementation of community policing strategies in the specific challenges of Naxal-affected areas, underscoring the trust-building, transparency, and focus on local needs (Thakre, A 2014)

Baudains et al. (2018) use a quantitative approach to estimate the effect of police deployment on the Naxal insurgency. Contrary to the expected hypothesis, the research discovers that increased police deployment can, at times, increase violence, especially in the absence of public trust. The counterintuitive result is used to reinforce the need to win people's trust before the deployment of heavy security protocols. The research validates the hypothesis that community policing, founded on relationship building, grievance redressing, and empowerment-based local decision-making, can be a more effective long-term response. The research reinforces the necessity of the general agreement that people-centered, participatory development approaches are essential in curtailing the Naxal insurgency and attaining sustainable peace

3.4 How Can Community Policing Help



Figure-6 How Can Community Policing Help
Source: Mission National Police, 2023

Community policing is like a bridge between the government and the people. Community policing is not just a theory or a small experiment. It is a big change in the way police and people work together.

One way community policing can help is through establishing trust. Where the police are feared, the initial work must be breaking that fear. Community policing promotes police officers visiting villages frequently, chatting openly and in a friendly manner with the populace, and attending social functions.

Another significant assistance is provided by resolving small issues at an early stage. Most village conflicts begin with small issues such as land disputes, personal conflicts, or the absence of basic facilities. If these issues are not resolved promptly, they can develop into larger conflicts that Naxal groups can utilize to generate more resentment. In community policing, officers assist in resolving these small issues before they blow up. They act as intermediaries who hear both sides and propose reasonable solutions. Even if it's not possible for the police to resolve every problem directly, simply facilitating meetings between the government departments and the villagers can make individuals feel heard.

Providing employment and opportunities for young people is another way in which community policing can make a significant difference. In most of the Naxal-affected areas, youth become part of rebel outfits because they have no hope for the future. If the police, in collaboration with NGOs and government departments, can arrange skill training camps, sports competitions, and cultural events, they provide youth with something constructive to concentrate on. For too long, people have seen the police only during arrests or violent raids. Community policing changes this by encouraging officers to act as helpers.

Empowerment of women is another large field where community policing can assist. Women quietly suffer in most villages because they are afraid of both the Naxals and the establishment. Through the creation of women's groups, police can bring women together, educate them about their rights, and make them speak out. Special women officers can go to villages and establish safe havens where women can speak out about their issues without fear.

The other plus point of community policing is that it helps to build local allies. If police officers engage teachers, local shopkeepers, health workers, religious leaders, and youth groups in community work, they establish a robust local network. This network is the first line of defense against Naxal influence.

Listening is another key aspect of community policing. Often, villagers have simple demands: a small bridge, an operating school, protection against illegal moneylenders, or simply respect. If police officers listen seriously at some point, people feel valued. Listening as such becomes a step that decreases anger and frustration. It demonstrates that the government is concerned and that change is possible.

Community policing can also make security operations more intelligent. Rather than mindlessly searching jungles, police may engage with the people and discern genuine threats. This saves unnecessary violence, time, and raises the success rate of operations against armed groups. An excellent instance of community policing being practiced is the Civic Action Programme conducted by the CRPF and the state police in numerous Naxal-affected regions. Under this initiative, officers conduct free medical camps, provide study materials to kids, and even construct small roads or wells. (Mission National Police, 2023).

Thus, community policing is not just about changing tactics. It is about changing relationships. It is about shifting from a mindset of “we versus them” to “we together.” It is about moving from fear to friendship. Under the Chhattisgarh rural conditions of hardships, where fear and wrath have accumulated over decades, it is only a friendly and equitable police system that can usher in enduring peace. Community policing provides hope. It demonstrates that there is more to establishing safety than guns and violence. Trust, respect, cooperation, and concern can establish a far more solid foundation.

3.5 Community Policing Measures

1. Amcho Bastar, Amcho Police initiative

As a response to the multifaceted challenges of Naxalism, especially in Red Corridor areas of Chhattisgarh, innovative community policing efforts have been initiated to address the gap between security forces and the local population. Of these, perhaps the most successful is the Amcho Bastar,

Amcho Police initiative, started in 2017 in Bastar district, which is among the most affected by Naxalism. This initiative transforms policing into an empathetic, participatory, and socio-cultural practice. The emphasis is on gaining the confidence of the tribal people by engaging police personnel in local functions, educating them in tribal traditions, and promoting interpersonal communications. The most significant innovation of the program is the rehabilitation of surrendered Naxals through vocational training and economic empowerment. The Bastar Police Line has even been enlisted as a Vocational Training Provider, allowing erstwhile militants and local youth to acquire skills in plumbing, electrical work, and security services. These people are then placed on the job or motivated to join Self Help Groups (SHGs), ensuring reintegration in the long term (Devarajan et al., 2024). Also, this project has assisted in rebranding police forces as development partners, with newly set up police camps being perceived as symbols of progress and not oppression. One innovative extension of this project is BESTCOP (Bastar Ensures Safe Tourism by Community Policing), which trains young people from the local community as tourist guides and home-stay operators, ensuring sustainable tourism and community-based income generation. Police officers also undergo hospitality training, changing attitudes and increasing local economies at the same time (Devarajan et al., 2024).

2. Lon Varratu

Another trail-blazing effort is Lon Varratu, or "Return to Your Village" in the indigenous Gondi language. Introduced in 2020 in Dantewada, the campaign aimed to emotionally and socially reconnect Maoist rebels with their villages. Sensing that most Maoists were from the very villages they were fighting against, the police devised public postings listing active rebels names, photos, and rewards included on posters and banners distributed across village squares and markets. This strategy had the objective of creating moral and social pressure and an offer to return to the mainstream. Lon Varratu stood out from the rest in being a people-focused approach: police officers personally visited families, conducted one-to-one talks, and highlighted the psychological cost of insurgency. Up to 2025, over 950 Maoists over 200 with reward points on their heads surrendered under the program. Such people were given an instant relief of ₹50,000, vocational training, medical assistance, and assistance in setting up small enterprises. Many of them were either brought into SHGs or were rehabilitated into farming by government schemes. This psychologically sensitive approach not only mitigated fear and suspicion within the public toward the police but also resulted in better intelligence gathering and Maoist networking being weakened in Dantewada (Devarajan et al., 2024).

3. Civic Action Programme (CAP)

Concurrently, the Civic Action Programme (CAP) led by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), has been instrumental in building development and confidence in Naxal-affected areas, especially in the Bastar division. CAP aims to provide basic services in unreached areas—education, healthcare, skill development, and infrastructure being its four pillars. Sanskriti Schools, the CRPF Gurukuls and other institutions were set up in far-flung villages to impart free education to tribal youth with books, uniforms, and sports kits. For young people, vocational training schools provided courses in trades like masonry, tailoring, electric work, and plumbing to induce self-sufficiency and limit the attraction of extremist thought patterns. CAP also conducted health camps in remote villages, dispensing essential medical aid and information on hygiene and disease prevention. Infrastructural assistance comprised the delivery of farming equipment, bicycles, and clean water facilities, thus adding to the day-to-day lives of thousands. Cultural and sporting activities like volleyball matches and dance competitions were done to enhance the villagers' relations with police forces, providing an arena for informal, non-hostile interaction. These

initiatives cumulatively contributed to recreating the image of the police in tribal areas from foes to friends, leading to a gradual reduction in extremist influence (CRPF, 2023).

4. Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy, 2015

Complementing these efforts is the Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy, 2015, formulated by the Chhattisgarh Government in order to establish a systematic exit for active Maoists. The policy is holistic, proposing financial assistance, vocational and legal assistance, counseling, and social reintegration processes. Surrendered persons under the scheme are provided with a fixed deposit, monthly stipends allowances, and cash assistance on spot. They are also being enrolled in skill training to enable them to find gainful employment or engage in business. The legal framework of the policy is also considered: surrendered persons are not immediately arrested, and lesser charges can be waived if they abide by the terms of the program. Psychological counseling addresses the psychological trauma normally suffered by former insurgents. In addition, there are awareness campaigns in villages to facilitate the social reintegration of surrendered Maoists without fear or stigma. Despite the policy's success, however, issues of authenticating claims of surrender and guaranteeing long-term acceptance by the community remain. Still, it is an essential element in the overall peace-building process in Naxalite-affected regions (Chhattisgarh Government, 2015).

Combined, these programs reflect a new paradigm of conflict resolution from the force-based model to one of people-based, empathetic and development-focused conflict resolution. These police-community programs not only decrease violence but also strengthen marginalized populations, create resilient peace, and restore confidence in democratic institutions. In doing so, they reaffirm the notion that security is most powerful when grounded in trust, conversation, and mutual advancement.

4. Results and Discussion

1. How does community policing impact security, trust, and crime prevention in Naxal-affected regions?

Community Policing plays an important role in building trust, improving security, and preventing crime in Naxal-affected areas such as the rural and tribal regions of Bastar and Dantewada regions of Chhattisgarh.

The regions have faced long years of violence, underdevelopment, and the local populace experiences profound mistrust when dealing with the police. In most such locations, conventional policing methods wherein police are seen only during raids or in cases of emergencies tend to instill fear and generate distance between the law and the public. Community policing changes the situation by emphasizing partnership, understanding, and continuous interaction between the people and the police.

In community policing, police do not play the role of outsiders but integrate themselves into the community. They visit villages frequently, talk to people, hear their problems, and attempt to address problems collectively.

These can be simple things such as arranging sports equipment for children, conducting health camps, assisting in ration distribution, or helping students with stationery and school supplies. These small steps helped villagers see the police in a new light as helpers and protectors rather than a symbol of fear.

When police officers establish these kinds of relationships, individuals build a strong connection. This creates a trust bond. Consequently, violence rates decrease, and security is enhanced for all. When individuals feel that the police are among them, they are more likely to collaborate in order to ensure their areas remain secure.

Community policing also raises awareness on empowerment. In remote areas, individuals are usually unaware of the rights or the schemes of the government they are eligible. When the police invest time in informing the people regarding health, education, work, or security legislation, it empowers them.

With increased knowledge, individuals are able to make improved decisions and are less likely to be misled. Timely resolution of small issues like land or family disputes helps prevent bigger problems. Regular communication between police and people builds understanding and reduces the chances of being misled.

Another important advantage of community policing is the prevention of crime before it happens. Traditional policing usually focuses on addressing the problem only after it occurs. However, community policing functions in a proactive manner.

This strategy also provides emotional safety. In most villages, being caught between Naxal terror and police crackdown is a constant fear. They do not often know whom to trust. But when police officials visit local celebrations, share time with the older generation, come to the aid of people in distress, or even help with road construction or school building, they establish a bond. Citizens start to think that the police are not only law enforcers but are also friends who care. Such a perception develops peace from within.

The combination of regular communication, emotional support, sensitivity, and early problem-solving makes community policing highly effective in crime prevention. It not only assists in the early identification of potential threats but also minimizes false suspicion and fear. Individuals no longer feel isolated or powerless. They know someone is available to listen and respond.

At last, community policing has made a positive impact in Naxal-affected regions. It has enhanced security by providing a more secure environment where the people and police coexist in harmony. It has established trust by converting fear into friendship.

And it has discouraged crime by solving the causes of conflict and frustration. Although it requires time and energy to establish these relationships, the long-term payoff is evident. **Peace is not just about stopping violence; it's about creating an environment where people feel safe, respected, and heard.** Community policing helps make that possible.

2. What are the key challenges in implementing community policing in Naxal-prone areas?

Ans: It is not easy to start and run community policing in Naxal-affected areas. These places have numerous problems that make it difficult for police and citizens to cooperate. The following are the primary challenges:

People living in Naxal-affected villages generally do not trust the police. They have only witnessed the police presence during raids or clashes for many years. Due to this, they remain scared or unsure about interacting with police officers. It requires effort and time to build trust. Most of these villages are far in the interior of forests or mountains. There aren't any normal **roads or ways of transport** for reaching them. At times, there isn't even electricity or a phone network.

This makes it complicated for the police to visit regularly or stay in touch with the people. Naxal groups intimidate villagers against supporting the police. If one catches sight of someone assisting the police, the Naxals will punish them. Individuals are **afraid of getting hurt** and tend to stay away from any police operation, even if they would like to assist.

Most police officers are deployed from elsewhere and do not speak the local tribal **language or culture**. It is difficult for them to converse with villagers or comprehend their culture. Police stations in these regions usually have extremely few personnel and insufficient resources such as vehicles, good buildings, or funds to operate programs.

As a result of this, officers are not able to attend all the villages or organize many beneficial activities. If the police officers connect with villagers, they might get **transferred**. A fresh officer must then begin anew.

This continually shatters the confidence that had begun to establish itself. Villagers also get exhausted repeating issues. At times, community policing is not carried out effectively. Police might simply distribute some free stuff or organize one event and disappear. If there is no follow-up, people feel it's not serious. This makes them lose interest and trust in the police once again.

There is usually **no set plan** or consistent support by the government for community policing. **Without sufficient funds** and definite rules, many great programs end after a while or when the commanding officer changes. Police use excessive force at times while conducting operations. Innocent individuals are harmed or arrested unnecessarily. This instills more fear and anger among the villagers, which brings them closer to the Naxals..

Villagers desire police personnel who understand their issues and families. People never get to witness their human side if the police are only present for operations or arrests. There is no possibility of developing trust without an emotional connection. Even when individuals report crimes or provide information, they believe justice is delayed or denied. Cases remain pending for years. Individuals lose confidence in the system and refuse to cooperate.

In certain regions, individuals believe the police are politicized or demand bribes. This erodes the image of fairness and causes individuals to turn away from law enforcement. There isn't a good, strong law or state policy backing up community policing nationwide. Certain programs are initiated but then come to an end as officers retire or budgets are exhausted. People, therefore, think that it's merely an ephemeral act.

3.What are the best practices and lessons learned from existing community policing programs in Naxal-affected states?

Community policing initiatives in Naxal-affected areas, especially in Chhattisgarh's Bastar and Dantewada districts, have brought to the forefront useful lessons and good practices that can guide future initiatives. There is a common thread among effective programs that stresses building trust, partnerships for development, and social reintegration.

One of the most effective practices is regular and compassionate police interaction with community. Initiatives such as Amcho Bastar, Amcho Police have established that if officers are involved in village activities, there is respect for traditional practices and addressing everyday problems (e.g., health camps, road repairs, assistance to schools), they become champions instead of symbols of fear. Such confidence facilitates more effective sharing of intelligence and reduce Naxal movement influence.

Another successful practices is the rehabilitation and reintegration of former militants. Programs such as Lon Varratu have shown that granting Maoist cadres a honorable return by way of money, vocational skills, and psychosocial care can markedly reduce violence and enhance peacebuilding. Public spectacles, direct contact, and social reintegration utilized by the campaign made the campaign very effective, resulting in more than 950 surrenders.

Women and youth involvement is a third key practice. Sport tournaments, skill development camps, and farming or tailoring workshops empower vulnerable groups and provide insurgency alternatives.

Another valuable lesson is that community policing needs to extend beyond policing to involve development, meaning it needs to fix actual life problems such as access to water, education, and

employment. CRPF's Civic Action Programme (CAP) demonstrates how education, medical care, and infrastructure support can make the state more palpable and beneficent in the public's perception.

The lessons learned include the **importance of continuity and sincerity**. People are more likely to cooperate when they see long-term commitment, not token gestures. Officers who remain posted in one area for longer durations tend to build stronger relationships. Programs should also avoid one-off events and instead create sustained community partnerships. Emotional connection, listening, and patience are as important as any infrastructure or policy

Community policing initiatives in Naxal-affected regions of Chhattisgarh, particularly in Bastar and Dantewada have demonstrated significant success in fostering trust, enhancing security, and promoting development. These programs have effectively bridged the gap between law enforcement and local communities, leading to improved cooperation and reduced insurgent influence

5. CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

- a. The time available for fieldwork was limited, which made it difficult to conduct extended visits or follow-up interviews for more detailed data.
- b. There was not enough secondary research available on the local impact of community policing in Naxal-affected areas, which made it harder to understand the full context.
- c. Many police officers did not share real or sensitive information due to confidentiality and security concerns, which limited the quality of primary data.
- d. It was hard to access remote or conflict-affected areas because of poor roads, safety risks, and other logistical issues, which affected data collection.
- e. In some places, people in the community were not comfortable speaking openly, either due to fear or lack of trust, which reduced the amount of useful information gathered.

6. CONCLUSION

This research determines that community policing is an effective and essential instrument to reduce Naxalite presence and foster peace in the Naxal-hit areas of Bastar and Dantewada, Chhattisgarh. In regions where the local people have lived in terror, suffered from underdevelopment, and witnessed a vast disconnect between society and the state, community policing provides a means to rebuild trust and establish a secure environment. It transforms the role of the police from being viewed as strangers to becoming part of the community.

The study points out that Traditional policing is not sufficient to manage such areas of conflict on its own. Rather, there is a need for regular local interaction, transparency in communication, and public participation to tackle the underlying causes of unrest, like poverty, alienation, land disputes, and fear. Initiatives involving health camps, sports, education, and cultural activities have been effective in making the police more accessible and removing long head of fear. The most significant result of community policing is increasing engagement of local youth and women. Their empowerment not only prevents recruitment by Naxal outfits but also produces future community leaders. Activities that give training in skills, employment, and access to government schemes induce hope and minimize the attraction towards violence. The research also highlighted that technological use, like drones, surveillance, and mobile communication, has enhanced public outreach, intelligence gathering, and coordination in previously inaccessible areas. The success of these activities relies on constant monitoring, steady resources, and stability among the officers in targeted areas

Therefore, community policing should not be thought of as a short-term campaign but rather as a long-term process to build peace through partnership. It promotes security through respect, active collaboration, and joint responsibility between law enforcers and the community. With the right policy, funding, and appropriate training, community policing can be a sustainable solution not only for the Naxal-affected regions but for any place that is suffering from mistrust and social disturbance.

7. RECOMMENDATION

1. Police officers should regularly visit villages and converse with villagers warmly. This process gradually removes fear and builds trust among people about the police.
2. Additional training programs should be given to the officers on how to engage in conversation, listen, and work closely with local people, especially in such sensitive areas of Naxal zones.
3. The government should ensure proper financing and regular support to community policing initiatives, so that activities will not stop halfway due to a lack of funds.
4. Infrastructure like roads, transport, and networks should be upgraded in rural areas. This will enable the police and development teams to reach people on time.
5. Police officers must try to learn the local language and customs. This small step will facilitate a good relationship and prevent misunderstanding.
6. The programs should include women personnel and place a strong focus on women's issues. This will encourage women to express themselves more freely and comfortably.
7. Technology such as mobile apps, drones, and CCTV cameras must be utilized wisely in both urban and rural areas to improve surveillance, gather real-time information, and facilitate quicker response to incidents.
8. Community groups should be formed where the locals can directly communicate their problems to the police.
9. Monitoring and feedback mechanisms must be established to monitor which programs are working and which need to change. This improves future planning and outcomes.
10. The public must be aware of their legal rights and the advantages of the government surrender policy. Proper awareness can motivate Naxalites to surrender arms and return to society peacefully.

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