



INDIAN POLICE FOUNDATION

SOCIAL AND PUBLIC ORDER IMPACT OF THE CONTINUING PANDEMIC: STRATEGIES FOR LONG-TERM PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

*Guidelines and a checklist to help
police organisations to plan ahead*

MAY, 2021

About this Paper

The observations and recommendations made here are based on the evidence and data gathered by the IPF during the course of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lessons drawn from our interactions with field police personnel, senior police leaders academic scholars and citizen stakeholders from across the country. Internal discussions within the IPF have helped deepen our understanding as well as in gleaning and compiling the important lessons.

Indian Police Foundation
May, 2021

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Social and Public Order Impact of the Continuing Pandemic: Strategies for Long-Term Preparedness and Resilience

*Preparing a plan for pandemic policing and contingency management:
Guidelines and a checklist to help State Police and CAPFs to plan ahead*

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Abstract

This paper advocates that India's police organisations should plan for the multiple and multidimensional contingencies that may arise or may impact their operational continuity, availability and resilience, as a result of the continuing and devastating impact of COVID-19. IPF believes that safeguarding the physical and mental health, well-being, morale and motivation of police personnel are crucial for the operational success of police organisations and the larger public interest.

Even as India battles a massive and virulent second wave of the pandemic, the police forces continue to work the covid frontlines, on duty round the clock as always, enforcing lockdowns and social distancing, protecting and regulating crowds at hospitals, vaccination centres and funeral sites, performing funerals of unclaimed dead bodies, ensuring the smooth flow of essential goods, services and supply chains, while also attending to their primary functions of crime prevention, investigation, maintenance of public order and myriad other responsibilities.

Apart from the daily firefighting and situational responses, it is important for the police leadership to strategize and plan ahead. Strategizing need to be informed by an analysis of the evolving external environment, anticipating the emerging threats & challenges and preparing for what looks like a prolonged and fierce battle against the pandemic.

Building a war room and a Centralized Command and Control Centre comprising of a core team of competent officers should be one of the first priorities of the top police leadership. The core team not only enables the top leadership to develop high levels of situational awareness, helping to envision, strategize and design realistic plans, but must also help deliver the plan on the ground and monitor its flow.

It is crucial that the centralized war room is supported by a string of Command Centres at District / Subdivisional or other appropriate unit levels for effective and decentralized implementation and delivery of the plan.

The scenarios referred to here are not predictions of what will happen. They are to be seen as illustrative of what might happen. Police organisations are advised to carry out their own internal discussions to generate the insights into the emerging situation, visualise the possible ways in which events are likely to unfold in their respective jurisdictions and develop specific strategies for dealing with them.

Not planning is not an option. Merely hoping that the crisis will go away, or hoping without planning is also not an option. The responsibility on the police is tremendous.

The Background

The Indian Police shines best in a Crisis.

When the World Health Organisation announced on March 11, 2020 that COVID-19 had reached the level of a global pandemic, citing concerns about 'the alarming levels of spread and severity', governments across the globe were advised to take urgent and aggressive action to stop the spread of the disease. The Government of India invoked the Epidemic Diseases Act 1897 and the National Disaster Management Act 2005 together with certain provisions of the Indian Penal Code 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973, to deal with the situation.

There was very little time for the State and Central police organisations to plan, train or prepare their personnel for the impending crisis. There was no existing experience or SOPs to fall back upon. When on the 25th of March, 2020, India began a nation-wide lockdown and when the police was saddled with the responsibilities to enforce these laws to help in containing the spread of the disease, most police personnel in the country were unfamiliar with the nature and virulence of the pandemic or what the provisions of these laws were. In fact, many citizens were perplexed at the sudden measures that would effectively limit the exercise of their fundamental rights to the freedom of movement, freedom of peaceful assembly and the freedom to go about their daily lives.

Quickly recognising their key role in combating the pandemic, the Indian Police rose to the occasion and galvanised itself in a time of unparalleled crisis, taking decisive action, while also continuously learning on the job. They deployed rapidly and acted decisively and cohesively, with dedication, commitment, innovation and flexibility. They were quick to use technology in many areas of police work.

Since then, India's police forces have been on the frontlines of the national battle against the pandemic, working closely with governments and health workers, doing everything possible to contain the spread of the disease, maintaining public order & safety and enabling citizens to cope. Police forces across the country have also been acclaimed for their extensive humanitarian work, reaching food and medicines to the needy and coming to the aid of citizens who needed assistance. Police personnel in different States did everything possible to ameliorate the sufferings of vulnerable persons, migrant labour, senior citizens and others in distress.

Now is the Time to Review, Strategize and Re-Calibrate for a Prolonged Battle

When the pandemic hit India in the early part of 2020, the country's police departments and CAPFs had very little time to prepare a formal crisis response plan for an impending public health disaster of the magnitude we are witnessing today. While the police have been doing everything possible towards implementing the governments' pandemic response and in attending to the daily fires, it would be important to develop and articulate a pandemic policing response plan. This means that even while in the midst of the evolving devastation, police leaders should find time to reflect and construct a clear and coherent pandemic policing response plan for the benefit of policy clarity and in the interest of sustainability, operational continuity and resilience of the force.

While even the best plans may come under stress when a disaster strikes with ferocious force, and it may be very challenging to find time during the fluidity of an ongoing disaster, it would still be critical to have written plans in place to avoid what may be called 'trial and error' governance, reactive measures and panic.

Considering the unprecedented and chaotic situation that confronts the nation resulting from the overrun of the health infrastructure and its possible implications for the police, it is time for the police leadership to introspect, review and anticipate, to quickly develop a crisis management strategy to deal with the ongoing health emergency. It is critical to assess the implications of the worsening situation, identify the challenges and preventive-maintenance needs of the police in case of a need for a prolonged engagement with the covid crisis.

This exercise aims at supporting the Indian Police in constructing a workable Pandemic Crisis Management Plan identifying and building upon the principal learnings from the first wave of the pandemic. Such a planning exercise will generate a deeper understanding of the present situational challenges and help prepare for the possible future trajectories that this pandemic might take. The scientific community has already predicted a third and possible subsequent waves of the pandemic, which is indicative of the possibility of a prolonged battle for the police as well.

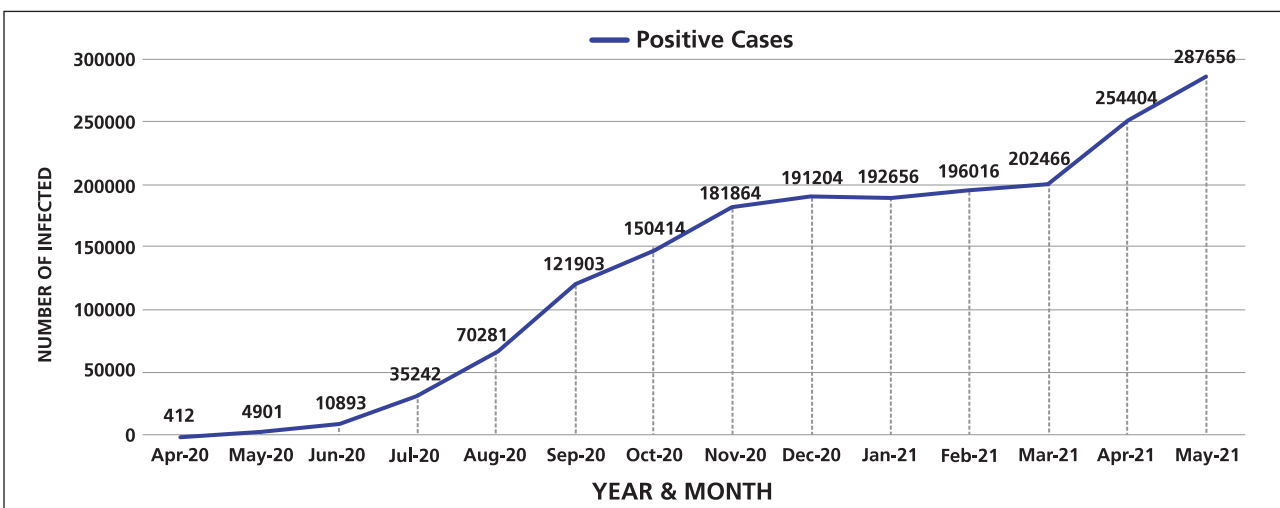
Lessons from the First Wave of the Pandemic

From the beginning of the pandemic, the Indian Police Foundation (IPF) has been gathering information about the spread of infection within the State and Central Armed Police Forces. From these numbers, it is now possible to understand the trends and draw certain inferences, both in terms of morbidities and mortalities in the respective police organisations.

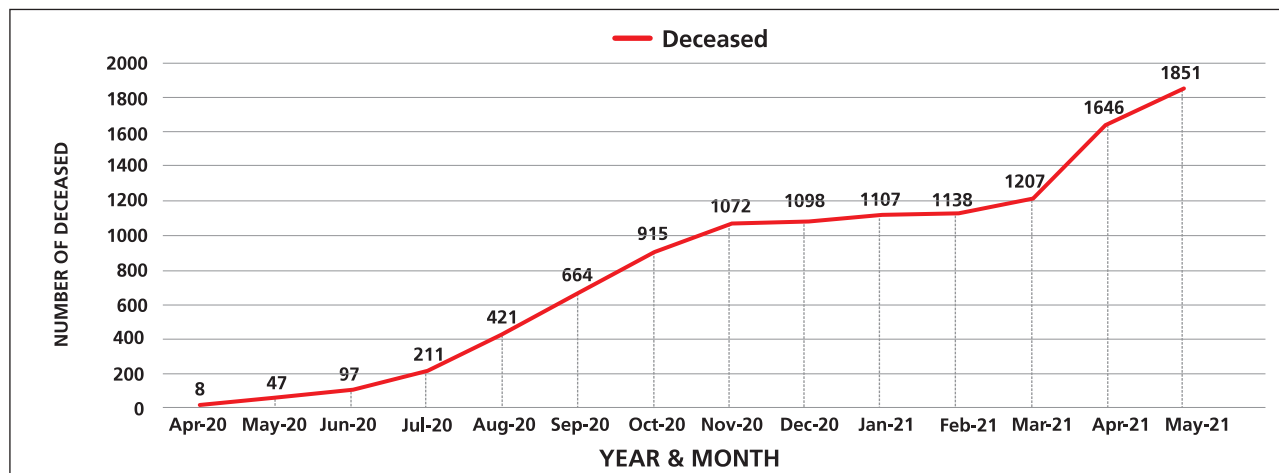
The IPF has been in constant touch with police officers in different parts of the country to understand the field level issues and challenges in pandemic policing. These efforts included several formal, structured and unstructured conversations with field police personnel as well as the top leadership. The IPF also held webinars attended by several DGPs, Police Commissioners, Chiefs of CAPFs, other senior police and CAPF officers, serving and retired civil servants, medical experts including mental health professionals, civil society leaders and NGOs, focused on the cross-sharing of learnings between various police organisations.

The observations and recommendations made here are based on the evidence and data gathered by the IPF, the lessons drawn from our interactions with police personnel and senior police leaders as well as citizen stakeholders from across the country.

Police personnel tested positive for COVID-19 from April 2020 to May 2021



Number of police personnel succumbed to COVID-19 from April 2020 to May 2021



Steps to Prepare a Pandemic Policing and Crisis Management Plan

STEP 1: Establish an emergency war room or a Centralized Command and Control Centre comprising of a core team of chosen officers

In a situation of deep crisis, the top leadership should decentralize operational decision-making authority by building a war room – a Centralized Command and Control Centre comprising of a core team of competent officers. The core team not only enables the top leadership to develop high levels of situational awareness, helping to envision, strategize and design realistic plans, but also helps deliver the plan on the ground and monitor its flow.

Planning must be data-driven and based on analysis of verified information and insights developed. Supported by data and dependable information, the team should advise the top leadership of the force as well as support strategy development, while also continuously guiding and facilitating the District/unit level officers, making mid course corrections where necessary, in a rapidly changing, complex and dynamic situation. Officers who run the Command Centre should have their eyes and ears on the ground, think fast, intervene quickly and should also be able to speak clearly and honestly with every level of the police hierarchy and the government.

The Central Command and Control Centre should be supported by a string of Control Centres at the District / Subdivisional or other appropriate unit levels for effective and decentralized implementation and delivery of the plan.

STEP 2: Assess the situation and the evolving risk scenarios

The Planning Team in each police organisation should initiate a comprehensive internal review/analysis for a pandemic risk assessment - to generate a deeper understanding of the present situation, the multidimensional risks and consequences of the heightened and continuing crisis and its implications for policing, crime, public order and other specific mandates of the respective police / organisation. This step will also involve identification of the potential hazards and anticipation of how the scenario is likely to evolve, their possible consequences on policing, and the availability of resources to help in the creation of a coherent crisis management plan for mitigation, keeping in view, the requirements of the immediate and long-term operational sustainability of the organisation and its resilience.

STEP 3: Develop and document a Pandemic Policing and Crisis Management Plan

This step will involve internal discussions and drafting of an operating model, visualising a set of the critical responses, focusing on the practical elements to deal with the evolving crisis,

recalibrating existing strategies where considered necessary. The plan should endeavour to have specific focus on standard protocols, address the short and medium-term challenges to policing, security-related governance and issues of police discretion and above all, the element of compassion in pandemic policing:

- List out critical resources and have a scheme to monitor their availability and replenishment on a continuing basis.
- Discuss, brainstorm, ideate. Planning discussions should expose existing systems and processes that require modification or improvements. During this step, the team should identify gaps, weak areas, needs for urgent capacity building and training, and units/ areas that require special attention.
- Keep it coherent, simple, uncluttered, flexible and practical.
- Write down the essential elements of the Plan, indicating the strategic, tactical and logistics elements. Need not be too textual, even just the listing of important and critical actions and guidance points would suffice.
- Anticipate and plan for contingencies.
- Review the plan on a continuing basis.

While carrying out this exercise by police organisations, it is crucial to learn from one another, understand how their counterparts in other States and organisations are dealing with the crisis, predict and anticipate future developments that could adversely impact operational continuity and resilience and to set realistic expectations of the police's role, keeping in mind the availability of resources and logistics.

Obviously, these assessment and review exercises will need to be an ongoing process. They need to be State-specific and District-specific, considering that issues confronting the police differ from State to State and place to place and they have local nuances and implications.

The pandemic is unfolding differently in different parts of the country and each police organisation needs to be continuously aware of and alive to the developments, adjusting their responses dynamically. Similarly, each CAPF will need to carry out organisation-specific reviews and recovery planning. The plans and strategies need to be tailored to suit the circumstances of each State or organisation.

STEP 4: Communicate and explain your plan to the formations below:

In this crisis situation, the field officers are constantly looking up to the leadership for clarity of policy, tactical guidance and critical resources. It is important for the leadership to effectively communicate a clear and focused Crisis Management Plan.

Elements of a Pandemic Policing & Crisis Response Plan

Broadly, the organisation-specific review and crisis planning for pandemic policing, should cover the following elements:

- I. **Operational continuity and resilience:** infection control within the forces, prioritisation of services, and a continuing focus on organisational resilience. Measures to ensure the wellness, wellbeing, welfare, morale and motivation of police personnel, with a special attention to personnel health & mental health, should form part of this strategy:
- II. **Pandemic Law Enforcement - respect for the law and human rights:** Ensuring sensitive and compassionate behaviour as well as respect for the rule of law and human rights while enforcing pandemic related laws and policies. Strengthening community relations.
- III. **Anticipating and preparing for emerging threats to public order & crime control; Contingency planning for extraordinary situations:** Scanning the environment and watching out for emerging threats to crime control, public order, safety and societal peace.
- IV. **Resources planning:** Finances, manpower, forensics and technological resources.
- V. **Leadership and nurturing the police as learning organisations:** Identification and adoption of national and international good practices.

This is only an indicative layout. Each State Police or CAPF would design the contents of the Emergency Plan document suited to its specific situation and organisational responsibilities.

I. Operational Continuity and Resilience

One of the biggest challenges that police organisations face during a pandemic is the rapid depletion of their fighting strength, as more and more police personnel get exposed and infected or proceed on leave for caring for their infected family members.

The very nature of their duties make police personnel vulnerable to infections, as they come in close contact with members of public. They are often required to interact in the proximity of infected persons, shift the sick to hospitals, handle dead bodies and physically grapple with violators, thereby increasing the risk of infection.

Data collected by the IPF during the first wave of the pandemic showed that police accounted for more than 2% of the gross COVID-19 infections in the country. By 1st of March 2021, the total number of police personnel testing corona virus positive was 2,02,466 and 1200 of them had died. By 10th May, 2021, these numbers stood at 2,79,071 infections and 1745 deaths. While there is some slowing down of the number of infections in the police, possibly due to the ongoing vaccination coverage of the police personnel, what is baffling is that the mortality rate has slightly increased, with about 575 deaths reported in the last two months.

It is to be recognised that large scale infection within the police is a public health risk in itself and also a source of worry for the police officers and their family members. It is therefore, important to constantly keep a watch on the morbidities and mortalities within each Police / CAPF organisation and continuously assess the impact of the renewed surge on police organisations, police personnel and their families, which in turn, have a direct bearing on the operational preparedness, continuity and availability. Functioning with reduced strength not only affects the quality of police service delivery, often resulting from departures from established procedures, but also raises stress levels within the forces. Needless to say, excessive pressure and

worries on availability of manpower, capacity and overstretch of manpower and other resources may have important consequences for crime, public order, societal peace and national security.

It is therefore, important to analyse and anticipate the possible organisational and functional disruptions resulting from staff shortages and prepare for operational continuity and manpower availability during the different stages of the pandemic.

State Police and CAPF organisations across the country have developed and successfully implemented a number of good practices in this connection. Some of the good practices reported from different States include re-working of duty schedules. For example, many police leaders put one half of staff to man the police stations continuously for one week while the other half of the available strength were given time for complete rest and recuperation during this period. These practices threw up their own challenges, in certain cases impacting routine policing responsibilities. Many organisations re-deployed their personnel, with the younger ones being put on field duties while the elderly were assigned office duties. The effectiveness of these practices have become problematic in some cases, with the increasing number of infections and deaths of young people in the second wave.

Prioritisation for workload management is another important area that requires serious consideration of the leadership.

1.1. Aggressive Strategy for Vaccination of Personnel needed

By the end of April 2021, most police organisations in the country, including the State Police and CAPFs had achieved some progress in terms of vaccinations of their personnel.

However, the number of personnel vaccinated have drastically varied between organisations and even between units within the organisations - from 20% to 60%.

Based on available statistics, it would be interesting to assess the possible impact of vaccination of police personnel. As per the data collected by the IPF, the total number of police personnel tested positive for corona virus stood at 2,02,466 by the 1st of March, 2021 and as many as 1207 personnel had died by then. By this time, the total number of COVID-19 infections in India had crossed 10 million, which meant that the number of police personnel who tested positive during the first wave of the pandemic accounted for about 2% of the gross numbers for the country. As against this, when the infections began to shoot up in the second wave, when the gross number of infections in India exceeded 20 million on May 5, 2021, the number of infections in the police stood at 2,73,515 and the number of deaths were 1682.

These numbers go to show that possibly, vaccination of personnel has been helping in slowing down infections within police forces. Police forces therefore, need to aggressively pursue the vaccination strategy to keep infections under control, in the interests of their organisation's operational continuity and availability.

1.2. Equally aggressive should be the measures for Infection Control

While police are required to take certain level of risks, it is important to recognise that they cannot serve the nation and its citizens effectively, unless they are themselves healthy. It is important that police personnel are protected from avoidable exposure and reduce the risk of infection, while it may not be possible to eliminate the risks altogether. *Infection control should therefore be, a strategic first priority for the police.*

Police forces across the country have been adopting an array of measures for building

organisational awareness and minimising infections. It is absolutely essential that these measures are continued, with renewed tenacity and resolve.

- **Awareness building:** When the pandemic broke out, the immediate focus was on building awareness among police personnel about the cause and nature of the disease, how the virus spreads, the importance of wearing masks correctly, the need for hand hygiene as well as the dos and don'ts. This awareness became crucial not only for their own protection, but also for the protection of citizens that they came across. These efforts need to continue.
- **Minimising chances of infection:** Amidst growing concerns for their health, even as large numbers of police personnel fell sick, it became difficult to ensure availability of adequate number of personnel for operational purposes at the police station, district and battalion levels. Initially, the protection afforded by mask was not well established and the availability of masks was also a problem. Procurement and distribution of masks, PPEs, soap for hand washing and sanitisers became one of the top priorities.
- **Infection control within barracks:** It soon became clear that a major reason for the spread of infections was the lack of social distancing in living barracks. As significant numbers of police personnel had asymptomatic infections, they spread the virus within the barracks without even their knowing, to their unsuspecting colleagues.
- **Hazards of community eating:** Police personnel who live together in barracks also eat together in their mess halls. Such community eating habits were one of the major reasons for the quick spreading of the virus in State police, armed battalions and CAPFs. The messes of police personnel continue to cause concern even today, where special supervisory attention is called for.

1.3. Medical assistance to Infected / Sick Police Personnel

- **Medical assistance to infected police personnel** as well as their hospital admissions has been a major challenge even during the first wave. This has become exacerbated during the second wave. Good practices included prior tie-ups with hospitals, especially those belonging to the Armed Forces.
- **Setting up centres for primary treatment and quarantine** within police lines became necessary, as hospitals and government facilities started getting over crowded. Some young police officers with medical education background, even set up covid hospitals.
- **Continuous monitoring and communication with personnel undergoing medical treatment.** Senior officers should take special efforts to ensure that adequate medical attention was available at the right time and that supervisory officers remain in continuous communication with personnel who remain on medical treatment.
- **Early testing and detection of infections** to limit mortality.
- **Telemedicine.** Many police leaders repurposed their digital platforms to deal with the evolving challenges, including measures to provide telemedicine services, tying up with physicians and other specialists.
- **Technology:** Police organisations set up Whatsapp groups to remain in touch with and monitor the health conditions of staff and also to reach them support and assistance. Regular meetings were organised online and officers were encouraged to work remotely using digital platforms.

1.4. Measures for protection and assistance to Families

- **Risk of personnel passing on the infection to family:** The big challenge was prevention of police personnel's exposure during their

field duties and the risk of their passing on the infection to family members, colleagues etc. Many State Police Organisations requisitioned temporary accommodation including hotel rooms to house the personnel at risk. At the end of the day's duty, such personnel would be asked to go to their temporary accommodation, instead of going back to their homes or regular barracks.

- **The importance of communicating with families** of affected police personnel needs to be well recognised, educating families about safety norms to be observed, and assisting them with procuring essential supplies including food rations and medical supplies. Good practices included senior police officers ensuring that appropriate logistics were in place.

1.5. Operational precautions – limiting exposures between Police Station Visitors, Detainees and Police Staff

- **Handling of Arrestees and custody management:** Many District SPs put in place a centralised handling of arrestees. This meant that arrested persons were not brought to the respective police stations and would be directly taken to temporary or regular prisons, specifically prepared to accommodate them following physical distancing.
- **Limiting arrests to the minimum:** Arrest only when essential - was one of the good practices followed by some officers. Bail was encouraged, which also helped de-congest prisons.
- **Receiving visitors to police stations:** With a view to preventing exposures between visitors to the police stations and the police station staff, the good practices included erecting of tents & shamiana outside the police stations to receive and interact with visitors and limiting access by non-essential staff.
- **Online courts and virtual hearings:** As courts remained closed during most part of the

pandemic, arrangements were made for virtual court hearings. Production of arrestees before judicial officers was done virtually. This allowed remand hearings being held from within prisons or detention centres. Many States launched different initiatives to make use of online services to ensure continued access to justice. In Madhya Pradesh, online mediations in cases of family disputes were organised with State Legal Services Authority. MP Police has another initiative allowing women in distress to connect online with mediators under the State Legal Services Authority.

1.6. Measures to muster Manpower resources from non-essential to Critical Roles

Every State police has a substantial number of police personnel deployed on duties that are considered to be non-core police work. Many State Police as well as CAPFs have been taking steps to mobilise and move staff from non-essential or non-core areas and assign specific tasks relating to the pandemic response.

- **Prioritizing police work:** During our interactions with State DGPs, many of them highlighted the need to prioritize work, giving top priority to emergencies and critical work, while certain activities are deferred to future dates. Thus, some units in PHQ were allowed to go on a skeletal operation mode for the benefit of shifting manpower to more urgent deployments. It would be desirable to discuss this internally and identify the officers and staff who can be shifted to more operational duties.
- **Prioritization of public complaints:** is unavoidable during these times and the police in different States have been practising different criteria for prioritization, but this may be one area where too much of discretion is being exercised. It would be desirable to discuss and set appropriate criteria for prioritization, based on an analysis of the nature of the complaint and the ability to respond, always making sure that serious cases are invariably attended to.

- **Shift some of the activities and services online:** With the increasing use of online services during the pandemic and more and more citizens getting used to digital interaction, many police organisations encouraged digital forms of filing complaints and submitting applications to the police. For example, many States allow online applications for issue of curfew passes, work permits, inter-district travel passes, online verification services etc. Many State police have been encouraging the filing of FIRs online, in the case of certain kinds of offences. However, there is lack of clarity and uniformity in terms of online reporting methods. At the same time, many States have not made use of this possibility, which could not only bring convenience to the citizen users, but would also help in releasing many police officials for other operational duties. Online services present limitations due to large sections of the population remaining digitally disadvantaged. A good number of training activities can also go online.
- **Explore the possibility of outsourcing certain functions to private agencies:** This could be another potential way of dealing with staff shortages. This path is beset with controversies due to issues of accountability and standards of performance and these concerns need to be addressed.
- Just as final year medical students are being roped in by government to assist healthcare work, the fast tracking of ongoing training programmes can also be considered. Many States are already resorting to this.

1.7. Collaborating with other Agencies

Pandemic policing involves working closely with other government departments, NGOs and civil society, requiring multi-agency collaborative relationships and complex risk communication strategies. It is the function of the police leadership to establish seamless and friendly professional relationships with other departments and agencies, iron out differences if any and avoid stress. Planning is crucial for achieving formalised

as well as informal relationships with clearly defined roles and multi-agency communication structures.

For an example, during the ongoing crisis, a number of NGOs were seen coming to the assistance of COVID-19 patients and their relatives in the procurement of oxygen and other medical supplies. At the same time, there were also some fly-by-night operators trying to take advantage of the situation. Some existing relationships established by the police in different contexts have helped in identification of the genuine NGOs. Prior planning and empanelment of NGOs for reaching succour to the people, could help in the distribution of tasks, resulting in better coordination, trust and efficient service delivery.

Prior planning also helps in establishing relationships that allow continuous sharing of information and learnings between the collaborating agencies. In the absence of prior planning and collaborative understanding, relationships can get fraught and fragmented.

1.8. The need to Invest in the Health of Police Personnel

One important lesson from the first wave of the pandemic policing experience concerned the need to invest in the physical and mental health of police forces. Many State Police Chiefs expressed their concern about the poor state of health of subordinate personnel and prevalence of co-morbidities such as hypertension, diabetes, heart and lung diseases, which made them vulnerable during the pandemic. Most of these are occupational health conditions arising out of their irregular working, eating and sleeping habits, occupational exposure to pollution as well as psychosocial stress factors at work.

Most State police organisations in India do not have a system of annual medical check-up for constables and subordinate police officers, while it is compulsory for senior officers. In today's world where group insurance coverage is affordable and easily doable, there is no reason why the rank and file of the police should be denied or

kept outside the insurance cover. *IPF has been strongly recommending that Police organisations should work fast and introduce compulsory annual medical check-up schemes for all ranks of the police forces.* The pandemic should be seen as an opportunity to achieve this basic facility for the police.

1.9. Mental Health of Police Personnel

There is an increasing realisation and acknowledgement that police personnel who are exposed to trauma and moral dilemmas during the course of their duties, who have long and unpredictable working hours, are at serious risk of developing mental health problems.

The pandemic is known to have had devastating impact on large numbers of police personnel and their families. Long and unpredictable working hours and exposure to traumatic events and large scale deaths around them and even physical handling of dead bodies etc during the course of their duties are seen as major psychosocial risks of police work during the pandemic. The requirement of proximate interactions with infected persons and tackling of surging political rallies and religious congregations and dealing with hostile and aggressive members of the public who refuse to follow the covid restrictions are seen as risk factors to heightened anxiety as well as acute psychological distress. The large scale occurrence of pandemic related morbidities and mortalities within the police forces has been another reason. Many members of the force have had to suffer personal losses of their loved ones and close colleagues and some of them grieve silently.

The increasing prevalence of mental health trauma and distress among police and CAPF personnel came up for discussion on multiple seminars and workshops organised by the IPF, some of which were attended by police chiefs and other senior officers including medical and mental health experts. Police leaders have a good understanding of this emerging problem and have emphasised the need to identify occupational stressors and the immediate management of mental health

issues. Some police organisations have buddy systems, and strong internal communications networks to help unwind stressed minds. Some of the useful suggestions include operationalizing tele-counselling sessions, active monitoring of early signs of mental health issues and appropriate support, open, structured and informal interactions and anonymous helplines to reduce the risks of self-harm. There has been very little research on mental health of police personnel and this needs addressing. Also required is a long term strategy and working plan for tackling mental health of police personnel.

Police personnel usually cope well with adversities and are seen as a resilient lot. However, in the context of the ongoing desperation and human suffering, it is important to develop strategies to provide the vulnerable men and women with social support from colleagues and superiors, to reduce the intensity of the trauma. Appreciation and thankfulness by senior officers and members of the public are seen as potential mitigating factors. Thanking the personnel and commending, both in writing and in person, acknowledging their good work, has the potential to foster individual resilience.

II. Pandemic Law Enforcement

2.1. Respect for the Law and human rights should be central to the plan itself

Respect for the law and human rights are so fundamental, that the pandemic policing plan should make them the principal strands of the plan document itself. The central theme of pandemic policing is the health and wellbeing of citizens at large and police action to preserve citizens' health is both legally and morally sanctioned.

The need for the police to approach pandemic law enforcement from a socially sensitive, humanitarian perspective, and keeping in mind that those who fail to observe the pandemic laws are not to be treated as criminals.

While our police forces by and large, quickly recognised the context and acted with commendable levels of compassion, restraint and maturity, there have been some instances of individual police persons wielding the lathi, displaying unacceptable levels of insensitivity and disproportionate use of force. It is to be kept in mind that police personnel themselves are in a state of stress, when they come across citizens who violate lockdown rules, fail or refuse to wear masks or participate in deliberate acts to break the rules and the underlying stress may manifest in undesirable forms.

There have been instances where hapless citizens trying to procure medicines and essential items, daily labourers, shopkeepers and poor street vendors have come under the wrath of the police. The wanton display of insensitive and arbitrary action may be indicative of the absence of appropriate and effective briefing and training. In a country of India's size, the number of such instances may not be significant, but even small exceptions do not justify such glaring violations of the law and human rights. Moreover, in the era of instant television and social media coverages, such incidents go viral and tend to get

disproportionately projected in no time, bringing huge embarrassment and bad name to the entire police force.

The approach of the police to pandemic law enforcement cannot be the same as that for dealing with criminals and law breakers. While enforcing the pandemic law and regulations, it is to be kept in mind that people are going through tremendous hardships, livelihood issues, shortages, medical emergencies and grief. They deserve compassionate and empathetic treatment, especially the poor and the marginalised.

Obviously, this situation calls for a different approach to policing and the 'use of force' doctrine. The approach to enforcement of the rules related to pandemic have to be different from the traditional police responses to crime control and maintenance of law and order. There is a need to change the very thought process, to recalibrate the 'use of force' doctrine and introduce new concepts of de-escalation and de-criminalisation while handling covid-related law enforcement.

As the police goes about enforcing the restrictions in this second and extremely virulent wave of the pandemic, police leaders and supervisory officers should also resolve to do everything possible to correct this aberration. It is important that the respect for the law and human rights and a respect for human dignity are integrated into the pandemic policing plan itself. The emergency measures to address the health crisis must strictly conform to the law of the land and there should never be an excessive use of such extraordinary powers. It is also crucial that field police personnel are clearly trained and briefed repeatedly, about the need for sensitive and compassionate behaviour towards citizens.

It would be desirable that State Police organisations lay down a 'Use of Force' policy, clearly spelling out the dos and don'ts in pandemic policing.

It is important that supervisory officers exercise effective control and oversight and prevent the abuse of emergency powers. Efforts are also required to secure voluntary compliance, the willing cooperation and collaboration of the public, although it may be extremely complex and difficult in many situations. In this connection, our police organisations may like to study the four Es approach of police organisations in the UK – Engaging, Explaining and Encouraging before Enforcing. Enforcing of course, remains the last resort.

2.2. Communicating with Citizens

In a pandemic situation, the police are required to communicate to the general population, the mandatory restrictions relating to lockdowns, quarantines and the importance of voluntary measures like social distancing as well as the consequences of violations of the law. Besides these, police are required to communicate with citizens on innumerable other matters concerning their daily lives, some of them relating to travel, essential services and procurement of essential items. Equally crucial is the importance of timely internal communications within the Police / CAPF organisations.

Many State police organisations have been making use of innovative and effective crisis communication strategies during the first wave of the pandemic. Many of them have skilfully made use of online communications, and social media platforms for effective dissemination of their messages, to provide situational information and advice to people, to tackle misinformation and to respond to specific criticism or queries.

These communications are helpful in conveying government's public health control measures, vaccination strategies, advice to public and also to inform the public about the prevalence or possibility of criminal activities. These communication strategies are extremely crucial in today's governance, apart from promoting transparency, accountability and public trust in the police. There is also a need for a concerted strategy to counter fake news and the spread of misinformation from different quarters.

At the same time, we noticed that some State police organisations have been rather reluctant or indifferent in this context and failed to take advantage of this powerful tool, which is veritably a low hanging fruit. Such communication hesitancy can be positively damaging in today's world. As the police organisations brace for the long haul, it would be useful to review and fine-tune their existing communication strategy and make mid course changes where considered necessary. It would also be useful for the police to enlist the support of the print and electronic media in communicating with the citizenry.

Messaging is an important component of a crisis management plan. Communicating directly with the public can help prevent misinformation which would otherwise result in confusion and anxiety.

An ideal communication plan should provide for a two-way process, enabling the citizens to get in touch with the police while also enabling the police to listen to the public and reassuring them through effective and clear messaging. It would be desirable that each organisation establishes a single point of communication both externally and internally.

III. Building a Policing Strategy to Deal with an Ongoing Crisis – Anticipating and Planning ahead

3.1. This is not just a health crisis, but a National Security Emergency

First of all, the current pandemic situation needs to be treated not just as a health crisis, but as a national security emergency, in fact, it is not any different from a full-fledged war in which we are engaged in fighting an enemy attack and defending the country. The situation calls for coordinated efforts on the part of the Central and State Governments, all their Ministries and Departments. Mobilisation of all resources at the command of the government and private sectors, educational and religious bodies, NGOs as well as the civil society itself, is the need of the hour. There is also a need for a warlike preparation for the scientific and coordinated distribution of medical supplies and other material coming into the country by way of international aid. And above all, it is time to prepare for and fight the war unitedly.

While police organisations are bound to be overburdened and overstretched, they cannot afford to be under prepared. The need of the hour is a rigorous evaluation of the situation to enable the anticipation of the emerging threats to crime control, public order, public safety and national security.

3.2. Anticipating possible threats to Public order

Disruptions caused by the continuing pandemic and the consequent reductions in economic activity are bound to ruin the already fraught employment situation. Threats to public order and resultant social stress may emanate from multiple sources. Unemployment and lack of access to

sources of livelihood and shortages of food and essential items could be an immediate cause. Possible resentment against non-availability of hospital beds, medical and health facilities, critical medical supplies and vaccines could be another. It must be kept in mind that the disease impacts the most vulnerable sections of society the hardest. The Police should watch out for the possibility that the search for food and livelihoods can bring about desperation, generate a social crisis and spark unrest and violence.

During the last few days, the nation witnessed not only unprecedented devastation and death, but also skirmishes in different parts of the country where angry citizens were seen refusing to abide by the police regulations or openly flouting the restrictions at hospitals, vaccination centres, medical stores and even funeral sites. The huge demand for oxygen cylinders and medical supplies as well as the misinformation spread on social media in this connection, continue to generate consternation and confusion in the minds of citizens, leading to open acts of disobedience and defiance of the law.

It is to be noted that this continuing and raging pandemic may have important consequences for crime, public order and peace. The Police should watch out for the possibilities of riots / unrest over continuing restrictions and social stress resulting from a collapse of the health system, economic distress and financial insecurity, difficult living conditions as well as fear of the pandemic itself. Such a situation could have the potential to ravage the fragile equilibrium between order and disorder. The problem could be further exacerbated by the unprecedented pressure on availability of police manpower arising from a depletion of police forces, an overstretch in terms of capacity and resources and their distraction from regular

policing and administrative activities. Once an imbalance begins, the slippery slope can end in civil unrest. The police need to be alive to such a possibility and plan ahead to prevent a breakdown of public order.

3.3. The emerging Crime trends during the Pandemic

While it may be difficult to correctly assess the long-term impact of the ongoing pandemic on crime, data from within India and abroad show that the pandemic has had direct and increasing implications for crime, even as we witnessed changes in the patterns of criminal behaviour. Amidst the resultant economic distress, fear of the disease and strict enforcement of lockdown rules, some patterns of manifestations of crime has emerged, with certain categories of crimes reducing and certain other forms of crimes surging. Even as the attention of the police was diverted elsewhere, individual criminals, scamsters and organised crime syndicates have quickly exploited the opportunity to abuse, swindle and defraud.

At the same time, police stations and district officers had to take decisions on prioritizing investigations during the lockdown periods. Such prioritizing is done on the basis of considerations of seriousness, vulnerability and other assessment of threat, harm or risk. One serious problem with this situation has been the undue levels of discretion exercised at the police station level. Senior officers may like to review this matter.

Crimes against women, children and senior citizens: The lockdown period witnessed a sharp increase in domestic violence and sexual violence against women and children, with many victims being trapped in their homes with limited possibilities of engaging with the outside world. Children who are in lockdown with the offender have reduced abilities to report the abuse. Police should pay particular attention to the prevention of trafficking and illegal adoption of orphaned children etc. Preventing crimes against women in hospitals etc. would be another important area of work. Senior citizens and persons with disabilities

have been particularly vulnerable. During the lockdown period, the media reported some instances of women being evicted from their houses by brothers, husbands or in laws, on the false grounds of their being infected by the pandemic. Police investigations however, in some of these cases showed that these women were victims of property snatching or dowry offences.

Many State police organisations launched special schemes for the protection of women, children and senior citizens. For example, the 'Prashanti' scheme of Kerala Police was lauded for the support of elderly citizens living alone during the lockdown. Similarly, Assam Police's 'Moitri' scheme too, was seen as another successful initiative. Some police organisations have a scheme for visiting senior citizens living alone.

Unemployment, financial stress and crime:

Research studies indicate the correlation between unemployment, financial distress and certain categories of crime, although these may not be the only determinants of criminal behaviour. Many anecdotal accounts from field police officers suggest that unemployment resulting from the pandemic may be forcing desperate persons with no past criminal history, to take to crime. For example, when the lockdown restrictions were eased towards the end of 2020, there was a sudden spurt in street crimes like robbery, snatching of gold chains from women, peddling in drugs and contraband etc. There have been reports of an increasing number of property crimes, smuggling in fake currencies and money laundering offences. Owner-tenant disputes have seen a spurt in many States, some of them resulting in physical violence.

Cybercrime: Given the push towards digitization of financial transactions and the exponential increase in the usage of computer and mobile devices connected to the internet, there has been a steady increase in cybercrimes in the country. The 'work from home' trend has enabled substantial chunk of the workforce accessing corporate data from their homes, on devices that may not have robust levels of security. Covid-themed phishing traps and ransom ware that trick victims into clicking on links offering

various kinds of cures, remedies and immunity boosting concoctions, sprang up in numbers. Identity thefts, credit card frauds, fraudulent insurance and investment schemes, fake websites resembling online shopping and home delivery services, as well as fake offers of employment in reputed institutions have been reported. International organisations have also reported a surge in the number of online sexual harassment of women and online child sexual abuses.

Citizen awareness about cybercrime and their reporting: A number of State Police organisations have launched initiatives to spread awareness among citizens about the surge in cybercrime. Many States have enabled online reporting of cyber offences during the pandemic. The National Cybercrime Reporting Portal of the MHA is one important facility that can be used by citizens across India. More awareness about this service needs to be spread. It would be desirable for the police to launch large public awareness campaigns to educate citizens, children and parents regarding online safety, availability of existing and new reporting procedures, helplines etc

Corruption: As large sums of money and other resources are mobilised to combat the pandemic, coupled with the dilution of regulatory oversight, new opportunities for corruption and illegal diversion of public funds have arisen.

Crimes related to the pandemic crisis: Taking advantage of the devastating and unprecedented spike in the number of COVID-19 cases and the resulting demand and acute shortage of hospital beds, oxygen and critical medications such as Remdesivir, a number of criminals and scamsters have surfaced, trying to trick and extort money from panic-stricken kin and caregivers of the patients. The absence of an up to date, verified and dependable information in the public domain about the availability of these critical resources, also helped in the proliferation of these crimes. The common *modus operandii* included:

- Posing as intermediaries or agents of hospitals, and demanding large sums of money for

arranging hospital admissions and ICU beds. In some cases, hospital employees were involved in admission rackets through tampering of allocation data.

- Booking of hospital beds in the name of non-existing patients and selling them off to others.
- Hoarding and black marketing of medical oxygen cylinders and essential medicines. There were many instances of oxygen cylinders and medicines sold at highly inflated prices. Many persons have been arrested by the police for hoarding oxygen concentrators and oxygen cylinders.
- Many ambulance / hearse drivers and operators are reported to have been charging several times the usual price, for transportation of patients and dead bodies.
- Demanding advance payments for oxygen cylinders, concentrators and medicines, while the victims never received any consignments. In some cases, bank accounts were opened in the name of entities that looked similar to those of reputed manufacturers.
- In one case, fire extinguishers were repainted and sold off as oxygen cylinders.
- Counterfeit or fake replicas of well-known essential medications have been flooding the market.
- Some entities were seen selling exotic and questionable products and phony remedies, claiming them to be cures for the corona virus and for the improvement of immunity.
- Some hospitals also were seen overcharging patients, taking advantage of the situation.
- Vaccine frauds: extortion of money through fake offers promising vaccines out of turn, imported vaccines, seeking advance payments etc.

While these are only some of the examples that have come to notice, it would be advisable for the police at the State and District levels to carry out crime risk assessments at the local levels so that effective preventive measures can be adopted.

Contingency Planning for Extraordinary Situations

The purpose of contingency planning is to anticipate possible emergencies and disruptions, including worse case scenarios. It helps police organisations to prepare for dealing with or mitigate the impact of such emergencies and disruptions. In the context of the present pandemic, apart from preparing for management of the evolving crisis, contingency plans should anticipate extraordinary situations and prepare for them. Some of the extraordinary situations that can arise are listed below for the sake of illustration:

A collapse of the health system: While precise predictions of the trajectory of the coronavirus contagion is difficult, the police should be always alive to the possibilities of further pressure on the health system in the event of a further and uncontrolled rise in the number of infections. It is worth noting that India crossed 1 million infections in mid-February 2021, but as of 10th May, it has already crossed 23 million cases in less than two months. Granting that 10% of the infected persons will need hospitalisation, already 23 lakh persons are under or seeking hospitalisation, which is a number far higher than the capacity of our healthcare system. As we have been witnessing a steep increase in these numbers, the pressure on the healthcare infrastructure is bound to increase in the coming days.

A research paper published by the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy (Washington and New Delhi) estimated that India has approximately 1.9 million hospital beds, 95,000 ICU beds and 48,000 ventilators. It says that India may need approximately 270,000 ICU beds to treat COVID-19 patients in an optimistic scenario, more than 2.8 times the estimated number of total available ICU beds in India. There are wide variations in the number of hospital beds / ICU beds estimated by different researchers, but they all highlight that our present infrastructure is too inadequate to meet possible spurts in the number of infections. Should such a situation arise, there is a possibility of the health system

getting inundated, with severe consequences for the affected citizens and may present huge implications for police and law enforcement. Contingency planning should factor in such a possibility.

Disruptions in the supply chain, shortages of essential commodities: In spite of the massive disruptions in supply chains across the world on a hitherto unprecedented scale, lockdowns, production stoppages, shortages of raw materials and business closures, the country has been able to maintain the supplies of essential items like food and medical supplies. The Indian police played a crucial role in ensuring the smooth flow of goods traffic from the production and storage centres to the consumer points and also in ensuring that the people involved in supply chain management are suitably enabled.

However, certain parts of the world that experienced extreme levels of death and destruction from COVID-19, also experienced serious breakdowns in maintaining supply of essential food and medicines.

While planning for contingencies, police organisations should keep this possibility in mind, making sure that operations of the supply chain are given top priority. Remember, any serious threat or disruptions of supply chains can have serious consequences on public order and national security.

Handling and disposal of dead bodies, strain on cremation / burial sites: The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, the WHO and the respective State Governments have issued detailed guidelines about the burial / cremation protocols to be followed, relating to the safe management of dead bodies and infection precautions during the handling of bodies, keeping in mind the safety and well-being of those who tend to them. Authorities are required to handle each dead body on a case to case basis, ensuring the dignity of the dead and respecting their cultural and religious traditions and their families. Detailed protocols on documentation, the requirement of autopsy, on preparing, packing and transferring of the body to mortuaries, crematoriums / burial sites,

creations / burials by family members etc exist. Unceremonious and mass disposal of dead bodies is against these norms and should be avoided.

In recent days, police officers in different States in the country have been seen going far beyond their duties, performing funerals of unclaimed and abandoned bodies and bodies of persons living alone etc. Police also performed funerals based on specific requests from relatives owing to various constraints.

Recently, there have been media reports of several bodies of COVID-19 victims floating in rivers in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, sparking understandable outrage, panic and shock. The bloating and decomposed bodies increased apprehensions of the risk of spreading infections in communities inhabiting the river banks. For the police, apart from dealing with local commotions, one of the major challenges in dealing with dead bodies that come floating in the rivers would be their identification and tagging. This is necessary to not only deal with possible medico legal issues in future, but also to provide accurate information to the family, issue of death certificates and for monitoring mortality rates etc. This would be an extremely difficult exercise.

It may be recalled that when the pandemic began to kill large numbers of people, and the number of bodies rose beyond the handling capacity of local authorities, some countries had requisitioned the services of their police and the armed forces to move hundreds of coffins to neighbouring provinces. Chaotic scenes in burial sites were noticed in many countries in Europe and Americas where mass burials were done, following the death and devastation as health systems collapse, overrun by patients far beyond their capacities and dead bodies filled the hallways of hospitals.

Even as the pandemic disaster is still unfolding, it is important for police organisations to anticipate and expect even worse emergencies, which may require them to plan and prepare for the worst, disastrous situations. What are the worst possible scenarios? Could there be a situation in which the number of infected persons increase exponentially, far beyond what it is today? Could there be death and devastation of a scale that is far beyond the present one? If so, what will we do?

It is often said that it is not the contingency plan that is important, but the contingency planning is. Engaging the planning team in analysis, anticipation and preparation for the worst, makes all the difference.

IV. Resources and Systems Planning

The availability of adequate financial resources for policing during the pandemic crisis is critical, considering that unforeseen expenditures impose a huge financial burden on police departments. Advance planning should comprise a meticulous budgeting exercise as well as the periodic procurement of critical resources like protective gear and supplies including face masks, PPE Kits, gloves, sanitisers and a host of other equipment.

List out key infrastructure, facilities, logistics service providers, and key persons: Pandemic policing plan should also list out the list of critical infrastructure and logistical tools. The control rooms should maintain up to date lists of hospitals, clinical labs and testing centres, vaccination centres, ambulance operators, manufacturers and vendors of medical oxygen and oxygen concentrators, important outlets of key medication, crematoria and burial grounds etc. The contact persons and their phone numbers in respect of all critical services and supplies, multi-agency and inter departmental contacts, key NGOs etc. should be maintained at all control centres and police stations. The emergency response team contact list should be prominently displayed in all control centres and police stations.

4.1. Building capacities and preparing for the future

- **Disaster management and response schemes:** Every organisation, City, District and State has a Disaster management and response scheme, but no organisation in the country is known to have had a plan to

handle a pandemic. It is time that this gap is attended to and detailed schemes are worked out and practised for the future. In the long run, it would be necessary to develop structures and processes to implement such schemes. Contingency planning would also be necessary to deal with any large scale force depletion due to incessant operational deployment of police and CAPFs in duties related to the pandemic or elsewhere. Moreover, force exhaustion, overstretch and burnout are possibilities to be planned for. Such plans should also maintain a list of trained specialists in different localities and units.

- **Revamping police control rooms** where it has not been done so far. Follow the example and guidance of the Nationwide Emergency Response System (NERS) of the MHA.
- **Improving digital capabilities of police:** Policing needs to be quickly and effectively digitized, for speed, agility and scalability.
- **Some of the training and capacity building:** can be done online, especially training relevant to deal with the pandemic.
- **Short, voice recorded videos** can be prepared to train field staff on topics like how to deal with families in a social bubble, how to deal with crowds violating social distancing norms, how to deal with those out to provide essential services, those who have to get emergency supplies, how to enforce prohibitory orders / curfew, enforcing micro containment zones etc.)

V. Leadership, Learning and Idea Generation

5.1. Leadership

During the ongoing crisis, we have seen some police officers providing extraordinary leadership, leading from the front, motivating their personnel to dedicate themselves to the cause of containing the spread of the disease and reinforcing people's trust in the police even while enforcing unfriendly laws and lockdowns. We have seen officers taking keen interest in the wellness and wellbeing of the men and women they lead, helping to maintain high levels of morale and motivation, even in the midst of the extraordinary sacrifices that they had to make.

Leadership is fundamental in police organisations, particularly during a crisis, given their hierarchical organisational structure. The inspirational and spirited leadership provided by some outstanding police leaders became manifest in their effective response to the extremely complex crisis situation presented by the pandemic. During our interactions, field police officers were very appreciative of those police leaders who have recognised the seriousness of the crisis, who have developed and adapted new protocols and technology, who were visible and present, who communicated honestly, clearly and effectively and who were truly concerned with the health, wellbeing and welfare of their subordinates.

In some States and organisations where the pandemic response was seen to be successful, the rank and file invariably expressed the confidence that their leader would stand with them through thick and thin, involving situations of extreme personal risk, intense pressures and excessive working hours – all these happening in the midst of a huge human catastrophe. Above all, field police officers valued collaborative styles of functioning of their leaders, teamwork and recognition. Leaders who gave constant and clear

guidance and thanked and appreciated the work of their subordinates were more liked than the silent and 'distant commanders'.

5.2. Training

Public health policing is an unfamiliar territory for the police, a crisis like no other even for the police that is usually clued up to respond to even the most serious calamities. Police need to train and prepare their personnel for their rapid adaptation to fit into this new role and develop new protocols to deal with the emerging new forms of crime and conflict. Training should aim at the development of new organisational and behavioural skills not only in the context of the ongoing pandemic, but also as a part of their preparation for disaster management and response in the future.

Training should aim at the dissemination of the minimum scientific knowledge about the communicable disease, how to protect themselves and others, as well as the proper use of masks and other personal protection equipment. Training should aim at the development of the attitudinal and hygiene skills for protection of personal health, the safety precautions to be adopted, and the role of police forces in safeguarding the citizens. Importantly, training should be based on technology and science, and aim to fight the misinformation on social media. Public Health and medical professionals could be invited to talk to the police trainees. Needless to say, police organisations should follow a structured approach to training to handle various aspects of pandemic policing.

In hind sight, we have discovered a gap in not catering for how to handle a pandemic in our Disaster Response Schemes and related training. It is high time to fill this gap. It would be desirable to prepare a *Training Needs Analysis specifically for*

pandemic policing and related elements of health emergency and contingency planning.

Pre-deployment training and education of newly inducted police personnel is an important tool for increasing risk awareness, improving vigilance and overcoming uncertainty and stress. In-service training would also help police officers to understand the dangers of contracting the disease during the course of their work, clear wrong perceptions and confusion and such knowledge would also be a valuable tool for educating the general public. Training not only helps officers to enhance awareness about protective measures, but also helps them cope with anxiety and personal risks.

What is most important is the need for a professional and trained approach to pandemic related law enforcement practices, to help police hone crisis management skills needed to sail through.

As regards the concerns regarding the spread of the disease within police training institutions, there are many good examples of training institutions being able to completely prevent any infections. Some organisations effectively fire walled the entire training area to insulate trainees and instructors from external exposure and were able to carry out training without any disruption.

5.3. Asking questions and identifying Potential Challenges

Internal discussions and ideation groups should be encouraged to ask questions and identify potential and emerging challenges. Some of the sample questions are:

- Where do we stand in terms of infections and casualties within the force? Are we confident about our operational continuity plans? What are the possible contingencies and what are the contingency plans? What happens if our own fighting strengths and capacities are affected by attrition of the force?
- What is our strategy for creation of redundant capacity if the first line of frontline workers suffers in large numbers?
- Do members of our force have sufficient stocks of masks and protective gear? Are our personnel fully trained to use them correctly?
- How can we improve public trust in the police, and / or the administration / political executive?
- How can the administration improve transparency in availability of resources and prevent their being garnered by influential people?
- What will we do to handle large-scale deaths and the disposal of the dead bodies, should such a situation occur?
- What will we do if the health system gets over-run, with large scale shortage of hospital beds, ICUs, ventilators, oxygen and critical medical supplies? What if the first line of health workers getting overstretched takes the hit; do we have another line ready?
- What are the chances of a sudden shortage of food and essential items?
- Could there be a major movement of migrant workers as happened in the year 2020?
- How can we deal with rumours and misinformation?
- What can be the probable black swans in the next wave? What if the vaccines don't provide the desired levels of protection? What could be the consequences to policing?
- How can we gear up the intelligence machinery to anticipate and provide early warnings to policy makers?
- What are the possible extraordinary measures such as fast-tracking of 'under training' officers and personnel at all levels or conduct emergency intake of additional personnel? Can we leverage NCC cadets? Recall retired personnel to man emergency control rooms to free up capacities? Move in citizen / student volunteers or volunteers from the private sector to coordinate logistics? Train lakhs of students as first responder paramedics?

- What are the changes you would recommend to government, in the existing legislations to deal with the pandemic?
- What are the temporary measures that we have adopted to deal with the pandemic? How do you rate them and how sustainable are they? What are the successful temporary measures that can be scaled up for long term adoption?

5.4. Collection of data

The IPF has been gathering data and information related about the multidimensional effects of the pandemic on policing. This data is expected to be of use to police officers and academic scholars for future reference and research. An array of data, documents, videos, photographs and other related material are available on the IPF website's COVID-19 Dashboard. Data on number of police personnel tested positive and number of personnel who lost their lives are also updated regularly, on the IPF's COVID-19 Dashboard. Available at: <https://www.policefoundationindia.org/covid-19-resources>

VI. Some General Issues

What other roles can the police play to help strengthen the battle against COVID-19?

Apart from their traditional roles of fighting crime and enforcing the law, the police have been contributing to the States' efforts to tackle the pandemic in many different ways, like playing an active role in contact tracing, distribution of essential items and supporting health workers and even distributing vaccines in some States. There are many roles that the police can play, if assigned specific other roles in the pandemic management system.

- **Logistics planning and implementation:** In a country of India's size, we often see huge shortages of essential medical supplies in some parts of the country, while the same articles are available in plenty, elsewhere in the country. This calls for coordinated planning of logistics. Police and CAPFs have the expertise in handling logistics. In the event of Governments seeking the support of the CAPFs, their field formations and the respective State police organisations, for the command, coordination & control of logistics, advance thinking would be useful.
- **Police and CAPFs have the expertise to build and operate effective control centres / emergency operations centres:** The Nationwide Emergency Response System (NERS) is already in existence under the MHA which can play an important role in the present crisis. Crisis control rooms are the real nerve centres for coordinated crisis response, where citizens in distress can approach for support. The control centres could also be the gathering points for crucial strategic information to support decision making. Ideally, the State level and District

level crisis control centres should be manned jointly by civil servants and police officers. Apart from deploying some dynamic officers for coordination and direction, the State / District Administrations could also hire young professionals or volunteers and place them at the disposal of these control centres to attend to citizens' calls and connect them to the appropriate service providers.

- **Preventing large gatherings of people at vaccination centres** could themselves be super spreaders. Support of the police could be obtained to plan the daily vaccination targets and ensure that such spontaneous gatherings do not take place in vaccination centres.
- **Training of volunteers:** Should the administration decide to requisition the services of large numbers of volunteers for various functions, the police should be in a position to train them up before their deployment and coordinate their use / functioning.
- **Leveraging special capabilities within government:** For instance, the current situation is a perfect use case for organisations like NATGRID, FIU and SFIO to be exploited to discern insights that will help policy makers. One asset alone – Geo Location of mobile phones – can yield immense insight into migrations, congregations, tracking of resources ranging from medical workers to food and medicine. Using geolocation, NATGRID can forewarn local administrations of movement of people, transmission patterns and efficacy of lockdowns etc by simply using this one dataset. NATGRID can also track fluidity of movement across national transport channels. There are literally hundreds of such uses where already existing assets within the govt can be reoriented towards this challenge.

VII. Checklist / Summary

This checklist is indicative and not exhaustive. Further development of this checklist is advised, based on local conditions and jurisdictional considerations.

General

1. Set the goals. Set the topmost organizational priorities and set realistic expectations of the police's role.
2. In a situation of deep crisis, the top leadership should decentralize operational decision making authority by building a war room – a Centralized Command and Control Centre comprising of a core team of competent officers. The core team not only enables the top leadership to develop high levels of situational awareness, helping to envision, strategize and design realistic plans, but also helps deliver the plan on the ground and monitor its flow.
3. The Centralized Command and Control Centre should be supported by a string of Control Centres at the District / Sub divisional or other appropriate unit levels for effective and decentralized implementation and delivery of the plan.
4. Establish an emergency team of a core group of officers – for constructing the crisis plan, its implementation, monitoring and its continuous updating.
 - a. Hold brainstorming sessions, encourage officers to ask questions, build scenarios of evolving contingency situations and develop strategies. It is important to promote psychological safety at the brainstorming sessions so that junior officers irrespective of their rank, feel free to come up with potential problems, questions, concerns, fears, suggestions and solutions.
 - b. Plan with the urgency of dealing with a national security emergency.
 - c. Assess the developing situation and the evolving risk scenarios.
 - d. Anticipate the possible contingencies, and plan for different contingency scenarios.
 - e. Develop and write down the essential elements of a pandemic policing and Crisis Management Plan – indicating the strategic, tactical and logistics elements of the plan. Need not be too textual. Write down the essential elements.
5. Have District specific and police station specific plans ready, following the above steps.
6. Incorporate in the plan itself, the principles of respect for the law, human rights and compassionate behavior towards citizens.
7. Communicate and explain your plan to all officers, staff and formations below.

Operational Continuity and Resilience/ Making Police Epidemic-Ready

Vaccinate Rapidly

8. Plan an aggressive strategy to vaccinate all police personnel
 - a. Leadership at the State and District Levels to monitor daily progress on vaccinations.
 - b. List out persons who are yet to be vaccinated and nudge them to take the vaccines.
 - c. Coordinate with the District officials for priority allocation of vaccines.
 - d. Internally communicate the criticality of vaccination.

Infection Control as a Strategic First Priority for the Force

9. Measures for infection control. Have clear, self-explanatory policies on
 - a. Measures for awareness building.
 - b. Infection control within barracks, police lines, police stations, police messes / kitchens etc.
10. Ensure correct usage of masks and PPE. Masks being the most crucial and dependable prevention tool, an aggressive campaign should be launched to ensure that staff are not negligent on this count.
 - a. Review arrangements for hand hygiene in all police stations and offices
 - b. Infection control within barracks
 - i. Supervisory officers should take responsibility for the strict enforcement of social distancing in barracks
 - ii. Reduce the number of beds in a barrack; Provide physical barriers between beds; Ban conversations when not wearing masks, encourage double masking.
 - c. Enforce strict messing protocols
 - i. Communicate the risk
 - ii. Ban eating together
 - iii. Ensure appropriate distancing and avoid conversations while eating

Extending Help to Sick Police Personnel and Their Families

11. Ensure medical assistance to infected /sick police personnel
 - a. Arrangements for medical consultations with appropriate specialists
 - b. Tele consultation facilities
 - c. Arrangements with nearby hospitals to provide hospital beds for personnel
 - d. Liaise with nearby units of Armed Forces for medical facilities for police personnel.

- e. Explore possibility of setting up primary treatment centres and quarantine facilities within police lines.
 - f. Stress on early testing and detection of infections within the force
 - g. Make use of services of doctors and qualified medical / paramedical personnel available in the force.
12. Protection and assistance to families
 - a. Extend assistance in procuring food rations and essential items
 - b. Support in securing medical treatment of family members

Limiting Infections in Operational Areas

13. Reduce the risk of police personnel passing on the infection to family members, arranging temporary accommodation for police personnel in hotels / guest houses etc, following standard precautions
14. Handling arrests and custody management
 - a. Limiting arrests to the minimum, avoiding arrests for minor offences
 - b. Centralized handling of arrestees, to avoid bringing them to police stations
15. Operational precautions at police stations
 - a. Consider erecting shamianas outside the police station building to receive visitors following physical distancing.
 - b. Limiting access of non-essential staff at police stations
 - c. Making arrangements for online court hearings and virtual production of accused etc.

Tackling the Manpower Crunch

16. Assess how large-scale infections will impact operational work of the organisation
17. Prepare contingency plans for different scenarios

18. Mobilization of manpower
 - a. Moving personnel from non-essential to critical roles
 - b. Prioritizing police work, reducing non-essential work
 - c. Prioritizing public complaints, but making sure that serious complaints are attended to
 - d. Shifting selected activities online
 - e. Exploring possibilities for outsourcing
 - f. Exploring re-employment of retired personnel for certain category of work
 - g. Obtaining services of volunteers
 - h. Plan for functioning with reduced staff
19. Exploring potential collaboration with other departments, agencies and NGOs

Physical and Mental Health of Police Personnel

20. Measures to invest in health of police personnel
 - a. Persuade political executive and government officials to launch a scheme for medical insurance of police personnel.
 - b. Launch scheme for mandatory annual medical checkups for subordinate police personnel.
 - c. Build awareness among police personnel about importance of their health
21. Plan for long term mental health protection of police personnel
 - a. Identify psychosocial stress factors faced by police personnel
 - b. Adopt innovative schemes to communicate with personnel, like buddy schemes, interactive sessions with immediate supervisors
 - c. Promote open interactions to listen to personal problems, appreciate and thank them for their work

Pandemic Policing Strategies

Guard Against Arbitrary Use of Force

22. The central theme of pandemic policing being the health and wellbeing of citizens, make sure that police deal with citizens with utmost consideration and understanding of their predicament, while enforcing the law.
23. Supervisory officers should brief the staff to ensure that people who violate the lockdown rules are not to be treated as criminals.
24. Field officers should remember that enforcement of pandemic laws are different from enforcing curfew in times of rioting etc.
25. Ensure that police responses are proportionate, necessary and non-discriminatory
26. Disproportionate use of force and arbitrary action, as well as the abuse of emergency powers should be strictly avoided.

Communicate Internally and Externally

27. Develop a plan for internal communications with members of the force.
 - a. Regular communication by seniors will reassure the ranks, reduce their tension levels and promote their confidence.
 - b. Seniors should listen to the subordinates to understand the ground level realities and developing situations.
28. Develop a public communication strategy and communicate regularly.
 - a. Consider making use of social media to spread information, advice and messages to citizens if you are not already doing so.
 - b. Skillful use of social media by police can help in securing public trust and confidence.
 - c. Make use of social media to understand the pulse of the people. This can help in gathering early warning about the brewing dangers.

- d. Develop strategies to counter the spread of hateful and misleading / fake information and confusion.
- e. Take the help of traditional print and electronic media to inform the public about important information that the police would like to convey.

Evaluate Possible Threats to Public Order

- 29. Collect ground level intelligence; continuously observe and analyze the evolving scenario, watch out for any signs of social disruptions or threats to public order
- 30. Keep a watch on hospitals, vaccination centres, cremation/burial sites, markets etc.
- 31. Alertness will help identify early warning signs and help police to intervene early, re-assure the public and diffuse any developing tensions

Keep a Watch on Emerging Crime Trends

- 32. As per learnings from the first wave of the pandemic, women and children are extremely vulnerable to sexual and other forms of exploitation and violence. Domestic violence has increased exponentially. Sensitize field police staff about these vulnerabilities and devise local action plans.
- 33. Police may develop strategies to identify the women and children who are particularly vulnerable to sexual and other forms of violence and human trafficking.
- 34. Consider deploying appropriate number of women police officers to combat crimes against women and children. Involve civil society groups and NGOs and seek their help in tackling these issues.
- 35. Make sure that the discretion available to police in prioritizing public complaints is exercised with caution and maturity.
- 36. Watch out for new forms of crimes arising from financial stress and deprivation – in the

form of robbery, extortion, chain snatching etc.

- 37. Develop strategies to deal with the burgeoning cybercrime including awareness campaigns about the huge increase in crimes like cyber frauds, fake investment offers, phishing traps, online harassment, online child sexual exploitation as well as the various options available to citizens to report cybercrime etc. Pay particular attention to misleading advertisements.
- 38. Identify opportunity crimes by predatory criminals taking advantage of shortages, public confusion and panic. Watch out for activities of criminals and intermediaries extorting money from patients and caregivers, promising hospital / ICU beds, medical oxygen cylinders, ambulance services, selling counterfeit medical supplies and vaccines.

Contingency Planning

- 39. Anticipate possible emergencies and disruptions and worse case scenarios; There is a possibility that a sudden eruption of unusual pressures on an already stressed system may spark situations of unrest and public disturbances. Police should be alert to the possibilities like
 - a. The health and hospital infrastructure getting overrun by unexpectedly heavy and surging demands for hospital beds, ICUs and ventilators etc,
 - b. A breakdown in the supply chain and possible shortages of essential food items and medical supplies;
 - c. Unexpected rush in cremation and burial sites, far exceeding their capacities.
 - d. Public unrest due to their inability to go out for earning their livelihood, large scale unemployment and related financial stress.
 - e. Jail breaks
- 40. Task the intelligence machinery to keep a watch on these and other important developments that may have a bearing on policing.

Resources, Infrastructure and Systems Planning

41. Set up a team for resources planning, budgeting and inventory management
42. Continuously assess the stocks of essential items like masks, PPE kits and other essential material, have a plan for their continuous monitoring, replenishment and distribution.
43. List out all key infrastructure, facilities, logistical tools, service providers for the effective implementation of this plan
44. Prepare contact details and numbers of hospitals, clinical labs, testing centres, vaccination centres, ambulance operators, manufacturers and vendors of medical oxygen, oxygen concentrators, critical medications, etc.
45. Contact details should be exhibited prominently at all control rooms, police stations and key offices of the police.
46. Make available, the disaster management plans to all control rooms and police stations and educate the key personnel.
47. Revamp police control rooms and review their existing capabilities and consider improvements where necessary.
48. Improve digital capabilities wherever possible.

Training, Idea Generation and Nurturing the Police as Learning Organisations

49. Top leadership should integrate and factor in their training assets, infrastructure, academies and training staff into their emergency management strategy, while developing and implementing the pandemic response plan.
50. Prepare and continuously update the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) for Pandemic Policing, Public Health Policing and related emergency management, keeping in mind a strategy for cross training of police personnel on key skills to deal with the crisis.

51. Have flexible training programme to meet the changing needs of the situation.
52. Shield trainees and trainers from infection. Develop innovative strategies to prevent the spread of infections in training facilities. Some organizations have built effective firewalls around the training area to completely isolate trainees and trainers from interacting with the outside world.

Leadership

53. Standing with every member of the force, during the hour of crisis is the most important leadership function.
54. While there is uncertainty and unpredictability in the air placing extraordinary demands on them, it is important for police leaders to be calm and decisive.
55. Build a network of teams to tackle some of the major functions described above, like reviewing operational continuity, infection control, welfare, external and internal communications, resources planning etc, setting clear priorities and action points. These teams should not only gather information but also devise solutions and put them into practice.
56. Communicate regularly, clearly and effectively with your subordinates.
57. Thank and appreciate the work of members of your team.
58. Encourage your teams to develop a professional and trained approach to pandemic related policing
59. Remember that in this crisis situation, field police officers are constantly looking up to the leadership for policy clarity, tactical guidance and critical resources. It is important for the leadership to communicate clear policies, strategies and plans, while also continuously encouraging and standing with them.

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