RESPONSE TO

COVID-19

SERIES 3
POLICY ADVISORY BRIEF

POLICING IN A PANDEMIC

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About the Series:

The School of Public Policy & Governance, TISS Hyderabad, is collaborating and supporting the initiative undertaken by its alumnus to document the response of Union and State Governments to address the Health, Livelihood and other Welfare concerns posed by COVID-19. This initiative documents the response from the Union and State Governments, Reserve Bank of India, Civil Society, Business Houses/Leaders.

In this policy advisory brief document, principles of police intervention during a pandemic have been outlined based on several incidents that have occurred during the lockdown period across the country and the laws invoked in the current situation. The proposed principles can be a source of a comprehensive framework for police intervention during a humanitarian crisis.

Note: As we understand, this documentation is a dynamic exercise and will require constant upgradation. We will attempt to add the new initiatives regularly and disseminate it widely.

Sources: The authors have taken due diligence to ensure the accuracy of the information presented in this document. Any inadvertent omissions/lapses are deeply regretted. Please inform of any such omissions at sppg.secretariat@tiss.edu. Immediate measures will be taken to correct the information.

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Cover page picture source: Scroll.in
Introduction - 1
• Lockdown time-line
• Analyzing the uncertainty created by the pandemic.

Good Cop; Bad Cop; ‘Unruly’ Citizens - 2
• Pictorial illustration of select nation-wide incidents
• Good cop – compassionate, thoughtful
• Bad cop – discretionary, arbitrary
• Unruly citizens – flouting norms, attacking the police

Governing Laws – 8
• Police are registering cases against which laws?
• Do lockdown and curfew have legal connotations?
• 123-year-old law is invoked – what does it say?

New Policing Paradigm - 14
• Proposing principles for new paradigm
• Intermediate and long-term interventions
• Representative examples
Introduction

The law enforcement agencies across India are faced with an extraordinary situation with the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. The state governments and the law enforcement agencies had to suddenly prepare themselves to restrict free movement of public while also ensuring that there is no impediment to essential and emergency services like food, sanitation, and healthcare. The usual perception of policing is to maintain law and order while this situation demands the police to go beyond it and reimagine their role in a humanitarian crisis.

Policing during pandemic can be a difficult task with lack of specificity and wide-ranging expectations. Police must ensure that the citizens adhere to the lockdown and curfew rules. From the reports gathered through print, electronic and social media, the police were seen using batons to brutally assault and given harsh punishments. Many police personnel from various parts of the country were also seen involving themselves in humanitarian efforts including distribution of food and extending help to the needy and homeless. While the humanitarian efforts of the police were applauded, it was not surprising that their coercive methods came under a lot of criticism.

The policy advisory brief discusses the following:

a. Illustratively shows two aspects of police interaction with the citizens during the ongoing lockdown – coercive and compassionate
b. Outlines various legal provisions governing lockdown and similar situations
c. Proposed principles of police operation during such pandemic
Experiences of Law Enforcement in India: Good Cop – Bad Cop – ‘Unruly’ Citizens

The lockdown and curfew rules were invoked in many parts of the country in order to restrict the spread of the pandemic - COVID-19. The police force has been at the forefront of the battle to reign in the Covid19 outbreak. They are executing myriad responsibilities over and above their usual role of law and order management like:

• Finding out the travel history of different citizens who might have been exposed,
• Coordinating with the medical teams to quarantine and isolate positive cases,
• Arranging vehicles for the emergency cases,
• Marking the hotspots with the help of municipal and health officials,
• Restricting movements from the hotspots,
• Arranging for distribution of food, and essential commodities are adequately supplied to the residents of hotspots, hospitals and other vulnerable groups,
• Guard the medical staff, isolated patients
• Guard the stock of essential commodities, medicines etc and
• Enforce social distancing norms at all the public places.

However, several reports and videos have been published on how the police have been employing brute force and giving harsh punishments to people they have caught allegedly violating the rules. The police were seen destroying vegetable carts of vendors, detaining and beating e-groceries and food delivery personnel, and making violators do squats and leapfrogs as punishment. In contrast, there are other incidents where the police was seen singing and roleplaying and enacting life situations to send out messages regarding lockdown and personal hygiene, arranging transport for emergencies, providing food and sanitation for the needy etc. There was a clear dichotomy where policing was carried out as compassionate and humanitarian police force – the good cop, and the unrestrained, violent police – the bad cop. Both the sides are illustrated below using select images from different media sources.

Good Cop

Traffic police wearing coronavirus-themed helmets pretend to attack a motorcyclist in Bangalore (RFI)

Punjab police personnel distribute food to needy people during nationwide lockdown in wake of coronavirus outbreak (Deccan Herald)
People maintaining social distancing to collect food distributed by police in Prayagraj, Allahabad (The Quint)

Police checking people on a two-wheeler the purpose of their travel during at a check-post in Kerala (The Hindu)

Gautam Buddh Nagar (UP) Police Distribute ration, food to 2,000 poor and needy (India Today)

Police personnel distributing masks to public while maintaining social distancing in Jammu (The Quint)

Gautam Buddh Nagar (UP) Police Distribute ration, food to 2,000 poor and needy (India Today)

Police personnel deployed at Gandhi Hospital, Hyderabad to ensure safety of frontline healthcare workers (Telangana Today)
Bad Cop

Although the actions of police showing compassion and humanitarian won accolades from citizens, they came under fire for using brute force and unrestrained behaviour, resorting to violence to enforce the lockdown and curfew rules in various parts of the country.
Listing down some of the incidents that have been reported reflecting police brutality:

- An ambulance driver in Pune was killed after allegedly beaten by the police on suspicion of illegally transporting passengers in his vehicle (Hindustan Times, March 28th).
- A 32-year old man in West Bengal died after being allegedly wounded by the police. The man’s family claims that he went out to buy milk when he was killed (India Today, March 26th).
- In Maharashtra some of the essential services, such as sale of groceries and food delivery, were hampered temporarily after reports of people being beaten by the police had emerged (Inc 42, March 24th).
- Policemen fired at the foot of an essential service provider Sonu Shah in Patna, Bihar after refusing to pay bribe to continue driving his pickup truck (Quartz India, March 28th).
- Companies like Milkbasket and Ninjacart went on record saying they had to dump milk and vegetables as they could not fulfil deliveries due to police harassing their delivery personnel (News 18, March 26th).

The above incidents are a result of the usage of discretionary powers of the police. Undoubtedly, they have been inconsistent in wielding the discretion at their disposal which has created a dent in their reputation. The humanitarian interventions recovered some of the lost trust on the police.
‘Unruly’ Citizens

In many places across India, police while implementing the lockdown has been attacked by citizens. Citizens under severe stress and anxiety wanting to travel to reach their family/relatives or to fetch necessary commodities when stopped by police reacted badly, and in several instances resorted to violence.

Few of the following reported news articles and tweets highlight the same.

- Bricks thrown at policemen in duty in Fazilka, Punjab (NDTV)
- Police offers pleading bikers to follow lockdown rules near Howrah bridge, Kolkata (Times of India)
- Punjab CM, tweeting updates regarding the situation of the police inspector who got injured on duty at a check-post
- Telangana DGP giving updates on the injured constable and appealing to citizens to cooperate and care for the police
In public policy perspective, it is important for us understand and throw more light on the legal connotations under which the law enforcement is acting or supposed to act in the current circumstances. The following section elaborates on it.
Governing Laws

India reported the first death due to COVID-19 on March 12th. Ten days from then, the Prime Minister requested the entire country to participate in Janata Curfew. The exercise of Janata Curfew entailed a lockdown of all activities across the country except for essential and emergency services. Chief Ministers of many states felt that the lockdown was not being taken seriously by the citizens and they have been routinely violating the rules. This prompted them to apply curfew in the evening hours to intensify the social distancing exercise. Many people who have travelled from foreign countries have been placed under isolation and quarantine to ensure that they do not show any symptoms of COVID-19 and to prevent the virus from spreading to their family, friends and public in general since it is highly contagious.

The terms curfew, section 144 are not new to the public. There have been many situations earlier when some of these instruments have been utilized to discipline the crowds, maintain peace and contain public dissent and protests. The terms lockdown, quarantine and isolation now have become part of household discussions. Understating the legal connotations of each of these terms will give us an idea regarding the legal backing of the law enforcement and the power they provide to the police and administrators under these extraordinary conditions.

The central government advised the state governments to invoke, the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 (EDA). This Act was legislated to stonewall the bubonic plague which had a devastating effect in the Bombay Presidency during the colonial rule. The Act gives the following powers to the police/administrator:

- When the government feels that the ordinary provisions of law are insufficient, it can take special measures and prescribe regulations to tackle against the dangerous epidemic.
- It empowers the officials to inspect and segregate people in hospital or temporary accommodations who are suspected to be infected with any such disease.
- Central government can issue orders to inspect any foreign carrier seeking to enter the Indian territory where the law is invoked.
- Any person disobeying the regulations or orders made under EDA will be deemed to have committed an offense under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code.
- It offers protection to the persons acting under the Act. It says that no suit of legal proceeding shall lie against any person for anything done or in good faith intended to be done under this Act.

The protection clause holds importance in the current context when we see police personnel resorting to discretion and arbitrary use of force to enforce the provisions of the law.
The lockdown that the central government has advised, and the state governments have notified through executive district magistrates is under the EDA. The **lockdown** here does not have a legal definition. The term is being used by government officials and others to describe a situation where free movement of goods is restricted, except for essential items declared by the Government of India and state governments. Many state governments have invoked the EDA with certain modifications in order to exercise the lockdown. Some of them are The Delhi Epidemic Diseases COVID 19 Regulations, 2020; the Maharashtra Epidemic Diseases COVID-19 Regulations, 2020; the Punjab Epidemic Diseases COVID-19 Regulations, 2020; the Himachal Pradesh Epidemic Disease (COVID-19) Regulations, 2020, etc.

**Section 188** relates to disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant.

- Violators can be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month or with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees, or with both;
- If such disobedience causes or tends to cause danger to human life, health or safety, or causes or tends to cause a riot or affray, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both.

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**The Delhi Epidemic Diseases COVID 19 Regulations, 2020**

In exercise of the powers conferred by the Delhi Epidemic Diseases, COVID-19, Regulations, 2020 under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, the following directions are hereby issued for the purpose of surveillance, prevention and control of the outbreak of epidemic disease namely COVID-19 in NCT of Delhi, with immediate effect:

i. All classes of Schools, Colleges, ITIs, Polytechnics (Government/Aided/Private/MCD/NDMC/Delhi Gantt. Board/Universities/Private Coaching Centres/Tuition Centres) in NCT of Delhi to be suspended till 31st March 2020. However, the schools-colleges examinations will be continued as per their schedule.

ii. The operations of all Cinema Halls in NCT of Delhi to be suspended till 31st March 2020.

iii. The operations of all Public Swimming Pools in NCT of Delhi to be suspended till 31st March 2020.

The **Kerala government** promulgated the **Epidemics Diseases Ordinance 2020** “to unify and consolidate laws relating to the regulation and prevention of epidemic diseases.” The Kerala government had also notified the Kerala Epidemic Diseases COVID-19 Regulations, 2020 Act. However, this ordinance was promulgated to give additional powers to the state government from notifying an epidemic to restricting the duration of essential services, including banking, healthcare and media. Under this ordinance the law enforcement can impose on violators a two-year imprisonment, with or without a fine of up to Rs. 10,000. The punishment is much severe than what is prescribed under EDA 1987.
There are two other legal provisions which are not very commonly invoked. They are Section 269 and Section 270 under Indian Penal Code (IPC).

**Section 269** prescribes punishment against a negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life.— "Whoever unlawfully or negligently does any act which is, and which he knows or has reason to believe to be, likely to spread the infection of any disease dangerous to life, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both.”

**Section 270** prescribes punishment against a malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life.— "Whoever malignantly does any act which is, and which he knows or has reason to believe to be, likely to spread the infection of any disease dangerous to life, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.”

**Section 353** of the IPC prescribes punishment with imprisonment for a term extending up to two years with or without fine on any person who assaults or uses criminal force against a public servant to stop him from discharging his/her duties.

Interestingly, **curfew** which is one of the most often used term associated with restricting public gathering and free movement, also does not have a legal definition. Curfew is often associated with **Section 144** of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). A curfew is simple terms is an escalation of Section 144 with very few exemptions and severe punishments can be exercised by the authorities, including shoot at sight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different Categories of Restrictions</th>
<th>Curfew</th>
<th>Section 144</th>
<th>Lockdown (under EDA 1897)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions</td>
<td>On all public movement and gathering except emergency services</td>
<td>On public gathering of more than 5 people</td>
<td>On all public movement and gathering except essential services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemptions</td>
<td>Very few</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>As per list issued by district administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passes</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Not Required</td>
<td>Not Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violation</td>
<td>Severe legal action shoot at site order can also be issued</td>
<td>Severe legal action: Under Sec 188 of IPC Including detention, lathicharge etc</td>
<td>Legal action as per Sec 188, 269, 270 and 271 of IPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal backing</td>
<td>It is an “escalation” of Sec 144.</td>
<td>Sec 144</td>
<td>Epidemic Diseases Act 1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issued by</td>
<td>DM/District’s executive authority</td>
<td>DM/District’s executive authority</td>
<td>DM or District Chief Medical Officer (DCMO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Services</td>
<td>Only emergency services are allowed</td>
<td>Are allowed</td>
<td>Are allowed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the Indian Aircraft (Public Health) Rules, 2015 (earlier 1954), quarantine is defined as “the restriction of activities and, or, separation from others of suspect persons who are not ill or of suspect baggage, cargo, containers, aircraft or conveyances, facilities, goods and postal parcels in such a manner as to prevent the possible spread of infection or contamination”

The Port Health Rules 2015 (earlier 1955) defines the term isolation as “separation of ill or contaminated persons or affected baggage, containers, ship/vessel, goods or postal parcels from others in such a manner as to prevent the spread of infection or contamination”

Both these provisions can be linked to the EDA 1897 which empowers the state and central governments to apply regulations to be followed by the public or any persons or class of persons for the purpose of preventing the spread of epidemic disease. It also gives the central government the power to examine any ship or vessel leaving or arriving at any port, and detention of any person intended to sail or has arrived as may be necessary. The central and state governments have been actively advising and exercising the practices of quarantine and isolation in the current scenario.

Further, Section 271 of the IPC gives the government the authority to award punishment against disobedience to the quarantine rule. Section 271 prescribes that “Whoever knowingly disobeys any rule made and promulgated by the Government for putting any vessel into a state of quarantine, or for regulating the intercourse of vessels in a state of quarantine with the shore or with other vessels, or for regulating the intercourse between places where an infectious disease prevails and other places, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both.”

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1897, Bal Gangadhar Tilak was punished by the Bombay High Court for sedition under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code – the first such conviction in colonial India – against the backdrop of a serious plague epidemic in India, one which would eventually reach pandemic proportions. The British colonial government feared that articles carried in Tilak’s Marathi newspaper Kesari would encourage people to thwart the government’s efforts at curbing the plague.
The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has passed an order invoking the **Disaster Management Act, 2005 (DMA)** along with the EDA 1897. The DMA empowers the administrative framework to exercise measures to deal with a disaster, meaning a “catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.”

The MHA on the 11th of March declared the Coronavirus outbreak as a “notified disaster” which implies that the provisions of DMA can be invoked. The union home secretary who is the chairman of the National Executive Committee under the DMA, delegated power to the union health secretary to undertake all measures to enhance the preparedness and containment of COVID-19. It further allows the usage of disaster relief funds created for this purpose.

The Chapter X of the DMA prescribes the “Offences and Penalties” giving the law enforcement authorities enough teeth to deal with the epidemic situation. The chapter contains ten clauses defining various punishments and penalties against individuals, companies and, governments departments and officials. Two important clauses for law enforcement against individuals and media circulating false warning, which can be extended to social media are replicated below.

51. Punishment for obstruction, etc.—Whoever, without reasonable cause—
(a) obstructs any officer or employee of the Central Government or the State Government, or a person authorised by the National Authority or State Authority or District Authority in the discharge of his functions under this Act; or
(b) refuses to comply with any direction given by or on behalf of the Central Government or the State Government or the National Executive Committee or the State Executive Committee or the District Authority under this Act,

shall on conviction be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine, or with both, and if such obstruction or refusal to comply with directions results in loss of lives or imminent danger thereof, shall on conviction be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years.

54. Punishment for false warning.—Whoever makes or circulates a false alarm or warning as to disaster or its severity or magnitude, leading to panic, shall on conviction, be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine.

All the laws have been invoked by the central and state governments and provide a strong framework of legal arsenal for the law enforcement agencies to prosecute violators of the lockdown, curfew, and quarantine rules without having to resort to violent measures. While such methods have made the people to think twice before violating the rules, the police have come under heavy criticism, from different quarters. The police in various states and UTs have started booking cases and registering FIRs against people violating lockdown under the IPC and CrPC sections listed above.
Origins of Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 – The Bombay Bubonic Plague

We can draw many similarities, especially the highhandedness of the law enforcement agencies with the plague that effected the Bombay presidency in 1896 and had a devastating effect on the human life, spreading quickly to Punjab, Bengal, the United Provinces and Burma. The plague prompted traders, labourers, residents, sanitation workers, and cart-drivers, to flee from the presidency limits. A committee was called the Bombay Plague Committee which advocated for quick enactment for a stringent law to capture the fleeing of people from the municipal limits. The outcome of this exercise was the Epidemic Diseases Act 1897.

At the initial stages when the plague broke out, British government initially were in a dilemma considering a trade-off between containment of plague. Once the plague was getting out of control the EDA was enacted which gave unrestricted powers to the local authorities to contain the situation without any legal ramifications. Efforts were made to set up quarantine camps and hospitals and disinfecting affected areas.

There have been reports which stated that the as the situation worsened the law enforcement started taking brutal measures including stripping and checking of Indians for signs of the plague. Individuals were forcibly quarantined and shifted to hospitals. During the process of disinfections properties, houses, clothes, and food of infected people were often destroyed and burned. The fear of plague, and the brutal enforcement of the British officials created a panic situation amongst the people leading them to flee Bombay and thus carrying the plague with them.
### Policing in the Times of Humanitarian Crisis

The pandemic situation has created a context of uncertainty which has a direct impact on the law and order of fabric of the society. The roles and responsibilities of the police have taken a quantum leap during this situation. The police have been burdened by a wide range of expectations. There is no similar precedent in our recent or distant past, which the police force can follow. Therefore it becomes imperative that the policing mechanism needs to take a new paradigm given the uncertainty and various challenges encountered. The new paradigm requires a new set of principles of policing along with the traditional approaches. The new framework will enhance the reputation of police, retain public trust and more importantly keep them ready for any immediate and future eventualities.

The principles are categorized as immediate and long-term to prioritize the focus of attention. Each principle is followed by instance(s) where similar intervention is/was employed.

### Immediate:

1. **Self Awareness:** The emergency personnel, especially the police, should be given training and awareness to secure themselves against the health hazard in a pandemic situation, where they are intervening. The authorities should ensure that police forces are supplied with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE). Regular training of police personnel should incorporate training in basic medical services.

   **India, Covid19, 2020:** Police in the different cities of the country, like Hyderabad, started cleaning and sanitizing their equipment (batons), vehicles etc.

2. **Specific Role Definition:** During a pandemic, police are likely to have to engage with public health officials for a range of different reasons. The relationships between police and public health therefore need to be carefully negotiated so that there is clarity in responsibilities and actions. Furthermore, the role of police increases during this time. Hence, they need support from trained professionals.

3. **Boost Morale of Police forces:** In addition from being heavily overburdened under myriad responsibilities, the police force has been coming under many threats of violence. This eventually leads to the downfall in the morale of such a vital frontline force. Hence it is very important that moral of the police is improved through various ways like:
   - Further strengthening their numbers,
   - Taking care of their families,
   - Awarding personnel displaying exceptional commitment
   - Creating awareness among the public to cooperate with police, and
   - Give exemplary punishment to those resorting to violence against police and other frontline workers.
   - Declare a financial package for the kin of anyone who is injured or loses life while serving during the crisis. Some states have already announced this.
4. Effective Communication between Different Agencies: During any emergency situations like pandemic requires sharing of intelligence and information between different agencies, and with the public. For instance, the police may have intelligence that is significant for contact tracing by public health, or medical staff may have knowledge about potentially criminal behaviour of interest to police. Also the safety of both medical staff and the police depends on each other. Apart from that it is important to communicate effectively with other agencies involved, and especially with the public.

India, Covid19, 2020: Police in the different cities of the country, like Chennai, Kolkata, have been using the latest technologies, social media, and many novel ways to reach out to the public, and create awareness. CMs and senior officials of many states like WB, Kerala, Delhi, Maharashtra have been regularly addressing press briefing related to the pandemic, and the administrations response to the same

5. Apart from regular communication, Citizen Police Interaction is extremely important during such crises. Indian police are used to using aggressive language to deal with law and order challenges. This needs to change into a friendlier tone. The citizens should look at the police as a friendly force for their own security and are not needlessly afraid of police. This will help police in getting cooperation from the citizens in the hour of need.

CISF, India: CISF guarding the airports, and the metros are considered much friendlier by the public and this helps in building a relationship of trust and understanding between the force and the public. This benefits in the long term for both.
6. **Use of technology:** During the current pandemic, different technologies have been used in different ways. Like to track the spread - AI and mobile apps, in policing - drones, and for sanitizing - robots. Even for normal policing activities technologies can be used to lessen the burden on the civilian staff of police agencies, by using e-governance. These efforts should be institutionalised on a wider scale during the pandemic.

| China, Covid19, 2020: | Using Alipay Health Code app, citizens are monitored on a real time basis. The status is colour coded and when need be, the information is shared with law enforcement agencies and emergency services. |
| India, Covid19, 2020: | Many state governments are issuing passes for essential services workers, remotely online, this lessens the burden on police and also does not create a mass gathering at the office. |

7. **Use of passive and community policing:** Due to the pandemic nature of the outbreak it is not possible to have a police force everywhere. Therefore citizens and technology can be used to passively police during these times. Furthermore in India, police can engage with the private agencies, NGOs, resident welfare associations, community-based organisations to police their own localities, including a hawk micro-violence(domestic violence). These kinds of self regulation will help reduce burden on the police.

| Washington, US, Covid19, 2020: | It has a 'see something-say something' policy. Residents are invited to complete online forms detailing suspected violations by local businesses operating when they should be closed. The state threatens violators with citations, suspension notices, revoked business licenses – even criminal charges. |
| Kerala, India, Covid19, 2020: | The Jan Maitri is acting as a bridge between the public and the police and involves them in communicating concerns relating to social distancing and helping people in distress situations. |

8. **Augmenting the police force:** The already adverse police-citizen ratio is further strained during such pandemics. The existing strength should be augmented by calling in home defence forces, para-military, retirees and even members of other civil services.

| UK, Covid19, 2020: | To strengthen the law enforcement, the existing Civil Servants are volunteering as Special Constables. In order to increase capacity and resilience, the government is relaxing tax and pensions rules which could deter officers nearing retirement and those recently retired from returning to serve. |
| Maharashtra, India, Covid19, 2020: | The DG Home Guards and Civil Defence, of the state, has tied up with CSOs in reaching food and rations to communities through his force. |
9. Assisting Public Transport: Apart from manpower augmentation, as the public transport has been snapped, police have been under pressure to provide special transport arrangements for patients, pregnant women, stranded migrants and emergency service staff. Hence skeletal public transport needs to be run, and a vehicle bank can be created with the help of taxi owners, and cab aggregators.

India, Covid19, 2020: Major cities like Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai are running local trains and buses for essential services staff. This can be extended to all those who have been stranded due to the lockdown.

10. Vulnerability during lockdown: During the lockdown there has been increasing cases of domestic violence, suicides and hoarding of essential commodities and medicines. The police being stretched on account of law and order functions, it is likely that such cases are going to be turned away or not given the appropriate response. It would be useful for the police to tie up with women’s organisations, especially those working on VAW to ensure that such cases are referred by the police for counselling and socio-legal guidance. For countering suicide cases, police already has collaborations with CSOs providing help with mental health. Those networks can be activated and further expanded in this hour of crises. Apart from that the families of police personnel are extremely vulnerable. Police families are under a lot of stress on account of long hours of work being done by the police and fears related to catching the virus. They need both mental support and logistical support.

Mumbai, India, Covid2019, 2020: There is an initiative by Mumbai Police Addl. Commissioner of Police, North Region, whereby the police families can call a dedicated mobile number 24x7 and ask for any help related to food, medicines, or any other help they may need.
11. Use of mild deterrent force: Due to many reasons police across the country have resorted to violent measures. The fines and other milder measures can help police in this crisis to manage law enforcement better. The initial fining amount under Sec 144 and EDA 1897 have become outdated and must be revised. And a telescoping fining scheme should be instituted for repeat offenders.

UK, Covid19, 2020: To ensure people stay at home and avoid non-essential travel, police may, issue a fixed penalty notice of £60, which will be lowered to £30 if paid within 14 days, and issue a fixed penalty notice of £120 for second time offenders, doubling on each further repeat offence if members of the public do not comply with the order.

Long-term:

12. Joint Training and response for pandemic: Coordinated planning and regular joint training must be conducted at the district levels and local levels among the police force, medical staff and emergency agencies for pandemic and epidemics. In order to bring convergence of all relief efforts addressing issues concerning pandemic. This can be over the current Disaster Management planning and training.

Fairfax County Police Department, USA: Following the 2003 global SARS outbreak. The police department devised a dedicated training for the staff focused on epidemic and pandemic situations. As per the national and state pandemic action plans. This has led to better coordination amongst the police medical staff and emergency agencies. Also the police are better placed in dealing with such unique situations.

India, Covid19, 2020: Many districts and local administrations conducted drills involving, police, medical staff, local administration and other emergency staff to deal with outbreak following the lockdown orders

13. Long term structural reforms and augmentation of police force: Police force in India suffers from not just lack of adequate numbers but also archaic laws governing its service. Police reforms are overdue and need to be carried out soon. Apart from that India falls far short of the UN recommended 222 police personnel per one lakh. According to MHA report the sanctioned strength is 198/lakh, while the actual strength is 158/lakh. Among the states the number of police is higher in the North Eastern states and states with extremism or history of extremism. On the other hand most of larger states fall woefully short of the required number of police forces they should have. This needs to be corrected and ranks of depleted forces must be filled as soon as possible. This will ensure lessening the burden of the police force and better law and order management in the country.
Police in Indian States/UT per 100000 population (MHA, 2019)

Sanctioned | Actual
---|---

State/Union Territory | Sanctioned | Actual
---|---|---
Manipur | | 1.3144
Nagaland | | 1.2736
AP (NE) | 1.0783 | 1.0162
Mizoram | 0.9754 | 0.9622
Sikkim | 0.8583 | 0.8583
A & N Islands | 0.8542 | 0.8542
Tripura | 0.8381 | 0.8381
J & K | 0.8177 | 0.8177
Meghalaya | 0.6548 | 0.6548
Goa | 0.5695 | 0.5695
Chandigarh | 0.4413 | 0.4413
Delhi | 0.3617 | 0.3617
Lakshadweep | 0.3113 | 0.3113
Punjab | 0.2656 | 0.2656
Chhattisgarh | 0.2214 | 0.2214
HP | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Puducherry | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Assam | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Haryana | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Jharkhand | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Uttarakhand | 0.2214 | 0.2214
India (Average) | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Maharashtra | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Uttar Pradesh | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Karnataka | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Tamil Nadu | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Gujarat | 0.2214 | 0.2214
MP | 0.2214 | 0.2214
West Bengal | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Odisha | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Kerala | 0.2214 | 0.2214
D & D | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Rajasthan | 0.2214 | 0.2214
Bihar | 0.2214 | 0.2214
D & N Haveli | 0.2214 | 0.2214

The International Benchmark 222/lakh