

Evaluation of Functioning of All Women Police Stations in Karnataka

Home Department

Executive Summary

Two-thirds of married women in India are victims of domestic violence¹. In an effort to address these issues of Violence against Women (VAW), the Parliament has enacted various legislations that provide an opportunity for women subjected to violence to take legal recourse. While the legislative changes were a positive development, there was also a need to implement a gender and child sensitive front level functionary i.e. the police force which actually is the first point of contact for the women and children in distress. Thus, **in an attempt to address these issues and protect women from violence and exploitation, some of the States including Karnataka have established All Women Police Stations (AWPS)**. In Karnataka, AWPS are empowered to investigate only the offences under: The Children Act 1960, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1986, Juvenile Justice Act 1986, Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 and Offences under select sections of the Indian Penal Code 1860.

In Karnataka, the first AWPS was established in Halasuru Gate in Bengaluru urban in 1994, Currently the State has 10 AWPS across 9 Districts, namely Mysuru, Mangaluru, Dharwad, Belagavi, Udupi, Davangere, Kalaburgi and Shivamogga. By 2016, the State aims to establish 10 more AWPS in Hassan, Tumakuru, Kolar, Chitradurga, Chamarajnagar, Haveri, Bagalkote, Bijapur, Bidar and Raichur. As per 2012-13 data from the police department, the number of complaints registered in AWPS in Karnataka increased by 39% from 955 in 2012 to 1,326 in 2013 and the number of cases solved increased by 5% from 904 in 2012 to 949 in 2013.

PricewaterhouseCoopers was selected following the QCBS process under Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements Act been retained by the Karnataka Evaluation Authority (KEA) to undertake '*Evaluation of the Functioning of All Women Police Stations in Karnataka*' with the objective of evaluating the **adequacy of the AWPS**, assessing whether the objectives with which the AWPS were established have been achieved and benchmarking against the AWPS in Tamil Nadu to identify areas of improvements.

In accordance with the ToR, **all the 10 AWPS in Karnataka** have been considered for the study. **Six main categories of respondents** were interviewed namely, **State Police Department officials- 3 nos, Officers of the AWPS- 73 nos, Women police officers who have worked in both AWPS and conventional Police Stations- 5 nos, Women Complainants- 30 nos, Women living in the jurisdiction of AWPS- 30 nos and officials of NGOs- 9 nos.**

Study findings

The study findings are presented under the following broad heads.

1. Territorial Jurisdiction of AWPS

- In Karnataka, the jurisdiction varies across AWPS; it is the entire District (Belagavi, Davengere, Dharwad and Shivamogga), number of sub-divisions (Bengaluru, Mangaluru), entire city (Mysuru, Kalaburgi) or one taluk (Udupi).
- The average number of women population that is served by an AWPS ranges from 2 lakhs in Udupi AWPS to more than 23 lakhs in Belagavi AWPS.
- In Tamil Nadu, the State Police Department establishes one AWPS per Sub-Division; this may cover 3 conventional Police Stations in metros and 4 in second-tier cities. Since the population is a factor considered while setting up conventional Police Stations, it also gets factored in while establishing AWPS

2. Availability of personnel at AWPS

- If the total number of available officers is considered vis-à-vis the total sanctioned numbers in each AWPS, 57% of sanctioned numbers in Bengaluru-Thyagarajanagar AWPS and 56% of sanctioned numbers in Mangaluru AWPS are vacant. This is followed by 37% in Belagavi AWPS. The available number of officers in AWPS in Kalaburgi and Shivamogga is higher than the sanctioned numbers.
- The magnitude of vacancies is highest in the Police Constable category; it is highest (75%) in Mangaluru AWPS. In the Head Constable category, Bengaluru-Thyagarajanagar has 83% of the sanctioned posts vacant; this is the highest among all AWPS in the HC category. The CI posts are vacant in Bengaluru-Thyagarajanagar and Dharwad AWPS and PSI posts are vacant in Bengaluru-

Halasuru Gate and Mangaluru AWPS. The APSI position is vacant only in Belagavi AWPS

- The reasons cited for higher vacancies in AWPS are deputations and transfers to other police stations, slow pace of fresh recruitments and greater deployment of officers at conventional Police Stations due to higher work load
- 59% of AWPS officers were of the opinion that the Police Department does not take any special efforts in filling the vacancies in AWPS while 7% opined that special efforts taken by the Police Department have resulted in expeditious filling of vacancies by higher authorities like Director General & Inspector General, Police Commissioner, etc. to whom the matter was reported. 34% were not sure and hence did not comment.
- In Tamil Nadu, in each AWPS, there are at least 15-20 Constables, 2 SIs and 1 Inspector. 2 Constables are deployed on a regular patrol daily- 1 in the morning shift and the other in the afternoon shift

3. Offences taken cognizance of at the AWPS

- In the districts of Davengere, Dharwad, Mysuru and Shivamogga, it was reported that complaints relating to the special offences (mentioned in the first para) are only dealt with by the AWPS and not by the conventional Police Stations. Thus, if any complainant approaches the conventional Police Stations with complaints in any of these categories, they are referred to the District AWPS. However, in some districts such as Bengaluru (Thyagarajanagar and Halasuru Gate), Belagavi, Kalaburgi and Udupi, both the AWPS and conventional Police Stations register and investigate cases across these types of offences
- 24% of all AWPS officers interviewed reported facing difficulties while investigating and resolving cases. These officers were mainly in Dharwad AWPS, Belagavi AWPS and Udupi AWPS. 76% reported facing no difficulties. These were mainly in Bengaluru- Halasuru Gate AWPS, Bengaluru- Thyagarajanagar AWPS, Mysuru AWPS, Mangaluru AWPS, Shivamogga AWPS and Kalaburgi AWPS. Officers who have worked at both, a conventional Police Station and AWPS, reported facing no issues in investigation of cases while at the AWPS.

- 55% of the AWPS officers interviewed reported that the AWPS are equipped enough to handle all the designated offences and discharge the assigned functions appropriately by themselves. These were mainly in Mysuru AWPS, Dharwad AWPS, Belagavi AWPS, Davengere AWPS, Shivamogga AWPS and Kalaburgi AWPS. However, 45% of the AWPS officers reported that AWPS were not adequately equipped and required additional officers, especially male officers and infrastructure. These were mainly in Bengaluru-Halasuru Gate AWPS, Bengaluru-Thyagarajanagar AWPS, Udupi AWPS and Mangaluru AWPS.
- 91% of AWPS officers interviewed reported seeking support from the conventional Police Stations. In the remaining 9% reported not seeking any support. While the highest percentage (71%) of AWPS officers reported seeking support for arrests, 12% reported seeking support for investigations, 6% for summons and 1% for documentation. 10% reported other support which includes long distance travel, especially to locations outside the District or outside the jurisdiction of the AWPS, overnight travel etc.
- In Tamil Nadu, the Assistant Commissioner or Commissioner facilitates allocation of male counterparts to support AWPS in cases involving male convicts. In most cases, the AWPS is located within the campus of a conventional Police Station or adjacent to the building of the conventional Police Station
- Of the cases reported in the AWPS' across Karnataka, approximately 51% were those registered under the Indian Penal Code and 38% were registered under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 9% under Immoral Traffic Prevention Act. And 2% under the Children Act
- On an average, conviction rates are low, as AWPS officers first try to resolve the case through counselling and negotiations, and only when all other alternatives fail and no resolution are reached, arrests are made.
- When compared to other Districts, the conviction rates are on average higher in Districts with an AWPS for offences registered under Childrens Act, Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, Juvenile Justice Act, Dowry Prohibition Act

1961 and select sections of the Indian Penal Code. This difference in conviction rate can be partially attributed to the fact that AWPS were set up to exclusively take cognizance of these offences and thus have a more focused approach to solving such crimes. Additionally, the presence of an AWPS may help increase the awareness of women and girls in the society to come forward to the police in cases related to dowry harassment etc

- In Tamil Nadu, on an average, over 200-500 cases are handled in an year, with only 30 to 40 cases converting into a FIR. Most others resolved through counselling and mutual consensus.

4. Facilities available at AWPS

- In terms of adequacy of infrastructure provided, the jeep is not operational in Bengaluru-Thyagarajanagar AWPS, is old and needs to be replaced in Udupi AWPS and is available and adequate for use in other AWPS. Matador van has been provided only in Dharwad AWPS. Scooters are not operational in Dharwad AWPS and Shivamogga AWPS and are in good condition but inadequate in number in other AWPS. Telephones are in good working condition in all AWPS. Wireless sets are not functional in Mangaluru AWPS; in other AWPS, greater quantity and better quality are required. 1 walkie-talkie is insufficient for use in Dharwad AWPS, 4 walkie-talkies in Shivamogga AWPS are not functional, Walkie talkies in other AWPS are in good condition and adequate for use. Stationery is adequate in all AWPS in which stationery was provided when setting up the station or where monthly funds are provided to purchase stationery. Higher fund allocation for stationery is required in Udupi AWPS
- The funding pattern varies across different AWPS. It was reported in 20% of the AWPS (Mysuru AWPS and Halasuru Gate AWPS in Bengaluru) that funds provided to the AWPS are sufficient for the functioning of the AWPS. In the remaining 80% of AWPS, issues pertaining to inadequacy of funds were reported.

5. Experience of working in the AWPS

- Of the officers that had worked in both conventional Police Stations and AWPS, 95% reported that they enjoyed working in the AWPS more than in a

conventional Police Station. These were mainly from Udupi AWPS, Shivamogga AWPS, Mysuru AWPS, Mangaluru AWPS, Bengaluru- Halasuru Gate AWPS and Kalaburgi AWPS. 3% reported preferring a conventional Police Station over the AWPS. The remaining 2% reported that it was the same in both, AWPS and a conventional Police Station.

- Reasons for preference of AWPS over conventional Police Station include better work life balance due to less working hours, distinct nature of cases handled and better working environment as they are more comfortable working with other women.
- Reasons for preference of conventional Police Station include perception of a safer working environment due to the presence of male officers, greater variety of cases handled and access to better infrastructure and equipment.

6. Linkages with other organizations

- AWPS in Karnataka use the services of NGOs, Mahila Sahaya Vani & women and child organizations for resolution of grievances of complainants, provision of shelter, spreading awareness about AWPS, identification of offences and crimes, investigation of registered cases and counselling.
- In Tamil Nadu, Support of Women's Welfare Department (DWWCD) is availed for investigating cases in which women register false cases of dowry harassment to harass their spouses.

7. Trainings for officers of AWPS

- Approximately 44% of all AWPS officers interviewed reported that they received some training/ orientation when they joined the AWPS while the remaining 56% reported that they did not receive any training/ orientation when they joined the AWPS.
- 70% of AWPS officers reported receiving training on case law, 27% on gender sensitization and 37% reported receiving training on other topics such as basic IT training and additional lectures on topics such as women trafficking, rape, kidnapping, etc
- 91% of all officer respondents reported that the lack of training does not hinder their functioning. However 9% reported that without specialized training, their ability to function effectively was reduced due to the inability to guide

complainants on the legal recourse to an issue, lack of awareness about modern investigation methods and a delay in resolution on cases.

8. Relevance and effectiveness of functioning of AWPS

- Difficulty in accessing the AWPS has been cited as a challenge by 57% of the complainants. Women living within the jurisdiction of AWPS and NGO officials also opined that if greater number of AWPS could be set up, the issue of difficulty in accessing the AWPS could be addressed.
- All women respondents living within the jurisdiction of the AWPS reported that they have heard about the AWPS. 33% saw the AWPS close to their place of stay/work, 33% heard of it through relatives, friends and colleagues, 30% through newspapers and posters and 4% through SHG members.
- 63% of women complainants reported that the AWPS officers were capable and confident while handling their cases and the remaining 37% observed that the officers were reluctant to take action because they were wary of the consequences and a few of them were under political pressure. 7% of the complainants reported the intervention of influential persons like MLAs, ex-MPs, Corporators, etc. in their cases.
- 83% of women complainants reported that AWPS officers reached the scene of the crime (or the residence of the victim or offender) on time while 13% reported that there was delay in reaching the spot.
- The women respondents in the jurisdiction who have visited the AWPS for accompanying complainants or were summoned as witnesses found the AWPS officers capable and confident and reported that their requirements were addressed promptly and efficiently. 80% reported that there was no intervention from influential persons.
- The officials of the NGOs reported that they were satisfied with the handling of cases which they referred to the AWPS because the AWPS officers are prompt, efficient, co-operative and expedited the solving.

Conclusions

1. The number of AWPS (10) forms nearly 1% of the 906 Police Stations in Karnataka. Comparing the effectiveness of functioning and outreach of AWPS against that of conventional Police Stations is not statistically reliable and valid.
2. AWPS were set up to provide better hearing to women and children. They function like conventional Police Stations but designated to take cognizance of and investigate limited type of offences against women and children. Though their territorial jurisdiction is large, and very variable from district to district, their legal jurisdiction is limited.
3. AWPS are under-staffed and under-resourced like conventional Police Stations. AWPS are not found to be lacking in capability, commitment and delivery.
4. AWPS was intended to be an ideal mix of regulation with positive reconciliation/persuasion. It has stood the test of time in this regard.
5. On the whole, AWPS in Karnataka are still in a nascent stage, capable and having potential to be tapped further to bring solace and comfort to women and children who are victims of violence and harassment.

Recommendations

1. More numbers of AWPS is the need of the hour.
2. Tamil Nadu model of AWPS should be adopted.
3. A dedicated Inspector General (IG) and special courts for handling women and child offences could enhance the effectiveness of functioning of AWPS.
4. The capabilities of AWPS officers should be enhanced through relevant trainings required to handle special cases and by engaging them productively.
5. The scope for case resolution by AWPS should be expanded to include all women-related offences under their ambit.
6. AWPS should proactively design and implement women and child friendly awareness campaigns and undertake efforts to garner support of volunteers from the general public.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. The number of AWPS (10) forms nearly 1% of the 906 Police Stations in Karnataka. Comparing the effectiveness of functioning and outreach of AWPS against that of conventional Police Stations is not statistically reliable and valid. This is more so when the performance of the population of AWPS is studied whereas in case of conventional Police Stations, all the nearly 900 stations are studied as a lumped group.
2. AWPS were set up to provide better hearing to women and children. They function like conventional Police Stations but designated to take cognizance of and investigate limited type of offences against women and children. Though their territorial jurisdiction is large, and very variable from district to district, their legal jurisdiction is limited.
3. AWPS are under-staffed and under-resourced like conventional Police Stations. AWPS are not found to be lacking in capability, commitment and delivery. Though the number of crimes registered per year is lesser than that registered by conventional Police Stations, the time taken from the receipt of complaint to registration of First Information Report (FIR) is much higher as repeated counselling sessions are conducted to settle complaints through counselling. It was reported that, in certain cases, the AWPS staff undertake counselling for 2-3 weeks even before a FIR is registered. A large number of cases which are resolved through counselling and mutual consensus do not get registered as FIR.
4. AWPS was intended to be an ideal mix of regulation with positive reconciliation/persuasion. It has stood the test of time in this regard.
5. On the whole, AWPS in Karnataka are still in a nascent stage, capable and having potential to be tapped further to bring solace and comfort to women and children who are victims of violence and harassment.

Recommendations:

1. More numbers of AWPS is the need of the hour.

Most (almost two thirds) of the respondents interviewed from the public who had been to an AWPS with some complaint at some point of time expressed satisfaction regarding the efficiency, initiative and capability of the staff of AWPS. Such being the case and considering that the number of crimes against women and children is increasing, the society, courts and governance is becoming more sensitive to these crimes, greater number of AWPS should be set up. This shall also enhance the visibility of AWPS.

2. Alternate operating models for AWPS should be considered.

Given that the State Police Department is undertaking efforts to establish at least 1 AWPS in all districts of Karnataka, it is important to study the relative merits of a model in which AWPS cease to exist as separate entities and are absorbed as units within conventional police stations. The evaluation findings show that 97% of women complainants, 60% of women within the jurisdiction of the AWPS and NGOs in 7 out of 9 Districts reported that AWPS, while operating as separate entities, solve cases with the additional time and focus which these special cases require and women are more comfortable talking to women officers in confidentiality. While this lends credence to the acceptability and relevance of the AWPS among the women population, it is imperative to examine the benefits of staffing select conventional police stations in each district with sufficient women police officers who can form a dedicated Women's Cell which shall exclusively deal with women and child cases.

The following three options are proposed for AWPS-

Option 1: Establish AWPS in each sub-division as separate entities

For AWPS to operate with relevance and effectiveness, the following should be ensured:-

- Taking a cue from the successful AWPS model of Tamilnadu, one AWPS in each sub-division may have 1 AWPS in close proximity to the SDPO/DYSP. This would ensure to easier and quicker access to additional manpower, resources and infrastructure from conventional police stations. Incidentally, this would result in smaller territorial jurisdictions for AWPS than they are

today. Smaller jurisdictions would help the AWPS staff to be more familiar with the territory. Effective/Faster investigation requires knowledge of the area and the people within the jurisdiction.

- The State Police Headquarters should have a strong commitment towards supporting the existence and efficient operations of AWPS. A favorable political will, administrative co-operation from conventional police stations and concerted efforts to fill the vacancies in AWPS should be ensured.
- Given that most of the cases handled by AWPS involve counselling, there is a high tendency for the urgency in investigation to be misconceived by conventional police stations. Though the ACP is empowered to instruct the men officers of conventional police stations to support the AWPS within his jurisdiction, it has been reported by AWPS officers that their requests for support of men officers is sometimes over-looked due to perceived lesser caseload and lesser urgency of the offences handled. Since the non-availability of male officers in majority of the AWPS makes it challenging for women officers in AWPS to undertake arrests, summons, late-night investigations, long-distance travel, etc. the requirement for establishing a formal linkage between AWPS and conventional police stations should be examined.

Complementing support from conventional police stations within the same jurisdiction or within jurisdiction of the area where the arrest or summon or investigation is scheduled should be mandated within specified timeframe (say within 24-48 hours of request from AWPS).

Adequate awareness building needs to be undertaken for officers of conventional police stations on the role of AWPS in crisis prevention and the crucial need to avoid any time delay in investigation

- Adequate staffing of AWPS should be undertaken to ensure that sufficient number of officers are available for various activities like counselling, investigation, documentation, arrests, etc.

Officers of AWPS should mandatorily be assigned duties for patrol and bandobast duties within specific time-frames. This shall enable the Police Department to overcome shortage of women police officers within

conventional police stations for special duty and maintaining law and order. A mutually supportive mechanism between AWPS and conventional police stations should be encouraged.

Presently, the sanctioned number of officers is almost similar for all the AWPS irrespective of their jurisdiction (ranging from 1 taluk to the entire District) and the women population (ranging from 2 lakhs to more than 23 lakhs). This should be revisited and appropriately revised after due consideration of the jurisdiction of the AWPS, the women population within the jurisdiction and the crime prone-ness of the area.

- Standard norms should be established for funding, resourcing, infrastructure provisioning, work timings, proportion of men officers to be posted in each AWPS, linkages with NGOs, mutual support between AWPS and conventional police stations, etc. should be developed by the State Police Headquarters.

Compliance to these norms should be ensured for streamlining the functioning of AWPS across Karnataka need to be developed

- Institutional linkages with specialized NGOs and counselling experts should be facilitated especially in rural areas where there are limited opportunities for complainants to avail professional counselling services. The services of the NGOs could also utilize to impart training and life skills to complainants/victims to empower them to earn a livelihood, link them with SHGs which undertake income generation activities, etc.

Option 2: Re-establishment of AWPS as structures with dual functions of operation

AWPS could be established in each sub-Division with dual responsibilities such that they function as conventional police stations within the territorial jurisdiction and as AWPS for the entire sub-Division.

Option 3: Re-establishment of AWPS as special women's units/cells within conventional police stations

Having special Women's Cells shall enable women police officers to address special cases with empathy and focus while, at the same time, avail support of their male colleagues for investigation, arrest, summons, out-station travel, etc.

Considering that a minimum of 8 women officers shall be required to staff a Women's Cell, it might be feasible to have these Cells only in select conventional police stations because manpower issues and cost implications could arise from staffing of women in huge numbers in several conventional police stations.

For these Women's Cells to operate with relevance and effectiveness, the following should be ensured:-

- Adequate staffing of AWPS should be undertaken to ensure that sufficient number of officers are available for independently handling different processes of case resolution. Sufficient numbers of officers should be available for assigned patrol and bandobast duties.
- The scope for seeking support from male colleagues should be clearly defined. Male officers should be assigned duties for routine and specific support within specific time-frames
- A women and child friendly ambience should be secured by ensuring that women complainants are able to discuss their issues in a confidential, safe and supportive environment. Each Women's Cell could have a Counseling Unit attached to it where professional counsellors shall be engaged to support women in solving their domestic disputes, re-establish relationships with family members, recover from traumatic experiences, etc. Additional counselling rooms should be set up
- The women officers of the Women's Cells should be empowered through special training on counselling, self-defense, etc. and through professional exposure to issues beyond the ambit of women and child offences.

3. A dedicated Inspector General (IG) and special courts for handling women and child offences could enhance the effectiveness of functioning of AWPS

Considering that the number of crimes against women and children is increasing, the society, courts and governance is becoming more sensitive to these crimes, it is time that a senior level IPS officer is assigned the special duty of looking into the cases of crimes against women and children which AWPS takes cognizance of. This will ensure better monitoring of the cases booked and better deterrent mechanism against crimes against women and children. It is recommended that an IG could be appointed specifically for women and child offences or an existing IG could be

assigned a special function for handling women and child offences. Alternatively, a dedicated Cell headed by a DIG or IG could be constituted to focus on bringing succor to women and children and monitor the functioning of AWPS.

4. The capabilities of AWPS officers should be enhanced through relevant trainings required to handle special cases and by engaging them productively

It was reported by the AWPS officers in Tamil Nadu that most of the case documents transferred from AWPS in Karnataka are weak and not comprehensively drafted. Effective case resolution and closure at AWPS requires in-depth knowledge about relevant case laws and amendments, high sensitivity towards gender issues and offences related to women and children, ability to undertake counselling, conversance with use of IT, etc. Hence, it is imperative that all officers posted at AWPS mandatorily undergo relevant trainings which shall enable them to improve their capabilities and competence to handle special cases. Refresher trainings should also be conducted regularly such that all AWPS officers across designations participate in such training at least once in a year. The training curriculum should be updated regularly.

Division-level workshops could be conducted for AWPS officers to share their experiences of handling special cases. These workshops could be conducted in a phase-wise manner throughout the year so that all AWPS officers are able to attend these workshops at least once in a year.

AWPS officers should be encouraged to engage in writing and scripting case details rather than merely typing out documents scripted by their senior officers. This shall enhance their professional growth and shall also prepare them for official duties which they shall have to undertake on their promotion. Also, since officers below the rank of ASI cannot interact with complainants as per government norms, it would be prudent to encourage junior officers to be present during counselling sessions undertaken by their seniors and observe case resolution and case closure activities.

5. The scope for case resolution by AWPS should be expanded to include all women-related offences under their ambit

AWPS should be empowered to register and investigate offences related to cheating cases under Section 420 (related to women), rape cases, sexual blackmail

cases, IT cases related to pornography and all sexual harassment cases. Presently, victims of pornography cases are required to approach conventional police stations and they find it difficult to discuss their issues with male police officers and show the videos/photos in which they are portrayed in pornographic acts.

6. AWPS should proactively design and implement women and child friendly awareness campaigns and undertake efforts to garner support of volunteers from the general public

Awareness campaigns could be conducted at housing colonies, Anganwadi centers, work places, women's hostels, children's homes, juvenile homes, SHG meeting places, etc. to increase awareness of women and children about offences related to violence, kidnapping, trafficking, etc. and to enlighten them about efforts which they can make to prevent occurrence of such incidents, resolve and report such issues. Awareness of the existence of AWPS and its role in case resolution and mentorship shall also be enhanced through such campaigns.

The State Police Department should provide adequate funds to meet the operational expenses of awareness campaigns. The minimum number of monthly awareness camps should be mandated such that efforts are made for reduction or prevention of occurrence of all relevant crimes- for example: awareness campaigns conducted at schools before examinations or publishing of results could result in reduction of suicides, campaigns at girls/women's hostels could ensure safety measures, campaigns among communities could address issues on dowry, female infanticide, domestic violence, child labour, etc.

AWPS could invite volunteers from the general public to support it in identification of cases, counselling and follow-up. These volunteers could be individuals from general public, SHG members, NGOs, etc.