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Bangladesh Community Policing Immersion Training Program Builds Culturally Competent Police Departments Overseas and Stateside

Preface

In July 2010, the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) implemented a community policing program in Bangladesh that funded local U.S. law enforcement officers to travel overseas and train rural Bangladeshi police officers for several weeks. This transformative experience taught U.S. police officers how to better relate to the diverse communities they serve stateside. Ultimately, this immersion training program, which promotes the core principle of community policing, not only helps to reduce crime and stabilize Bangladesh but also helps prevent those same threats from building within Bangladeshi communities in the United States.

About this BOLO

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) presents the BOLO series, supporting the publication and dissemination of experiences and implications discovered during ongoing research in the field, with the goal of regularly communicating these resources to the law enforcement community at large. “Be on the lookout” for these field-driven, evidence-based resources that will help illuminate the nature, function, context, costs, and benefits of community policing innovations.

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Creating culturally competent police departments

With today's emphasis on fair and impartial policing, the need for cultural competency training should be an essential focus for all police departments. Cultural competence is "the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each."¹

Law enforcement leaders have begun asking how they can help their officers to understand, relate to, and empathize with the different cultures that comprise the communities they serve. How can leaders ensure their officers are exercising sound decision making and communicating and interacting with communities in ways that demonstrate cultural competency? Furthermore, how can leaders ensure that communities believe their officers are demonstrating these same skills? If officers interacted with and had strong relationships of trust with individuals and groups of every race, ethnicity, gender, creed, sexual orientation, and religious belief, community members would have more confidence in their law enforcement agencies and be more inclined to reach out to and assist the police.

If a component of the Federal Government offered a law enforcement agency cultural competency training that required the officers to travel outside of the country but at minimal cost, the agency would most likely be interested but wonder, "Where are the hidden costs?" Although participating agencies would lose the services of a few officers for several weeks, the officers would benefit from a full immersion training program—not just eight hours of classroom lectures and exercises for a day or two that allowed officers to return home every night. This would be an all day, every day experience during which the officers would be living and breathing cultural diversity 24 hours a day for approximately three weeks.

This immersion training program was conceived by Karl Clark, the previous senior program manager of the DOJ's ICITAP assigned to Bangladesh. In early 2011, Clark told then Chief Michael Reese of the Portland (Oregon) Police Bureau (PPB)² that ICITAP could provide PPB officers with a classroom that Reese could never replicate in the United States and explained what the program involved. As a result, the PPB deployed officers to that immersion training program for almost three years. Where did they have to travel? To Bangladesh.

After several meetings, conversations, and e-mails, Chief Reese agreed to deploy an assessment team to Bangladesh to gather all information pertinent to the possibility of allowing his officers to travel overseas and provide training to the Bangladesh Police in rural police stations and to the Bangladesh Police Academy with DOJ authorization and funding. The assessment team, led by PPB Captain Chris Uehara, returned wholeheartedly endorsing this concept. In September 2011, the PPB began deployments to Bangladesh. The officers deployed with two missions:

1. To go as teachers and advisors, delivering law enforcement training and mentoring in support of the goals and objectives of the community policing philosophy
2. To go as students, embedding themselves within the community and culture in an effort to sensitize themselves to the plight of the impoverished and to better understand the Muslim culture and religion

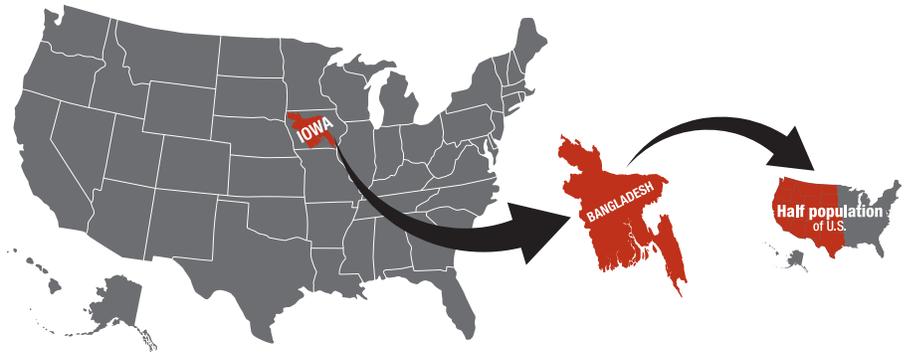
When the officers returned home, they called on their experiences and new understanding to more effectively engage minority communities while demonstrating greater empathy and sincerity. They also used knowledge gained from their experience to modify and improve community policing practices.

Why Bangladesh?

In July 2010, ICITAP, funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), implemented a three-year community policing program in Bangladesh. To be more specific, ICITAP began working with the Bangladesh Police Academy in the district, or region, of Rajshahi and with the rural police in Rangpur. Training in Bangladesh rather than in the United States is desirable because it is helpful for the PPB officers to be able to mentor and advise Bangladesh Police officers in their own policing environment. In addition, the cost of travel for an entire class of Bangladesh Police officers to come to the United States is much higher than sending a small team of PPB officers to Bangladesh.

In terms of building cultural competency, the culture shock U.S. officers experienced taught them to better empathize with and relate to the diverse community they serve stateside. For example, Bangladesh has around 160 million people,³ or approximately half of the U.S. population, living within an area the size of Iowa—about 147,000 square kilometers or a little more than 56,000 square miles.⁴ As such, the officers who visited Bangladesh were amazed to learn that in such a densely populated country, personal space effectively does not exist.

With such a large population, Bangladesh also suffers from extensive poverty and crime. Having local U.S. police officers train Bangladeshi officers in ways to address the violence and crime affecting their local communities helps prevent those same threats from building within Bangladeshi communities in the United States. Thus, creating stability in a foreign country creates stability in the United States.



Bangladesh has nearly half of the U.S. population living within an area the size of Iowa.

ICITAP created a long-term organizational development initiative in Bangladesh and from 2003 until 2005 had been using short-term, focused training sessions to implement programs that focused on human rights and combating trafficking in persons.⁵ As a part of those initial efforts, in fiscal year 2006 various stakeholders came together under the National Defense Authorization Act to provide funding to ICITAP to develop and implement a community policing program in Bangladesh. ICITAP's goal is to support community policing initiatives previously undertaken by the government of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Police to bolster community trust and confidence. ICITAP's ultimate goal is to help train and develop Bangladeshi police to provide a more community-focused, professional police service. With this goal in mind, ICITAP implemented the Bangladesh community policing program in 2010.

Why the Portland Police Bureau?

The Federal Government has a history of partnering with other countries to enhance security for all parties involved. For example, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) created the State Partnership Program (SPP), which facilitates “cooperation across all aspects of international civil-military affairs and [encourages] people-to-people ties at the state level.”⁶ With this goal in mind, the SPP created a partnership between the Oregon National Guard and the government of Bangladesh. Clark, ICITAP's program manager at the time in Bangladesh, looked to mirror that partnership by matching local U.S. law enforcement agencies with local Bangladesh police agencies, and the PPB proved a natural fit given the large Bangladeshi community it serves stateside.

While meeting with PPB Chief Reese and his command staff, Clark came to believe that the PPB embodied the community policing philosophies he wanted to instill and institutionalize within the Bangladesh Police and its

various local stations. The PPB has evolved to be one of the nation's leading law enforcement agencies that manifest the principles of community policing.⁷ The PPB was one of the first departments to formalize community policing in the late 1980s and to institutionalize its foundational principles. Since 1990, the PPB has gained greater community trust by implementing innovative initiatives, involving community leaders, and developing nontraditional partnerships.

The DOJ's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) assisted the PPB with its transformation by providing several community policing equipment and hiring grants.⁸ Because of the PPB's firm community policing foundation, openness to

nontraditional partnerships, and responsibility for serving Portland's Bangladeshi population, the PPB seemed uniquely prepared to assist the Bangladesh Police with the grass roots training and mentoring needed to transform the local jurisdictions from rudimentary police approaches to improved community engagement and policing services.

The ICITAP community policing program is an innovative community policing training approach that has achieved great success and has proved to be transformational on many levels.⁹ INL and the U.S. DoD's joint assessment team used the terms *transformative*, *innovative*, and *with world-wide implications* during an out brief with Dan Mozena, former U.S.

Ambassador to Bangladesh, in 2012.¹⁰ Collaborating with the PPB, ICITAP developed a training and immersion model that can be replicated by many local police departments and countries worldwide.¹¹

According to Clark, the program manager, he often wished he'd had the opportunity to work in a developing country earlier in his law enforcement career for the experiences and lessons learned that would have made him a better police officer.¹² Although he did not have such opportunities earlier, he was pleased to afford this opportunity to many officers in the hope that they would gain helpful experiences they otherwise might not have had.

Community policing in Bangladesh

While brainstorming and assessing current stateside and Bangladesh criminal activities, ICITAP determined in early 2011 that for its Bangladesh community policing program to be effective and efficient and for Bangladesh's government to build capacity with limited funds, U.S. local law enforcement could assist with training Bangladeshi police officers in targeted Bangladesh Police divisions. It was also important to ensure the ICITAP community policing program would enhance and not duplicate other agencies' community policing efforts across the country; thus, U.S. local law enforcement would supplement ongoing initiatives and programs.

The ICITAP community policing program has expanded to comprise other Oregon and Michigan police agency partners. The program uses sworn law enforcement officers to train, develop, assist, and enhance Bangladesh police officers (BPO) in needed areas that improve community safety and citizens' quality of life.¹³ This program initially helped BPOs to provide quality law enforcement services, but as implementation continued, the transformative experience not only helped the Bangladeshi police and its communities but also taught Oregon officers how to foster better relationships with the communities they serve stateside.

In addition, this community policing program holds the potential to thwart potential terrorist activities through improved communication and trust-building community initiatives. This is at the heart of community policing; if people feel safe, they are happy. This program not only has improved community relations and problem solving, resulting in reduced crime in the Rajshahi and Rangpur Bangladesh Police divisions, but also has created non-traditional relationships that intersect with other stakeholders nationally and internationally.

Bangladesh transforms Portland police officers

As a part of the initial agreement to solidify an ongoing partnership, Chief Reese authorized a few command staff members to visit Bangladesh to assess the reception of local BPOs and see the feasibility of their training needs. When PPB staff arrived in Bangladesh, they immediately observed the openness and kindness of the citizens of Bangladesh and were treated well. For many PPB officers, this was their first exposure to being a minority. For the first time, everything they experienced challenged their comfort zone—the language, music, sights, smells, and food. They were completely dependent upon Bangladeshis, as the nearest American was six hours away. These experiences were pivotal in improving their stateside community policing efforts, especially in terms of how PPB officers began relating to the communities they served in Portland.

Upon returning from Bangladesh, the staff members reported their observations and experiences to Chief Reese, who then gave his approval to move forward. ICITAP agreed to cover all travel-related expenses while the PPB continued to pay its deployed officers their full salaries, plus any necessary overtime. Initially, there was a concern and skepticism about the officers' interest in being deployed overseas to facilitate community policing training and to serve as mentors. However, on the day of the informational session, the room was at capacity.

The potential recruits were demographically diverse, including both men and women and ranging from younger officers to those nearing retirement. They also represented every rank, from police officer to chief, from almost every



Photo: Courtesy of Portland Police Bureau

Officers from the Portland Police Bureau who eagerly attended the first informational session about the ICITAP's community policing program in Bangladesh, August 2011.

division of policing, including Patrol, Detective, Family and Youth Services, Drugs and Vice, Forensics, and Traffic. Chief Reese deployed on three occasions both to observe his officers in action and to conduct senior leadership training with senior Bangladeshi police officials.

A team generally comprised three members, but occasionally Chief Reese deployed two- or four-member teams for specialized training. Nominated by unit commanders, screened by a senior officer, and approved by Reese, the teams initially trained BPOs in Bangladesh for two weeks. However, shortly after deployments began, Reese agreed to increase the length of time to three weeks and allowed teams to overlap for three days to ensure the outgoing team assisted the incoming team with transitional projects and training. Each PPB officer was chosen based on his or her individual expertise, skills, and overall attitude. To be more specific, chosen officers demonstrated that they were

- change catalysts;
- progressive thinkers and open-minded;
- willing to be uncomfortable;

- good communicators for training certain techniques and conveying experiences;
- introspective;
- strategic thinkers and planners.¹⁴

At the outset, Chief Reese directed that no more than one officer from a unit would be permitted to deploy with a team at one time. This helped to ensure that participation was spread across the PPB and that each team mate's individual knowledge cross-pollinated to other members. Thus, the deployed teams comprised PPB officers who had never worked together and bordered on uncertainty with a willingness to grow and learn. Each deployed not knowing what to expect from his or her team mates or what the team was getting itself into, having never been to Bangladesh (or even overseas in most cases).

Once deployed, the training began in rural communities and by flattening the police office structure. To provide effective training, BPO administrators and command staff needed to begin interacting with, and working more closely with, subordinate officers. This was a non-traditional approach for the Bangladesh Police.

PPB officers initially co-trained several hundred BPOs in the principles of community policing and how to organize and conduct community policing meetings between police and communities. Later, alongside The Asia Foundation's community policing project, they co-trained nearly 100 BPOs as community policing trainers. These Bangladeshi trainers are now replicating these concepts throughout northern Bangladesh.

The PPB training began with developing basic skills to help BPOs build confidence and to establish an atmosphere of trust. This foundation was necessary because BPOs are typically not receptive to modern policing techniques. Historically, they use colonial era policing designed to respond to colonial revolts in the 1800s.¹⁵ Their enabling legislation is the Police Act of 1861, and their procedures are largely guided by "The Police Regulations, Bengal, 1943," both of which are obviously outdated. As an example, according to those regulations, the police are required to transport physical evidence to Delhi, India. Another such example is a police commander

who is faced with an unruly crowd is authorized to fire live ammunition into a crowd after having ordered the crowd to disperse and they have failed to disperse. Modern law enforcement agencies in the United States have moved on from such procedures, with each department generally having its own secure physical evidence storage and all departments using a variety of less lethal crowd management techniques rather than live fire.

While developing basic skills, PPB trainers also conducted needs assessments within the local departments and the various communities those departments served. PPB training officers began to teach immersion techniques, which require officers to interact with citizens on a personal level. Building individual relationships fosters trust and communication between the police and the community so that citizens feel comfortable notifying police of potential issues, reporting crimes, and providing information that can help officers to close crime investigations.¹⁶ To assess whether these techniques are working, PPB trainers also taught BPOs problem-based policing using the scanning, analysis, response, and assessment (SARA) model, which police departments use to identify and solve repeat crime and community problems.¹⁷

Some immediate challenges to overcome included the poor conditions that BPOs, as well as the rural communities they

serve, work and live in. Many communities and police stations do not have electricity. In addition, most rural police stations do not have modern police infrastructures and operate under a paper-based system of tracking.

During the basic skills development training, PPB officers found the BPOs had a real thirst for knowledge and continued to want more and various types of police training, such as arson investigation techniques and various crime prevention strategies. Numerous U.S. police trainers have affectionately referred to the Bangladeshi people as "dry sponges" thirsting for and absorbing knowledge. BPOs began to take on problem-solving projects and to develop partnerships within existing governmental structures. BPO administrators, in partnership with community leaders, began to hold regularly scheduled meetings facilitated by PPB trainers and with community-elected officials to find solutions to problems that could be resolved by changing ordinances or investing in tangible items that help improve citizens' quality of life. One example of this partnership to deter criminal activities was to advocate for services in poorly lit areas, such as landscaping to remove bushes and purchasing items that increased lighting.

The Portland police have created a YouTube video that captures this transformative experience.¹⁸

Accomplishments and successful initiatives

As a result of training, numerous partnerships, commitment, and follow-through from former Ambassadors James Moriarty and Dan Mozena as well as Hassan Mahmood Khandker, the inspector general of police for the Bangladesh Police, there has been significant, increased community involvement and interaction with the police. In 2013, one police station commander reported that he attended ICITAP training courses, one of which was the Strategic Planning for Station Commanders, and the PPB's community policing course—both of which were very helpful for him. The techniques he learned in those classes helped him to develop trust with his community and the crime rate of that station dropped 35 percent.

Furthermore, citizens speaking to police officers may seem a practice Americans take for granted, but Bangladeshi citizens do not normally do this. To encourage communication between the officers and citizens in the two Bangladesh Police divisions, one PPB officer suggested that BPOs “just say hi” to citizens. The concept proliferated among local Bangladesh police agencies, resulting in the implementation of the “Just Say Hi” project to increase trust between BPOs and citizens and break down communication barriers. Other ongoing initiatives resulting from ICITAP's community policing program included girls sports training programs and community policing festivals. For example, during community cricket festivals, famous cricket stars spoke about the benefits of police and citizens working together and then participated in a game that also involved police and citizens.

Upon returning, PPB officers began sharing their experiences and reported on the successes and challenges. This sharing caused community partnerships to expand from Portland to Bangladesh. In particular, Portland community members David Smith and his wife, Pat Smith, became interested in learning about and supporting ICITAP's community policing program and ongoing human service efforts in Bangladesh. In fact, as a highly active community leader and partner of the police, David Smith was a member of the first team to deploy to Bangladesh. Rather than having PPB officers simply teach BPOs the theory of police-citizen cooperation, sending a civilian with the first officers deployed to Bangladesh was vital for demonstrating such cooperation.

Furthermore, Smith stated that when the team visited a U.S.-sponsored shelter for human trafficked children, he had a transformative experience that left him with the need to personally invest in and support the ongoing programs and initiatives that improved (and the needed interventions that would improve) the quality of life for the citizens of Bangladesh. After returning to Portland, he told his wife what he'd seen and that he'd agreed to sponsor the education of two girls in the shelter. Pat Smith wanted to see for herself, so they returned to Bangladesh at their own expense the following February.

Subsequently, the Smiths initiated a foundation, ASHA-INC,¹⁹ to support and address the educational needs of human trafficking victims and “adopted” two additional girls by paying for their education at the shelter. Through ASHA-INC, the Smiths encourage and sponsor

Bangladeshi youth's education. Many Bangladeshi citizens are so poor that their children have to work in lieu of school to help support themselves and their families. Thus, the Smiths' investment and sponsorship have helped impoverished families to improve their quality of life so their children can take advantage of the free education system Bangladesh offers.

In addition to the Smiths, PPB officers are using what they have learned from their experiences in Bangladesh to improve their interactions not only with Bangladeshi Americans but also with all their minority communities and contacts. Officers have personally taken action through sponsorship and departmental training and mentoring, helping to further institutionalize and personalize community policing that increases community satisfaction and perceived trust of law enforcement.

This strategic alliance can best be described as a win-win situation for everyone involved:

- The Bangladesh Police are receiving lessons on how to use modern law enforcement techniques.
- The PPB now has officers who better understand why many minorities, in particular Muslim communities, may be reluctant to engage with the police.
- The PPB has established improved relations with the Muslim public in and around Portland.
- The ICITAP's Bangladesh community policing program has far surpassed its original mission, at a great cost savings.

- The U.S. Department of State is accomplishing its mission with international relations.
- The people of Bangladesh are starting to see encouraging signs of a more professional and compassionate police presence.
- Possibly the most important win for the people of the Portland area, relations between its Bangladeshi community and the PPB have improved significantly.

Because of the success of ICITAP's Bangladesh community policing program, other U.S. law enforcement agencies are exploring replicating this cultural diversity approach. The power of cultural exchange, exploration, and working in conditions with which many U.S. officers and citizens are unfamiliar seems to be the tipping point toward changing negative perceptions of U.S. policing. Helping other countries through hands-on training, mentoring, and shadowing has proven to be transformational and has impacted the lives of officers receiving and providing the training. Ultimately, replicating this immersion training program and thus further implementing the core principle of community policing can help reduce the threat of U.S. crime stemming from other countries.

Furthermore, the accomplishments of the Bangladesh community policing program has led to ICITAP creating additional programs, such as an ICITAP Bangladesh forensics program that trains BPOs how to process evidence. Other programs focus on training local police to pursue poachers and on training police units dedicated to the garment industry to reach out to workers so they feel comfortable reporting violations.

There is much to be learned from the ICITAP's Bangladesh community policing program, and the benefits are far reaching. Community policing initiatives such as ICITAP's Bangladesh community policing program make the world a little smaller and bring to light many of the human needs we all have in common. The ICITAP's Bangladesh community policing program in particular is a fundamental movement toward ensuring every impacted Bangladeshi and Portland citizen experiences much improved community safety and positive police interaction and engagement. The need to feel safe, to have a good quality of life, and to engage positively with our communities should not just be an American tradition but a basic human right.

Acknowledgments

As with all successful programs, relationships are critical to ensuring effective implementation. Several individuals played pivotal parts in the successful implementation of ICITAP's Bangladesh community policing program. These include Karl Clark, former program manager with ICITAP; Dan Mozena, former U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh; Tanik Munir, ICITAP program management specialist; former Chief Michael Reese, Captain Chris Uehara, and Sergeant Tim Sessions of the Portland Police Bureau; Patricia Pleune, civilian administrative support for the Portland Police Bureau; Shana O'Reilly, former program director of The Asia Foundation; David and Pat Smith; Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker of the Bangladesh Police; and the men and women of the Bangladesh Police.

Unfortunately, although we cannot acknowledge by name all of the individuals who contributed to the immense success of this program, we gratefully acknowledge their participation.

About ICITAP

As a DOJ law enforcement development organization, ICITAP's mission is "to work with foreign governments to develop effective, professional, and transparent law enforcement capacity that protects human rights, combats corruption, and reduces the threat of transnational crime and terrorism, in support of U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives."²⁰

ICITAP developed an array of needs-based programs with a focus on national security for both the foreign country receiving ICITAP's training and the United States.²¹

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., ICITAP works with foreign governments to develop effective, professional, and transparent law enforcement capacity and to

"develop sustainable foreign law enforcement institutions that promote democratic principles, instill respect for human rights and human dignity, and reduce the threat of transnational crime and terrorism." As of June 30, 2015, ICITAP has 15 field offices and 31 country programs worldwide.

Endnotes

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The Internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, neither the author(s) nor the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services can vouch for their current validity.



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