ENHANCING POLICING: A STUDY OF HUMAN SECURITY IN POLICING IN THE CHANGED CONTEXT OF NEPAL

Manoj Kumar KC
ACTS PhD Fellow 2017-2020

Abstract

Despite the evolution of policing, crime fighting and law enforcement remain the core duties of police. Safety and security of people and society as a whole is associated with the role of police. After a decade-long violent conflict, Nepal has entered into a new era of political and social transformation. The early post-conflict time was marked by political turmoil and instability. Nepal police, being primary security agencies in protecting the safety and security of the people, experienced challenges in maintaining law and order. Understanding better the people of Nepal's sense of security has been the question for Nepal Police in these post-conflict years. Anecdotally, it was understood that the sense of security differed across geographical locations and amongst the ethnically diverse groups of people in Nepal.

Many efforts have been undertaken to enhance the people's sense of security but remained futile, and the dynamics of security among the people was far from the understanding of police. The policy of the Government of Nepal has increasingly had a dual focus on development and security. The current National Development Plan is themed 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' highlighting the basis of security as Human security (National Planning Commission, 2019). The current policing strategies do not incorporate a human security dimension that reflects the wider security needs of the people. This concept has brought the intersectionality of security-development as a key policy area in the national plan and one that needs to be better understood in the current context of Nepal.

Therefore, this study seeks to understand security from the perspective of the people and to determine the gaps in security needs in the changed contemporary context of Nepal. The study uses qualitative inquiry with a phenomenological approach to examine how Nepal Police's approach to security can be developed through a better understanding of the people's sense of and experiences of security across Nepal; and how these relate to the core security issues currently facing the country. The research gathered both quantitative and qualitative data: the quantitative data was used to attain a basic understanding of security on the ground, and the qualitative to explore the factors associated in building the

sense of security. The quantitative data was gathered through a structured survey in six different local communities at the local level: four from the same district Morang and one each from District Gorakha and District Salyan. They represent the state no. 1, State no. 4 (Gandaki) and State no. 6 (Karnali) of the total seven states, involving all the local body levels: Metropolitan, Municipality and Rural Municipality. The focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews in the respective areas from both the public and police provided in-depth qualitative data. The research activities were structured across five stages - four within the research duration, one cycle is outside the research phase. The second and third were the FGDs and in-depth interview and the fourth was partly the analysis of crime data. The fifth involved crime data collected from the last five years. The first cycle included the survey from both police and public.

Research findings show that the sense of security is sponge-like: an integrated phenomenon where crime as well as contrasting Security behavior like the sense of alienation, discrimination, low trust and confidence and non-cooperative attitude, all absorb and influence how levels of a sense of security are constructed. The research highlighted the five basic security pillars, namely: level of income, level of understanding, conditions to access to basic services, police performance and the partnership of security practice. The human security aspects directly related to security were identified as employment as it relates to level of income; education which relates to the level of understanding, and the condition of access to basic services as it relates to the availability of essential goods and the access to basic services. Each condition differently has effects in contributing to how security is felt and experienced. The Security behavior triangle was specific: the access to information and access to participation linked to the sense of justice formed a Security behavior and the level of this shows the contrast in Security behavior which has an impact on the sense of security.

The elements of police performance that were important consisted of visibility, integrity and investigative capability. The low level of these three elements links to the low performance of the police and produces contrasting Security behavior of an active resistance towards police. Another important pillar that emerged was identified as the partnership of security practice. The low level of partnership in security linked to the recognition of the people in the community. As being a police officer of more than 22 years of active experience, mapping crime based on the causes of crime is crucial in building the sense of security. The study highlighted the critical linkages in producing violent and organized crime and contrasting Security behavior like active resistance and non-cooperation from the community. The probability of violent crime and active resistance suggests clear intervention areas for police. In the research discussion, human security is explored both conceptually and in practical terms to enhance security from a policing perspective and offer recommendations to guide these.
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