



MAHARASHTRA

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Our Covid19 Battle - when the pandemic grips poor and downtrodden, it is the leadership, strategy and empathy that win the battle.

by

Niyati Thaker IPS, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mumbai.

Mumbai was the epicentre of the outbreak of COVID19 in India. It was the first battlefield in the country and the Mumbai Police were at the forefront. There were huge administrative challenges as the problem was unprecedented, the communicability of the disease was high with the cure unknown. Unfortunately, the thickly populated slums emerged as a hotbed where the virus spread quickly as there was no scope for any meaningful social distancing there.

Challenges faced by the police

Implementing the lockdown and guarding containment zones

Ensuring social distancing in shops of essential items

Raising awareness among public

Securing supply of essentials & supplying food to the hungry

Convincing people to go to institutional quarantine centres

Attending desperate calls for removal of COVID-19 positive persons

Ensuring proper disposal of COVID-19 dead bodies from homes

Helping doctors and health workers screen patients inside overcrowded slums

Arranging for taxis/ambulances for non COVID-19 patients

Sending migrants labourers home

Senior officers visited the containment zones daily and devised strategies for the problems of the people living inside these containment zones.

Worli Koliwada, Dadar containment zone

It has a population (mostly fishermen) of about one lakh settled in an area of two sq. kms and has congested lanes where four wheelers can't ply. To stop socialising and implementing social distancing norms, there was a need for quick intervention and so we got 8 to 10 loudspeakers, made audio clips in the local language and played it throughout the day and night. It had a definite impact on them and their socializing immediately came under control. *We continue to use this practice in all our police stations till date to get the desired results.*

In the beginning, people could not purchase essential items because of restrictions. Essentials like milk, LPG cylinders, groceries, had to be made available at the earliest to prevent unrest. It seemed impossible at first because of large number of households and lack of knowledge of the labyrinth and lanes inside and no one was willing to volunteer. A tour on foot was undertaken inside the slum, 12 to 14 small grounds were identified, the milk supplier was called and local young volunteers were roped in and guided to act as retailers for milk in these places. The corporation was instructed to put markings on these grounds so that social distancing could be observed. PA systems were installed at each of these locations and deployment of the police and corporation staff was done. The system worked flawlessly and was used for other essentials later.

Strategy

Instill the fear of COVID-19 in the public to stay more watchful. Imparting education on virus.

Providing solution/ methodology for protection.

Worli Koliwada today is no longer a containment zone and the spread was successfully contained.



Vegetable markets:

It was observed that following of social distancing during purchase of vegetable was next to impossible. The vegetable markets including Dadar vegetable market were then closed down/decentralized/shifted out depending on the local situation.

Dharavi and other slums:

Dharavi- the largest slum of Asia with an area of around 2.1 sq. km and a population of about 10 lakh is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. It is also a highly diverse settlement religiously and ethnically.

Therefore the solution has to be specifically designed at a local level. *The SHOs were asked to devise sustainable systems based on the local conditions for implementing the lockdown, raising awareness, ensuring availability and distribution of essentials.* They were also asked to develop volunteers to help in running these systems.

The family of 1st COVID-19 patient was unresponsive and unwilling to share the contact/source of the virus. It took some intelligence and policing to find a link to the returnees of religious congregation. The police then completely exposed the entire story and traced the potential candidates for quarantining.

Vulnerable sections of society like daily wage earners, factory workers, migrant workers etc. had been rendered jobless and penniless. Arrangement for dry rations for them who could cook, and, cooked food for those who couldn't, had to be made.

Willing NGOs and individuals were roped in. Some helped with dry rations and the others with cooked food. Distribution of groceries could lead to a mad rush, so, it all had to be carefully planned to ensure

that it reached the correct beneficiary so that the donor was assured of its deliverance to the needy individual/family. Night delivery was also resorted to avoid mad rush.

Improvised drones were used to make announcements in congested places. Massive flag marches were organized to deter people from breaking the lockdown and also to instil confidence in the public.

In Dharavi, almost 60 percent residents were totally dependent on the 220 public toilets. Therefore movement of public was seen in the morning and evening hours. These inhabitants were educated to avoid unnecessary movements and taking care of proper sanitization. Food, sanitizers, masks and soaps were distributed in large quantities.

During the holy month of Ramzan, *the timing of the markets was changed to suit the routine of the public. Police proactively circulated audio and video recordings of respected Maulanas and Aaleems among the public so that they would continue following social distancing norms.* The loudspeakers of the mosques were used to continuously make people aware of the dangers of COVID-19. It had a positive impact hence there were no public gatherings.

Police stations thus became stop centres for solving all kinds of problems.

Sending migrants home:

Mumbai has considerable population of migrants and this young, extremely poor, mostly uneducated and unorganised workforce lives in slums. With two months of continuous lockdown, they were unemployed, penniless, desperate and impatient. Desperation was so high that even the fear of death didn't stop them from wanting to travel back home without any means of transport available at that point of time.

The process of sending migrant labourers home was complicated. It required coordination between the sending state, the receiving state and the railways.

Upon scheduling of the train, those specific people had to be summoned at short notice, buses had to be arranged for them. The food and water had to be made available in coordination with other departments well in time.

In the early days when trains were yet to start, many migrants were seen to have started walking back to their states. Many were stopped and convinced to wait for another few days.

After a few trains had left, we were able to control this outflow of people going on foot. In all 1, 15,000 persons applied for permission to travel from Dharavi alone. And as it was imminent, this constant contact with public led to a spurt in a number of COVID-19 cases among the police personnel too. Till date, in Dharavi alone, 65 police personnel have been affected and one officer has lost his life battling COVID-19.

Lessons Learnt:

- Understand the mindset of the locals
- Constantly communicate with them
- Find solutions only after understanding the problems well
- Know your limitations, take help of stakeholders and low risk individuals
- Understand and anticipate the expectations of the stakeholders
- Sustainability and adaptability of the solution is a must
- Prioritize issues and use manpower accordingly
- Be strict but do not lose sensitivity
- Anticipate the problematic areas and prevent unrest by devising proactive plans.
- Be empathetic
- Decentralize planning where local conditions are at great variance
- Make systems self-sustainable
- Local intelligence is always indispensable
- Keep a watch on what your force is going through physically and emotionally
- Inner strength is the biggest tool.

MALEGAON

'Malegaon Pattern of Corona control'

by

Sunil D. Kadasne, Superintendent of Police, Malegaon

Introduction : Malegaon a historic, industrial town and an emerging urban centre of Nashik, Maharashtra. It is infamous for its communal riots and bomb blasts. It has rich cultural and historical background. As per 2011 census, 75% population is constituted of Muslim and 23 % of Hindu and 2% of other religion. Malegaon has the most number of people travelling abroad mainly for *Hajj and Umrah and to Gulf countries* for work after Mumbai in Maharashtra. This urban population is living in 6 km with population density of 18881 per km square

is a classic example of urbanisation and a subject matter of sociology and policing.

Corona pandemic broke out in Malegaon on 08 April, 2020 first COVID-19 patient found in Malegaon with foreign travel history. On 9 April, 2020 the patient lost his life, it was the beginning of the pandemic in Malegaon and till the end of April, 2020 around 30 deaths due to COVID-19 and 600 plus deaths due to non-COVID and other causes and fear related concerns. People of Malegaon were in panic and various rumours were travelled across. Administration was seen struggling in tackling the situation to control the menace. Reports in the national media and news papers brought national attention to Malegaon. Honourable Chief Minister, Maharashtra State took a call and appointed me-Mr. Sunil D. Kadasne, Superintendent of Police, Anti-Corruption Bureau, Nashik range as special co-ordinator for COVID situation in Malegaon on 13 May, 2020.

On 14 May, 2020 I took charge as special co-ordinator to contain spread of corona pandemic. Earlier during 2012-2016, I was Additional Superintendent, Malegaon. I had wide experience of the city and linguistic comfort in Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic and Madari Jaban (local dialect of Malegaon) and awareness of politico, socio and religious sentiments of the city proved instrumental in establishing dialogue between people and administration. Soon I realised the importance of the community participation to regain faith of people in government machinery to win over the current situation due to corona pandemic.

Prevailing circumstances: There was a fear of corona in the people of Malegaon. Death toll increased in Malegaon primarily due to closure of private hospitals, civil hospital turned into CCC (**Covid Care Centre**) so people avoided civil hospital. Many patients suffering from non COVID ailments succumbed to the disease due to unavailability of timely medical facilities.

In the very first meeting with Shri. Pankaj Ashiya, IAS, Special Officer in Malegaon to monitor COVID-19, Dr. Zahid Shaikh and UMAGA- Unani Doctor Forum came forward with his team to support. After a meeting with IMA doctors and AAYUSH ministry hospital started for 4 hours everyday. In Mahatma Gandhi Vidya Mandir only Hindu patients were treated and in Badi Malegaon High School, Rounkabad only Muslim patients were treated. Malegaon's silent communal divide was seen here also.

Contribution: After discussion with Shri. Suraj

Mandhare, IAS, DM, Nashik sizeable deployment of doctors (Unani) was done in the Eastern part of Malegaon. With 16 Unani doctors appointed in different COVID Care Centres as there was a shortfall of Allopathic Practitioner and Medical Staff and also absenteeism due to fear of Corona. Distribution of **PPE Kits** and High quality masks was done in presence of Hon'ble Dadaji Bhuse, Minister (Local MLA).

There was a prejudice in the mind of Muslim patients that Hindu doctors are not treating them. Clinics were closed due to IMA directives and doctors feared that admitting COVID Positive patients from the Muslim area would infect their hospitals. I persuaded the team of IMA and alternate medicine practitioner doctors to treat all people/patients irrespective of religion in all CCC with zeal of services and Compassion and also instructed them to make small video clips to convey a message that all patients are being treated.

I appealed to the people to follow social distancing, using mask and using of soaps to clean hands frequently as the local strata avoids using sanitizer liquid as it contains alcohol. Created an awareness message on social media in Hindi, Marathi and Urdu. Dr. Himanshu Jain a homeopathy practitioner and Motiwala Medical College had distributed thousands of Kits of **Arsenic Alb-30** in eastern part of Malegaon.

Roza was becoming an excuse for many Muslims not willing to give swabs. Deployment of volunteers made across the city as the municipal wards to persuade people for swab collection. Due to lockdown all mosques were closed for mass prayers. We convinced the mosque trustees to use their loud speakers to give public appeal and audio messages to the local mohallas people. **Dr. Azhar, WHO representative** observed that Malegaon people were reluctant to use sanitizer due to religion prohibiting the use. Public awareness was required, notice boards and walls of mosques were used for sticking bills, pamphlets creating awareness, precautionary measures on Coronavirus. **ASHA** activists' conducted door to door survey and persuaded the patients for hospitalisation.



Ration kits distributed to ASHA Workers.

During Eid, people were persuaded to follow the lockdown norms set by Central and State governments. All significant groups responded positively and made consensus on offering *Eid namaz at home instead of Eidgahs and masjids*.

Power looms are the engine of Malegaon which keeps the city alive and peaceful. Power looms which had been closed since lockdown was enforced that rendered the labours in town jobless (about 3 Lacs), giving rise to problems like hunger and stress. Constant follow up and discussion with yarn merchants, power loom owners, transporters resulted in consensus on restarting the textile activity. The police took a positive approach to facilitating getting of yarn from Kerala, Karnataka and making goods in Malegaon and transporting of goods to Pali, Balotra, Surat and Ahmadabad.

Thus communal harmony was maintained and wrong perspective and image about Malegaon was changed.

Summary:

Interaction with IMA, Unani doctors motivated them to give services to society. Distribution of kits to doctors gave them confidence.

The co-ordinator with his team walked around in the streets of Malegaon distributed pamphlets in Urdu with the help of volunteers and held corner meetings to sensitize people.

Rise in incentive of Asha workers and distribution of ration kits motivated them.

Restarting of Power looms brought a glimmer of hope in terms of stability of economy, peace and harmony.

Meeting and dialogue with about 100 Imams was fruitful as it helped in carrying the right message throughout the town.

The special co-ordinators knowledge of Urdu, Arabic and Islamic way of life appealed to the people at large during interaction which helped gaining confidence and co-operation of the community.

POLICING A PANDEMIC IN RURAL INDIA: FROM ENFORCEMENT TO ENGAGEMENT

A CASE STUDY: BEED, MAHARASHTRA

HARSSH A PODDAR, IPS

SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE, BEED

Handling the COVID-2019 crisis has required police institutions to transform almost overnight into a new template of policing. *A model of law enforcement that remains firm, grim and determined when*

facing the killer virus and yet humane, sympathetic and munificent when dealing with society ravaged by the virus.

The narrative of the Corona crisis globally has almost completely been dominated by its impact on cities and urban areas. This article offers a perspective of how the crisis has impacted India's vast rural hinterland- District Beed in central Maharashtra District Beed spans an area of ten thousand square kilometers with 30 lakh people are engaged in agriculture sector. Where families can isolate themselves for extended periods, nor do they have recreational facilities like televisions. Thus, confinement in homes and dissemination of accurate information are the challenges. Apart from this, about seventy thousand sugarcane labourers returned home from other Maharashtra districts.

Guiding principles –

1. Empathy

2. Awareness

3. Firmness

This is a war which can be won by moving from enforcement to engagement. Details of implementation of above principles are as below.

1. EMPATHY: SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE CRISIS

i) **A comprehensive and responsive pass system-** The limitation imposed by the lockdowns were the restrictions on the movement of people resulting in disruption of emergency services. To facilitate movement and to maintain emergency services, quick response (QR) coded passes were issued . More significantly, a system was instituted to sanction passes for movement by citizens for emergency.

ii) **Coordination of returning labourers-** Due to lockdown, these families were stranded and were unable to return to their home district.

A dedicated control room was set up for coordinating the staggered movement of labourers through nineteen selected entry points of the districts. At the entry points, all labourers were medically screened for symptoms so as to stop the spread of disease.

iii) **Movement of industrial labourers stranded within the district-** Police stations continued to act as the nodal point .Movement of 2500 stranded labourers by Shramik trains were coordinated.

Late in May, twelve labourers from West Bengal reported to Pimpalner police station that their names had not appeared on the latest list for dispatching them to their home states. A train to West Bengal was due to pass through Nanded (four hours travel from Beed) that afternoon itself. The Beed police arranged for their transport to Nanded and ensured their boarding the train. A thank-you postcard in Bengali, dispatched from a village thousands of miles away is a souvenir we shall cherish for years to come.



iv) **Distribution of food grains and groceries-** Hundreds of villagers came forth across the district to contribute grains, pulses and vegetables to those who did not have the means to purchase them during the lockdown. The police provided the channel through which these resources could reach the neediest amongst us.

v) **Domestic violence helplines-** Helplines were created where survivors of domestic abuse could call and seek immediate police intervention. Police teams were then dispatched to their respective homes to take apposite action against the perpetrator. 132 cases of domestic violence had been resolved during the period of the lockdown.

2. AWARENESS: LEVERAGING KNOWLEDGE, OUR BEST WEAPON AGAINST THE VIRUS

Given the high penetration of data services in rural areas, the internet remains the predominant source of information for village communities. WhatsApp and Facebook are the two main platforms that serve the best. While urban populations are mostly aware of the phenomenon of fake news, in villages people continue to be beleaguered under the notion that any fact sourced from the internet must perform to be true. ***In such a setting it's vital to disseminate the correct information/facts with credibility and authority.*** Following methods were used.

- i) **Coordination with religious leaders for information dispersal-** Several religious figureheads such as pandits, maulanas, monks etc. were recruited to our cause, to convey the protocols to be followed during the lockdown period through short videos.

The real impact of this initiative had been felt during festivals. In a village setting, festivals were not family affairs limited to home. They were the occasions of public exuberance and gathering. During Ram Navami, Hanuman Jayanti, Shab-e-Baraat, Ambedkar Jayanti and Eid **not a single congregation was seen.**



- ii) **Awareness videos-** Regular videos were issued by senior police officers giving authorised information and also the law and order scenario of the district. The issues

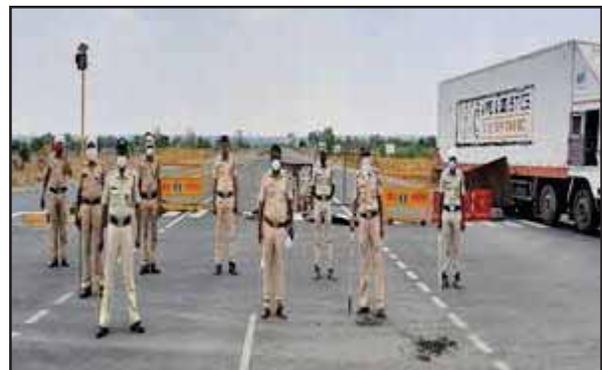
covered are countering communal hate speech or procedure for issuing of passes. ***These videos effectively countered fake news and misinformation.***

- lii) **Social media monitoring cell-** The social media cell monitors social media platforms 24x7 for fake news, rumours and hate speech. This is done by using hashtag and keyword searches. It is also done by keeping vigil on content in WhatsApp groups that operate in the district. *Beed has the distinction of having clocked the highest number of actions taken against fake news and hate speech in the state (48 cases with 60 accused), during the course of the present pandemic.*

3. FIRMNESS: THE ROLE OF ENFORCEMENT IN CONTAINING THE CONTAGION

- i) **Border sealing-** Police checkpoints were placed on each of the sixteen entry points. The checkpoints were placed under CCTV surveillance to root out any unethical practices and monitor traffic situation.

The utility of this sealing mechanism came to the fore when a family travelling from Haryana to Latur, tested positive for the virus there and contributed to a spate of infections. Upon enquiry it was found that he was refused entry to Beed due to improper papers.



- ii) **Gram Suraksha Dals-** A village level intelligence mechanism was formed consisting of the *Sarpanch, the Police Patil and the Tantamukta Adhyaksh.* This committee informed the police each time an unscreened person returned to the village. Such persons were then forthwith tested for symptoms and placed in quarantine.
- iii) **Contact Tracing Cell-** A crucial component of combating the infection is to identify people that an infected person has come into

contact with. This required a combination of interrogation, surveillance and detection—all part of the daily skillset of police organizations. The Contact Tracing Cell had been working on tracing the previous contact history of suspected COVID-2019 individuals through personal and technical intelligence. Over 350 individuals were taken into medical custody for institutional quarantine.

- iv) **Geo-fencing of home quarantined individuals-** Enforcing home quarantine can be a significant challenge in rural areas. In order to achieve effective home quarantine, three forms of surveillance had leveraged in Beed:

Life 360 App- a GPS based app that permits a closed user group to keep track on all people who are members of the group.

The houses of people who are placed under home quarantine are geo-fenced so that any movement outward or inward can be traced.

Physical checking, done by the beat constable, police patil and gram rozgarsevak.



- v) **Area Domination-** To place restrictions on the interactions between the three million population, places of regular public congregation were mapped and dominated through fixed points and regular route marches. The internal roads of each city were patrolled using drones. *In a vast district, mapping as well as aerial surveillance permitted us to efficiently deploy forces in accordance with need.*

- vi) **Exemptions:** Keeping in view the pre sowing activities farmers were therefore completely exempted from the lockdown regulations.



Small gestures like providing home delivery of groceries to police families, social-media stories about individual acts of bravery and resilience, the police band welcoming quarantined constables to the nostalgic tunes of 'Hum honge kaamyab...', have worked wonders for the morale of Beed Police.

These lessons of empathy and commitment that we have learnt have forged a new relationship of trust between us and the citizens of this country. Our battles are not done yet, we will fight on, we will win this war... We shall overcome oneday...

TWITTER

Mumbai Police

@MumbaiPolice

May 22

PN Sandhya Sheelvant from Shahu Nagar PStn carried out the responsibility of performing last rites of 4 unclaimed bodies from Sion Hospital.



Sanjay Kumar IPS, @sanjayips89

On request a pregnant lady provided with police vehicle for hospital. May 29



Sindhudurg Police @Sindhudurg_SP Jun 1

नियमित मास्क चा वापर करू...कोरोना वर मात करू. घरी रहा..... सुरक्षित रहा..



Maharashtra Police @DGPMaharashtra Jun 27

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