IMPROVING POLICING IN ANDHRA PRADESH

An Andhra district uses tech to make police accessible, especially for women

Prakasam Superintendent of Police has won the seventh G-Files governance award for Spandana project

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 22

SPANDANA, AN Andhra Pradesh Government initiative to make police stations more approachable for the public, especially women, is winning accolades and awards. Although it is being implemented state-wide, Prakasam district's Superintendent of Police (SP), Siddharth Kaushal has initiated several reforms and the district has topped in resolving complaints, especially from women. For his efforts, Kaushal was awarded the 7th G-Files Governance Award on December 13.

The annual G Files award is given to civil servants for innovative reforms in governance.

Spandana was launched in July, and 52 per cent of the complainants were women. The district police also introduced Spandana Beyond Borders—people of the district living outside the district, state or abroad can interact with the SP through video conferencing and register their complaints. Spandana, which means response, is also being held at District Collectors' offices too but it is in the police department where it is creating an impact.

"We have basically made it very easy for anyone to approach us and lodge a complaint or register a grievance," says Kaushal. "Women, in particular, do not like to go to police stations but after Spandana centres were established, more women are approaching with their complaints. A woman does not have to go to a police station at all. If she visits a Spandana centre and submits her complaint or connects with me through video-conferencing and if her complaint is criminal in nature, an FIR would be immediately lodged or we will conduct an inquiry and initiate action. All complaints have to be closed within 15 days," he said.

Prakasam district has led the Spandana initiative (see box) with 84 Spandana centres within the premises of all police stations, offices of Inspectors, Deputy SPs and the SP office. These centres mostly have a female receptionist and other staff members who are trained, briefed and sensitised in handling women victims and complainants.

"Through Spandana we have become available and accessible. Available because the police is eager to meet and serve the people and address their complaints. Accessible because we have established proper communication facilities and are now connected via video conferencing. When a complainant walks into my office during the Spandana programme, I and

Prakasam Police officials resolving cases through video conferencing *Express*
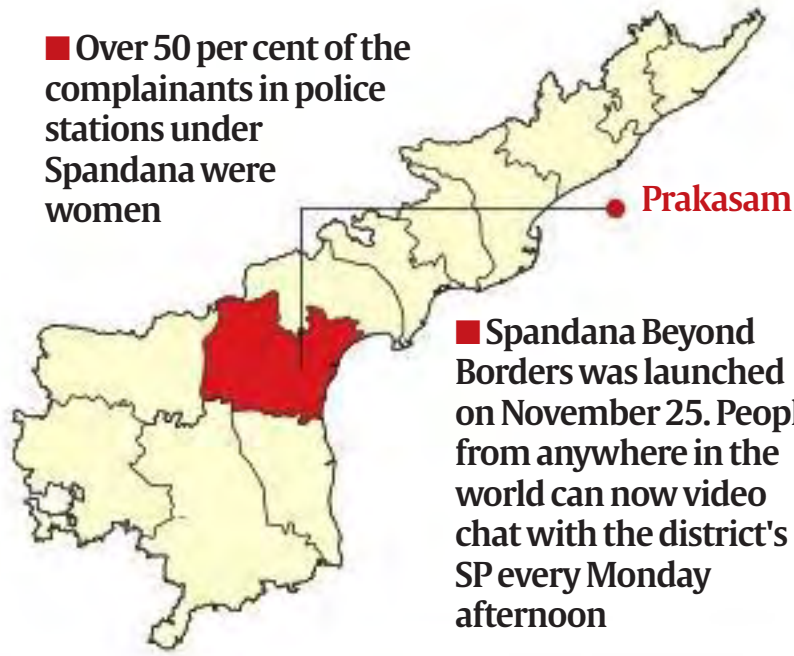
SPANDANA INITIATIVE: PRAKASAM DISTRICT LEADS

■ Prakasam district has 84 Spandana centres, the highest in Andhra Pradesh

■ Prakasam district is spread over 18,000 sq km with approximately 40 lakh population

■ Since July, Prakasam Police has received over 3,500 petitions resulting in 845 cases being registered

■ Over 50 per cent of the complainants in police stations under Spandana were women

■ Spandana Beyond Borders was launched on November 25. People from anywhere in the world can now video chat with the district's SP every Monday afternoon

the complainant often connect to the field officer concerned to discuss the issue and how it can be resolved. It becomes a three-way communication and this is giving confidence to people to approach police," he said.

All 84 Spandana centres of the district have the facilities for a three-way video conference.

Prakasam district is spread over 18,000 sq km with approximately 40 lakh population. "It is strenuous as well as expensive to those who live in faraway places to go and meet the SP in the district headquarter in Ongole... For such people, Spandana is a boon. They have

to spend just one hour at the nearest centre and talk to the SP through video-conferencing," an official said.

For instance, recently 18 Adivasi masons from Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh narrated their ordeal through video-conferencing from a Spandana centre stating that they were not paid by their contractor in Korisapadu Mandal in Prakasam. The contractor, Bathula Ravi, was summoned to the office of Addanki Police Inspector where he gave an undertaking that he would pay within 24 hours. The next day he paid the Rs 2 lakhs that he owed to

the masons and also assured that he would make arrangements for the mason to go back to their state safely.

Since July, the Prakasam Police has received over 3,500 petitions resulting in 845 cases being registered. "In the rest of the cases, they have been settled amicably mostly," he said.

To create awareness about the Spandana centres, cops have put up banners and flex boards all over the district.

"As word spread about the procedure and friendliness, more and more people are coming forward with their grievances. At the Spandana facility the average time given to each complainant by the officer is 8.5 minutes," DGP D Goutam Sawang said.

Spandana Beyond Borders was launched on November 25. People from anywhere in the world can now video chat with the SP on Monday afternoon.

Officials said that many people from within the country — from places such as Bengaluru, Delhi, Lucknow, Jammu and Hyderabad — as well as from outside India — from places such as the US, Germany, Canada, United Kingdom, Dubai, UAE, and Singapore — have utilised the services so far and solved their issues using the facility.

Besides the G Files Awards, Spandana Online was nominated by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), which operates under the National Police Mission in Delhi, for its award.

EXPLAINED E.

Why Spandana is a success

There are two broad reasons why Spandana initiative has succeeded. One is the use of technology. With Spandana centres spread across the district, each having video conferencing facility, it is easier and cheaper for people to lodge complaints. They no longer have to travel to the district headquarters to follow up. The second reason is the special attention to women complainants.

'Instead of focussing only on formalisation, raise the informal sector's productivity'

INSTEAD OF solely focussing on the formalisation of the Indian economy, which is not inadvisable per se, policymakers should focus on increasing the productivity in the informal sector, says MICHAL RUTKOWSKI, Global Director, Social Protection and Jobs, World Bank as he speaks to UDIT MISRA.

When you look at India, what are the two or three key challenges that pop up in your mind? What are the areas of concern?

To me, the fact that India is predominantly an informal economy is a very important starting point when talking about jobs. That's because many of us are used to thinking in terms of a long-term stable employment contract in a formal economy as the gold standard. India is not only 90 per cent informal economy, but also this is the same number as 50 years ago. So we see that there is no progress in formalisation. That is why we need to change our mindset.

The 10 per cent in the formal sector, they are relatively well protected. Where the rubber hits the road is the informal sector. That's where we need to start thinking about how to improve productivity by bringing those informal sector workers, subsistence agricultural workers closer to markets.

From the demand side, we need to look at the development of secondary cities because not all agricultural workers will be in a position to move to a major city. A developed secondary city could be a stepping stone towards further migration. From the supply side, we need to offer informal sector workers a package of cash transfers.

In this regard, the development of the pension systems for the informal sector in India — because of our ability to use mobile money — opens up new possibilities with respect to protecting workers.

Is there a demand-supply disconnect in the Indian job market?

Indeed, you have a situation in the Indian job market where despite a huge pool of labour there is high unemployment and yet, at the same time, surveys show that for employers the lack of proper skills is a big constraint in recruitment. So, there is clearly a mismatch there.

I think the key issue is to involve the private sector to understand what kind of skills and training is required because at present it seems like employers' views are not taken on board. The other aspect is the north-south distinction in the Indian labour market. You have southern states such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala with ageing population whereas you have surplus labour in the north.

Usually every type of migration — internal or international — is a politically sensitive issue, but migration is a powerful force for development.
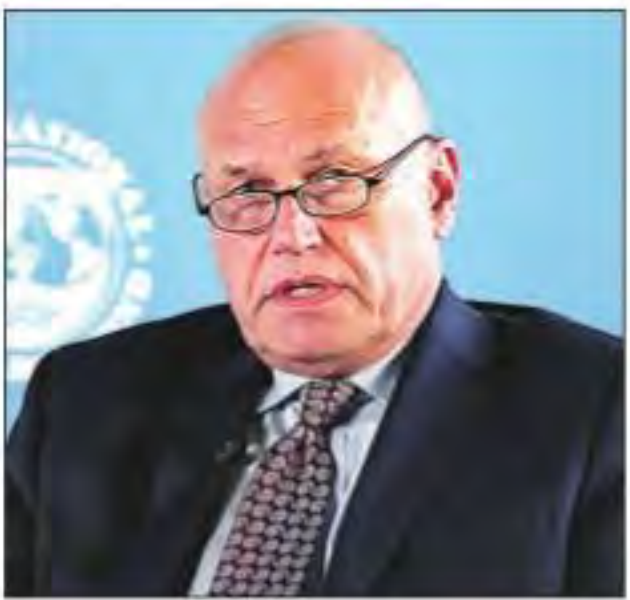
THE POLICY INTERVIEW
MICHAL RUTKOWSKI
Global Director (Jobs), World Bank

But increasingly in India, state governments are feeling compelled to say that they will reserve jobs for the locals.

My point is that if states open the door to migrants, they would gain and so would the states of origin of the migrants. Everybody's a winner when such migration happens; incomes often grow 10-12 times compared to the place of origin. And contrary to belief, typically, migrants do not take away jobs from the locals — they take up those jobs that locals don't want to do anyway. And this especially applies to ageing populations.

Over the last few years in India, especially since demonetisation, there has been a massive push towards formalisation. In fact, the informal economy has been demonised — it is almost seen as corrupt and inefficient. How do you see this shift?

I would actually regret it. I regret it in the following sense. One of the recent studies we did — titled "Protecting all" — points to the fact that in developed countries there is an increasing fluidity in the labour market. So in the past lifetime employment in one place was a norm, now increasingly the norm is just 3-4 years. After that people may migrate, take a break, jobs could be contracted out etc. The gig economy, although still a very small part of the world economy, is expanding very fast. So the nature of the formal sector in the west is changing. So we need to rethink the point of aspiration.

Because of this change and because India has such a large informal sector already, I would rather focus on improving productivity in the informal sector instead. I have nothing against formalisation. I would rather look at it as a continuum and focus on improving productivity across the board.

ODISHA
Programme for safe drinking water for all

CHIEF MINISTER Naveen Patnaik has launched a new programme called 'Jal Sathi' on December 18. The objective of this initiative is to ensure the availability of clean drinking water through piped connections to all households in the state. He also launched a dedicated mobile application for Jal Sathi. For the programme, the Water Corporation of Odisha (WATCO) has signed a memorandum of understanding with the several women federations. Women volunteers will be the Jal Sathis (water partners) and the move is expected to also lead to economic empowerment of women in the state.

PUNJAB
One-time relief for industrial sector

THE STATE government's Industries Department has given a one-time opportunity to industrial units in Punjab to migrate to a new policy providing fiscal incentives. The move, decided by Punjab Industrial and Business Development Board, is likely to provide relief to the stressed industrial sector, which has been petitioning the government for fiscal incentives.

BIHAR
Rehabilitation policy for Maoist militants

The state government has given its nod to a new surrender and rehabilitation policy for Maoist militants in the state. The new policy is aimed at convincing Naxals to give up arms and join the mainstream of society. Under the new policy, the state government will be given a substantially higher amount — Rs 2.5 lakh instead of Rs 10,000 — to those who senior members in the Naxal hierarchy. It would replace the 2001 policy. Seven policemen were killed in a land mine blast in early December.

How Section 144 of CrPC was used to curb the branding of children using hot iron rods

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, DECEMBER 22:

IN A survey carried out by the field staff of Women and Child Development Department as many as 672 children that were registered with 763 anganwadis in Umaria, Manpur and Pali blocks of Umaria district in Madhya Pradesh have been found to have been victims of "daagna" or branding. Daagna, in local parlance, refers to an unscientific practice wherein young children, who are ailing with some undiagnosed sickness or the other, are poked by hot iron rods as a way to cure them. This inhumane practice is quite common in the tribal-dominated blocks of the district.

Swarochish Somvanshi, the District Collector of Umaria, found these results alarming and quickly swung into action. The 2012 batch officer said he has tried to raise awareness about the unscientific practice by engaging with the common people and ex-

Officials of Umaria district raising awareness against branding *Express*

plaining to them how daagna hurts the children instead of curing them.

In May this year, two months after he joined as the Collector, Somvanshi imposed Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). Section 144 gives the government the "power to issue order in urgent cases of nuisance of apprehended danger". It bars all

civilians from carrying weapons, including lathis, sharp-edged weapons, or firearms in public places. Somvanshi invoked this section of the CrPC to warn people against branding their children. If they violate it, they would face the legal consequences.

In fact, he launched a project named Sanjeevani to tackle the menace.

This involved regular monitoring of children every Tuesday — celebrated as Mangal Diwas — to ensure they are getting nourishing food and to check they are not being branded. It was also an opportunity to ensure malnourished and underweight children are provided health facilities.

When the first case of branding was reported, a case was registered in Manpur Police Station to spread the message that branding was illegal. "I am not so much for registering FIRs because in most cases parents and grandparents do it and in some cases, midwives and quacks. Enforcement is not the solution, the awareness has to come from within," said Somvanshi.

IN NUMBERS
MORE THAN 1 MILLION PEOPLE DIE IN INDIA EVERY YEAR BECAUSE OF OUTDOOR POLLUTION — THE HIGHEST IN ANY G 20 COUNTRY

VARIABLE	G 20 AVERAGE	INDIA
GDP per capita (in PPP US $ constant 2018)	22,694	7,762
Greenhouse gas emissions per capita (in Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent)	7.5	1.9
Energy intensity of the economy (Terajoule/PPP US$ 2015 million)	4.86	4.17
Total ambient air pollution attributable deaths (per 1,000 population per year)	Between 0.1 to 1.1	1.1

Source: Brown to green: The G20 transition towards a net-zero emissions economy (2019)

PUNJAB/AGRICULTURAL MARKETING REFORMS

An app that is reforming govt, transforming agri markets

RAAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, DECEMBER 22

PUNJAB MANDI Board's (PMB) IT cell has introduced a new mobile application or app that is transforming mandis in the state. The objective is to make employees more regular at the job and increase the transparency in the daily functioning of the mandis. The e-PMB app also allows farmers to check for the availability of space of foodgrains in the mandi and book their slots accordingly.

Punjab has a total of 154 market committee offices which have regular mandis while 1,834 seasonal mandis (which operate under Mandi board office) are set up during wheat and paddy seasons.

Ravi Bhagat, Secretary, PMB said "earlier the employees used to mark attendance either through wall-mounted biometric machines or offline attendance process". But at times these machines developed some faults, and then many employees chose to visit the mandi directly instead of coming to the of-

Kamaljit Singh marking his attendance using the app in Ludhiana. *Gurmeet Singh*

fice to mark attendance. But this also meant that there was no way to keep track of who is working and who is not. "So to keep a track of all those field employees and also for their convenience, we introduced the e-PMB app. With its use, field employees can mark their attendance from outside offices as well," said Bhagat.

The app also tracks the location of the employee and an employee's salary has been attached to the online report of this app.

"Punjab Mandi Board has a total of 4,766 employees across the state and out of these 45 per cent mark their attendance using this app as they are the regular field workers," said Bhagat.

The app was introduced in September last year and in just one year, the attendance of employees has improved by over 60 per cent. The app also allows employees to apply for leaves.

But the app is not just about employees. While initially the app was only meant for employee attendance, from February this year, PMB added many features in the app through which farmers could even get an on-

line stall booked for "apni mandi" (weekly fruit and vegetable market).

Details of district-wise registered commission agents in all mandis has been uploaded in the app and a farmer can see whether or not to visit a particular mandi on a particular day based on the business being conducted in the mandi. In the absence of the app, at times, farmers had to wait for 2-3 days to get their grains unloaded. But now since all transaction information is available on the app, they can plan their visits more efficiently.

Even though the app has not yet been launched formally, a total of 890 farmers have got themselves registered for online site booking for apni mandi, according to Nitin Bansal, IT Analyst of Punjab Mandi Board. "A slot can be booked online and later a farmer can pay the fee manually once he actually arrives to set up the stall. Not only this, daily vegetable/ fruits rates are also displayed in the app by noon every day so that consumers cannot be cheated by the vendors," said Bhagat.