Shantana, another class 10 student of the same school, said a local youth proposed to her on her way to private tuition in Katnarpara in Bogra town. "As he threatened to throw acid on me, I had to stop going to my teacher," she said, adding that local CPF members later visited the area and stopped the eve-teasing with assistance of police.

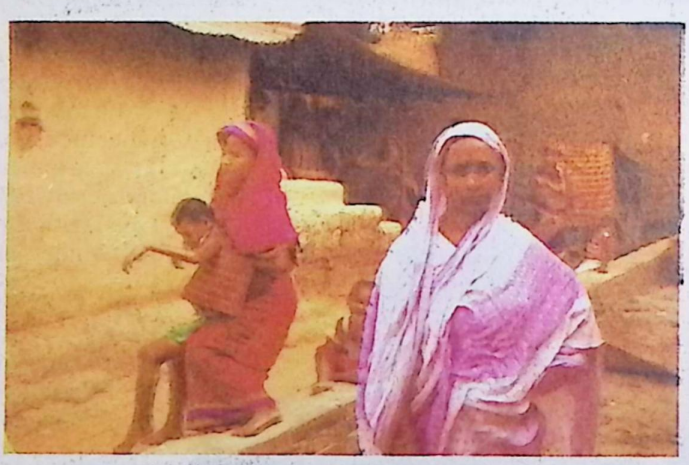
Some youths used to take drugs inside Hasna Jahan School during the night and it could not be stopped even after police conducted operations there several times. After the CPF men later met the youths' guardians and threatened them with capturing their sons and sending them to jail, the situation came under control.

"While it was impossible for only the police or guardians to control their unruly sons, the situation changed after joint initiatives of police and the community," said Harunur Rashid, executive director of Light House.

In ward No. 9, the local market association appointed four youths for controlling traffic congestion at Charmatha intersection and pay them themselves.

While the community leaders could not stop drug selling in Badurtola in the town for for fear of the goons threats, the CPF earned success quickly with police assistance.

"In fact, other problems including gambling, early marriage, clash over land dispute, dowry-related beating and divorce has reduced a lot after we started working here," a CPF member of ward No. 9 of Nishindara UP told *The Daily Star.*



A CPF beneficiary of Nishindara UP whose land dispute was solved.

"Readiness of police and to devote voluntary time to the formation and activities of community-police forums, willingness of representatives of different political parties laying aside political differences have helped CPF succeed," Harunur Rashid said.

"Police have embraced COP, acknowledging that the CPF activities enhance their efforts to combat crime and ensure public security, and that regular interaction with citizens has helped to improve the public image of the police and the readiness of citizens to assist the police in their work," said Monsur Ali Mondol, officer-in-charge (OC) of Bogra Sadar Police Station.

"By creating space and opportunities for citizens and police to discuss their respective views and expectations and matters of common interest through informal dialogue, community-oriented policing helps to make the police more responsive to citizen interest," he said.

While they used to record 150 cases on an average in a month before initiation of COP activities, the number has now reduced to 60-70, he said. "People now do not have to come to the police station for solution of their community problems as police and community leaders deal with them at the community level," said the OC.

Encouraged by the success of the pilot programme experience, The Asia Foundation and its local partners wish to expand the COP model to other communities.

"We would definitely like to expand the programme, but it involves a lot of money... we're still running the works with our own resources," The Asia Foundation country representative Kim McQuay told *The Daily Star.*

The Asia Foundation officer hoped that other development partners would come up with similar initiatives for the greater benefit of the society.

Building on the pilot programme experience, the Foundation plans to develop an integrated community approach to combating human trafficking. This means collaboration among law enforcement officers, UP members, religious leaders, medical professionals, counsellors, shelter workers, livelihood trainers, NGO representatives, business persons and other members of the community.

Through these efforts, proven pilot programme experience has begun to help stimulate a national call for the broader adoption of COP by the police, with support from civil society, the media and other facilitating agents. The police administration, meanwhile, have proposed for introduction of community policing across the country, which now awaits government approval. A police headquarters committee headed by an additional inspector general have submitted a concept paper on this for inclusion of the provision in the organogram of Bangladesh Police to give it an institutional shape.

"Once it is approved by the government, there will be community police units in metropolitan and district level to receive complaints from the citizens," says Inspector General of Police Abdul Quayyum. "We'll try to solve the problems by counselling and legal steps," the IGP said, adding the process is still in primary level.

Photos: **Syed Zakir Hossain**