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COMMUNITY POLICING: A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FOR EFFECTIVE CRIME PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Insecurity and high level of criminality the world over has led nations to seeking alternatives to curbing criminality and improving security of lives and properties of citizens. Nigeria just like other nations of the world have taken a giant step to curb insecurity through the introduction of community policing. This paper is an examination of the ways and manner a cooperative and collaborative relationship can be established between the Nigeria Police Force and the larger society in community policing. Secondary sources of information are the basic data used in this paper.Findings show that there is currently lack of cooperation between the police and community because of lack of trust and general apathy. It suggests various strategiesthat could be used in forging partnership between the police and general public, ranging from education and enlightenment,

KEY WORDS:

Community, Policing, Partnership, Crime prevention, Effective.

Introduction

The human society has continued to grow and expand in time and space. Each growth and expansion brings along with it its challenges. These challenges vary from one social group or one society to another, and equally take different dimensions in terms of causes and their impacts on existing structure, institutions and organs of government. ., the government and people of Nigeria as well as the various institutions like the Nigeria Police Force put together had to encounter many challenges particularly those in the area of prevention, control and management of crime. Some strategies had to be put in place to address the growing rate of crime. These strategies have had misfortunes in term of positive impact on the citizenry. However, in line with the global trend of the 21st century, Nigeria has also decided to key into community policing, this is not to say that community policing is new in the country as some degree of community policing existed in some communities in precolonial times. The colonial administration not only discarded it, but supplanted it with its own quasi-military formation that served the interest of the colonial government and put the people, artisans, workers, labour in perpetual subjugation.

This paper therefore, is an examination of the ways and manner a cooperative and collaborative relationship can be established between the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the larger society in community policing in Nigeria. It has three man parts. The first section looks at conceptual issues. The second examines the dimensions to community policing and the final part focuses on strategic partnership in community policing. The objective of this paper is to make us understand what community policing is and some of the dimensions to community policing. This has become imperative because many of us use the term without understanding what it entails. But most significantly to develop the awareness in us that community policing requires its own intellectual capacity both as a policy and a crime prevention strategy.

Theoretical Framework

The Normative Sponsorship Theory (NST) and the Critical Social Theory (CST) are both theoretical frameworks that have been applied in the presentation of strategic partnership in community policing. The NST emanated from social norms which can affect human action systematically and powerfully. Two types of norms were isolated, that is the injunctive and descriptive norms. The descriptive norm is concerned with what people actually do. Social norms of the descriptive are those which guide the behaviour, via the perception of how most others would behave. The injunctive norms on the other hand have to do with attitude or what people feel is right based on moral beliefs. There are norms which guide via the perception of how most other would approve/disapprove of ones non-conduct at a given time. Individual actions are likely to conform to the dictates of the type of norms that are familiar even when the other types of norms dictate contrary conduct (R.B Galdini &RR Reno 1991). Once injunctive social norms are activated, it is likely to lead to beneficial conduct across the greatest number of situation. In essence therefore, the NST is saying most people are of good will and that they will cooperate with others to facilitate building consensus. The more these various group share common goals, values and belief, the more they will agree on common goals when they interact together (Manning 1984).

Critical Social Theory (CST)

It is a theory oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding and explaining it. A theory is said to be critical in so far as it seeks, “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave theme.”(Goldstein 1990). Critical theory involves a normative dimension either criticizing society from some general theory of values, norms or 'ought' or through criticizing it in terms of its own espoused value. The CST focuses on how and why people fuse together to correct and overcome the socio-political obstacles that prevent them from having their needs met (Goldstein 1990). There are three core philosophy associated with CST. The first is enlightenment which insists that people must be educated about circumstances before that can initiate change. The second is empowerment which wants people to take action to improve their condition. Thirdly is emancipation

which focuses on people achieving liberation through reflection and socialization. Based on the theory of Normative Sponsorship (NST) activating both injunctive and descriptive norms will lead to change in attitude and once people feels that community policing is the right thing to go about policing the country it will be accepted. The position of the theory is that, once people minds are liberated to abandon the traditional policing system, the enlightenment, empowerment and the emancipation will make them to work cooperatively and collaboratively through a partnership that will see to effective implementation of community policing.

The Nigerian society has continued to grow in leaps and bounds. It has become more dynamic and complex which in turn has become more challenging to governments both military and civilian. The challenges in the areas of law enforcement and order, prevention, control and management of crime are so serious that they have overwhelmed the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). This is inevitable because of inherent structural impediments, institutional inadequacies, logistic etc. It must be emphasized that the work of the police, "involves a variety of tasks and responsibilities. Officers are expected to prevent crime, protect life and property, enforce laws, maintain peace and public order and provide a wide range of services to citizens" (Alemika E.E.O. and Chukwura,I.C. 2013). But what is the nature of the working environment?

The structural factor militating against effective performance of the NPF include political oppression and instability, economic exploitation, mass poverty, widespread corruption etc. Among the institutional inadequacies are poor quality of personnel, inadequate training, poor facilities, grossly inadequate remuneration and general conditions of service, and hostile police-public relations. As at January 2001, the NPF numbered 163,722 of whom 20,287 were recruits in training. This was even more so, because the civilian government of Obasanjo decided to strengthened the police in order for it to cope with the growing crime in the country (Alemikaetal 2013). In 2006, there were about 315,588 policing over 150 million people. The total number of area commands, divisions, police stations, police posts and village posts in the NPF were 126, 1040, 1598, 2631, 3924 respectively (National Bureau of Statistics 2009). In spite of this grossly inadequate staff strength, there was concentration of police in the urban areas, and even this, the NPF concentrate on patrolling Government Residential Areas (GRAs), home of indigenous and expatriate elites. In their routine work therefore, the NPF tends to protect the powerful. This is visible during ceremonial occasions when they cordon off VIPs from common folk. Officers are assigned to guard the homes of powerful government officials and buildings and they act as body guards for important officials. Meanwhile, according to a one time Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Commasie, the NPF lack accommodation, tools to work with, transport to patrol, effective communication and appropriate intelligence outfit to support their operations (cited in Alemika & Chukuma 2013, p.13).

To worsen the situation, corruption and extortion have soiled the Police image. The most significant source of negative police – community relations is corruption, victimization and nepotism which are reflected in extra judicial killing, detention without trial which were condoned by successive governments. Given structural and institutional inadequacies, coupled with the battered image of the NPF, alternatives to crime prevention, control and management like community policing are seen as desirable. This probably accounts for some attempts at refocusing the philosophy of the NPF towards community policing and the ending of some few young offices to understudy community policing in both Britain and the U.S and training of some young officer at home who will go back to their states and spread the message of community policing.

Conceptual Issues

Strategic

Strategic to what? Strategic to who? In what context? It is in the specific or general? To appreciate how strategic an issue, plan or action is, we need to understand the concept of strategy. In the traditional sense, strategy has been wholly associated with the military. It is the 'science and art of conducting military campaign by the combination and employment of means on a broad scale to gain advantage in war' (The New International Western Comprehensive Dictionary, 2013, p. 1239).Strategy is a well-crafted plan of action and its accompanied tactics and methods put in place to win a war successfully. However, in modern economy, particularly in the business and management world, strategy as a concept has found a comfortable place. There is the talk about business strategy, advertising strategy, human resource strategy etc. Little wonder therefore, we talk about community policing strategy. Strategic is an adjective relating to, dictated by, of value for strategy, that is any long term plan.

Partnership

Partnership is the state of being a partner or partners. It could also be seen as a contract between individuals engaged in any business(Chambers Dictionary 2007, p. 1509). A partner on the other hand is one who takes part or is associated with another or others; one or two persons united in some enterprise. (The New International Dictionary 2013, p.921). It equally can be a person who plays on the same side with another in a game. (Chambers Dictionary 2007, p.1103). However, from the point of view of law, partnership is "an association founded on a contract between two or more persons to combine money, efforts, labour or skill or all of them, in lawful commerce or business and to share the profit and bear the loss in certain proportion". (The New International Dictionary 2007, p. 921). Strategic partnership in this context refer to the coming together of the NPF, members of the public and including stakeholders to be on the same page and developing a well-crafted long term plan of action, tactics and methods to deliver community policing.

Community Policing

Community policing is a 21st century phenomenon which has been perceived from different perspectives. As a matter of fact, some prefer to address it as 'neighbourhood policing', or 'proximity policing'. To lanre Ikuteyijo and Kemi Rotimi (2012), community policing is about community partnership with the objective of creating a safe and secure environment for members of the community who take active part in their own affairs. For Stipak (1994:115-123), it is a management strategy in which joint responsibility of citizen and police is promoted through a partnership and interpersonal contact for the safety of the community. But according to Van Rooyen (2001), it is a philosophy and strategy which is based on a partnership between the community and the police to address contemporary community problems of crime in a creative manner. Adams (2013:307), it is a philosophy that promote organizational strategy that support the systematic use of partnership and problem solving techniques which proactively address the immediate conditions that gave rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime. It could be seen therefore, that community policing is a philosophy as well as a strategy that emphasize collaboration and cooperation, consultation, partnership, creativity and proactivity between the police and the larger society to address real and imaginary fear of the people in crime and other related issues to keep the environment safe and secure for all.

Background to Community Policing in Nigeria

Community policing had existed in one form or the other in the pre-colonial era in Nigeria. Some of the communities that existed in some of the empires, kingdoms, emirates, or caliphate had community policing using either some of the existing traditional/local institutions or leadership structure like the age grades, masquerades, hunters, place guards, occupational groups and the like with the colonial domination and subjugation of many parts of Nigeria, the Native Authority policing system was introduced in Northern and Western Regions of the country Okeke, (2013). However, the misuse, abuse and gross negligence of the local policing system by the politicians either in the pre-election and post-election processes in different parts of the country eventually led to the merger of the regional outfit into a centralized institution known as the Nigeria Police Force. Community policing therefore, took the backseat. However, given the enormity of the tasks before the NPF, the Nigerian landmass and population, coupled with the inherent structural, institutional, logistics and other impediments to effective discharge of its statutory responsibilities, it embedded community policing as a philosophy.

A research carried out between March 2001 and December 2003 by the Centre for Law Enforcement Education in Nigeria (CLEEN) Foundation in partnership with the NPF in 14 states selected from the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria discovered that if community policing strategy is adopted it could assist to eradicate most of the challenges attributed to the traditional reactive police culture (Pamsha 2005

cited in Inyang and Abraham 2013). Community policing was formally introduced in 2004 and some police officers were sent to both Britain and the U.S courtesy of the British Department of International Development (DFID) to do a comparative study of the community policing systems in both countries. In addition to this, more officers were trained as Community Development Officers (CDO) in Enugu. There was equally the recent training of 53 officers at the Police College, Ikeja. This six weeks training programme was for officers from police constables to the rank of Chief Superintendent of Police (CPS). They were drawn from 19 State Commands comprising the six pilot states and 12 other states.

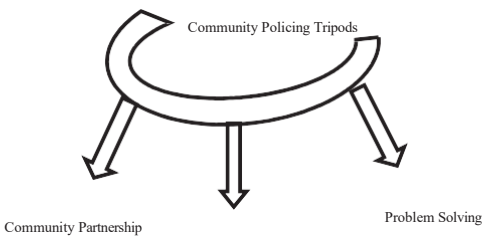
The purpose of the programme was to train 53 field trainers and to develop and introduce community policing in 18 states. The trained field officers were expected to go back to their various states and spread the message of community policing. This effort was complimented by the Jigawa State Command which equally trained more than 50 officers on community relations (Garba 2012). The three core elements of NPF philosophy of community policing includes:

a) responsibility for community safety and crime prevention is not solely that of the police but a shared one between the police and the people,
b) policing is a process, not simply about reaching to incidents or call for service from the public once a crime has been committed, but proactively addressing local problems and small issues before they grow into bigger ones and/or crimes,
c) It entails officer's discretion, flexibility and freedom over how they do their jobs and respond to community needs (Dawn Newspaper January 27, 2011).

Those core elements require integrated involvement of all departments and functions with their combine efforts and expertise focus on community based actions to address priorities. But are the police officers from the very senior to the rank and file ready to relinquish their powers, influence, officers and associated benefits to embrace in totality community policing?

Operational Issues in Community Policing

Understanding the nature/forms or content of community policing is of the utmost importance in knowing how to go about this system of policing. It is the appreciation of this that will make us to have a proper grasp of the fact that this system needs serious intellectual capacity and capability for its attainment. Three basic operational elements have been associated with community policing vis-à-vis community partnership, organizational transformation and problem solving (Okeke, 2013).



Organizational Transformation

a) *Community Partnership*

Community partnership is a vital point in the chain of development in the community policing process as partnership between the law enforcement agency and individuals and organization they serve develop solutions to problems and increase trust in the police. As a matter of fact, it is doubtful if community policing can ever succeed without this type of partnership. It leads to confidence building measures and capacity building between government agencies, community members and groups, human and social service providers, private business and the media. This partnership has made the police to include public safety, crime prevention, fear of crime and community quality of life their schedule (Okeke 2013,p, 308). According to Greene (2000) such partnership strengthens citizens' capacity and resolve to resist crime and recover from it.

b) *Organization Transformation/Change*

The second leg in the tripods is transforming or fundamentally changing the organizational culture, leadership and management structure, strategic planning process, performance evaluation techniques and operational transparency or modus operandi. These changes or transformation is highly important as community policing means a paradigm shift from the traditional policing approach to a more dynamic, purposeful, environmentally situated proactively rewarding system. This is a very critical leg. As we are aware change is not easily welcome in an organization more so, an organization that has been used to decades of command structure. Therefore, a lot of work need to be done in the NPF for the officers to acknowledge the need for change, accommodate it, and be part of it if community policing is to make any progress.

c) *Problem Solving*

The third and final leg, problem solving is relatively more intellectual in content. It refers to the process of engaging in a proactive and systematic examination of identified problems to develop and rigorously evaluate effective response. To this extent, the police officers are required to be proficient in SARA models of problem solving which connote, Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment. Scanning entails going into the social and political radar to identify and prioritize problems. Analysis refers to researching what is known about the problems or subjecting identified problems into thorough investigation. Response on the other hand means the developing solutions to bring about lasting reduction in number and extent of problems. While in the case of assessment, it in corporate evaluating or appraising the success of response so far made (Okeke 2013). The main thrust of problem solving is to make the police more thoughtful about problems they address and their method of intervention. Therefore, they are expected to study the characteristics of problems in a geographical area and then apply appropriate resources base on the circumstance of the area. It is clear from this discussion that a lot of education, training and retraining is needed to implement community policing. Not only that and more importantly, the police officers must also know

the rudiment of research – statement of the problem, drawing up hypothesis, data

collection, analysis and the writing of report. Without this, the SARA models of problem solving will remain a mirage.

Strategic Partnership Community Policing Strategies

The strategic partnership should start with what is obvious, that is the fact that community policing is not a replacement of the NPF, as an alternative means of criminal control. Rather, it is a complimenting strategy to make the NPF to perform to their optimum vis-à-vis the environment.

Multi Dimension in Control and Context

For a strategic partnership in community policing the community must be approached holistically. The traditional institutions, leadership and other social groups in the community must all be mobilized because all of them have a role to play. Both the formal and informal organizations must work together within and between the traditional leadership and institutions, there has to be a synergy between the traditional leadership and institutions and other agencies of government. There should be good rapport, understanding and collaboration. This synergy should equally be firmly rooted in the relationship between organs of government and the various agencies. The Immigration Department, the Customs, the Civil Defence, the NDLEA must not only work together, but they should be seen working in synergy with the military and the police. Apart from officers in the various paramilitary organizations, working as government officials, they live and interact with a wider segment of the people in the community, and they equally have their family members and relatives in the larger society. Their interrelationship with a wider spectrum of the society put them in a more relatively better position to make community policing more effective.

A Coordinating Institution/Leadership

However, while efforts must be intensified to establish a powerful synergy between and among these agencies and organs of government, there should be a deliberate step taken to ensure they do not work at cross purpose. It has been shown to the world that the September 11, 2011 terrorist attacks were successful because the various security agencies of government failed to collaborate and cooperate with each other. Some of them were aware of the intending attack from the intelligence but failed to alert the others. In Nigeria, recent developments are equally pointing towards that direction.

The 'Mainagate' which has become an embarrassment to government is good example. So also is the current face-off between the EFCC, DSS and NIA all agencies of government. If there had been such cooperation or synergy in the past, would Boko Haram have grown to an octopus as we know it today? To prevent such occurrence as far as community policing is concerned a coordinating organ/institution/leadership is highly desirable for all the activities of organs and agencies of government. If because of paucity of fund another organ/institution

cannot be created, the Security Adviser to the President should take this additional

responsibility. All information gathered by all these organs and agencies from the community no matter how small or seemingly inaccurate should be on his desk. A highly intelligent hardworking, committed officer with a high degree of integrity should be in charge. Such information should be dispatched to the right quarter, the Inspector General of Police by the Security Adviser and action taken should be reported back to his office as quickly as possible.

Education and Enlightenment

Community policing depends on a lot of education and enlightenment campaigns on a sustainable basis for it to succeed. The questions are in the NPF, how many of the officers are aware of this policing system? How many are willing and ready to abandon their entrenched traditional policing approach? Therefore, the senior, middle level and the rank and file need this education and enlightenment. It is only when this is done, that the place of partnership will be appreciated. The general public also needs the education and enlightenment. The National Orientation Agency has no choice but to take the lead in this read. It has to come up with well-crafted messages and jingoes that unambiguous but straight to the point on community policing and need for partnership with the police. The information officers at the local government level as well as the traditional town criers that cut across the different emirates/kingdoms must be recruited to pass the message across the grassroots. The people should be made to know how and where to report any suspicious character in the community because the bottom-line should be 'prevention is better than cure'.

Assurance of Adequate Protection

Trust and adequate protection are important strategic partnership for community policing. Whoever reports any unscrupulous element or act of misdemenour from any quarter to the rightful quarter should remain anonymous. Under no circumstance should such a person's name or identity be revealed It should be adequately guarded as the money in the printing department of the Printing Press of the Central Bank of Nigeria. It is when this is done and the people see it, and are convinced that they will never, ever be exposed that they will come forward unhindered to report any suspicious moves, development or character within and outside their immediate environment. The trust must therefore, be built between the police and the public.

Bottom-Up Leadership

For any meaningful strategic partnership in community policing, there should be a paradigm shift from the traditional top-bottom leadership to a bottom-up one. In management, a bottom-up administrative and management system allows for those in the junior rank in an organization to think deep into their thinking faculty and come up with a new innovation or a solution to problems within the organization that have remained unsurmountable. In this circumstance, bottom-up leadership will build the confidence of people to come forward and report anything they feel unusual and any suspicious move without anybody breathing

down their neck do so. This approach to leadership existed in some of the kingdoms or emirates in pre-colonial era. In the emirates, for example, it was such that any stranger or unusual event was reported to the ward heads, then village heads and from there to the district head before finally the emir.

Adhoc Community Liaison

Other partnership choice includes the establishment of ad hoc community liaison. In this strategy, a community police officer goes out into the community and tries to find responsive people who are on the side of the police to serve as police informants (Bayley cited in Okeke 2013). In the alternative, some community police officer may engage in foot patrolling of the community. Such patrolling will help the police in intelligence gathering. It may also take the form of some police officer being given the responsibility for diagnosing the needs of the community and come up with solution using police and non-police recourses at their disposal. Or others are just asked to deliver traditional police service but are enjoined to do so in a more responsive and community oriented way.

Use of Local Transport System

For effective community policing and optimizing positive contact between patrol officers and community members, the police department may supplement automobile patrols with foot, bicycles, scooters, horses, camels etc. depending on the topography of a particular community. Some of these local means of transportation makes contact easier, affordable and could be used easily at will.

'Mini Stations'

The establishment of 'mini stations' in the rural areas of the community has been suggested as a way of advancing community policing. However, this may be practically impossible in a country like Nigeria with its level of development and the dependence on only petroleum whose market price is beyond our control. It could be recalled that even the stations already established in major towns and cities, are grossly inadequate and are just police stations only in name.

Type of Organizational Change/Transformation

Community policing cannot be introduced and implemented with some form of change or a transformation in the organization, particularly, the NPF. The people of Nigeria most especially the NPF must determine the type of organizational transformation or change that will deliver a more efficient and effective community policing. Is the community policing going to have a new command based in the headquarters that is a unit of specialization within the police? Or is the function of the community policing going to be integrated into existing command structure?

Regular Community Meetings

Regular community meetings between the police and members of the community must be institutionalized and intensified. Such meetings provide fertile ground for

understanding and appreciation of challenges. The meeting will dwell on the need

to increase police presence and reduce fear of crime and the expectations of the police from the community. The regular meetings allow average citizens the opportunity to have an input into the police process. It must be emphasized that contemporary community problems require a new decentralized and personalized police approach. Where and how such meetings are to be held can be determined by both the police and the community. Town halls, local government offices or any other neutral and central (to the community) are more appropriate.

Conclusion

A change from the traditional policing system to a more creative, collaborative and cooperative one has become desirable in Nigeria, given the structural and institutional inadequacies that have made the NPF not to be effective in enforcing law and order and controlling crime. Community policing is seen as the alternative. But the police officers as well as the general public are yet to understand what this policing system entails. An in-depth analysis of the meaning, content and context has been provided with emphasis on the place of intellectual sophistry, capacity building, cooperation and collaboration in a robust and proactive ways to appreciate and implement community policing. Organizational/institutional, and attitudinal changes required were identified and discussed. Some of the partnership options were highlighted. However, without a change in the attitude of the public but most especially the NPF to inculcate and imbibe the nitty-gritty of community policing system and commitment to it by the government and the community, it may remain only one of those lofty policies of government.

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