



TOWARDS EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE POLICING IN NIGERIA

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Ice Breaker

- I am first and foremost a Sociologist and then a lawyer.
- These two professions, especially sociology, have boosted my career as a police officer.
- For example, I couldn't have been able to perform my job competently as a police officer without having an understanding of the society I was in, the people in it, the cultural fabric, the nature of the institutions within it and the social problems plaguing it.
- Being a sociologist therefore has incredibly been of immense advantage to me as a Police Officer.

Introduction

- The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is the principal law enforcement agency in Nigeria with a staff strength of about 371,800 and plans to increase the force to 650,000.
- The NPF is a large organisation consisting of 36 State Commands grouped into 12 Zones and 7 Administrative Organs.
- The agency is currently headed by **IGP Ibrahim Kpotun Idris**.
- The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria makes provision for a single police force, meaning for now, no other similar security agency is allowed to be established by the Federation or any of the component parts.
- The NPF is statutorily therefore responsible for the 'detection and prevention of crime, apprehending and prosecution of offenders, protection of lives and property of citizens, enforcement and maintenance of laws and order' (Inyang & Abraham, 2013).

Introduction - B

- These statutory functions have guided policing activity within the country, without regards to any other informal groups (Inyang & Brown, 2011).
- However, while a lot of criticisms have been levelled at the operations of the Nigerian Police Force, the force has continued nevertheless to prove its mettle in the midst of daunting environmental, personnel and socio-economic challenges facing the police as an institution. Recall the story of Basketmouth and numerous others.
- The Nigerian Police also remains a friend of Nigerians and has continued to combat galloping crime incidents and violent criminals in the country, sometimes with its officers and men paying the supreme price, and in spite of the numerous constraints it is currently facing. Recall the killing of “Vampire from Imo State and his killer gang of kidnappers” by a dedicated officers and men of the NPF.
- However, there is still room for greater improvement and that is why this paper seeks to peruse the subject of achieving efficient and effective policing in Nigeria.

Historical Background of the Nigerian Police Force

- The history of policing in Nigeria can be traced to three epochs: the pre-colonial era, the colonial era and the post-colonial era.
- Crime prevention in the pre-colonial era was the duty of indigenous institutions responsible for crime control such as age groups, traditional cult groups, palace guards, among others.
- In the colonial epoch, policing was operated based on the provisions of the British law. There was a paradigm shift from the traditional pattern of policing where much emphasis was placed on traditions, customs and unwritten laws to an era where policing was institutionalised and criminal codes and different pieces of legislation guided the institution.

Historical Background of the Nigerian Police Force - B

Timeline of the NPF's History

- NPF was established in 1820.
- 1879, a 1,200-member armed paramilitary Hausa Constabulary was formed.
- In 1888, the Royal Niger Company set up the Royal Niger Company Constabulary.
- 1894, a similar force, the Niger Coast Constabulary was formed.
- 1896, the Lagos Police was formed.
- In the early 1900s, part of the Royal Niger Coast Constabulary became the Northern Nigeria Police, and part of the Niger Coast Constabulary became the Southern Nigeria Police.
- In the 1960s, under the First Republic, these forces were first regionalised and then nationalised.
- The police in the colonial era was criticised for the lack of equity in policing because the police were said to serve and protect the commercial interests of the colonial masters at the detriment of the masses which they were commissioned to protect (Inyang & Abraham, 2013).
- In the post-colonial era, the NPF performs conventional police functions and is responsible for internal security generally. It supports the prison, immigration, and customs services, and performs military duties within or outside Nigeria as directed.

The Roles of Nigerian Police Force

- With the emergence of the Nigerian state, the NPF has been scheduled to perform the following responsibilities or duties:
 1. Prevention of crime
 2. Protection of lives and properties
 3. Enforcement of law
 4. Maintenance of peace and public order.
 5. Providing a wide range of services to the citizens. By doing this it has the potential for violence and right to use coercive means in order to establish social control (Bitner, 1970).
- According to Yecho (2004), the Nigeria Police is statutorily required to fight crime through detection, investigation, apprehension and prosecution of offenders in the law courts and the protection of lives and property through proactive policing.

Understanding the Terms “Police” and “Policing”

- Police refers to a socio-political and quasi-legal institution charged with the responsibility of enforcing criminal law and the maintenance of law and order (Akuul, 2011).
- Police can also be defined as a civil organisation whose members are given special legal powers by the government to carry arms and ammunition for the task of maintaining public order, solving and preventing crimes and supporting other sister security agencies to achieve internal security in the country.
- Policing, on the other hand, refers to measures and actions taken by a variety of institutions and groups (both formal and non-formal) in the society (led by the Nigerian Police Force) to regulate social relations and practice in order to secure the safety of members of the society as well as compel them to conform to the norms and values the society expects of them.

Objectives and Importance of Policing

- The central objective of policing is to provide security, or at least a social and psychological feeling of security, for a majority of citizens, in a majority of places, and for most of the time (Odekunle, 2005).
- This central objective is broken down into the following:
 - To prevent, control and combat criminality wherever and by whoever;
 - To maintain public order and peace;
 - To render assistance and service to all citizens needing or requiring security; and
 - To favourably symbolise the law and the government by always upholding the rule of law.

Major Yardsticks for Measuring Successful Policing

- According to Odekunle (2005), the criteria for measuring successful policing are as follows:
- **EFFECTIVENESS** (e.g. fewer or reduced criminal victimisation; higher proportion of crimes known to the police cleared by arrest; increased recovery of stolen property; higher rates of arrests which result in conviction; lower traffic accident rates; faster response time to reports/complaints, among others).
- **RESPONSIVENESS** (e.g. higher citizen perception of safety from crime; higher citizen ratings of police performance in general; higher citizen ratings of specific police activities; higher citizen ratings of specific aspects of police conduct such as honesty, integrity, courtesy and fairness, among others).
- **EQUITY** (i.e. with reference to egalitarian distribution of "protection" to all sections of the population).
- **EFFICIENCY** (i.e. with reference to cost-and-benefit analysis of "protection" output relative to monetary, human and material input).
- Borrowing from Odekunle's postulations, I define "effectiveness" as the ability of the Force to successfully perform its assigned tasks; and by "efficiency", I refer to its capacity to perform its functions with the least amount of "waste", in terms of time, material, personnel, public goodwill, and lives.

The Crime Situation in Nigeria

S/N	Type of Crime/Criminal Victimization	Direct/Immediate Victims	Level/Degree of Public Concern	Equipment Needed by the Police to Combat Crime
1	Common Crimes (Theft, Burglary, Assault/Street Fighting, etc)	Mostly working class Nigerians	Low (Feeling of helplessness)	Foot Patrol (with durable kit)
2	Violent Crime (Armed Robbery, Assassination, Kidnapping)	Mostly Middle-Class Nigerians, but occasionally the power elite.	High (Sensationalisation and feeling of insecurity)	Motorized Patrol (with Adequate Automatic Weapons and Communications Gadgets)
3	Elite Crimes (Corruption, 419, and others)	The economy (and the morality and morale of the polity)	Low (Feeling of powerlessness)	Specialised Corps of Detectives (with Professional Background in Forensic Accounting, Banking and ICTs)

Originally taken from Odekunle (2005) but amended by the presenter.

Efforts of the Nigerian Police Force in Ensuring Peace and Security in Nigeria

- Several programmes or measures have been put in place by the NPF to guarantee safety and security for all Nigerians. Some of these include:
- Operation Sweep,
- Operation Flush,
- Operation Fire for Fire,
- Anti-crime Patrol,
- Operation Dzenda

Generally, the NPF's output with regard to security in Nigeria includes the following:

1. Maintenance of national peace and security;
2. Protection of several important personalities;
3. Protection of hundreds of public buildings such as the Central Bank and State Houses;
4. Protection of hundreds of private business buildings such as commercial banks;
5. Continuous daily traffic checks and control;
6. Several seizures of arms and ammunition from criminals and unauthorised persons - such arms could have been used against citizens;
7. Daily encounter with men of the under-world in which several police officers and men lose their lives;

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- h) Recovering of stolen cars;
- i) Settlement of disputes by the police in all police stations in the country;
- j) Protection of people in the night;
- k) Thousands of criminal investigations going on daily;
- l) Prosecution of offenders on daily basis in courts scattered all over the country;
- m) Arrest of several criminals;
- n) Fast and decisive crisis/conflict management;
- o) Comprehensive training programme, conducive for qualitative policing;
- p) Serious anti-corruption crusade, both within and outside the Force;
- q) Robust Public Relations necessary for the vision of "People's Police";
- r) Community partnership in policing, the modern approach all over the world;
- s) Inter-Service/Agency cooperation at all levels, and
- t) Improved conditions of service and enhanced welfare package for all officers, Inspectors and Rank and File.

Factors Leading to Ineffective and Inefficient Policing in Nigeria

1. Corruption and Extortion
2. Lack of Proper Resource Management
3. Inadequate Funding and Poor Remuneration
4. Inadequate Arms and Ammunition
5. Lack of Integrity
6. Police Brutality and Harassment of Innocent Citizens
7. Misuse, misapplication of available resources and lack of accountability, award of bogus contracts including outright diversion and misappropriation of police meagre resources.
8. Failure to plan and lack of vision.
9. Lack of political will to enthrone meritocracy in the employment process and politicisation of the empowerment of the police force.
10. Some police men had been found to facilitate the escape of criminals from lawful custody, obtain money from suspects for closure of case files or to derail the cause of justice, escort contrabands, steal from suspects and accident victims and supply police weapons and uniforms to criminals (Nigerian Tribune 19, October 2011).

Factors that can Lead to Effective Policing in Nigeria

1. The act of policing should not be left in the hands of the NPF alone. States and other organs like the traditional institution, the clergy and civil society organisations (CSOs) should be actively involved.
2. The NPF should be well equipped to perform its functions well and in compliance with the rule of law.
3. Presently, the police are highly and visibly subservient to the rich and powerful politicians. Policies should be put in place to withdraw police men attached to these politicians.
4. Sensitisation exercise should be taken as a priority in addressing relationship that exists between the public and personnel of the NPF.
5. As a matter of urgency, police personnel who are no longer productive as well as those who are corrupt should be retrenched and more skilled youths be injected into the system.
6. Community policing as a concept and global best practice in security management should be implemented in Nigeria.
7. Investment in modern software and hardware as become sacrosanct in order for the NPF to match members of the criminal underworld and to outwit them.
8. Continuous training of members of the NPF must be sustained.
9. Decent remuneration must be given to members of the NPF as part of the motivation to inspire to increase their commitment to the task of internal security in the country.
10. Injection of educated Nigerian youths especially those who have completed the one-year compulsory NYSC will bring fresh blood, ideas and brawn to the policing mix in Nigeria.

Conclusion

- The Nigerian Police Force may be castigated by the populace for many of its institutional weaknesses.
- However, the importance of this institution cannot be undermined when internal security matters are discussed.
- Many times, the NPF has risen to the occasion to deal with violent criminals, kidnappers, sociopaths, armed robbers and violent criminals who had posed an existential threat to citizens.
- On foreign missions, the members of the NPF have also distinguished themselves.
- This means that the seed of success and accomplishment already exist within the NPF as an institution.
- Nevertheless, to continue to see an effective and efficient NPF, the contributions of all stakeholders in the society that would compel the institution to give its best at all times, and everywhere are needed.
- The political class must provide the needed resources and enabling environment that the NPF needs to function efficiently and effectively.
- It is safer to befriend the police than to entrust our collective security in the hands of ethnic militias and armed gangs.
- The Police is truly your friend.

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Thank you for listening.