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AN ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY-BASED POLICING IN YAGBA COMMUNITIES IN KOGI STATE, 2016-2024

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Abstract
Community-based policing in Nigeria has been recognised as an effective approach to crime prevention and control. This policing model emphasises proactive rather than reactive policing, partnership, and decentralisation of powers for effective crime fighting. This Study examines the challenges, effectiveness, and implementations of community policing in Yagba communities in Kogi State. The study has dealt with the importance of community participation in crime prevention and control, as well as the need for police reform to adopt a more community-oriented approach. Thus, community-based policing has the potential to transform the way law enforcement agencies interact with the community, leading to safer and more secure environments. However, its success depends on the willingness of both the police and the community to work together towards a common goal. Community-based policing in Yagba communities in Kogi State, Nigeria, has shown promising results in reducing crime rates and improving public safety. The study adopts primary and secondary sources for data collection, presentation, and analysis. The findings of the study reveal that community policing can lead to improved relationships between law enforcement and the community, ultimately resulting in reduced crime rates.The study also highlights that community policing in Nigeria emerged due to the inadequacy of traditional policing methods in addressing crime and social disorder. The study concludes by recommending that there should be adequate training and funding mechanisms, and the formation and implementation of effective policies to ensure the smooth operation of community-based policing.

Key Words: Yagba, Communities, based policing, and Challenges

Introduction

The concept of community policing in Nigeria emerged due to the inadequacy of traditional policing methods in addressing crime and social disorder. However, with the enormous security issues bedevilling Kogi State, particularly, Yagba communities, the community-based policing machinery has been able to mitigate the criminal activities to a reasonable level. They would be able to achieve more outstanding feats, taking cognisance of their success, if the necessary resources are made available to them. Community-based policing in Nigeria has shown promising results in reducing crime rates and improving public safety. Studies have found that community-policing initiatives, such as those involving vigilante groups, have been effective in reducing crime in selected communities in Nigeria (Aremu, 2014). These initiatives have also been credited with creating a more secure environment, which is essential for promoting development and improving livelihoods.

Recently, Kogi State has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity. This has threatened the peace and security, and has prompted a huge allocation of the state resources to security (Achumba

and Akpor 2013). Although the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria specifically states that "The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government".

Unfortunately, the government has a constitutional responsibility to provide a secure and safe environment for lives, properties, and the conduct of business and economic activities.

The alarming level of insecurity in Yagba in Kogi State has increased the crime rate and terrorist attacks in different parts of the state, leaving great consequences for Kogi State's economy and business growth.

To ameliorate the incidence of crime, the federal government has embarked on the criminalisation of terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011. Despite the government's efforts, the level of insecurity in the country is still high, and a confirmation of this is the low ranking of Nigeria in the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2012). Security challenges can be traced to the early years of military rule, when large quantities of arms were imported into the country for the use of the military during and after the Nigerian civil war, some of which got into the hands of civilians. Soon after the civil war, these arms were used by civilians and ex-military men for mischievous purposes such as armed robbery (Olabanji & Ese, 2014).

However, the significance of community-based policing in Yagba communities in Kogi State cannot be overemphasized. The community-based policing in Yagba communities helps in reduction of crime rates. Community-policing initiatives have been shown to reduce crime rates in Yagba communities in Kogi State with improved public safety. The Yagba Community-based policing has created a more secure environment, which is essential for promoting development and improving livelihoods. Implementing community-oriented policing seeks to narrow the gap between law enforcement and the communities they serve through partnership, mutual respect, and shared responsibility over safety. Yagba community-policing initiatives attempt to shift law enforcement from a traditional, reactive model to one that responds proactively and collaboratively to local concerns. Moreover, community-policing programs have encouraged increased public engagement in preventing crime and enhancing safety through neighborhood watch programs, reporting suspicious activities, and collaborating with police to identify security needs in their respective communities. However, the degree of public engagement and the extent to which this approach can reduce crime, understand crime patterns, and enhance safety are still matters of controversy, particularly in contexts with limited public trust and constrained community engagement.

In a globalised world, investors are not only looking for high returns on their investments but also a safe environment for their investments. Thus, the alarming level of insecurity in Nigeria has made the economy unattractive to foreign investors and has slowed down the level of business activities, and this has negatively impacted economic growth and development. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to examine the implications of insecurity on business activities.

However, the effectiveness of community-based policing in Yagba communities faces significant challenges, particularly inadequate community engagement, limited trust between residents and the police, and insufficient training of officers in community policing principles. These gaps have created a disconnect that undermines collaboration, fuels suspicion, and reduces community ownership of security initiatives. As a result, crime rates and social unrest have persisted, threatening local peace and stability. In Yagba, the absence

of robust engagement strategies has weakened participation, while deep-rooted mistrust and hostility toward the police have further hindered the successful implementation of community-based policing.

Empirical Review

Community-Based Policing in Yagba in Kogi State.

According to Nwanegbo, J. and Odigbo, A. (2013) in "Security and National Development in Nigeria: The Threat of Boko Haram" and Olabanji, O., and Ese, E. U. (2014) in "Insecurity and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria" highlight the divergent approaches to the conceptualization of human security can be understood through the lens of traditional and non-traditional security studies. The traditional approach focuses on state security, prioritising the protection of a nation's territorial integrity and sovereignty from external military threats. This narrow perspective views security as a zero-sum game, where one state's gain comes at the expense of another's loss.

In contrast, the non-traditional approach broadens the security agenda to include non-military threats, such as poverty, hunger, disease, and environmental degradation. This view recognizes that human security is closely linked to individual well-being, freedom, and dignity. Therefore, human security related to non-traditional focuses on areas like protection from economic threats such as unemployment and income inequality, access to enough nutritious food, protection from health threats including diseases and poor healthcare, safeguarding against environmental degradation and natural disasters, protection from physical violence, war, and discrimination, shielding from ethnic tensions, fear, and violent conflicts, as well as protection from state repression and human rights abuses. These different approaches highlight the complexity of human security and the need for a comprehensive understanding that includes both traditional and non-traditional perspectives.

Nigeria's government expenditure on security agencies in 2009 was $1.864 billion or N276.5 billion, representing 0.90 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 fiscal years, the total expenditure earmarked for both internal security and defence in the approved budgets was N920 billion, N924 billion, N923 billion, N923 billion, N934 billion, and N782 billion, respectively (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2016). This is five times greater than the expenditure on security in Cote d'Ivoire and almost 15 times that of Ghana (Oladesu, 2012). Apart from the expenditure on defence and internal security at the Federal level, the 36 states and 774 local government councils in Nigeria enjoy security votes, a fund that has come under severe scrutiny and criticism in recent times. Some scholars like Daudu (2008), including a few serving governors, have frowned at these security votes because it is not economically viable in the face of the diverse challenges bedeviling the nation. Moreover, the security votes have encouraged monumental fraud and stealing of state funds by the political elites in Nigeria (Eboh and Obodoechina 2012).

Furthermore, Okechukwu and Anyadike (2013) opined that in the face of these expenditures, the security forces appear helpless to curb the insecurity trends. The internal security mechanism appears to have broken down completely as the state no longer has a monopoly of the means of violence. In addition, the involvement of very powerful individuals has escalated the problem, bringing an unprecedented sophistication to the vice, as their automatic weapons, such as the AK47 and mode of operation have beaten the low-range arms of the police hollow in the crime war. At least ten to thirty lives are lost either through violent robbery, political assassinations, murders, and kidnapping in Nigeria on a daily basis. Other manifestations of threats to national security include drug trafficking, human trafficking, human sacrifice, ritual killings, sectarian and political violence, communal strife, and natural

disasters (Darmer, 2004). Even when government officials are targets of the violent attacks and some of them are kidnapped, the federal and state governments have been unable to surmount the challenges.



Samples of Cartridge used by Hunters taken on 15TH March, 2025.

Meanwhile, it is not as if they are really on a monthly salary. Their services are rewarded by the goodwill and the passion to defend their communities to make it safe for the people. Kudos to the Executive Chairman of Yagba West Local Government for his proactiveness, as well as his counterpart in Yagba East Local Government. According to Chief Aina, the West Yagba Local Government has been supportive with respect to providing bullets. In a like manner, Okun indigenes abroad equally support the activities of the traditional hunters through the provision of binoculars lens and money.

Another challenge is a trust issue between the community-based security agents and some Nigerian Police and Civil Defence personnel. The efforts of the community-based security agents are at times sabotaged by the conventional security agents through compromise. The traditional hunters said they are more comfortable working with the Army than the Police and Civil Defence personnel.

Moreover, mobility is quite challenging for rapid response. Although the Kogi State Government recent distributed Toyota Sienna Buses to the Vigilante groups, what is really needed is motor bikes and Hilux van. These can easily facilitate movement and efficient operation than a Bus.

Similarly, the ignorance, lukewarm attitude, and naivity of the people is a problem. According to Hon. Jambright Sunmonu, a one-time Ijumu Local Government Chairman, he said he was in Isanlu one day and saw a Fulani man buying Petrol in 10 (50 Litres Gallons); all loaded on a motorcycle. He said he questioned the Petrol attendant why he did not ask what the Fulani man wanted to do with the petrol he was buying using a motorcycle. But the

petrol attendant was nonchalant. He said he drove ahead of the Fulani man to complain to the Police at the nearest checkpoint, but unfortunately, while discussing with the senior officer, the junior officer had allowed him passage.

In addition, the nature and level of sophistication of the arms carried by the local hunters is equally constitute a major challenge compared to the type usually carried by the kidnappers or bandits within the area of study. This situation always handicaps these community – based security agents, resulting in their being overpowered in most time and in some cases loss of lives of the personnel. The locally made guns being used by these community–based security agents are a major challenge to the achievement of their goals of securing lives and properties in the communities. The conventional security agencies must make recourse to them before they can enter any forest in the Yagba community. The traditional hunters make use of both physical and spiritual elements in their operations. However, they are most of the times financially constrained. Each traditional hunter possesses personal guns (Plates 7,8 & 9) which require adequate bullets for effectiveness. The cost of a pack of the Cartridge below is N32,000. So how many of them could afford this?

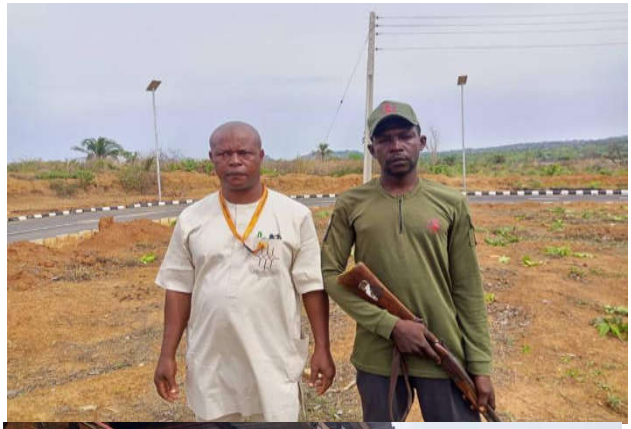
Conclusively, going by the efforts and success recorded by the instruments of community-based policing, if necessary resources are adequately made available to them, criminality in Yagba Federal Constituency would reduce drastically and the area would become unattractive as hideouts for nefarious activities of the criminals, bandits, and their cohorts.



Community-based police Security Personnel at the Okoloke community



Security Personnel at Odo-Ere, West Yagba Local Government.







Challenges of Community–Based Policing in Yagba Communities in Kogi State

One of the fundamental challenges that has affected the traditional hunters is funding. As earlier stated, most of the successes recorded in the discovery of the kidnappers' hideouts and arrest are spearheaded by the traditional hunters. This evidence led credence to the fact that the Nigerian Police, over the years, has not been able to effectively carry out its functions. Despite the benefits of community-based policing in the Yagba community, there are still challenges to be addressed. These include corruption and extortion, lack of proper resource management, inadequate funding and proper remuneration, Insufficient Training and Capacity Building, and Inadequate Arms and Ammunition. Addressing these challenges will be essential for ensuring the long-term success of community-based policing in Yagba communities. The challenges are;

Corruption and Extortion: Corruption and extortion are widespread among the members of the Nigerian Police Force. A high level of corruption and misconduct within the police force erodes public trust in communities they serve. This practice has greatly soiled the image of the police. Agreeing to this worrisome issue, Alemika (1995) argues that police corruption is a serious issue because they are expected to be moral as a law enforcement agency. If the police, which are employed to prevent and detect corruption or crime and bring culprits to justice, are themselves corrupt, then the society is at risk. Similarly, the police exercise powers that have great implications on their lives, properties, and the safety of the citizens. Where such power is contaminated by corrupt tendencies, then the citizens are insecure. This corruption also manifests in extortion, which is a form of robbery. Corruption on the part of the police explains why the public is threatened by such practices, and hence, the police are not capable of living up to expectations. According to Alemika (1999), in many cases, police brutality is a means of coercing individuals to succumb to demands for bribes, and sometimes it is punishment for not cooperating with the police in their demand for gratification.

Lack of Proper Resource Management: This practice has also greatly impacted negatively on the police efficiency. These management inadequacies, according to Alemika (2003) and Balogun (2002), are critical in the aspects of manpower, both in quantity and in quality. That is, the quality of police personnel, some of whom cannot write or speak well affects the performance of the force. The available resources allocated to them are also mismanaged. He also posits that poor crime and operational information management, including inaccurate recording and collation of information, inadequate analysis, and infrequent publication of statistics, affect the performance of the police force.

Inadequate Funding and Poor Remuneration: Under normal circumstances, the Police Force is supposed to be paid well so that they don’t lack. Most police officers indulge in collecting bribes because of their meagre take-home home. They are not adequately funded

and this is evidenced in their inadequate office and poor residential accommodation. The police force faces challenges in terms of inadequate funding and resources, which hamper their ability to combat crime effectively. This problem is not peculiar to the police alone; it is indeed a general problem in Nigeria.

Insufficient Training and Capacity Building: Inadequate training impedes police effectiveness, hindering their ability to respond to evolving security challenges.

Inadequate Arms and Ammunition: The Nigeria Police Force has inadequate arms, logistics, telecommunication gadgets, and transportation facilities. The police need to be empowered with sophisticated weapons so that if confronted with criminals or armed robbers who usually have sophisticated weapons, they will be able to withstand them. However, the police should be restricted in the use of these arms as a last resort. Lamenting on the inadequacy of arms as a critical factor for police failure, Daudu (2008) has this to say, "Nigerian police are helpless, when confronted with armed robbers, these boys have sophisticated machines that the police cannot withstand".

Police Brutality and Harassment of Innocent Citizens: This is another major obstacle to the prospects of the Nigerian Police in guaranteeing the security of lives and property, law and order. With the backing of autocratic leaders and repressive laws, the police often acted outside the rule of law. The police have involved themselves in criminal activities like killing innocent people, detaining persons arbitrarily and with impunity. Political opponents of governments, workers, student radicals and human rights activists have always suffered excessive waves of brutalities, abductions, unwarranted searches and violations of privacy, extra-judicial killings, bodily injury and intimidation, harassment, and loss of personal liberties in the hands of police.

Initiatives and Efforts to Enhance Police-Community Relationship

Community Policing Approach: The community policing approach in Nigeria aims to build trust, create mutual understanding, and address security challenges collaboratively.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Public awareness campaigns play a vital role in engaging community members and educating them about the importance of police-community collaboration.

Establishing Platforms for Dialogue and Feedback: Creating platforms for dialogue and feedback is essential in promoting effective communication between the police and the community.

Overall, community-based policing in Nigeria has the potential to improve public safety and reduce crime rates. However, addressing the challenges faced by the police force and enhancing police-community relationships are crucial for its success. Community-based policing in Nigeria has shown promising results in reducing crime rates and improving public safety. Studies have found that community-policing initiatives, such as those involving vigilante groups, have been effective in reducing crime in selected communities in Nigeria. These initiatives have also been credited with creating a more secure environment, which is essential for promoting development and improving livelihoods.

Conclusion

Previous studies had focused on neighbourhood watch, joint task force, and vigilante groups; however, this study has empirically shown the necessity of citizens' participation in ensuring effective community-based policing in the country by being people-centered. The study has revealed that communities and residents are very important in ensuring the security of their

immediate environment, especially in checkmating the rise of the trend of kidnapping and banditry thereby reducing the high rate of crime. The study has shown that the lack of trust between the public and security agents can be eliminated through the adoption of community policing and the partnership that it engenders between both parties. The study has added to the body of existing literature with respect to crime reduction and control in the area of effective community participation through community-based policing, which has not received sufficient attention in earlier research by scholars. The study recommends effective formulation and implementation of policies capable of tackling the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria, such as ethno-religious conflict, weak security system, systemic and political corruption, and unemployment.

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