

Police-Public Partnership In Prevention And Control Of Violent Crimes And Conflicts In Nigeria¹

Solomon E. Arase, NPM, M.Sc., LLM., LLB., BL., fdc
Inspector-General
Nigeria Police Force

Introduction

Police organizations and officials in a democratic society are charged with the responsibilities of promoting human rights, rule of law, security and development through law enforcement and order maintenance. The contexts in which police operate determine the extent to which they are able to discharge these responsibilities.

The contexts, which we refer to here, include key political, economic, social and organizational factors which encompass the nature of the political and economic system; dominant values that are promoted and transmitted by the family, cultural and religious institutions; relationship between the leaders in the various sectors of society and citizens; conditions and standard of living of citizens,

¹ Public Lecture Delivered at the University of Jos, JOS on April 29, 2016

quality of infrastructure for producing goods, delivering services and guaranteeing human security and welfare; organizational capacity and resources; and nature and extent of partnership between the police and citizens in preventing and controlling threats to the security and development of their country and constituent communities.

Although we shall be making references to some of these factors, our key concern in this lecture is to stimulate debate, awareness and response that will strengthen partnership between the police and the community towards the prevention and control of violent crimes and conflict that threaten and undermine security and development of the country as well as the wellbeing of citizens. This is in recognition of the reality that lack of effective partnership between the police and the public can only sustain ineffective police and insecurity among citizens.

It is also in cognizance of the fact that historically, policing, which is the activities involved in ensuring peace and security in society, was the responsibility of all citizens. It was in the course of the development of society as complex entities that division of labour emerged, including

the creation of professional police as distinct from diffuse mechanism of social control within society. In spite of this development, it has been recognized throughout history that partnership between the police and the public is critical to effective prevention and control of threats to national security and development.

Establishment, duties and powers of the Nigeria Police Force

The role of the Nigeria Police Force, defined in terms of functions and powers, are contained in the Constitution, Police Act and Regulations and other statutes of the country. Section 214 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, provides that:

There shall be a Police Force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section, no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof.

There are several policing agencies in the country established by federal, state and local governments for the

regulation of specific activities or enforcement of specific laws. However, only the Nigeria Police Force has been vested with the powers of exercising the full range of police powers - surveillance, intelligence, apprehension, detention, bail and prosecution. The Nigeria Police also constitutes the primary agencies responsible for internal security in the country. This is an enormous and daunting task, which in most jurisdiction across the world require inter-agency collaboration as well as partnership with the citizens as individuals and in groups.

The Police Act and Regulations provides for the command, control, operation and administration of the Force. As regards, the duties of the Nigeria Police Force, the law (Police Act and Regulations) provides in Section 4 that:

The police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are charged, and shall

perform such military duties within or outside Nigeria as may be required.

The organizational structure of the Force consists of the Force Headquarters, 12 zonal commands, and 37 State commands including the Federal Capital Territory. Nigeria Police Force's staff strength by 31st December 2015 was 305,000. This is inclusive of 1,331 Cadets currently on training at the Police Academy, Kano as well as specialist branches and civilian supportive staff. Female officers in the Force constituted 30,854 (9.47%), while there are 127 area commands; 1,130 police divisions; 1,579 police stations, 2,165 police posts, and 1,591 village police posts (NPF Annual Report 2013: 137).

At the statutory level, the Force is accountable to four key government agencies. These are:

1. Nigeria Police Council chaired by the President, with all state governors, Chairman of the Police Service Commission the Inspector-General of Police as members;
2. Police Service Commission established by the Constitution;

3. Committees on Police Affairs in the Senate and House of Representatives, and
4. Ministry of Interior (until late last year 2015, there was a Ministry of Police Affairs)

This accountability framework positions the Nigeria Police Force as probably the most policed government agency in the country.

Challenges of Violent crimes and conflict in Nigeria

Since returning to civil rule in 1999, Nigeria has been faced with several security challenges, especially violent crimes and conflicts in different parts of the country and by different groups that have claimed tens of thousands lives, displaced millions of citizens, and undermined national unity, security, and wellbeing of citizens. Some of the manifestations, incidences and challenges of violent crimes and conflicts are:

1. High level of victimization in respect of violent crimes such as robbery and kidnapping,
2. Sabotage, disruption and vandalization of critical infrastructure;

3. Widespread incidence of violent religious and ethnic conflicts
4. Widespread cases of political violence and intra-communal violence over land, ponds and chieftaincy titles
5. Insurgency, terrorism, proliferation of ethnic militias,
6. Oil theft and piracy
7. Cattle rustling and banditry,
8. Violent conflicts between farmers and herders which is very potent threat to national security development because they can trigger ethnic and religious violence in addition to food insecurity
9. Political violence, especially election-related violence,
10. Financial and economic crimes such as corruption; money laundering, electoral fraud, trafficking in persons, drugs and arms, and fraud, which trigger or aggravate poverty, inequality, interpersonal and collective violence

Some of these problems derived from or are aggravated by economic and social conditions such as erosion of ethical and moral conduct in private and public life, corruption,

ethnic and religious intolerance, deterioration of infrastructure and service delivery, steady rise in unemployment and mass poverty, widening social and economic inequality, proliferation of arms and drug abuse.

Since September 2001, violent conflicts that claimed thousands of lives occurred in Plateau State. Available information from the White Papers on the Reports submitted by panels of enquiry and police records reveals that:

- a. 904 persons were killed during September 2001 (Plateau State Government White Paper on Justice Niki Tobi Panel Report);
- b. 312 persons were killed during November 2008 Jos North LG election violence (Plateau State Government White Paper on Justice Ajibola Panel Report) ;
- c. 402 persons killed in January 2010 violence (Police Report)
- d. 109 persons killed during the invasion and attack on Dogo Nahawa in March 2010 (Police Report)
- e. There has been unending killing in several local government areas of the State since 2010.

The challenges and consequences of violent conflicts and crime in Nigeria underscore the need for partnership between the police and public as effective strategy to curtail the problems.

Challenges of Policing by the Nigeria Police Force

The work of the police in any society is a very difficult, complex and dangerous vocation. The expectations of members of the public in Nigeria are many and varied and exceed the resources and support given to the police². Failures on the part of the police are easily observed and widely reported and condemned while achievements of the police are rarely recognized, applauded and rewarded. Police are in constant contact with dangerous persons and in dangerous situations.

In spite of the inherent hostile policing environment and sundry challenges, the Nigeria Police has remained steadfast to its responsibility of guaranteeing the safety of the lives and property of the citizens even at the risk of their own lives.

² Kayode, O. (1976) "Public Expectations and Police Role Concepts: Nigeria" *Police Chief* (May): 58-59

Between January 2014 - December, 2015 a total of 278 police officers paid the supreme sacrifice in the discharge of their statutory Mandate in relation to enhancement of community peace and security, while 194 others sustained varying degree of injuries. Similarly, between January - April 2016, we have lost a total of 72 Police personnel with 78 others injured in the line of internal security duties. Cases of killing of police personnel have increased since 2009 due to terrorist attacks by Boko Haram.

In order to perform its function effectively of preventing and controlling crimes, the police require diverse skills. As an American police chief wrote 1947:

Policemen are challenged at every turn to render skilled services to the public. In a routine day a policeman may have to render first aid to an injured motorist, deliver a safety address, trail and apprehend a dangerous criminal, convince a runaway boy of the error of his ways, assist in the prosecution of a criminal case. These and many more are the abilities that the public confidently expects of policemen.

Ideally, policemen must have some of the knowledges and skills of the lawyer, doctor, and the engineer; they must possess the endurance of an athlete; have the insight of the sociologist and psychologist and the compassion of a minister. They must present resolute, dynamic personalities particularly characterized by magnanimity (p. 177)³.

The work of the police is even made more difficult in societies like Nigeria where there is mutual distrust between the police and the public, and assistance to the police is often withheld by citizens⁴.

Several factors inhibited strong partnership between the citizens and the police in Nigeria. We shall briefly highlight some of the factors that undermined effective partnership between the citizens and the police. The first factor is the circumstance in which the police emerged in the country. Some Nigeria Police historians believe that Police forces were introduced to the territories that were occupied by the colonial ruler to promote their interests of

³ Don L. Kooken 1947 Ethics in Police Service, Don L. Kooken 1947 Ethics in Police Service, 38 in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology Vol. 38: 172 – 186.
p.177

⁴ Alemika E. E. (1988) "Policing and Perceptions of Police in Nigeria" *Police Studies* 11(4): 161-176

exploiting and oppressing the indigenous peoples, and hence, by origin Police forces were established as instrument of colonization⁵. This presents a wrong perception of the Police by the citizens. Unfortunately, this mentality was carried over to the post-colonial policing era in Nigeria.

The second factor that affected relationship between the police and the public was the inability of the country to introduce required reforms for the reorientation of the inherited police forces in a manner that will integrate both the Police and the community. In this regard, it is recognised, though that successive leaders attempted to introduce varied reforms which were outcomes of several Committees on Nigeria Police Reform. While these reform initiatives have led to organisational changes in the Force, the impact on cementing police -public partnership in crime prevention has remained limited.

Third factor is the lack of required resources and skills to ensure the efficiency of the police. Efficiency is a critical factor in developing and sustaining confidence in the

⁵ Tamuno, T. N. (1970) *The Police in Modern Nigeria: 1861-1965*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press and Alemika, E. E. O. (1993) "Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria" *Crime, Law and Social Change* 20: 189-219

police. Sources of inefficiency by the Nigeria Police Force include huge gap between required and provided human and non-human resources made available to the police⁶; deficit in operational competencies; poor remuneration and conditions of service; misconduct by some officers, and unrelenting criticisms of the police by the public which demoralised the police.

The fourth factor is widespread disrespect for law by citizens across all the sectors and strata of society. Attempt to enforce the law is often resisted by significant proportion of the population who resent support for law, authority and police in Nigeria. Many citizens also do not understand the law and the functions and powers of the police. Therefore, enforcement of certain laws is considered an unacceptable action on the part of the police.

Further, many citizens expect the police to act on any complaints brought to the Force with dispatch, irrespective of the nature of the allegations, some of which do not constitute breach of criminal law. When police decline, such

⁶ Federal Government of Nigeria (2006) Report of the Presidential Committee on Police Reform; Federal Government of Nigeria (2008) Report of the Presidential Committee on the Reform of the Nigeria Police Force; Federal Government of Nigeria (2012) Report of the Presidential Committee on the Re-Organization of the Nigeria Police Force – Main Report;

persons accuse police of corruption or ineffectiveness. Several Nigerians act as if they are above the law and violate the law. When the law is enforced they use different media to discredit the police and other criminal justice agencies. These enumerated and other factors contribute to the generally poor relationships between the police and the public.

Policing in Nigeria is particularly difficult because of several inadequacies. Many scholars and government police reform committees in the country have identified several factors that inhibit police efficiency⁷. Some of the identified problems are:

1. Inadequate logistic and resources (especially transportation, telecommunication, arms and ammunition, accommodation, etc.) for police services

⁷ Tamuno, T. N. (1970) *The Police in Modern Nigeria: 1861-1965*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press; Kayode, O. (1976) "Public Expectations and Police Role Concepts: Nigeria" *Police Chief* (May): 58-59; Alemika, E.E.O and I. C. Chuckwuma (2000) *Police-Community Violence in Nigeria* (Centre for Law Enforcement Education, Lagos and the National Human Rights Commission, Abuja, Nigeria); Federal Government of Nigeria (2006) Report of the Presidential Committee on Police Reform; Federal Government of Nigeria (2008) Report of the Presidential Committee on the Reform of the Nigeria Police Force; Federal Government of Nigeria (2012); Alemika E. E. (1988) "Policing and Perceptions of Police in Nigeria" *Police Studies* 11(4): 161-176; Alemika, E. E. O. (1993) "Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria" *Crime, Law and Social Change* 20: 189-219; Kayode, O. (1976) "Public Expectations and Police Role Concepts: Nigeria" *Police Chief* (May): 58-59.

2. Inadequate personnel with training, skill and orientation required for policing a country with complex security challenges
3. Inadequate resources for effective law enforcement, intelligence gathering, criminal investigation and prosecution
4. Lack of appropriate police stations, offices, facilities and accommodation
5. Lack of modern forensic laboratory and other technological aid to law enforcement
6. Inappropriate use of arms and ammunitions
7. Absence of reliable and comprehensive criminal database
8. Poor conditions of service, including low remuneration and pension benefits⁸

There have been numerous suggestions by government committees on police reform as well as by scholars and citizens as to how these deficiencies can be addressed. Some of the recommendations are being considered for

⁸ Federal Government of Nigeria (2006) Report of the Presidential Committee on Police Reform; Federal Government of Nigeria (2008) Report of the Presidential Committee on the Reform of the Nigeria Police Force; Federal Government of Nigeria (2012)

implementation by the government and the leadership of the Nigeria Police Force.

Critical requirements for effective implementation of the recommendation are funding, effective leadership of the Force and support by the government through the Nigeria Police Council, relevant committees at the National Assembly, Police Service Commission, and the Ministry of Interior. The most fundamental is the support of the citizens is also necessary for effective resolution of the challenges inhibiting optimal efficiency of the Nigeria Police Force.

Imperative of Police-Public Partnership

The imperative of partnership between the police and the public was underscored by the principle of law enforcement articulated by Robert Peel, pioneer chief of London Metropolitan Police in 1829. The principle comprises nine statements and the first two principles are relevant to our discussion and are briefly discussed below.

The first statement reads *"The basic mission for which police exist is to prevent crime and disorder as an*

alternative to the repression of crime and disorder by military force and severity of legal punishment". This statement emphasises the significance of prevention of crime and disorder instead of reaction to its occurrence. In order to do this in modern times, police require the citizens to supply them with information for the production of actionable and timely intelligence to guide operations aimed at preventing and disrupting occurrence of crime and disorder. The statement also highlights the primacy of police in internal security operations.

Nonetheless, in exceptional cases of severe disorder, section 217 (2) (c) of the Constitution provides that the military could be deployed to suppress insurrection and act in aid of civil authority. The President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, relying on this provision, has deployed the military to complement the Police in serious internal security challenges of magnitudes that have practically snowballed beyond the operational capacity of the Police including riot control, combating armed robbery, kidnapping, oil bunkering, militancy and insurgency.

According to Sanda (2013), the deployment of the military for Internal Security Operations (ISO) is often a subject of intense debate. While some view the deployment of the military as a welcome idea since they often times save lives and mitigate the destructive consequences of violent conflict, others argue that their deployment often result in some unintended consequences⁹. What remains undebatable is that such deployments are constitutional and within the prerogative of the President, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation.

Indeed, as Sanda (2013) observes this process is what has been conceptualized as Military Aid to Civil Power (MACP) when it involves the use of firearms and Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) which refers to the engagement of the military to support civil powers in the management of disasters or humanitarian situations not involving use of firearms.

⁹ Sanda, J., 2013, 'Deployment of Security Agencies in Nigeria', NSRP, Abuja.

The second statement of the Principle emphasised that “The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon *public approval* of police existence, actions, behaviour and the ability of the police to secure and maintain *public respect*”. This statement speaks directly to the topic of our discussion today, simply stated, police efficiency is dependent on citizens’ approval of the existence, actions and behaviour of the police.

One of the problems encountered by the police forces in Nigeria since British colonial rulers established the first police force in 1861 in Lagos is the lack of approval of police existence, actions and behaviours by significant sectors of the society. Responsibility for the conferring and earning the approval rests on the citizens and the police respectively.

The relationship and partnership between the police and citizens in Nigeria are generally unsatisfactory because of several factors¹⁰. Some of the factors are lack of organizational resources and capability for effective

¹⁰See contributions in S.E. Arase (ed.) 2013 *National Security: Intelligence and community partnership approach*. Abuja: Lawlords Publication; pp.29-43

service delivery; poor conditions of service that affect personnel performance and their relationship with suspects and complainants; inadequate social interaction between the police and citizens; indiscipline by some personnel and flagrant violation of law by significant proportion of Nigerians who resent police action to curtail criminality; and lack of appreciation of the nature of police work by citizens¹¹.

As earlier stated, police are employed by the society, through its government, to enforce the law and maintain order in order to guarantee security and development. The police will only be effective if the society provides the police with clear mandate, adequate resources, and support for its operation by providing information about factors and individuals responsible for violent conflicts and crime. Intelligence-led policing is the most efficient approach to prevention of crime and disorder.

However, this approach significantly depends on the willingness of members of the public to provide the police

¹¹ Alemika, E.E.O and I. C. Chuckwuma (2000) *Police-Community Violence in Nigeria* (Centre for Law Enforcement Education, Lagos and the National Human Rights Commission, Abuja, Nigeria); Kayode, O. (1976); "Public Expectations and Police Role Concepts: Nigeria" *Police Chief* (May): 58-59; Federal Government of Nigeria (2006) Report of the Presidential Committee on Police Reform

with information to produce and use intelligence¹². If members of the public protect criminals in their midst, police in work will be ineffective and society will be plagued by insecurity. The consequence is that society will be unsafe because of the presence of violent criminals in their midst. This is a problem that has persisted in the country. Distrust between the police and the public has been to the benefit of the criminals, as it inhibits police efficiency while citizens live at the mercy of criminals.

Responsibilities of the police in fostering partnership with the public

Effective police-public partnership requires the police to play certain roles, including the following:

- a. Pay attention to the concerns of citizens concerning personal safety, security of property, liberties and freedoms, and public order and respond promptly, responsibly and respectfully to demands for police services by citizens

¹² S.E. Arase (ed.) 2013. *National Security: Intelligence and community partnership approach*. Abuja: Lawlords Publication; pp.29-43

- b. Demonstrate professionalism such knowledge, competence, integrity and impartiality in the discharge of their responsibility and create avenues for constant dialogue, consultation and sharing of knowledge and resources members of the public
- c. Understand the challenges, problems and opportunities that impact on security in the communities and working with the residents develop appropriate responses and create effective mechanism for receiving and resolving complaints by citizens
- d. Protect the identity of informants and ensure confidentiality of information provided by citizens
- e. Officers should demonstrate knowledge of rights of citizens, and promote, protect and respect them.
- f. Undertake public enlightenment on its functions, powers and activities to prevent and control crimes and relate with members of the public through sponsorship and participation in sports, youth clubs and civic education activities within communities.
- g. Identify and work with appropriate civil society organizations interested in partnership with it to

develop and implement community-based security and safety programmes or police-public partnership;

h. Emplace strategies that galvanise children and youths in primary and secondary schools to develop security consciousness.

These and other measures will promote mutual respect and trust which are important factors in fostering and sustaining partnership between the police and the citizens¹³. The Nigeria Police Force, with support from the government, is implementing some of these proposals. However, resources and capacity remain major challenges.

Roles of citizens in fostering partnership with the police

Citizens also have responsibility towards the police. The police will be ineffective if the citizens constantly disrespect, distrust, assault, insult and antagonize the police. The Constitution, in chapter 2 obliged citizens to assist law enforcement agencies as civic responsibility. Unfortunately, most citizens are either unaware of this obligation or chose to ignore it. In order to enhance police

¹³ Alemika, EEO. 2013. Intelligence-led policing and internal security: the imperative of community partnership, in S.E. Arase (ed.) *National Security: Intelligence and community partnership approach*. Abuja: Lawlords Publication; pp.29-43

efficiency, develop and sustain effective police-public partnership, citizens and communities should:

1. Appreciate the duties and powers of the police and avoid criticizing them just of inconvenience arising from law enforcement intended to guarantee public peace and safety and promote the rights and liberties of others.
2. Demonstrate respect for legitimate authority and laws;
3. Parents, religious, traditional and educational institutions should inculcate in children and youth respect for legitimate authorities and laws at all levels of society without shying away from holding those in authority accountable for their actions, decisions and conduct;
4. Challenge and report anyone involved law-breaking behaviours that are responsible for insecurity and crime and report those who promote, plan, encourage or fund ethnic and religious intolerance, conflict and violence in the country
5. Engage the police to build trust, share concerns about security and welfare, evolve and implement appropriate

measures for crime prevention and control within the community and the country

6. Assist the police with information on crimes and criminals within their community and should not assist suspects and criminals to evade arrest

7. Respect police officers and comply with lawful instructions from them and avoid using police to settle personal or civil scores, which fall outside criminal law and process.

These actions are required from individuals, community based organisations and professional groups in society.

Conclusion

Under my watch, the management team has introduced several initiatives directed at promoting police-community partnership to drive intelligence-led policing and also bridge the gap between the public and the police.

We organized the National Security Summit in August, 2015. The Summit which was attended by the President of the Federation and attracted over 500 participants spread across major traditional rulers, public officials, non-state

actors and other strategic security stakeholders was convened to dissect the challenge of police-community partnership with a view to developing pathways for strengthening the concept of citizens-led policing in Nigeria. The Summit was later replicated at State and Divisional Command levels across the country with the support of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP).

Aside this, the decision by my leadership to dismantle road blocks and introduce safer highway motorised patrol system was informed by the need to isolate a fundamental component of policing that widens the gap between the Police and the citizens.

In addition, two Information Communication Technology-driven platforms which provides a real-time avenue for members of the public to reports professional misconduct and hold their police accountable have been introduced. These are '*stop the bribes*' and the '*Complaint Response Unit*' (CRU). This is heart warming that since being established, increasing number of citizens are taking advantage of these platforms in a manner that will in the

long-term further cement public confidence in the Nigeria Police.

We have also introduced or strengthened measures aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the Nigeria Police Force. There have been significant efforts to enhance the intelligence gathering, strategic management and operational capacity through training and acquisition of equipment to aid crime prevention and control. Welfare of officers is critical to the performance of the Force.

Realizing, this, we have paid attention to this area. One of the major efforts aimed at improving officers' welfare is housing programme that has been given significant attention since I assumed office. Towards this end, 400 Units of low-cost housing estates have been commissioned in Katsina, Adamawa, and Edo States while that of Enugu State is nearing completion.

Similarly, on 25th April, 2016, the ground breaking ceremony for the construction 25,000 low-cost housing project for personnel of the Force was performed in Abuja. The Project is being financed under the UN Habitat/Shelter Afrique framework. The unique thing about

the housing scheme is that it targets the Inspectors and Rank and File Cadre of the Force who do not only represent the most critical operational cadre of the Force but who are the main street bureaucrats whose fear of the future propel them to engage in acts capable of widening the gap between the citizens and the Police.

Beyond these, the Force leadership has incorporated the Nigeria Police Scholarship Foundation to extend scholarship opportunities to children of junior cadre officers from Primary to University level. The scheme was launched in December, 2015 with a total of 325 children of members of the rank and file benefitting. If these programme are sustained they hold the potentials of drastically reducing corruption, improving commitment and performance among police officers, and closing up the trust gap between the police and members of the public.

Strong partnership between the police and the public is a critical precondition for the prevention of violent crimes and conflicts in any society, including Nigeria. Therefore, on behalf of the members of the Nigeria Police Force, I assure you that the government and the leadership of the police

are making efforts to dismantle obstacles to partnership with the public, and hope also that citizens will reciprocate by extending support to the police to enable them carry out their daunting task of ensuring security and safety in a dynamic and increasingly dangerous world. In this way, security, peace and development shall reign in our country.

Thank you for your attention.