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# COMMUNITY POLICING FOR PEACE AND INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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## ABSTRACT

Nigeria as a nation or country in the developing part of the world has experienced the on slot of Covid-19 pandemic in the year 2020. The pre and post effects began when the nation witnessed economic melt-down in the presence of rising population, unemployment, illiteracy, diseases, rural-urban migration and social mobility, which resulted to poverty and hunger; complemented with food insecurity. These indicators mentioned above also imported to the nation all forms of criminalities and social vices at high levels in the cities and local communities (grass root habitants). Sequel to this, some rural communities has been put on check and hijacked by the perpetrators of evil acts in the aspect, of kidnapping, insecurity, raping, violence, armed robbery, cultism and groupings of gangsters, who have decided to sack rural community people from their ancestral homes, where their skills and capacity for meaningful livelihood is based. These are serious deviant behaviour from our youths and adults alike in our society. Reconsidering the increase in population and perceived scare resources in terms of providing adequate security apparatus by the government at all levels is noticed to be very difficult in protecting lives and properties, which means that the government cannot render these services to her citizenry alone, rather the need for an alternative must come from the rural communities through proper partnership and constituting “vigilante groups” otherwise called “community police”, made up of credible young men, dependable and reliable to the welfare and course of their fatherland. This emphasis is based on the fact that the issue of community policing has suffered setbacks in terms of legislation and approval from the lower and upper law making bodies and the Nigerian government state. Therefore, it became very imperative for this paper to advocate that for the nation to achieve relative peace that will lead to integrated community development in our nation, the need for proper legislations that will guarantee an approval for community policing should be seen as an urgent and important key to sustainable socio-economic, political, cultural, peace development (An answer to co-existence, unity and harmony) of our society is the prayer of this subject matter in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The discourse centered on the concept of community policing, strategies, benefits and challenges. Also, peace and benefits or importance, integrated community development, her indicators and relationships with community policing.

**Keywords:** Community, Policing, Peace, Integrated Community Development.

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## INTRODUCTION

Community policing for peace and integrated community development in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a signal to examine or reexamine the workability of the nation's security apparatus in terms of protection of lives and properties of her citizenry, especially in the rural communities. Secondly, discussing the subject matter in the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be over emphasized, as there are existing correlation in their various parts and roles played. Meaning that when a community is at peace it brings multidimensional development that will harness the approach of integrated community development not as unit development, but bearing in mind that a "community" existence is a conglomerate of homes (Oji, 2020). Community is a strata of the society. Community is seen as a territorial unit of a society for instance a village, town, district, camps (internally displaced persons, Christian, Moslem, refugees). It can also be described as a unit of social organization which can be based around common interests like the academic community. Its characteristics include:

- Sense of a community devoid of urban communities, rather similar groups based on tribes, clanship, religion and political/social affiliations;
- A sense of belonging;
- A sense of purpose with common goals and agendas;
- Existence of cooperation and participation in all aspects of communal goals actualization;
- Presence of high level of social interactions, amongst members in age grade meetings, cultural activities, etc.;
- Interpersonal relationships built on the climate of mutual respect, oneness, we together, common fellowship, brotherliness.

Abiona (2012) added that the common feelings of a community recognized amongst others are attributes and common sentiment which make the people believe in one destiny and have a strong bond holding them together. Community creates a feeling of brotherhood in all members to the extent that what affects a member or an event that concerns a group attracts a common feeling in the community. This is because the community has the ability to share a recognized way of living and life through their mode of dressing, speaking language, educational level, political participation, marriage pattern, occupation etc. These are manifestation of their cultures and values, which every member abide to. Disobedience is not welcomed in respect to the above, but sometimes are allowed at a very high extent.

Murray in Omoruyi (2008) described the above features of this type of community as a functional community in nature, which implies that the effectiveness of the community is determined by the extent to which members of the group continue to share the same or similar functions and views of concern like policing the community issues.

**Policing:** is an approach of curbing or reducing crime and criminality in our society, especially in the rural communities that calls for maintenance of public order. This is sequel to assessment of the police agencies and their effectiveness in the conflict resolution, protection of lives and properties of the citizenry.

Idowu (2019) mentioned that policing is fundamental to deciding whether initiating engagement with police to achieve such aims is appropriate. Based on the fact that policing is not the same as law enforcement. He therefore maintained that the term 'policing' is used with many

different meanings in mind. Most notably it is referred to as a process of “ensuring compliance with the law” in all its aspects. Meaning that the compliance of the citizenry to the law of the land can never be activated by the “police” agencies alone; as policing encompasses more agencies and entities, as it sometimes even takes a social process of involving civil society. Policing is also in different dimensions for instance socio-cultural, crises, political and authoritarian.

**Community Policing:** according to Community policing consortium (2004), defined it as a collective or collaborative effort between the police and community that identifies problems of crime, criminality and disorder and involves all elements of the community in search for solution to communal problems. This was the former assumption that police cannot control crime and criminalities alone, but requires the support of communities to fight and reduce them. In line with these explanations, Ladan and Hassan (2015) discussion on the emergence of community policing in Nigeria, mentioned that community policing is an innovative law enforcement response in dealing with and preventing crime, also, as a term often used to describe the process of engagement between the police and community, believing that police working with the community, law enforcement agencies can find local solutions to local problems. They maintained that community policing have gained momentum for a variety of reasons, especially in general community satisfaction with the traditional law enforcement practices and demand for greater police accountability for increasing crime rates. Community policing is built on the philosophy of promoting organizational strategies that support systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, which allow for increase in public trust in the police.

### **Benefits of Community Policing**

- Prevention and detection of crime in a given settlement or community;
- Assist to enhance the efforts of the police and other agencies responsible for the control of crime and criminality in a given society;
- Reduction of fear of crime;
- Improvement of police community relationship;
- Enhancement of social, economic, cultural, political growth of the society by attraction of investors, especially to the rural area or communities as to improve their revenue base and build capacity of the people;
- It helps the community to have a better understanding of the people’s needs and promote mutual trust between the two parties toward good harmonious and peaceful coexistence through taking active part in their felt needs;
- Improvement of intelligence gathering in the society;
- It makes the police not to be seen as a stranger, but as a partner in the control of crime and crime towards community development;
- It encourages more liberal and tolerant attitude towards criminality (change in behaviour);
- It enhances communication amongst the groups in a community and society;
- It encourages participatory approach in decision making towards control of crime and criminality amongst the stakeholders in a given community or society;
- Assist in community integration and equality with the leadership of the community;
- It allows for better judgment and justice in a community;

- Rapid community development is witnessed through community policing apparatus as it sets stage based on the principles of self-help and citizens participation.

The strategies to achieve the above benefits or goals in community policing are:

- Through community engagement in planning, decision making, implementation and evaluation of the process in due time;
- Through problem solving by dialogue, thematic investigation of communal problems, town hall meetings, etc. (Osse, 2006);
- Through transformation of organizations which will involve recruitment of non-criminal minded people, punishment of officers who violates the laws and rules.

While Karen in Idowu (2019) added that planning support for reconciliation should begin with a conflict analysis including the context of the conflict, root causes, consequences (including psychological trauma) and the existence of any initiatives for reconciliation at different levels in a given society (top-level, middle range and grassroots).

The phase of gathering information (thematic investigation) and analyses must be given enough time, because it will be the starting point of a very long process and if rushed approach is adopted that will result to counterproductive. Generally, the analysis or evaluation stages is also important to determine who is doing what, where and how in terms of protecting lives and properties in our society.

### **Challenges of Community Policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Nigeria**

Community policing as a new approach reformed approach to combat crime criminality in Nigerian communities and society has its noticeable challenges ranging from:

- Mistrust on the side of the government and police and other agencies in terms of integrity, honesty, observations of procedural laws in handling offenders and non-offenders on the perception of fairness and justice to the citizenry;
- Police assuming the visible position of courts or prisons, the only authority legally authorized to use force on citizens.
- Proliferation of other vigilante groups in the country;
- Lack of political will, especially on the part of national assembly and the president to provide assent and deliberate on the legislation of such laws to empower community policing and her establishment;
- Lack of police culture to recognize, value, and accept the importance of community participation in neighborhood crime problem identification and solving activities. This remains contrary to the traditional police culture guided with professional model that allows community people get involvement in the overall exercise of improving the level of crime and criminalities;
- Provide assistance inform of reporting crimes and stand as witness in that regard. Let me recall that sometime in 1990, a robbery incident took place along the East-West Road, lives and properties were lost. But one of the communities in the environs tried as much as possible to provide police with relevant information to track the criminals involved in such act, who were later jailed for number of years;

- Funding and welfare (Logistics), on the part of the local authorities and central government or administration. It is very necessary to fund and champion the activities of community policing. But some personalities see it as a political group that will be used to fight perceived opponent in a given community or society. This makes funds difficult for the welfare of those who have volunteered to carry out such security endeavours in our various communities;
- Maturity and readiness of some of the youths to join force with the volunteers to fight crime and criminality on the ground of their involved in cultism; Group and regrouping amongst the cult groups, fraternity and their associated disorder to the society;
- Wearing of different force uniforms amongst the citizens.

Community policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is very necessary because security of lives and properties are every bodies business and should not be seen as an illusion at all levels of the society, especially when we know that the security agencies cannot do it alone in the churches, roads, railways, airports, market places, football centres, event centres, political rallies, carnivals etc. Crimes and criminalities are committed even at the point of peoples woes (time of disasters like the just receded flood that revenged communities in different parts of the country.

## **Peace**

Peace is a uniting force in for the achievement and development at all levels of human existence in a society. Gilbert in Oji (2018) defined peace as the absence of violence in all its forms of physical, social, psychological and structural. This means that as long as there is no violence in a society, there is peace, hence, making peace to existence in the absence of war.

Ibeanu in Oji (2018) and Oji, (2021) supporting this view see peace as a process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict, both with specific societies and in the wider international societies”. This is an addition to say that peace exists in all societies in different graduations, characteristics and forms such as peace-keeping, peace enforcement, peacemaking and peace building. Maduabuchi (2017) mentioned also that the nature of peace has made it possible for mankind to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because the devastating effect of war has necessitated that peace is important for the propagation of the human species.

Therefore peace towards educational and developmental initiative is imperative to sustainable peace in every community and society. Even when we can say that a society without violence or conflict is a dead society, because they are realities of human existence and behaviours rooted towards how to achieve sustainable integrated community development.

## **Peace Process Strategies**

Peace process strategies are:

- Use of peace education at all levels centered on conflict and violence resolution;
- Mass mobilization/sensitization programmes;
- Town hall meetings because the greatest resources for building peace is the people themselves through peaceful relationship and structure;
- Negotiation and dialogue through understanding one another’s views, etc.

## **Benefits of Peace to the Discourse**

Peace as a condition of social harmony without limit is needed in the following areas of human existence in the society:

- Assists in the removal of the spirit of war and anarchy;
- It encourages bilateral/domestic trade between communities and nations (productivity enhancement);
- Improves or ignites rapid scientific, technological, socio-economic development that affects the citizenries positively;
- Peace builds capacity of people;
- Encourages full smooth and social interactions between individuals, groups within a given community and society;
- Removal of the idea of diversion of community development projects and resources that will better the lives of every member in the community;
- Sustenance of rest of mind in pursuance of the citizenries livelihood towards development of their potentials.
- It allows for integration, equity, justice, citizen participation devoid of 'degree of tokenism'.

## **Integrated Community Development**

This is an integrated approach to community development practices. It holds to effective coordination of human and non-human resources towards sustainable community development. The approach involves connection to design, delivery and evaluation of programmes amongst disciplines and sectors to provide laudible impact on the lives of people. Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008), agreed that this approach emphasizes effective coordination of resources available in a community for its overall development. This leads to the achievement of desirable changes in the performance of principle interactive variables in the development process of the welfare and benefit of the poor communities living in rural and urban areas of the society, especially in improving their overall living condition and quality of life. It also means that integration of the economic with the socio-cultural in the aspect of integrated community development is very necessary. The reason being that integrated community development focused on sharing knowledge, self-management, sustainable wellbeing and developing strategies to support development in the communities. Mission idea of continuously improving local productive and sustainable utilization of internal and external resources is not left out of the discourse.

## **Elements of Integrated Community Development**

There are elements or indicators that propel the vision and mission of the subject matter. They are:

**Integration:** involves the synergy between top-down and bottom-up leadership as to build strong capacities to plan and manage resources, especially that of community people, local leaders,

organizations, training institutes, government at all levels and non-governmental organizations. Identification of their stakeholders function and responsibilities in terms of interest, abilities, strength and innovative ideas for enhancement of developmental programmes and projects, leads to rural/urban linkages for better attainment of potentials is very important.

**Sustainable development** is a household discourse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as it intend to meet the needs of the present generation and future without compromising the abilities of each other. Integrated community development is anchored here because it considers sustainable process of development that should be environmentally sound, economically viable, socio-culturally and politically acceptable and important in strengthen the capacities of communities.

**Productivity** enhancement cannot be overemphasized in this discourse because it is the hallmark for capacity building, empowerment and income generation strategy in community development process that will lead to better aspirations, goals, knowledge and skill acquisition for productivity improvement. It also requires involvement of stakeholders from the government, private enterprises and non-governmental organizations as to share their ideas on the best practices that will bring innovations to the rural/urban societies.

**People's participation** is a sine-qua-non in this process, because participation of critical stakeholders from the host communities in terms of decision-making, planning, implementation, evaluation and utilization of developmental programmes and projects in respect to their wellbeing and it also help to strengthen their capacities in managing their affairs in terms of inefficiency and conflict era. But let us note that when people take part jointly to solve their problems, it means participation has taken place at the level devoid of "degree of tokenism".

**Capacity Development** is the process through which individuals institutions organizations, societies obtains, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives overtime in a sustainable manner. It involves knowledge development, motivation and self-confidence with internal and external stakeholders, through working in consensus and dialogue. Key success factors for capacity development is that the process are owned, action taken and the lessons learned by the rural people (Dlamothoran, 2009). It is also used to overcome poverty and move towards the direction of sustainable development and integrated community development.

### **Objectives of Integrated Community Development**

These objectives stated below are to:

- Promote building of civil society organization to develop pool of technical human resources at all levels for collective and self-sustaining initiatives.
- Contribute in sustainable community based gender sensitivity development by empowering communities, especially the women folk of the society;
- Enable the people living in poverty and under privileged to play their vital roles in improving the socio-economic conditions in the areas of interventions.

## **Relationships between Community Policing, Peace and Integrated Community Development**

The synergy that exists between the aforementioned cannot be over emphasized in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, bedeviled with insecurity, robbery, kidnapping, rape, gay and other serious heroic crime and criminalities in our society. Peace devoid of violence and conflict brings the people at the rural/urban centres together to champion their felt needs in collaboration with other non-governmental organizations, private investors and governmental agencies.

The idea of collaboration in this venture is not out of place, as some states or almost in the country have vigilante groups, such as vigilante group of Nigeria (VGN), Bakassi Boys, Oodua, People's Congress, OSPAC (Rivers), Dakata-Kawaji (Kano), Community Volunteer Guards (Benue), Amotekun (South Western States), Ebube agu (South East), Yansaki (Zamfara State), etc. These groups work together with the Nigerian police force, community leaders and elites in the area of information and intelligence gathering towards reducing crime and criminality. But that notwithstanding their proliferation rate and other unnecessary activities makes some of the groups criminal in nature. For instance they are prone to human right abuses, which aggravates intercommunal tension and increasing risk of conflict and influenced by the factors of Boko Haram, ethno religious conflict, herder-farmer violence.

Apart from the abuse factors the need for community policing through vigilante groups have become an important discourse to protecting the Nigeria public for now. In this respect on will say that achieving the indicators of integrated community development as earlier mentioned, especially on productivity and capacity building is necessary for the growth and sustainability of livelihood in the rural/urban communities. Also, when a community is in peace, policing becomes easier, attraction of investors, partnership with critical stakeholders in development programmes and projects to such communities will be easier too. In return the skill acquisition, respect for dignity, value for norms and tradition, aesthetic nature, consideration of God given human and non-human resources will be put to service in the communities. This will result to sustainable community development hoped upon in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION**

In discussing this subject matter I feel it is timely, as others have done in the past. But looking at the antecedent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technical age, devastated by war and evil acts, one will understand that any model, method, approach, strategy that will assist in the protection, reduction or alleviation of poverty, crime and criminality in this era should not be short changed either by personal interest or government external influences. This paper is calling for a synergy that will promote harmonious living, sustainable livelihood, partnership, people's participation, integration, productive economic, capacity building, income generation, empowerment etc, as ingredients of integrated community development that must be achieved through sustainable community policing and peace is highly welcomed, devoid of insecurity, injustice, inequality in our society is a better option for this fight before us as a community, local government, state, and nation. This is paper therefore discussed the concept of community, community policing, peace and integrated community development and their sundry features, challenges, benefits and relationships to the society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Nigeria.

## Recommendations

The paper recommends as follows:

- There should be a quick review and speedy passage of the law by the national assembly, while president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, gives his assent;
- Need to improve the security apparatus of the nation by boosting the judicial system and the police force for speed dispensation of cases of law offenders in our society;
- Reduction of the number of vigilante groups in existence (proliferation) as to know the real groups acceptable in the land.
- Need for police reform in all aspects in very necessary as to give room for support and regulate conflict journalism practice and reporting of genuine events in our society;
- Serious check on rising ware of crime and criminality at all quarters, especially on the economic yielding activities of the nation;
- Need to implement and fund the new curriculum that has to do with securing education and her related subjects in our schools at all levels.

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