

EVALUATION OF THE STRUCTURES AND OPERATIONS OF THE NIGERIA POLICE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

William Adesoji Johnson

*Department of Media and Communication Studies
Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria*

Jide Johnson

*Department of Mass Communication
Nigeria Institute of Journalism
Lagos, Nigeria*

Tolu Elizabeth Ifedayo

*Department of International Relations
Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the structures and operations of the Nigeria Police Public Relations Department (NPPRD) saddled with the responsibility of improving relationship between the police and the civil populace. In-depth interview method was used to ascertain the structures and strategies put in place by NNPRD to engendered a civic, corrupt-free, public-friendly and operationally capable police force for Nigeria. The interviewed covered a cross section of the Nigerian police and members of the public-police community relations. Consequently, contrary to popular expectations, the study reveals that NPPRD has evolved vibrant structures and mechanisms such as Police Public Complaint Bureau, Police Community Relations Committees and the various organs of the Community-Policing Project scattered all over the country which are aimed at bridging the gap between the police and the public with a view of curbing police inappropriate use of lethal force, extra-judicial killings, intimidation, extortion, illegal arrest and detention, among others. The study concludes that more awareness programme is required for the effort to sanitize the police force to be appreciated by the member of the public. The study recommends that NNPRD should be autonomous and public relations professionals recruited into its fold; rigorous background check of recruits in order to weed out people of questionable characters at the point of entry and the design of curriculum that would inculcate modern policing ideals and democratic values in police rank and file.

Key Words: Nigeria Police, Force, Public Relations, Department, Structures

Introduction

The amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914 was a precursor to the formation of the present Nigeria Police Force on April 1, 1930, with its headquarters in Lagos, commanded by an Inspector-General of Police. Nigerians assumed the overall leadership of the Force in 1964 when the late Louis Orok Edet was appointed the first indigenous Inspector-General of Police. Since then twelve other Nigerians, including the incumbent, Mohammed Abubakar, have been at the helm.

The Nigeria Police Force is a product of the nation's Constitution: the 1999 Constitution cited by Alemika and Chukwuma (2000,p.15) explicitly prohibited the establishment of State Police forces other than the Nigeria Police Force. Section 214(1) stipulates: "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." Though, the country briefly experimented local police force at the regional levels alongside the Nigeria Police Force, as enshrined in the Independence Constitution of 1960 and the Republican Constitution of 1963 which provided for Local Police Force and the Nigeria Police Force. But the military cut short this experiment when it seized power on January 15, 1966, and dissolved the Local Police Force, as a result of the negative roles attributed to the Force during the First Republic (1960-1966) (Alemika and Chukwuma 2000).

In essence, The Nigeria Police is a national force and the only one operating throughout the country covering an area of 923,769 square kilometres with an estimated population of over 150 million. Thus, by virtue of Section 4, Police Act of 1967, Cap 359 of the Laws of the Federation, 1990, power is conferred upon the Force for the maintenance of law and order throughout the country. The Nigeria Police personnel are estimated at about 377,000 (The Punch). The Nigeria Police has a centralized management command and control structure in which the Inspector-General of Police singlehandedly determines both policy and operational matters. As the head of the Force, the Inspector-General of Police is appointed by the President but on the advice of the Nigeria Police Council, from among some serving top hierarchy of the Force (NOPRIN, 2007).

Command Structure of Nigeria Police Force

According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2000,p.8) the Force is organized into 37 Commands and the Force Headquarters. Each of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory is served by a Command of the Force. The Force Headquarters is the office of the Inspector General of Police. The tasks of the Force are carried out through six Departments:

1. Administration and Finance
2. Operations
3. Works and Logistics.
4. General investigation and Intelligence
5. Training
6. Research and Planning.

Each of the Departments is under the leadership of Deputy Inspectors-General of Police. The 37 State Police Commands are further organized into twelve Zonal Commands. The Zonal commands are under the command of Assistant Inspectors-General, while Commissioners of Police are in charge of State Commands. The entire Force is under the command of the Inspector -General of Police. The Commandants of the Police Staff College, Jos and Police Academy Wudil, Kano are also Assistant Inspectors-General of Police, while the Police Colleges are commanded by Commissioners of Police, and the Police Training Schools where recruits are trained are under the direction of Superintendents of Police.

However, for effective national policing and operational command, the zonal command structure was created. The country is divided into the following twelve zones: Zone One is made up of Kano, Jigawa and Katsina States, with headquarters in Kano. Zone Two has Lagos and Ogun States; its headquarters is in Lagos. Zone Three has its headquarters in Markudi; is made up of Benue, Nasarrawa and Plateau States. Zone Five comprises Edo, Delta and Bayelsa States; its headquarters is located in Benin. Zone six comprises Rivers, Cross River, Akwa-Ibom and Ebonyi States; Calabar is where its headquarters is located. Zone Seven has its headquarters in Abuja and is made up of Federal Capital Territory, Kaduna and Niger States. Zone Eight has Kogi, Ekiti and Kwara State; its headquarters is in Lokoja. Zone Nine's headquarters is in Umuahia and is made up of Imo, Abia, Anambra and Enugu States. Zone Ten with headquarters in Sokoto; is made up of Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States. Zone Eleven comprises Oyo, Osun, and Ondo States; Oshogbo is its headquarters, Zone Twelve has Bauchi, Borno and Yobe States; Bauchi is its headquarters. In the same vein, the State Commands are divided into a number of Police Areas and Divisions under the command of Assistant Commissioner of Police who oversees Police Stations and Police Posts within his Area or Division.

Nigeria Police: Functions and Powers

According to Section 4 of Police Act and Decree No. 23 of 1979 cited by Alemika and Chukwuma (2000,p.9), the functions of the Nigeria Police Force are unambiguously stated to include the following: "The Police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property, and due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged and perform such military duties within or without Nigeria as may be required of them by, or under the authority of this or any other Act. The Nigeria Police Force also have statutory powers to investigate crimes, apprehend offenders, interrogate suspects, prosecute suspects, grant bail to suspects pending completion of investigation or prior to court arraignment, to serve summons, to regulate or disperse unlawful processions and assemblies. The police are also empowered to search and seize properties suspected to be stolen or associated with crime, and to take and record for purposes of identification, the measurements, photographs and fingerprint impressions of all persons... in custody."

Police Recruitment and Training

Alemika and Chukwuma (2000,p.10) in their exposé on “Police-Community Violence in Nigeria” they highlight the Force’s recruitment and training requirements: “There are three entry levels into the Nigeria Police Force. These are Constable, Cadet Inspector and Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police levels. The first is a beginning level, the second, an upper junior level, and the third, the lowest superior police officer rank. Constables are trained at either Police Training Centers, located in many states capitals or at the Police Colleges located at Ikeja-Lagos, Kaduna, Enugu and Maiduguri. Similarly, Cadet Inspectors are trained at the Police Colleges (Ikeja, Kaduna, Enugu, Maiduguri). Cadet Assistant Superintendents of Police are trained at the Police Academy, Wudil Kano. The training period for Constable lasts from six to nine months. The Cadet Inspector’s training last twelve months. The duration for the Cadet Assistant Superintendent is also twelve months. The selection and screening process for recruitment into the police, especially at junior (Constable and Inspectorate) levels emphasize physical stature and stamina. Rigorous tests for psychological and emotional stability and social relations' skill are not given adequate attention. The educational requirement for recruitment into Constable and Cadet Inspector is secondary school certificate with five credit passes, including English language and mathematics. The educational requirement for enlistment as Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police is a Bachelor's degree in any subject.”

Force Public Relations Department

In order to project the social services dimension of the duties of the police, the late Kam Selem, former Inspector-General of Police (1966-1975) formally established the Force Public Relations Department as a statutory function of the Force and expanded its services to states Commands. The Nigeria Police Force has demonstrated how critical public relations is to its operations, hence, its replication in major police formations across the country. The Force headquarters Public Relations Officer (FPRO) is the official mouthpiece for the entire Nigeria Police Force, and he is superior in rank (the position is occupied by at least an Assistant Commissioner of Police) to Police Public Relations Officers (PPRO) who hold sway at the Zonal and State Commands – a responsibility that is traditionally entrusted to an officer of at least the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police and Assistant Superintendent of Police respectively.

The Department performs communication tasks such as publishing the list of wanted persons, missing persons, stolen vehicles, dark spots, security tips and organizes press briefings to parade arrested criminal suspects. It also issues press releases and bulletins, writes feature articles, publishes photographs and advertisements through the press and electronic media in order to keep the public constantly informed of police activities. It also organizes public lectures and produces informative materials such as posters, flyers and booklets in order to inform and educate the public about police activities. The Department is also responsible for producing police calendars, diary, greeting cards, magazine and newsletter.

It is noteworthy to state that Nigeria Police Public Relations Department (NPPRD) in all police formations throughout the federation is peopled by general duties police operatives, and not

public relations professionals. The Nigeria Police Force classifies public relations as a general duty function and it is subsumed under Administration Department. The implication of this kind of arrangement is that any police officer irrespective of his or her educational background or professional training can be posted to work in the Department.

Statement of Problem

The Nigeria Police has not been able to perform its duty in such a way that the citizenry will appreciate and support their duties. Various reports abound of high-handedness, torture, mass killings, intimidation, rape, extra judicial killings (summary execution) and other heinous crimes perpetrated against the same citizenry they ought to protect. This to a large extent make police-citizen relationships in the country to be characterized by mutual hostility and resentment (Alemika and Chukwuma,2000). Despite its vaunted slogan: “Police is your Friend,” most Nigerians perceived the police as a dreaded foe that must be avoided by any means possible.

Hence, the thrust of this study is to find out whether NPPRD has the required structure to reinvent the Nigeria Police Force as a public-friendly, humane and social service-focused law enforcement agency that eschews inappropriate use of lethal force, extra-judicial killings, intimidation, extortion and arbitrariness.

Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To find out the strategies employed by the Nigeria Police Public Relations Department (NPPRD) in tackling police abuses, repressive posture, violence and unbridled aggression against the public.
2. To ascertain the efforts of the NPPRD at re-orientating Nigerian police to be public-friendly.
3. To assess the feedback mechanisms used by the NPPRD to effectively gauge the public perception of the Force.
4. To ascertain the efforts of the NPPRD at educating members of the public about their constitutional rights and the roles of the police in the society.

Literature Review

A publication, *Creating a Better Police Image, Nigeria Police Information Booklet* (1981,p.5) stipulates the statutory roles of NPPRD to include the following:

“To spotlight anything likely to cause police-public friction and advise the authorities of the situation and suggest action to remove it; to publicize the good work of the police so that the public will appreciate such services; to gain and sustain a favorable public opinion about the Force; to establish and strengthen sound relationship with well-meaning citizens and to win over the “fence sitters” by effectively communicating with them; to educate the public on the functions and roles of the police in the society; planning and coordination of the Force public relations policies with a view to improving police relationship with the public; serving as the central source of public information concerning the Force and the only official channel of

publicity for the Force; production and distribution of the Force's magazine, newsletters, press releases, feature articles, statistics, photographs, films, advertisements and other publicity documents to the information media and the public; establishment and maintenance of an internal information and reference service within the Force; examination of complaints from the public; and education of ranks on the importance of public relations."

According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2000,p.32) relationships between the Nigeria Police and the citizens are largely characterized by suspicion, prejudiced, mutual disrespect, conflict and violence. In essence, the inability of the police to connect with the public as a result of their widely reported belligerent and criminal attitudes has alienated the public.

Creating a Better Police Image, Nigeria Police Information Booklet (1981,p.6) further outlines the causes of public distrust of men and officers of the Force:

"Dissatisfaction in handling of reports due to the public ignorance of police methods and the law; rude treatment of citizens who come to the police with cases; an overbearing attitude and an attempt to deflect the ego of the citizen in public; discourteous approach of policemen controlling or checking traffic in the cities; unpleasant tone of voice; unnecessary show of force and bestial pleasure to hurt people while controlling crowd; rough treatment of suspects and other offenders; taking advantage of other citizens when driving police vehicles such as breaking speed limits and jumping of lanes; showing partiality to women, friends and relations in handling cases; assumption of proud airs by policemen to cover their shortcomings; drinking in uniform while on duty; unkempt and careless dress and appearance; and tendency to expect unmerited rewards for performing lawful duties."

However, the aforementioned publication suggests some basic rules which every member of the police force should embrace as their operational creed in their quest to transforming their organization into a responsive, accountable, civil and people-centered:

"Smile and be polite (not weak) and avoid rudeness; enthusiasms instead of dullness – show interest in what you have at hand, learn about your job and locality to be able to discuss any problem freely and confidently; use courteous words instead of sharp retorts; response instead of indifference. Listen to those who come to complain, show you are interested and be alert to their moods; warmth instead of coolness, warmth attracts warmth, no one can respond to you if you are cold and aloof; understanding instead of closed mind, keep an open mind to be able to discuss, reason, discern and arrive at sound judgment; attention instead of neglect, listen and if necessary disagree politely; patience instead of irritation; sincerity instead of sham. Say exactly what you mean. Be honest and straight forward in dealing with the public; consideration instead of annoyance, listen without annoyance; to persuade without apparent force is evidence of maturity; facts instead of arguments, facts are your best weapon because they cannot be denied and can be repeated without confusion, don't argue, reason; creative ideas – the world is progressing so must you or you fall by the way side, you have to think progressively, the days of the bluster muscle police are gone, working mostly alone you must act promptly without reference to you superiors; helpfulness instead of hindrance; giving you time to assist others and

asking nothing in return is the most difficult but most rewarding experience; action instead of dilatory tactics; and appreciation instead of ingratitude.”

Police-Public interaction and interface

The conducts of the Nigerian police is largely at variance with the aforementioned lofty tips on how to engage the public. Reports have shown that the police-public relationship is plagued with mistrust, suspicion, betrayals and hatred.

Okiro (2005, pp.5-6), former Inspector-General of Police, explains the historical antecedents of police anti-people stance and its repressive posture: “The people who hated the idea of armed military-styled police in their own soil created and used armed police to keep the colonies in perpetual subjugation. The colonial masters recruited into the Nigeria Police illiterate men who were outcasts, ex-slaves and criminals who could carry out colonial orders, even against fellow Nigerians without question or critical analysis. The policeman was used by the colonial masters to collect taxes from unwilling Nigerians and suppress Nigerians who were agitating against colonial rule. Examples included the cold blooded killing of workers in Burukutu in 1947, the brutal suppression of the Aba women riot in 1929, the murder of Chief Abiyoko of Ajido for resisting arrest.”

In his evaluation of police repressive attitude toward the citizens, Mawby (2002) cited in the *Awake* magazine echoes Okiro’s assertion: “Incidents of police brutality, corruption, violence, murder and abuse of power punctuated almost every decade of colonial police history. The colonial masters created a global impression of policing as a government force not a public service.”

Alemika and Chukwuma (2000,p.11) documented the largely repressive, ruthless and criminal legacy bequeathed to Nigeria Police Force by its colonial forerunner: “The British colonial government established police forces in the territory and organized them as constabulary and para-military forces. The Forces were employed in various colonial wars and punitive expeditions. They were also used in maintaining the exploitation and repression of labor. In some of these cases, the police used ‘batons, rifles and revolvers’, to suppress, maim and kill persons who opposed colonial rule and policies....The frequent use of police to scuttle, disperse and break strikes led to the killing of 21 miners and 50 wounded workers during the Enugu colliery strike in 1949.”

According to Johnson (2005,p.3), since April 1, 1930, when the present Nigeria Police Force was formed, there have been little efforts to exorcise the Force from its colonial evils. Hence, “Nigeria Police of the 21st century is still a relic of the 1879 Colony of Lagos Constabulary in spirit and soul...the force has remained trapped in the vision its creator (the British colonial government) crafted for it: an instrument of coercion and oppression.”

The inability of the Nigeria Police to transform itself into a people-friendly force and social service-oriented organization, love and trusted by the public has affected its public image and perception. Bothered by the public image of the Force, the former Inspector-General of Police

Sunday Ehindero (2005,p.9) counseled his men and officers to change their policing methods and eschew illegal practices such as extortion and extra-judicial killings.

According to Obijiofor (2005,p.53), the Nigerian public is yet to develop trust and confidence in the police. A genial relationship between the police and civil society in Nigeria is simply non-existent. It would take a long time, perhaps decades, to establish a good working relationship between the police and civil society. It would also take radical changes in the police, their attitudes to their job, as well as changes to how they respond to public calls for protection from criminal groups.

The Network on Police Reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN) in its *2007 Interim Report on the Nigeria Police* put the Force brutalization and wanton killing of defenseless people in perspective: "The evidence from NOPRIN's monitoring of police practices covering over 400 police stations in 14 States of Nigeria found a police institution whose work has been criminalized. Police personnel kill, torture, extort, and commit rape, safe in the knowledge that they are unlikely to suffer consequences for such misconduct. Such brutal police practices have thus become the routine of policing in Nigeria."

The Punch in its editorial of August 5, 2005, titled "Police and Rights Violation," detailed some largely unwholesome acts perpetrated against members of the public by Nigerian police which have affected public confidence in the Force: "The Police Mobile Force is nicknamed "Kill and Go" because its members are notorious for extra-judicial killings. For refusing to part with a N20 gratification, they have sent many commercial drivers to their early graves while on daily basis, policemen harass law abiding citizens and boast that they can "waste you" and "nothing will happen." When the police arrest bandits or illegally raid streets, drinking parlors and joints, most of those arrested, who could not bribe their way to freedom, are often tortured and dumped in the prison for years on holden charges, without any credible evidence to prosecute them."

Obijiofor (2005,p.51) further reveals the depth of mutual distrust existing between the public and police and its impact on effective policing. He said that The Nigeria community does not trust the Nigeria Police. The police too have no respect for the community. When members of the community witness a crime, they run away from the police rather than run to the police to report the crime. This makes the task of policing very difficult. And given the soured relationship between the police and the members of the public it is not surprising that the Force has been largely ineffective in performing its constitutional roles.

Criminal and Brutal Excesses of Police

Exasperated by the untoward conducts of members of the Nigeria Police, former President Olusegun Obasanjo (2005, p. 8) gave a shocking assessment of the Force at a security retreat in Port Harcourt: "Some robbers have been recruited into the police. Police hire out their guns to armed robbers, what do we do?" In the same vein, Obianaso (2000:24) made a similar damning assessment of the Nigeria Police: "Nigeria Police is an organization that can boast of some of the best robbers Nigeria has ever produced."

Widely criticize for its lunatic recklessness, NOPRIN (2007,p.5) aptly captures the relatively murderous posture of the Nigeria Police: “The number of people killed by the police is impossible to quantify. Mass killings are frequent. The evidence suggests that the police do not keep adequate records of encounter and other killings committed by its personnel or that figures of police killings are deliberately manipulated to produce artificially low statistics of killings...In November 2007, Human Rights Watch estimated that the number of persons killed by the NPF in the eight years since 2000 is in excess of 10,000...an unwritten rule in Police formations in Nigeria that “confirmed” armed robbery suspects should be “escorted”, sent on an “errand”, or “transferred to Abuja”, all euphemisms for summary execution.”

Methodology

The research design for this study was in-depth interview. According to Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells (2009), in-depth interview are conducted on one-on-one with open-ended questions that permit interviewee to give thoughtful responses. The interview was used because it was deemed as the most effective means of gathering information vis-à-vis the subject of the research. The sampling technique was purposive sampling technique. According to Johnson (2012,p.66), it is the selection of sample based on personal judgment of the researchers using a set of criteria determined ahead of time as the rationale for the selection. The researchers carefully selected persons who are highly-knowledgeable in police affairs, and particularly the operations of NPPRD. The following people were interviewed: Olubode Ojajunni, Chief Superintendent of Police and former Lagos State Command Public Relations Officer (presently Commander, MOPOL 7); Emmanuel Ighodalo, Chief Superintendent of Police and former Deputy Force Public Relations Officer (now Divisional Police Officer Alapere Police Station); Stephen Ogundijo, Editor-In-Chief, Security & Safety magazine; and Kemi Asiwaju, former Coordinator, Police Accountability Section, Centre for Law Enforcement Education. They were made to respond to the following questions:

1. What are the strategies employed by the Nigeria Police Public Relations Department (NPPRD) in tackling police abuses, repressive posture, violence and unbridled aggression against the public?
2. What are the efforts of the NPPRD at re-orientating Nigerian police to be public-friendly?
3. What are the feedback mechanisms used by the NPPRD to effectively gauge the public perception of the Force?
4. What are the efforts of the NPPRD at educating members of the public about their constitutional rights and the roles of the police in the society?

The interview questions were given to the interviewees to study for one week before the interview was conducted. This was done in order to afford the interviewee ample time to study the questions and respond appropriately. After the expiration of one week, the researcher then proceeded to interview the selected interviewees on an agreed date and time. The interviewees were tape-recorded and their responses transcribed verbatim. The detailed accounts of their

responses to the questions which border on the structures and operations of NPPRD were analyzed.

Findings and Discussions

For NPPRD to function effectively and achieve its main objective of sustaining favorable public opinion for the Force, it has put in place formidable structures that would boost its operations and forestall police repressive tendencies and abuses against the public. Ojajunni identifies some of these structures: “We have Police Public Complaint Bureau, Police Community Relations Committees and the various organs of the Community-Policing Project scattered all over the country. All these are avenues by which the public can lodge complaints of misconducts on the part of police officers; in respect of brutality, extortion, harassment, incivility or any other acts that are at variance with legal policing duties. These organs also serve as platform for interaction and exchange of ideas between the Force and members of the public. It would be unfair to blame every killing on the police. The Nigeria Police has a set of rules and regulations that govern the use of firearms which are encapsulated in Force Order 337. Although, the abuse of the rules could lead to extra-judicial killings, however, such cases are few and far in between. The police have more to gain from a living suspect than a dead one, because a living suspect would assist the police in their investigations.

“In addition, it is the operational norm of the Nigeria Police to sustain mutually beneficial relationship with members of the public. Hence, all the major police formations throughout the country have public relations section manned by an officer: from the states command, zonal commands, ports command, railway command, police colleges to the Force headquarters, they all have vibrant public relations section.”

In essence, if police operatives know that their misdeeds are reported to the authorities and disciplinary actions taken against them, they would become more careful in dealing with members of the public. They would respect the rights of the citizenry and maintain professional demeanor in the face of threats and resist the urge to use force even in a situation where they are disobeyed.

NPPRD is sparing no effort at evolving strategies aimed at tackling police abuses, violence and unfriendly posture against the public. Ighodalo summed up the efforts of the Department at enthroning people-oriented police force: “The Nigeria Police is intensifying the training and retraining of police operatives on how to handle firearms and when to use them, forbidding policemen who had not served up to three years from using firearms, barring rank and file from using firearms during rallies, forbidding policemen from taking firearms home, dismissal and prosecution of any errant policeman who is involved in extra-judicial killings or other serious crimes.”

Ogundijo also revealed the joint initiatives of PCRC and NPPRD at tackling police menace: “The NPPRD in conjunction with PCRC organizes workshops for officers of the lower cadre on professional decorum and the handling of firearms, so as to prevent accidental discharge and indiscriminate shootings. It would not be reasonable for a policeman in a bid to apprehend

fleeing criminals to shoot into a crowd. It is much more reasonable he allows five criminals to escape, if the life of an innocent person is being threatened. I believe the hoodlums would not have it every day. If they escape today, they can be caught another day.”

Asiwaju hinged the loathing of the police by the public on the law of sowing and reaping. She posited that “a repressive police that thrives on inhuman treatment, extortion, extra-judicial killings and other heinous criminal tendencies; should not expect to attract the love and friendliness of the civil populace.” She counseled NPPRD to “inculcate through training in police operatives the culture of fairness, truth, justice and respect for human dignity.”

Over the years, the Nigeria Police has suffered severe public opprobrium as a result of its operatives’ inhuman and unprofessional conducts. The Force is widely reported in the media as the most corrupt and hated organization in Nigeria because its operatives’ penchant for extra-judicial killings, extortion, human right abuse, inappropriate use of lethal force, illegal arrest and detention (Obijiofor 2005)

In order to mitigate public hatred of the police and engender friendly cooperation between the Force and civil populace, NPPRD has evolved programs aimed at re-orientating Nigeria Police to be public-friendly. According to Ighadalo: “The Inspector-General of Police is laying an enduring foundation that will bequeath a new improved police force to Nigerians, in terms of professional conduct, public relations and competence in crime fighting. Torture has been going on in the Police Stations, the situation in our cells is worrisome. Henceforth, there will be no more brutality, suspects would be given tea to drink and good food to eat at the expense of the state which makes provision for such things but were diverted in the past. Bail is free and the police do not have any right to detain a suspect over 24 hours for a bail offence, as there is no Holden charge in the law. It is an aberration, Holden charge is illegal.”

Ojajunni recounted the activities of the Department that are geared toward dousing animosity between members of the Force and the public: “NPPRD always organize workshops, seminars and lectures that bring policemen and members of the public together. These kinds of interaction have produced cordial relationship between the police and the civil populace. It is also an avenue for sorting out issues that often create friction between the police and the public.”

Ogundijo affirmed that “such forum usually provide an opportunity to educate police rank and file who interface more with the public on the need to eschew brutality, coercion, human right abuse in their day-to-day dealings with members of the public. Instead, they should be seen as gentle, kind and friendly cops, and not public scarecrow.”

The foregoing have amply demonstrated that NPPRD has keyed into the former Inspector-General of Police Sunday Ehindero’s (2005)10-Point Program – a guiding philosophy of policing with integrity, where the notions of justice, fairness and pursuit of common good is the focus. He avers that police hierarchy should endeavor to reconcile the maintenance of law and order with the protection of freedom. Ehindero listed the 10-Point Program as: “Effective crime prevention and control through intelligence-led policing; combat of violent and economic crimes; conflict prevention and resolution; community policing and police-public partnership; zero-tolerance for police corruption and indiscipline; reorganization of the investigation outfit of the Force to

ensure prompt and timely investigation of cases; contribute positively to improving the quality of justice delivery in Nigeria; empower field officers operationally by devolution of powers to improve the standards, reliability, consistency and responsiveness of the service; and re-orientating the Force Public Relations Department to focus on improving public perception and image of the Force.”

The former IGP further posits that police need to respect the rights of suspects in custody and carry out effective policing within the dictates of democratic principles. “We must police within the concept of social justice, fairplay and integrity. We must balance security with freedom and accountability for our actions, and that is accountability to the people and the law.”

NPPRD is the Force’s eyes, ears and mouth. In this respect, it is saddled with the responsibility of gathering information on how the public perceive the Force. In order to function effectively in this regard, NPPRD has devised feedback mechanisms to gauge the public perception of the Nigeria Police. Ojajunni elaborated on how the Department has been monitoring the attitude of the public toward the Force: “The feedbacks are gotten through seminars and workshops the NPPRD organizes in conjunction with civil organizations, PCRC, Police Public Complaint Bureau (PPCB), radio and television programs. The seminars and workshops provide the forum for interaction between the police and civil populace. They offer members of the public the opportunity to comment freely on the performance of men and officers of the Force. The PCRC is made up of members of the public who are of proven integrity.

“The Committee has been playing a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the police and the public. Radio and television programs such as *The Police and You*, *Crime Fighters and Security Watch* offer wider spectrum for interaction between the police and the public. These programs have afforded members of the public unrestricted access to express their grievances against the police, report erring police officers and commend the Force. The PPCB has been ingenious in monitoring public opinion – it mounted specially built metal-boxes in strategic areas of state capitals to solicit for suggestions and complaints from the public concerning the activities of the police; which are tailored towards encouraging the civil populace to express their grievances and opinions anonymously.”

According to Ogundijo, “PCRC has been helpful in monitoring the activities of the police in its various localities and compiling dossiers on the performance of police personnel. And it has also been furnishing NPPRD with recommendations aimed at improving relations between the civil populace and the police.”

However, Asiwaju posited that the attitude of the civil populace toward the police is a direct response to police behavioral pattern. She commended the Community Policing Project for serving as a reliable feedback mechanism. “The system brings the police nearer to the people. It enables both sides to appreciate the qualities, expectations and shortcomings of each other. It is the product of this interaction that would indicate whether the police have a cordial relationship or not with the civil populace.”

The hallmark of efficient policing is preventive policing. And this includes educating members of the public about their constitutional rights and the roles of the police in the society. Ojajunni expounded on the efforts of NPPRD at creating awareness on the activities of the Force and the constitutional rights of the citizenry: “At any given forum, NPPRD do not hesitate to educate the public on the law guiding police activities. The Force Order on the use of firearms is pasted on the notice boards of Police Stations throughout the country. It is conspicuously displayed so that members of the public can get to read it. Our belief is that such information would empower the civil populace and stem incessant firearms abuse by errant policeman.

“Also, members of the public are free to walk into any Police Station to make enquiries or see their local Divisional Police Officer on security matters. We publish emergency telephone numbers through which people can reach the NPPRD for enquiries. NPPRD enlightens people at seminars and workshops about their constitutional rights and obligations toward the police. They are often told that bail is free, that they have the right to ask for warrant of arrest and identification of the policeman who comes to their house or office to effect their arrest. They are also educated not to take laws into their hands by way of prescribing jungle justice to suspects – that the police are the only constitutionally assigned agency to prosecute offenders. And if a law breaker is apprehended, such a person should be handed over to the police for proper prosecution.”

Recommendations and Conclusion

In spite of the alluring structures and programs of NPPRD, the image of the Force has largely not resonated with the kind of police force desired by the civil populace: a force that eschews inappropriate use of lethal force, illegal arrest and detention, extortion, intimidation, corruption, sexual violence and extra-judicial killings. However, the following recommendations would guide NPPRD in its bid to re-engineer the Force, slough off its undesirable reputations and turn it into a humane law enforcement agency that is respected, trusted and befriended by the civil populace as the protector of lives and property.

Getting Members of the Force to key into NPPRD’s Programmes

The NPPRD efforts at endearing the police to the public are ineffectual because there is no synergy between it and the Force’s two largest and most important Departments -- Operations, General Investigations and Intelligence. The core of police activities is performed by men and officers of these departments: they take measures to prevent the commission of crime; investigate the commission of crime; interrogate suspects; they search persons and premises in order to detect, prevent or investigate the commission of crime; among others. These are the police personnel who interface daily with the public, and whose unprofessional postures have largely tainted the image of the Force, thereby causing the relationship between the police and the public to become increasingly thorny.

NPPRD spirited efforts at repairing the damaged relationship between the Force and the public in the forms of seminars, workshops, publications, radio and television programs, and

other strategies have failed to stem police abuses and coercive excesses because there is little or no working relationship between NPPRD and the Force key departments in its bid to anchor modern policing ideals and democratic values in the heart of police personnel. Understandably, men and officers of these departments are not keying into the laudable programmes of NPPRD because of their corrupt tendencies: many of them serve as conduit through which “illegal and criminal contributions find their way through the system as booties to all the hierarchy.”

Autonomy of NPPRD and Recruitment of Professionals

At present, NPPRD is subsumed under the “A” Department (Administration), and this classification has adversely affected its operation. For NPPRD to realize its potentials and professionally discharge its functions, it must commence the recruitment of professionals into its fold. Steps should be taken to professionalize the Department in its entirety and discard the retrogressive policy of posting “General Duty” officers who lack professional training in public relations (PR) to the Department.

Public relations is critical to the operations of the Force, NPPRD should be elevated to the status of a full-fledged department which must be manned by a police officer who is versed in PR practice, and must not be lower than the rank of a Deputy Inspector-General (DIG) – he should be able to participate at the highest decision making body of the Force. The present system whereby NPPRD is headed by an officer of the rank of a Deputy Commissioner (most times lacks professional competence in PR practice), who in turn report to the DIG in-charge of the Administration Department, do not augur well for the Department as this could stunt initiatives and hurt its operations.

Hiring PR Consulting Firms to Launder Police Image

Dearth of PR professionals or experts in NPPRD has severely hampered its ability to effectively tackle the image problem of the Force. In this respect, the Department should outsource some of its jobs that require expertise execution. The consulting firms would serve as outside eyes, and because they are detached from the system, they can also bring civilian perspectives to bear on the job – by designing a PR framework that would transform the Nigerian police into operationally capable, public-friendly and accountable police force that will advance democratic governance in the country.

Oversight by Independent Citizenry

Over the years, police monitoring teams have failed to effectively tackled police unprofessional conducts and anti-people acts. The most promising kind of reform is one based on the concept of civilian oversight of the police. And this should involve people of different strata of the society: students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, businessmen, former police officers and licensed private security practitioners. A monitoring team comprising mainly civilians of proven integrity and sound educational background should be constituted to investigate complaints of misconducts or disciplinary infractions against police operatives.

Holistic Approach to Recruitment and Training

It is very sad that recruitment into the Force has become all-comers affair – All that is required of any prospective police officer are Secondary School Certificate with five credit passes, including English language and mathematics; good physical stature and stamina. Because of the nation's poor record keeping culture, it is possible for a convicted criminal in a state in the Southwest to emerge as a police officer in another state in the Northwestern part of the country. Recruitment into the Force is very porous. And like everything Nigerian, the process has been compromised: The Nigeria Police has become a magnet for crooks and their ilk. Recruitment is done without rigorous background check. There is no fool-proof mechanism for vetting the claims and background of recruits. This explains why criminalities thrive in the Force, as people of questionable credentials and characters find their way into the organization unchecked.

The Force recruitment system scarcely pays attention to the psychological and emotional stability of the recruits. The resultant effect is that people of fiery temper who are eventually recruited soon become uncontrollably dangerous elements in the society. NPPRD should champion the cause of administering psychological tests on recruits in order to determine their true human nature and whether they are fit to perform the task of protecting lives and property.

The curricula for the training of police officers, especially at the entry level are inadequate and narrow in scope. There is so much emphasis on physical exercise and police duties. Subjects such as computer science, psychology, sociology, political science, geography, law and public relations which could have prepared the recruits to perform their roles effectively in the society are left out. Also, NPPRD should ensure that police officers are properly trained in their various roles and services to the Nigerian society.

Fairness and Respect for all Members of the Public

NPPRD should regularly train police operatives on how to deal with the civil populace. They should be educated on how to accord respect and equal treatment to members of the public irrespective of their social status. The Department should design measures that would enhance police-public cordiality. For instance, police officers should be schooled on how to address members of the public. Politeness and decorum should form the basis of their interaction with the civil public. Words such as “Sir,” “Mr.” or “Madam” should preface their remarks. Instead of the commonly uttered: “Park! Come out. Bring your particulars.”

Indeed, NPPRD has structures such as Police Community Relations Committee and Police Public Complaints Bureau which if effectively put to use would help stamp out unethical practices in the Force and improve police-public relations. In all, this study has shown that NPPRD is a pivotal arm of the Force that should be empowered, adequately funded and re-engineered to perform its roles effectively. Indeed, the Department is crucial to the successful transformation of Nigeria Police into a friendly, trusted and efficient police force.

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