
COMMUNITY POLICING STRATEGIES IN AKWA IBOM STATE, 1999-2019

Ubongabasi Israel, *PhD*

Department of History and International Studies

University of Uyo

Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *The concept of community policing has remained a subject of interest among scholars since the twentieth century, especially as the need to checkmate the surge in crime among various societies continued to take top position in governments' scale of preference. Given the foregoing premise, this research undertakes a historical examination of community policing in Akwa Ibom State between 1999 – when Akwa Ibom State reverted to civilian rule – and 2019 – marking a year of democratic elections in the state. Deploying the historical method laced with both descriptive and analytical approach with primary and secondary sourced evidence, this research addresses the question of crime prevention through community policing technique. Moreso, the research unearths the strategies employed in community policing as well as the challenges of community policing in Akwa Ibom State. It, therefore, postulates that even though the concept of community policing has long been introduced in Akwa Ibom area, the period between 1999 and 2019 appeared to witness more concerted efforts from government in the utility of the this system towards the purpose of combating and prevention of crime in Akwa Ibom State.*

KEYWORDS: community policing, strategies, Akwa Ibom , State

INTRODUCTION

The mechanism to prevent crimes is dynamic. Murphy notes that preventing crimes does not only target the causes of offences, but also in the long-run, it does so in the most cost-effective ways.¹ This denotes that the prevention of crime should involve all activities that aim to drastically reduce, discourage or deter such occurrences irrespective the situation at hand. Thus, in order to achieve such goal, certain circumstances would require adjustments, alteration in crime prevention techniques, as well as the introduction of powerful discouragement by means of strong system of criminal justice.² In contemporary Nigeria, the rate of crimes as recorded across several communities appears unprecedented. Some of these crimes include, but are not exhaustive to murder, kidnapping for ransom, rape, robbery, assault, community clashes, and drugs dealings, among several others. In a bid to curb these crimes and many others, the security structure of Nigeria had continued to receive adequate adjustments in a bid to meet up with the elasticity of crimes in the country. A critical measure that had been adopted is the concept today known as community policing.

¹ P. Murphy, *Management Project: Design and Presentation*, London: Chapman and Hall, 2000, 24.

² M. Shiner, B. Thom and S. MacGregor, *Exploring Community Responses to Drugs*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004, 23-30.

The whole idea of community policing was first initiated by the Metropolitan Police District, London. Philosophically, it was aimed at promoting organizational strategies which support the systematic use of partnership and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime and social disorders.³ With focus on the Nigerian crime spectrum, the need to imitate community policing had become a necessary step as it appears that the people who are to be policed must contribute towards an effective policing operation.⁴ Coming to term that community policing have a role to play in the fight against crime, former President Olusegun Obasanjo floated the Nigeria Policing Project on 27 April 2004, which proposes the idea of community policing into selected pilot divisions.⁵ Moreover, Abubakar S.R Matazu has argued that the whole idea of community policing can be understood in a trilogy: community partnership, organizational transformation and problem solving.⁶ Thus, community policing has become a core prerequisite in the securitization of communities in today Nigeria. These understandings enable the police to work closely with community members in the fight against crime.⁷

Prior to the institutionalization of community policing, several communities across Nigeria have employed the vigilante strategy to combat crime along instituted authorities. It is by no mean the most effective way of fighting crime, yet the vigilante system has thrived and has its own advantages when it has to do with keeping the community safe. Several studies have been conducted towards that direction. However, based on findings as presented in some of these studies, certain lacuna in the role of vigilantism in crime fighting are yet to be addressed. Some of the most remarkable works on vigilante role in crime fighting in Nigeria include the work of Laurent Fouchard. Fouchard's work entitled "A New Name for an Old Practice: Vigilante in South-Western Nigeria,"⁸ Fouchard's work traces the changing dynamics of vigilante and its functionality in community crime not just in South-western Nigeria, but in pockets of areas across Nigeria. Juxtaposing such scenario to the Akwa Ibom scenario, prior to the idea of combating crimes through the NPF, the people making up present Akwa Ibom had employed traditional

³Charles Moose, "The Theory and Practice of Community Policing: An Evaluation of the Iris Court Demonstration Project," *Phd Dissertation*, Portland State University, 1993, 5-6.

⁴O. D. Onyeije, O. Anyaoha and A. Osita-Njoku, "Community Policing and Crime Control in Isiala Mbano Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Vol. 24, Issue 1, Series 6, (January 2019), 81-86. https://www.academia.edu/38271571/Community_Policing_and_Crime_Control_in_Isiala_Mbano_Local_Governm ent_Area_of_Imo_State_Nigeria. Accessed 11 April 2020.

⁵Peter J. Okoro, "Community Policing: The Nigerian Experience: FID, 2015" https://www.academia.edu/3030198/Community_Policing_The_Nigeria_experience. Accessed 11 April 2020.

⁶Abubakar S. R. Matazu, "Internal Security: The Imperative of Intelligence and Community Partnership," in *National Security: Intelligence and Community Partnership Approach*, edited by Solomon E. Arase (ed.), Abuja: LawLords Publications, 2013, 48.

⁷This position was the view of former Inspector-General of the Nigeria Police Force, Ogonnaya Onovo during a public discourse in 2010.

⁸Laurent Fouchard, "A New Name for an Old Practice: Vigilantes in South-Western Nigeria," *IAI (Africa)*, Vol. 78, Issue 1, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.3366/E000197200800003X>. Accessed 14 April 2020.

measures in combating crimes in the society. Some aspects of how these were done in pre-colonial Ibibioland have been articulated by Uwem J. Akpan in “Law and Public Order in Ibibio Traditional Society.”⁹ The primary aim is a concise historicization of the concept of community policing in Akwa Ibom state, as it will help underscore the changes and continuities that had existed since 1999.

The Concept of Community Policing

The concept of community policing has received quite a high degree of attention. As a matter of fact, several scholars have shed light on some pertinent issues on the concept. In that light, Kasali explores the idea of community policing based on the relationship between the host community and the police force. Kasali further holds the view that community policing speaks much about the relationship between the police and the civic society.¹⁰ Succinctly, he writes thus:

Community policing involves the importance of active partnership between the police, civic societies and other agencies of government who work together in identifying and solving problems to improve the overall quality of life as a whole and crime prevention in particular.¹¹

In an attempt to conceptualize the whole idea of community policing, Kasali traces the historical formation of community policing, which he situated within the context of the United States of America’s (USA) effort to integrate the police force into the public life. That is to make a shift from police personnel to collaborators in the security affairs of the nation for optimal efficiency and responsiveness.

However, contrary to Kasali’s position, it has been argued that the whole idea of community policing goes way back into the 19th century in London. In fact, community policing was first initiated in London in 1829 by Metropolitan Police District. With this initiative the British parliament hoped to address the soaring crime rate in and around the nation’s capital when it was growing. Meanwhile, Sir Robert Peel established the London Metropolitan Police and he set forth a number of principles, one of which could be considered the seed of community policing: “the police are the public and the public are the police”¹²

For a number of reasons, the police lost sight of this relationship as the central organizing concept for police service. Researchers have suggested that the reform era in government, which began in the early 1900’s, coupled with a nationwide move toward professionalization, resulted in the

⁹ Uwem J. Akpan, “Law and Public Order in Ibibio Traditional Society,” *Research Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 3, No.2, 2017, 1-12. <https://iiardpub.org/get/RJHCS/VOL.%203%20NO.%202%202017/Law%20and%20Public.pdf>. Accessed 14 April 2020.

¹⁰ P. U. Kasali, *Alternative Approach to Policing in Nigeria*, Lagos: Jovics, 2006, 56.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 45.

¹² Chris Braiden, *Enriching Police Roles, Police Management: Issues and Perspectives*, Washington, DC: Police Executive Forum, 1992, 45.

separation of the police from the community¹³ Therefore, police managers assigned officers to rotating shifts and moved them frequently from one geographical location to another to eliminate corruption. Management also instituted a policy of centralized control, designed to ensure compliance with standard operating procedures and to encourage a professional aura of impartiality.

Further, Ajayi maintains that majority of the police personnel and most members of the public seem to perceive community policing as an approach of engendering relations between the police and community, and seem to be managed through a departmental function, rather than a policing philosophy that is focused upon providing best quality service and therefore should inform each and every activity.¹⁴ Thus, the success of the partnership between the police and community largely lies on the amount of trust that exists in their relations. Ajayi emphasizes on trust as the basic ingredients of relationship between the police and the community. He concisely notes that certainly, trust is the value that underlie and connects the components of community partnership and problem solving. A foundation of trust will allow police to form close relationship with the community that will produce great achievements.¹⁵

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN AKWA IBOM STATE

Akwa Ibom State is located at the southeastern part of Nigeria. It is bounded by Cross River State on the east, by the Gulf of Guinea on the south, by Rivers State on the west, by Abia State on the north.¹⁶ Its major cities include Uyo (the state capital), Eket, Ikot Abasi, Ikot-Ekpene, and Oron.¹⁷ Akwa Ibom State is divided into thirty-one (31) local government political units, also referred to as local government areas (LGAs); these are: Abak, Eastern Obolo, Eket, Esit Eket, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Etinan, Ibeno, Ibesikpo-Asutan, Ibiono-Ibom, Ika, Ikono, Ikot Ekpene, Ikot-Abasi, Ini, Itu, Mbo, Mkpato-Enin, Nsit-Atai, Nsit-Ibom, Nsit-Ubium, Obot-Akara, Okobo, Onna, Oron, Oruk Anam, Udung-Uko, Ukanafun, Uruan, Urue-Offong/Oruko and Uyo.¹⁸ Standard divisional police stations are situated across the length and breadth of the State with the State Police Headquarters located at Ikot Akpan Abia, in Uyo - the state capital. In Nigeria, the organizational structure of the Nigeria Police Force is structured into 12 units/ zones, and Akwa Ibom State is grouped under Zone 6, along with Cross River State, Ebonyi State and River State. Zone 6 has its headquarters at Calabar.¹⁹ Like other zones in Nigeria, Zone 6 is under the command of the Assistant Inspector-General (AIG), who is directly answerable to the Inspector-General of Police (IGP). Like in other states of Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State Police Command is headed by a Commissioner of Police (CP). The CP has a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) to assist him

¹³ G. Kelling and M. H. Moore, *The Evolving Strategy of Policing: Perspectives on Policing Bulletin* (No.4), Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1988.

¹⁴ J. O. Ajayi, *Crime Wave and Public Confidence*, Ibadan: Longman, 2003, 78.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

¹⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Akwa-Ibom>

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*

in running the affairs of the command. Directly under the CP is an Area Commander in charge of all the Divisional Police Officers (DPOs), who also have the station officers and police posts under them. Each police station has area of jurisdiction (area of operation).

There are five departments in the headquarter of Akwa Ibom State Police Command and they include: 'A' Department for Administration and Finance; 'B' Department for Operations; 'C' Department for Logistics and Supplies; 'D' Department for Investigation and Intelligence; 'E' Department for Training and General Policy on Manpower Development; and 'F' Department for Research and Planning.²⁰ Other policing outfits in Akwa Ibom State include the State Security Service (SSS), or the Directorate of State Security (DSS), local vigilante outfits, and other paramilitary groups complement the policing of the area. These security outfits are set up by the government to provide effective police service and security for the rising population in the district. Before the introduction of community policing, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) was profiled with issues related: corruption, human rights, abuses associated with extortion and bribery, arbitrary arrests and detention, mass arrests and detention, prolonged unlawful detention, extortion using threats and acts of physical abuse, torture as a tool of extortion, sexual assault vulnerable women, extrajudicial killings at checkpoints, undermining the criminal investigation, justice for sale, requiring victims to fund criminal investigations, turning cases against complainants, police protection for sale, unequal protection under the law, etc. These cases led to lack of trust between the people and the Nigeria Police Force. However, with the introduction of community policing this bad image of the police was redeemed as trust and confidence was restored between the people and police personnel.

In Nigeria, community policing was formally launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo on 27 April, 2004, which was to ensure that democratic principles are upheld in the country. As at this time of its introduction, community policing was not being implemented in every part of the country including Akwa Ibom State; although community policing had been an issue of concern from the time Akwa Ibom State was created in 1987.²¹ One of the major reasons for this setback was military incursion into the Nigeria political administration. However, as community policing project was initiated by Nigeria's democratic government in 2004 (five years after democratic transition), some states in the country began to key into the democratic agenda which was targeted towards ensuring community policing. While it was believed that the programme will soon sweep over every part of the country, many states (including Akwa Ibom State) had problems keying into this democratic initiative.²²

²⁰*ibid.*

²¹ Interview with DSP Okon Martin, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Akwa Ibom State Police eadquarter, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 10/6/2019.

²²*ibid*

Community policing was successfully adopted in Akwa Ibom State on January 9, 2012, by Godswill Obot Akpabio (2007-2015), the former governor of Akwa Ibom State.²³ This was to tackle the rising security challenges in the state and to address the dearth of professionalism among security operatives which has led to deficiency of trust among members of the public. Also, there were problems associated with migration, high unemployment rate, alcoholism, violence among political parties, poor quality of the infrastructure, neglected children and soft judgment punishment. Also, Akwa Ibom State was caught in the web of crime dilemma, manifesting in the convulsive upsurge of both violent and non-violent crimes.²⁴ Notable in this regard were the rising incidents of armed robbery, cult clashes leading to rising incidents of murder rape, politically motivated assassinations, ransom-driven kidnapping, electoral crimes, housebreakings, stock thefts, as well as other electoral and political crimes.²⁵ These issues were ravaging the state like a tsunami and spreading a climate of fears and anxieties about public safety. The upsurge of crime was blossoming as the state was on the global crime map, which has also been the status quo since 1987.²⁶ A report by Premium Times, indicates that these issues have been there for decades and were traceable to poverty, poor parental upbringing, greed, get rich quick syndrome, as well as inadequate crime control model among others.²⁷

Community policing was initially flagged-off in Uyo (the state capital), with some police patrol vans known as Quick Response Squad (QRTS), comprising of mobile police officers who mounted security surveillance at different locations (strategic crime hot-spots) in the city, which include: Ibom Plaza, Ikot Ekpene Road, Abak Road, Nwaniba Road, Aka Road, Ikpa Road, (around the University of Uyo axis) etc.²⁸ Some public awareness programmes were also created to enlighten the public on the roles in crime fight.²⁹ This was followed by official registration of local vigilante groups to assist the police in fighting crime in some areas. With time, this initiative was gradually introduced in every local government area of the State. To facilitate government efforts, a strong wireless communication channel was opened for the patrol officers and members of the public to report real-time crime incidents.³⁰ Also, training and re-training of personnel were undertaken on the principles and practice of community policing. Police in the State were equipped by the State government in terms of payment and equipment to facilitate the initiative.³¹

²³ Interview with the Police Public Relation Officer, DSP. Macdon O. Odiko, 40 Police headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 8/5/2019.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Nigeria Data Portal, Crime Statistics, Akwa Ibom State. Published by source: 03 July 2014. Available at: <https://nigeria.opendataforafrica.org/ygmagic/crime-statistics?states=1000040-akwa-ibom>

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Premium Times, Fatal Crimes in Nigeria by Nigeria watch <http://premiumtimes.org/media/html/Ukoji2016.pdf>.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Interview with the Police Public Relation Officer, DSP. Macdon O. Odiko, 40 Police headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 8/5/2019

Community policing project in Akwa Ibom State was founded on the principle that in a democratic society, the police are entrusted by their fellow citizens to protect and serve the public's fundamental rights to liberty, equality and justice under the law. With some initial setbacks, the community policing project in the State had develop from simple to a more sophisticated community policing concept over the years.³²Community policing model adopted by the Akwa Ibom State Police Command in its pilot Divisions had successfully integrated many policing concepts into a fully functioning model of community policing, including the policing excellence model, neighbourhood policing, intelligence-led policing, conflict prevention; and student-centered problem-solving training approaches.³³ NPF personnel in the State who have been trained in Community Policing proactively act beyond simple crime fighting and law enforcement. They relied on the community, decentralize to the neighbourhood level to be more accessible, maintained contact and co-operation with their communities, engaged in tactics to target specific problems identified by the whole community, work in partnership with other public and private organizations and continually evaluate and adapt their strategies. It also follows that Community policing have enabled intelligence-led policing because of the increased level of trust among partners.

Also, the Community policing model adopted by the Akwa Ibom State police command was based upon the following key principles: Community policing which relied upon active partnerships between the police and the communities. It required the police to be committed to high quality service delivery. A community policing which emphasized that appropriate skills, attitudes and behaviours of police personnel must be developed and maintained to achieve high quality service delivery, through a student-centred problem-solving approach to training, mentoring and re-training; Community Policing which required the police to involve their communities in agreeing policing priorities; It also entails the police adopting a proactive problem-solving approach.³⁴

Strategies of Community Policing in Akwa Ibom Communities

According to Inspector Monday Udoh, community policing perspective in Akwa Ibom State differs in a number of ways from a traditional policing perspective. The community policing project adopted for every local government area of the State is structured in such a manner that the police shared power with residents of every community, and critical decisions were made at the neighbourhood level.³⁵ First, this has to do with establishing police stations in every nook and cranny of the State. In achieving the goals of community policing in the State, three essential and complimentary components or operational strategies were adopted and implemented and these include: Community partnership, Problem solving, and Change management:

³²*ibid.*

³³*ibid.*

³⁴Interview with the Police Public Relation Officer, DSP. Macdon O. Odiko, 40 Police headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 8/5/2019.

³⁵Interview with ASP Monday Udoh, Assistant Superintendent, 40 Police headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 15/7/2019.

Community Partnership

Establishing and maintaining mutual trust between indigenes of the State and the police is the main goal of the first component of community policing. Since 2012, Akwa Ibom State Police command has always recognized the need for cooperation with the community and has encouraged members of the community to come forward with crime-fighting information. The police no longer view community as a passive presence connected to the police by an isolated incident or series of incidents. The community's concerns with crime and disorder become the target of efforts by the police and the community working together.³⁶

Problem- Solving

Problem-solving requires a lot more thought, energy, and action than traditional incidents-based police responses to crime and disorder. In full partnership, the police and a community's residents and business owners identify core problems, propose solutions, and implement a solution. Thus, community members identify the concerns that they feel were most threatening to their safety and well-being. Those areas of concern then became priorities for joint police-community interventions. For this problem-solving process to operate effectively, the police had to devote time and attention to discovering community's concerns, and they recognized the validity of those concerns. Series of town-hall meetings have been held between the communities and the police to proffer solutions on crime-fighting.³⁷

Change Management

Forging community policing partnerships and implementing problem-solving strategies necessitated assigning new responsibilities and adopting a flexible style of management. Traditionally, patrol officers had been accorded lower status in police organizations and have been dominated by the agency's command structure. Community policing in the State, in contrast, emphasized the value of the patrol function and the patrol officer as an individual. It requires the shifting of initiative, decision making, and responsibility downward within the police organization. The officer became responsible for managing the delivery of police services to the community. Patrol officers were the most familiar with the needs and concerns of their communities and were in the best position to forge the close ties with the community that lead to effective solutions to local problems. Under community policing, police management guide, rather than dominate, the actions of the patrol officer ensured that they have the necessary resources to solve the problems in their communities. Management determined the guiding principles to convert the philosophy of the agency to community policing and then to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies implemented.³⁸

³⁶ Interview with ASP Monday Udoh, Assistant Superintendent, 40 Police headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 15/7/2019.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ Interview with ASP Monday Udoh, Assistant Superintendent, 40 Police headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 15/7/2019.

Effective community partnership and problem solving would require the mastery of new responsibilities and the adoption of a flexible style of management. Community policing in the State emphasized the value of the patrol function and the patrol officer as an individual. Patrol officers were traditionally accorded low status despite the scope and sensitivity of the tasks they perform, community policing followed a shifting of initiative, decision making, and responsibility downward within the police organization.³⁹ With this responsibility comes wide-ranging discretionary and decision-making power. Under community policing, patrol officers were given broader freedom to decide what should be done and how it should be done in their communities - they assumed managerial responsibility for the delivery of police services to their assigned area. Patrol officers were the most familiar with the needs and strengths of their communities and were thus in the best position to forge the close ties with the community which led to effective solutions to local problems. The shift in status and duties of the patrol officer was critical to the community partnership and problem-solving components of community policing in Akwa Ibom State.

Assignment stability of these neighbourhood officers was considered essential if they were to develop close working relationships within their communities because they were expected to engage in activities other than simply reacting to calls for service. Having officers periodically rotate among the shifts impeded their ability to identify problems. It also discouraged creative solutions to impact the problems, because the officers end up rotating away from the problems. Thus, a sense of responsibility to identify and resolve problems is lost. Likewise, management cannot hold the officers accountable to deal with problems if the officers are frequently rotated from one shift to another.⁴⁰

The enhanced role of the patrol officer had enormous organizational and managerial implications. The entire police organization are structured, managed and operated in a manner that supported the efforts of the patrol officer and that encouraged a cooperative approach to solving problems. Under the State community policing project, command is no longer centralized, and many decisions now come from the bottom up instead of from the top down. Greater decision-making power was given to those closest to the situation with the expectation that this change will improve the overall performance of the agency. This transformation in command structure was not only sound management but was also crucial to the creation of meaningful and productive ties between the police and the community. This view is in line with Malcom Sparrow, Mark Moore and David Kennedy:

To establish a partnership with the community, the police must move to empower two groups: the public itself and the street officers who serve it most closely and regularly. Only when the public has a real voice in setting police priorities will its needs be taken seriously; only when street

³⁹ Chris Braiden, "Enriching Traditional Police Roles." In: Joseph, E. Brann and Suzanne, Whalley, *Police Management: Issues and Perspectives*. (Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum: 1992), p.108.

⁴⁰ Timothy N. Oettmeier, and Bieck H. William, *Developing a Policing Style for Neighborhood Policing*. (Houston: Houston Police Department, 1987.), p.67.

officers have the operational latitude to take on the problems they encounter with active departmental backing will those needs really be addressed.⁴¹

Community policing alters the contemporary functions of supervisors and managers. Under community policing, management serves to guide, rather than dominate, the actions of patrol officers and to ensure that officers have the necessary resources to solve the problems in their communities. Creativity and innovation must be fostered if satisfactory solutions to long-standing community problems are to be found.⁴²

The adoption of community policing in the State required recognizing that the new responsibilities and decision-making power of the neighbourhood patrol officers are supported, guided, and encouraged by the entire organization. In addition, it required establishing clearly stated values that provide both the police organization and the public with a clear sense of policing with expanded focus and direction.

The guiding principles of community policing is ultimately about values - specifically, the change in values that is needed to adapt policing to these changing times. Values were ingrained in the very culture of the community policing project of the State and were reflected in its objectives, in its policies, and in the actions of its personnel. According to Robert Wasserman and Mark H. Moore:

Values are the beliefs that guide an organization and the behaviour of its employees... The most important beliefs are those that set forth the ultimate purposes of the organization. They provide the organization with its *raison d'être* for outsiders and insiders alike and justify the continuing investment in the organization's enterprise... [They] influence substantive and administrative decisions facing the organization; they lend a coherence and predictability to top management's actions and the responses to the actions of employees. This helps employees make proper decisions and use their discretion with confidence that they are contributing to rather than detracting from organizational performance.⁴³

A clear statement of beliefs and goals gave direction to the police and helped to ensure that values are transformed into appropriate actions and behaviours. The police were committed to the values embodied by such a mission statement. This mission statement was widely disseminated both

⁴¹Malcom K. Sparrow, Mark H. Moore and David M. Kennedy, *Implementing Community Policing. Perspectives on Policing* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice and John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1990), p.2.

⁴²Malcom K. Sparrow, Mark H. Moore and David M. Kennedy, *Implementing Community Policing. Perspectives on Policing* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice and John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1990), pp.2-3.

⁴³Robert Wasserman and Mark H. Moore, *Values in Policing: Perspectives on Policing*. (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice and John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1988). pp.1 - 3.

inside and outside the police organization to garner public support and to facilitate accountability. As noted by Lee Brown:

Community policing relies heavily on the articulation of policing values that incorporate citizens involvement in matters that directly affect the safety and quality of neighborhood life. The culture of the police department therefore becomes one that not only recognizes the merits of community involvement but also seeks to organize and manage departmental affairs in ways that are consistent with such beliefs. Planners need to assess what specific behaviours by organizational members support or undermine the stated values. This assessment requires that the values be defined in operational terms such that an observer can know whether any particular employee action is on target or off target... Planners must also think clearly about how management will know whether the desired changes are taking place; feedback and evaluative steps must be developed.⁴⁴

According to ASP Jonah Akpan, community policing in the State relies on the establishment of a clear, unambiguous link of values to behaviours. By creating a system of performance measurement, specific operational meaning was given to seemingly abstract values. The guiding values central to community policing in the State are trust, cooperation, communication, ingenuity, integrity, initiative, discretion, leadership, responsibility, respect, and a broadened commitment to public safety and security.⁴⁵ A succinct mission statement that embodies these values and that is widely communicated to personnel, local government, and members of the community formed the basis of assessment systems that match actions and behaviours to the goals of community policing.

Philosophy and Organizational Strategy

As consumers of police services, the people of the State in every community are informed about the process of problem-solving and change. This strategy describes the ways the police and the community can forge partnerships and work together as co-producers of a better quality of life;⁴⁶

Commitment to Community Empowerment

Both the police and people are made to be community problem solvers by working to identify and solve problems creatively with freedom and autonomy. With their understanding of the significance of problem solving and their ability to use their own discretion without being bogged down by bureaucracy, the police can be more effective;⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Lee P. Brown, *Community Policing: A Practical Guide for Police Officials*. Perspectives on Policing. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice; and John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. 1989: p.89. Gary W. Cordner, Fredrick B. Craig and Cox Wexler, "Research, Planning, and Implementation." *Local Government Police Management*, (Washington, D.C.: International City Management Association. 3d edition. 1991) pp.346–347.

⁴⁵ Interview with ASP Jonah Akpan, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Police headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 08/09/2019.

⁴⁶ Interview with ASP Jonah Akpan, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Police headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 08/09/2019..

⁴⁷ Interview with ASP Jonah Akpan, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Police headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 08/09/2019.

Decentralized, Personalized Policing

Officers assigned to a community-oriented policing unit are oriented on how to provide direct assistance to the people on their beat without being dispatched to calls outside their beat;⁴⁸

Immediate and Long-term Proactive Problem-Solving

The role of community-oriented policing officers is to act as generalists and provide continuous contact and support to law-abiding citizens. Working together with private citizens and other public organizations, each officer serves as an ombudsman for the community. The goal is to work together to improve the quality of life in the community not only by answering calls for service and making arrests but also by listening to the needs of the community and providing long-term solutions;⁴⁹

Ethics, Legality, Responsibility, and Trust

Community policing implies a new way of thinking and acting. The police provide a clear vision of hope for the welfare of the community as they work together for a better quality of life for all members. Once the police have established themselves as a catalyst for the betterment of the community, they can ask citizens to take more responsibility for minor issues that constrain the police, enabling them to focus on long-term solutions for problems citizens have identified;⁵⁰

Expanding the Police Mandate

The police have a responsibility to educate citizens they serve about community policing. For the long-term betterment of the community, the police must use their resources in the most productive manner;

Helping Those with Special Needs

By serving special and immediate needs in a community, the police act as a catalyst to other programmes often associated with community policing, such as crime prevention and public relations;⁵¹

Grassroots Creativity and Support

Community policing is a grassroots effort by the police to establish good human relations with the community. Its focus is on relationships and trust. Officers in the State are empowered to make short-term decisions and work to produce long-term results in creative ways, which make them problem solvers and community generalists;

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Interview with DSP Okon Martin, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Akwa Ibom State Police eadquarter, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo, 10/6/2019.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹*Ibid.*

Internal change

The police communicate the significant long-term effect they have in a community to others in the department who are not otherwise assigned to a community policing unit. The idea is to incorporate all members of the department into the philosophy of community policing;

Building for the future

The police are encouraged to legitimized their philosophy of community policing within the community in order to work as independent resource providers. Community policing is the process of continuously assessing the needs of the community and providing long-term solutions in partnership with law-abiding citizens;

Routine Patrol

Routine patrol, whether on foot or car are made to be part of community outreach strategies to increase police visibility in an effort to reduce fear of crime or as a prevention measure for crime-reduction in a particular hot-spot neighbourhood. This also gave the opportunity for the community members and officers to become more familiar with each other and also allow the police to have better insight of the community needs regarding crime deterrence;

Information Sharing/Ongoing Communication

In Akwa Ibom State, community policing advocates for a consistent flow of information between the police and the community, regarding potentially effective solutions to crime and disorder problems and various crime trends and patterns. As a result of sharing information, the police have been more proactive and focused on developing long term solutions to the citizen's concerns rather than be reactive and wait until they are called to determine how to rectify a known problem;

Crime Prevention Programmes

The main objective of community crime prevention is to be proactive and bring awareness to community members/groups that may be a potential target for crime as well as open the lines of communication between the police and the community. In most of the community crime prevention programmes, the police facilitate the program, however needs the support of the community to support and participate in the programs in order for the program to be effective and successful.

Social Control

The goal of social control is for the police and community to collaborate and work toward maintaining, enhancing, and restoring social control over the entire community. It is thought that if community members have an attachment or are dedicated to making the community a better and safer place, people would less likely commit a crime than those individuals who are lacking in one or more areas. The above programmes are being utilized based on the community members' needs and their perceptions of the local problems.

Training

Training at all levels - academy, field, and in-service supports community policing principles and tactics. It also encouraged creative thinking, a proactive orientation, communication and analytical skills, and techniques for dealing with quality-of-life concerns and maintaining order. Officers in Akwa Ibom State police command are trained to identify and correct conditions that could lead to crime, raise public awareness, and engage the community in finding solutions to problems. Field training officers and supervisors learnt how to encourage problem solving and help officers learn from other problem-solving initiatives. Until community policing is fully institutionalized in the organization and the State, training in its fundamental principles will continue to take place regularly.

The principles of community policing are infused throughout the entire personnel system of an agency, including recruitment, hiring, selection, and retention of all law enforcement agency staff, from sworn officers to civilians and volunteers. Personnel evaluations, supervision, and training are also aligned with the agencies' community policing views. Police use a systematic means of incorporating community policing elements into their recruitment, selection, and hiring processes. Job descriptions usually recognize community policing and problem-solving responsibilities and encourage the recruitment of officers who have a "spirit of service" instead of only a "spirit of adventure."

CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN AKWA IBOM STATE

Despite numerous efforts by various police administrations to curtail the level of crime in Nigeria, crime and social disorder still persist in the country. Thousands of lives and millions of naira worth of property are being lost as a result of one crime or the other. Some believe that the inability of the Nigeria police to ensure maximum security in the country is as a result of so many social and technical constraints, among which are lack of equipment and sour relationship between police and public.⁵²

Corruption

Wide spread corruption in the Nigeria police force is fueling abuses against ordinary citizens and severely undermining the rule of law in Nigeria on a daily basis. Countless ordinary Nigerians are accosted by armed police officers who demand bribes and commit human rights abuses against them as a means of extorting money. These abuses range from ordinary arrest and unlawful detention to threats and acts of violence, including sexual assault, torture, and even extrajudicial killings.⁵³ Police is not unique. Corruption exists in the Nigeria police force much the same as it does in any other police organization the world over, except perhaps, in terms of its extent and the organization's reaction to it. However, the issue of corruption in the Nigeria police as noted above cannot be treated in isolation of the larger society. Police routinely extort money from victims of

⁵²The Dawn Newspaper, Community Policing and National Security – Community Policing in Nigeria. Thursday 27, 2011.

⁵³Human Rights Watch, Police Corruption in Nigeria, 2010.

crimes to initiate investigations and demand bribes from suspects to drop investigations. Corruption in the police is so endemic that it has eroded public trust and confidence they have in the police. To achieve any success in combating corruption in the Nigerian police one has to take a holistic approach and most importantly understanding the growth and existence of corruption within the police.

Institutional Constraints

According to Onyeozili, allegations levelled against the institution and its personnel, some of which have proven to be true, include arbitrariness in exercising its power, corruption, perversion of justice, and delays in the administration of justice.⁵⁴ Various factors have been blamed as constituting a stumbling block to the effective administration of justice and efficient maintenance of law and order in Nigeria. Other factors are inadequate manpower (both in strength and expertise), insufficient education and training, inadequate equipment, and poor conditions of service of the average policeman. The long-term failure of the Nigerian authorities to address police bribery, extortion, and wholesale embezzlement threatens the basic rights of all Nigerians. Therefore, good policy is the bedrock for the rule of law and public safety according to Dufka, in a research conducted by Human Rights Watch in 2010 on 145 victims of and witnesses to police corruption in Nigeria. Among them are market traders, commercial drivers, sex workers, criminal suspects, and victims of common crime, rank-and-file and senior level police officers; federal government officials; judges, prosecutors, and lawyers, religious and civil society leaders, journalist, diplomats and members of an armed vigilante group. Findings from the research shows “the myriad forms of police corruption in Nigeria” and “also show how institutionalized extortion and a profound lack of political will to reform the force, and impunity combine to make police corruption a deeply embedded problems”. This includes cases of extortion, bribery, embezzlement, and failure of oversight functions. One corrupt practice detailed in the findings is called “returns” in which rank- and – file officers are compelled to pay up the chain of command a share of the money they extort from the public. “Another form of corruption the report noted is the practice of forcing crime victims “to pay the police to conduct every stage of an investigation.”⁵⁵

Mammus further stressed that the major challenge of policing is the manpower shortage, inadequate funding, inadequate logistic support and infrastructure, lack of serviceable information and technological equipment to cover all the areas of the State are responsible for the current state of the police in Nigeria.⁵⁶ The police is arguably the most visible agent of government and citizens often assess the character of a government through its police force. This is because the police are the “guardians” of society. To a large extent, the growth, action and behaviour of the police as an

⁵⁴Emmanuel C. Onyeozili, *Obstacles to Effective Policing in Nigeria. Department of Criminal Justice, Administration of Justice*. Vol 1. No 1. April, 2005.

⁵⁵Human Rights Watch, *Police Corruption in Nigeria*, 2010.

⁵⁶ Thomas Mammus, *Challenges and Prospects of Policing (Edo State, Nigeria in Perspective)*. *Study Mode*, 2010.

institution not only reflect the political and economic character of society, but also mirror what those in power are willing or able to tolerate or condone or perhaps even demand of the police.⁵⁷

Police Perception

Another important factor that has been neglected for many years is the perception of the police force itself by the police officers. Questions that readily come to mind are: What is police officer's perception of the citizens they claimed to be serving? What is the perception of citizens to police officers in Nigeria? To be frank, the image of police in the eyes of Nigerians is bad arising from all the factors enumerated above.

Military Orientation

The police as it is now came out of a military administration. That is probably the biggest challenge we face – turning it from a force into a service. Although Tim Iwar agrees that police officers often lack the skills needed to police effectively but refuses to admit the most serious allegations made about the police – that they brutally torture and sometimes kill suspects without trial.⁵⁸

Godfatherism

This is an endemic problem in Nigeria, which the police still battle with. Godfatherism is the funding and abetting of vices and shielding “connected” criminals from justice by government agents and highly placed officials entrusted with the power and authority to investigate and prosecute such vices. It has become a dominant issue in African polity and impedes the course of justice in virtually all the countries in Africa.⁵⁹ Furthermore, many highly placed public officers in Nigeria are known to pervert the course of justice by the virtue of their closeness to the seat of power. Often, the police get sucked in, and this accounts for their complicity in several unresolved crimes across the country. According to Alemika, many of these problems in the Nigeria police force are self – evident and have been sources of serious concern to the public, governments, police authorities and officials, the mass media and human rights organization in the country. What is required is a determination to address the problems.⁶⁰ The knowledge of human rights among the majority of policemen is poor. This might be as a result of the long period of military rule. Although policemen are taught the principles of the rule of law, in reality this is not put into practice because military rule does not recognize the rule of law. In the new democratic dispensation, policemen should be given intensive on-the-job training on citizens' fundamental rights which they must uphold at all times.

⁵⁷ICPC, Combating Corruption in the Nigerian Police. A paper presented at the Police Service Commission Retreat. August 8th, 2010.

⁵⁸ Tim Iwar, Can Nigeria's Police be reformed? BBC News, Thursday 30 July, 2009.

⁵⁹Emmanuel C. Onyeozili, Obstacles to Effective Policing in Nigeria. Department of Criminal Justice, Administration of Justice. Vol 1. No 1. April, 2005.

⁶⁰Everest Alemika, Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 20:189 - 219.1993.

CONCLUSION

Evidently, as crime continues to surge in contemporary Nigeria, so have government at all levels continued to think modern and efficient methods to counteract crime in order to have a peaceful society where socio-economic and political progress could be assured. It was in a bid to reduce crime that the idea of community policing – which involves security agencies and communities – became a modest idea that appears more proficient towards the prevention of crimes. However, since the idea of community policing began incubation, there have been a whole lot of scholarly attention drawn towards it to adumbrate explicitly on the idea from a multifaceted pedagogical and epistemological lens. Contributing towards the on-going debate on community policing and its (in)efficient role in combating crimes in the society, this research employs the Akwa Ibom State perspectives – between 1999 and 2019 – to see how well the concept of community policing have fare.

Akwa Ibom State – with the longest coastline and an oil producing state within the Niger Delta region – has recorded its own share of crime in the last two decades. In a bid to curb crime and criminality, the concept of community policing became an issue to be evaluated. Thus, this research argues that even though community policing is not entirely a new concept within the Akwa-Cross River region, since community security has been in existence, the idea is still in the incubation stage given the plethora of lapses associated with its full implementation. Findings reveal that the Nigeria Police built the idea of community policing on what already exists, adopting different strategies in the contemporary era in its community policing efforts. Unfortunately, findings have shown that several factors are militating against the concept of community policing in Akwa Ibom State. Some of these range from underfunding for both the police force and members of the community, poor training, lack of needed facilities and equipments, among others. The absence of the foregoing issues has created difficulties for the idea of community policing to becoming a reality in Akwa Ibom State.

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