

CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON THE INTERNAL SECURITY SYSTEM: IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Community engagement in the security system is increasingly becoming a norm as a result of the rising cases of insecurity in most communities in Nigeria. Though, this paper acknowledged the fact that such innovation is needed to address the predisposing factors threatening the internal security system, but it is not without challenges. The discourse, therefore, highlighted some of the strategies adopted and the overall benefits to the improvement of the security system as well as the challenges in the process. Some of these challenges include negative public perception about security personnel, poor mutual relationship, lack of trust and visionary schemes, poor intelligent gathering and poor funding among others. The study further emphasised on the far reaching consequences of these challenges on community development process in Nigeria. In view of this, the paper provided some suggestions as a way forward towards addressing the issues of community engagement in internal security in Nigeria.

Keywords: Security, Internal Engagement, Community, Challenges.

Introduction

Issue of internal security is one of the rallying points for discussing peace and development on the known basis, that it conveys the values of freedom and safety over those variables that constitute danger to human existence. Internal security, therefore,

is the inward mechanism that steps up the safety and freedom of a given society, so that factors which are responsible for tensions, anxieties, instabilities or apprehensions are duly minimised. It also depicts a serious state of affairs in handling the occurrences of

those factors responsible for tensions, anxieties, instabilities or apprehensions. This is because internal security is not only a yardstick for peace but also an aspect that fosters national development. Thus, the thrust of this discourse fundamentally looked at the concept of internal security, its forms and challenges using the contextual situation in Nigeria.

The concept, as may have been described by different scholars, is one of the biggest issues in both national and international discourses in our contemporary society. On this basis, scholars such as Egbefo and Salihu (2014) and Isa, Ayuba and Dankishiya (2021) agreed that internal security is not a new concept, rather it has always existed for ages and indifferent places such as during the Roman, Ottoman, Benin and that of the Kanem Borno kingdoms among others, as a basic requirement for the survival of the state using its economic, military, political power and the exercise of diplomacy to achieve. Thus, it is the totality of the nation's equilibrium to enhance the performance of its responsibility without unnecessary interruptions from anywhere. Internal security is mainly the sole responsibility of the government and when there is a threat, the government has the mechanism to quickly intervene to minimise the impact of such threat on the people. Furthermore, it also includes the capacity of the government to create and maintain agencies and mechanisms, and even institutions that would guarantee freedom from danger. Therefore, threat to life and property be it from the angle of the armed robbers, terrorist attacks, political instabilities, protest or any other conflict that endangers lives are symptomatic of lack of internal security. Internal security is very paramount and

dynamic state of affairs in the core values of our national interests and this is because it relates with the safety of lives and properties (Isa, Ayuba and Dankishiya, 2021). For this reason, the state will go at any length to avoid, prevent, reduce, or resolve factors that may constitute insecurity. The United States Department of Justice (2009) described internal security as the ability of the state to cater for the protection and defense of its citizenry.

It is, however, clear that the purpose of the Nigerian national security policy and implementation strategies requires collaborative and integrative system that consist of the individual as the irreducible basic unit, which is connected both to the state and the international political system while the state is the strongest entity for the enhancement of security issues. Nonetheless, it is increasingly being challenged to incorporate the community for a better result. Thus, the other subordinate goals of internal security are safeguarding the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Nigerian state; defending her unity and independence from interference; providing regional leadership for economic development, security cooperation and attaining military self-sufficiency among others (Nwagboso, 2016).

On this basis, the global security rating of nations has continued to encourage huge expenditure on internal security system. Nations such as Iran, Burundi, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Uganda and Togo, to mention but a few, are placed ahead of Nigeria in terms of internal security maintenance right from 2007-2022. Thus, Nigeria is currently occupying the 10th position in the global security index and consequently ranked 8th least peaceful country among African

nations in the recent Global Peace Index report, an indication that peace has deteriorated by 2.87 percent because of the lack of political will to address rising national security threats in various forms, such as kidnapping, cultism, militancy, Boko Haram, herdsmen and banditry, among others (Echezu, 2023). The position of Nigeria in this critical ranking affirmed the need for elaborate community engagement in internal security as a means of boosting the capacity in exploring other possible options readily available within the community in handling alarming security challenges bedeviling the nation in recent times. Community engagement, therefore, is the way forward to security problems because it promotes some collaborative efforts in addressing security issues using specialised community based organisations such as local vigilante and other related groups. It is equally an important instrument for achieving a desired change in community development process. It also enhances the rate of partnerships and coalitions among people to solve other perceived problems. The process has also encouraged development of leadership potentials, and policy improvement to address perceived issues in the society (Asor, Ubana & Abuokwen, 2022). From the above viewpoints, the process is capable of bringing about positive changes in individual perception about others as a most effective means of true partnerships to improve the security system.

Forms of Internal Security in Nigeria

Forms of internal security in Nigeria vary considerably according to the scholars. To this end, Adebakin and Raimi (2012), explained forms of internal security system to include the following:

1. **Economic Security:** It is the process that ascertain the streams of income for personal or collective usage in a given society through a productive venture that ensures viable economic opportunities for all categories of persons. It also encourages a living wage. Economic security enables the ability to address various necessities of life in the forms of food, clothing and housing needs.
2. **Food Security:** This entails people having access to basic food and nutrition for their survival, wellbeing and protection, at all times. Food security is a system that addresses issues of starvation and malnutrition among people. In this way, farm yields are improved to address both present and future natural and man-made disasters such as flooding, famine, drought and conflict among others, which often threaten food security. It is the availability and accessibility of food items for the well-being of the people. Food security is attainable once there is improved policy framework to reduce conflict, poverty, bad leadership, corrupt practices and hunger among others.
3. **Health Security:** Health security is the assurance of protection from all forms of diseases and other related harmful lifestyles that are capable of reducing life span. It is a process that acts promptly to minimise those factors posing a threat to people's health. Achieving health security requires the presence of improved policy for clean water, environment, hygiene and health education.

4. **Environmental Security:** The ecosystem is very vital for the survival of man and other living things. For this reason, many abuses against nature such as pollution, bush burning, deforestation and other related activities are checked to reduce their negative consequences on the environment. Negative effects of these abuses on the environment are the reasons for climate change and escalating global warming.
5. **Personal Security:** This refers to the protection of lives and personal effects from attacks by the state actors. Personal security also includes the process of ensuring freedom from fear, want and ensuring safety from hunger, diseases, and repression that may gradually or suddenly show up to disrupt the patterns of living and well-being of the people.
6. **Community Security:** It is a form of internal security that ensures the continuous protection and preservation of homeland customs and values from extinction by virtue of undue pressure resulting from all forms of conflicts.
7. **Political Security:** This refers to the protection of fundamental human rights as well as freedom from systematic abuse and coercion of an individual or group of individuals. It is also described as an atmosphere which allows safety of people to freely participate in political exercises without violence.
8. **Cyber space security:** Apart from the above mentioned aspects of security, issue of protecting the national cyber space is another urgent

national security matter, because of the importance of data systems in maintaining internal security system. Perhaps, it is to possibly guide against unauthorised access to the critical state information that can result in a serious threat to the socio-cultural, political, economic and other aspects of internal security. It is also a measure to combat internet insecurity occasioned by threats such as Morris worm, password sniffing, internet providers spoofing, denial of service attacks, email-born virus, fast spreading worm, spam, internet identity theft, hackers, phishing and cyber stalking among others (Williams, 2022).

Predisposing factors threatening internal security in recent time

For sometimes now, the security situations in Nigeria has remained a serious matter of concern. As a result of the presence of some factors such as lack of political will to reduce the massive poverty, bad leadership, level of illiteracy, political crises, massive corrupt practices, economic crises, oppressions, poor state of the social institutions and infrastructures among others. These issues have eventually affected the ability of the state to guarantee its primary responsibility of protecting lives and properties. The situation has even deteriorated to the point where the Nigerian society is now regarded as one that is losing grip of its statehood, on the basis of the presence of different kinds of criminalities. On the other hand, there is no political will to address some of these factors such as kidnapping, terrorism, bunkering, trans-border crimes, rape, murder, ritual killings, ethno-religious conflicts and other issues that

are responsible for insecurity in the country (Williams, 2022 & Echezue, 2023). Nevertheless, looking at these issues currently suggest that violence is threatening the territorial integrity of Nigeria more than diseases and other natural disasters would have done. The undesirable nature of these

security problems in the Nigerian context is a thing of grave concern for national development. Below are some of the issues of security concern in the Nigerian society and the focus of effects.

Table 1: Security issues, causes and focus of effects on national development in recent times

S/N	Security issue	Causes	Focus of Effects
1	Kidnapping	Unemployment/Poverty	Economy
2	Terrorism	Religious ideology	Economy
3	Bunkering	Unemployment/Poverty/Greed	Economy/Environment
4	Rape/ Murder	Psychological	Human / Economy
5	Herdsmen/Farmers	Land related	Human/ Economy
6	Ritual killing	Greed/poverty	Human/Economy
7	Cult clashes	Supremacy	Political participation
8	Religious clashes	Different ideologies	Human safety/Economy
9	Unemployment	Lack of political will	Economy
10	Drug peddling	Greed/ poverty	Economy
11	Addictions	Idleness	Mental health
12	Outbreak	Natural/Manmade	Health/Economy

Adapted from Nwagboso, 2016

The table above clearly indicated some of the factors constituting threat to internal security in Nigeria. In all, the analysis of these issues underscores the need for community engagement. It is, therefore, very instructive to note the negative consequences of these predisposing factors to peace and national development in addition to loss of lives and properties, poor attitude to work due to insecurity, imposition of curfew, migration of investors to safer areas, proliferation of arms and ammunition, inadequate participation in various development processes, serious economic uncertainty, brain drain, threats to public facilities and encroachment on national budget, among others (Amujiri &

Agu, 2012, Williams, 2022).

Budgetary efforts at improving internal security in Nigeria

The attempt to improve internal security of the nation has only attracted more budgetary provisions than the desired results. This is because of the lack of political will to address perennial nature of the issues causing the internal security problems in the system. Besides, the inability on the part of the government to address problem of insecurity in the last few years under review has affected other key sectors of the economy (Williams, 2022). Below is the statistical representation of what was spent annually on internal security between 2016 - 2022.

Table 2: Budgetary allocation to security 2016-2022

Yr	Annual Budget	Security	% of the Budget
2022	16.39 Trillion	2.41 Trillion	14.70
2021	13.08	1.96	14.99
2020	10.33	1.78	17.23
2019	8.92	1.76	19.73
2018	9.2	1.305	14.2
2017	7.29	1.058	14.44
2016	6.06	1.04	17.16
Total	71.27 Trillion	11.313	112.45

Adapted from Williams, 2022

The above table shows the annual budgetary allocations to security maintenance alone. In 2022, it was 14.70 %, of 16.39 trillion naira, 14.99 % of 13.08 in 2021, 17.23% of 10.33 in 2020, 19.73% of 8.92 in 2019, 14.2% of 9.2 in 2018, 14.44 of 7.29 in 2017 and 17.16 of 6.06 in 2016. From this breakdown, there is clear evidence that internal security system may not even improve soon, if experts and state expenditure on internal security do not improve. Consequently, to improve the deteriorating security situations, the government is required to adequately implement policy framework that will create massive employment, reduce mass poverty, corruption and ineptitude of state agencies among others. Besides, such policy implementation must take into cognisance the collaborative efforts and commitment of the people to boost internal capacity for the security system.

Informal security agents and strategies in internal security

In recent time, the Nigerian internal security system has greatly involved using the informal community based security apparatus, otherwise known as local

vigilante. They operate under different nomenclatures and strategies in most parts of the country but with a similar objective of reducing insecurity. Some of these strategies include collaborating with members of the formal security sectors to assist in providing surveillance, intelligence gathering and active involvement in security decisions among others. However, the success of the achievement depended on the state actors' abilities to win the trust and partnership of the people. This is because of the poor public perception about security management due to the attitudes of the security agencies to provide security to the people against the back drop of the rising insecurity. Thus, collaborating with the informal security sector to aid local surveillance and intelligence gathering suffice to tackle internally rooted security problems. Such informal structures work in collaboration with the formal security agencies and can exist through the form of religious bodies, ethnic groups, state-sponsored and community based /neighbourhood watch assisting in the reportage of crimes and criminal activities (Asor, Ubana &

Abuokwen 2022). Besides, the United States Department of Justice offered that the outcomes of collaboration in security process must exist through permanent channels of communication between the security agencies and other stakeholders in the community, to enhance partnerships with groups that are interested in similar goals, promote workable approach that is very strategic to combating crimes, provide the ideal process of partnership to reduce insecurities and getting other support required to that effect (Daerego,2022).

Nevertheless, Belgin and Philips (2018) stated that the strategy is a process that enables people to influence and get involved in the actions that directly affect their livelihoods; a process that allows their inputs and to stake control over development initiatives. More so, the process allows the people to present their interests, felt-needs, values and other related issues in the public domain for decisions. Based on this understanding, the community can be engaged in security system using either the community broad-based or community tailored methods. The community broad-based method require that majority of community members are allowed participation based on their overall interest and objective to rejig the security system while the latter allows specific key stakeholders' participation in taking key decisions concerning the system.

Accordingly, the method is capable of helping to identify flash points for criminal activities and ways of arresting the problems. It is also one of the strategies that ensure specific concerns and decision making to solve perceived security threats in the community. Based on this supposition, many criminal activities can be nip in the bud for the safety and protection of the people. This

is because the strategy of involving informal sectors in security matters would first of all enable consultations of stakeholders to prioritise areas of serious security concern with the hope of creating an atmosphere where the people and the security agents can work together to prevent crimes (Daerego, 2022).

It is also a necessary means of empowering specialised groups in the community to take up different overwhelming security responsibilities for the good of the people. According to Bassler et al in Asor, Ubana and Abuokwen (2022) the process is capable of increasing the acceptance of programme, improve the use of locally sourced materials to effectively create solution, expand the horizon of learning and knowledge towards solving community/personal security problems. It equally offers the opportunity for empowerment and integration of various groups in the community to work together in order to promote a good security system for peace and progress. Similarly, it will increase the opportunity of discussing most concerns of the people on a regular basis, thereby fostering mutual trust in community leadership and organisation, improve community skills in problem-solving abilities, create a forum for empowering and uniting the people together in terms of needs. In a related view, Mbadiwe-Woko, Agi and Echezu (2021) noted that informal system of engaging community in the maintenance of peace and security has been observed to be very effective complementary measure in the protection of lives and properties. The mechanism has further assisted in reducing security threats, improved security strategies and effective partnership with the people in handling security matters.

Challenges of Community Engagement in Security System

Engaging community based groups in the security system is not without glitches. According to Hanachor and Wordu (2021), some of the challenges may be as a result of negative public perception leading to poor mutual relationship, loss of trust and confidence, suspected gang protection by the informal security groups, lack of visionary schemes and poor funding to name a few. Most of the time persons engaged in the informal security sector are often disrespected and even violently attacked. Sometimes, these negative attitudes towards those engaged in the sector often discourage their willingness to provide security to the people. Furthermore, it is noted that despite the success stories of partnering with the community in the security system, their relationship with the formal security sector often becomes an issue of concern as a result of recorded successes in combating criminalities in places where the conventional methods of security have failed. This is also evident in the recent proclamation of the Inspector General of Police asking for the withdrawal of all weapons used by the informal security groups during their security engagement. It is, therefore, very frustrating to do security work without the presence of requisite instrument at this time when criminals are even more equipped than ever. For this reason, Jidefor and Ogbuabor (2019) identified other areas of these challenges to include the negligence of security sector by the government, ill equipped personnel, over stretched and inadequate security personnel, non-involvement of critical stakeholders, increase in sophisticated crimes and illegal weapons acquisitions, unorganised and uncoordinated approaches to emerging security threats, poor security awareness and lackadaisical implementation of community

policing policy and so forth. These factors are not unconnected with absence of good governance to drive home a better secured state. On the other hand, corrupt practices among those engaged in security matters are also another major challenge to the system. Consequently, there is lack of synergy and mutual understanding in the coordination of security. There is also the absence of social, economic and technological supports, especially, at local level to back up partners engaged in improving security. These also serve as a discouraging factor to individuals who would have been willing to be engaged. It has also been noted that poor working condition has greatly affected the integrity of those involved in the informal security sector given rise to corrupt practices and subsequent lack of public trust to mention but a few.

Another area of grave concern is the issue of extra judicial killings. Most times suspects arrested by the community based security group are summarily executed without proper interrogations. In this direction, Ijah and Patrick (2019) pointed out that extra-judicial executions of suspects rather than handling them over to the law enforcement agency for proper prosecution is an additional problem to community engagement in the system and this development is deeply associated with the people's lack of confidence in the judicial system. As a result of the complexities of the criminal justices system, there are difficulties to secure conviction of crime committed without much delay due to technicalities. With such legal procedures, the law enforcement agency is often pressured to releasing criminals back into the society where they may serve as political thugs or become political traps for hunting perceived enemies in the state.

There is also a serious concern for poor capacity to the handling of security information and issues that may arise as a result of inexperience of group leadership. As a result, most of the individuals engaged in the informal security sectors are very notorious in carrying out activities that are not in sync with the original purpose of been established. Some of these activities are intimidation and arbitrary arrest of law abiding persons, involving in purely civil matters and aiding and abetting crimes to mention but a few. Besides, there is the presence of militia groups among them, which are not properly registered with the police, individuals are not properly screened before engagement and are allowed to brandish light weapons without formal approval (Aboh & John, 2018). On the other hand, the absence of strong advocacy groups for community engagement is also an additional issue compounding the existing concern for internal security system.

The above challenges by implication have constituted a severe threat to the legitimacy and functions of the informal security sectors for the enhancement of community development process in Nigeria. This is because the presence of these challenges as occasioned by the informal security activities have the capability of fostering social mistrust among people to relate well, fears and anxieties to participate in the community decision making process for needs assessment and vehement refusal of some individuals to become a figure head in the mobilisation of resources for community self-help programmes among other issues.

Conclusion

Improving internal security system through community engagement is a proactive measure which is aimed at ensuring safety and protection of lives and properties. The

strategies adopted in this regard also speak volumes of their benefits to the goal of varied security system. However, achieving a secured society through engagement of the people is not without challenges. These challenges also have some far reaching implications on community and national development process.

Recommendations

The study, in order to adequately manage the security challenges arising from community engagement, put forward the following recommendations;

1. The federal government in collaboration with all other relevant stakeholders should develop a strong policy statement on formation and implementation of community engagement in the security system to boost local capacity of reducing various forms of insecurities in the society.
2. The tiers of government should provide adequate capacity building for people who are willing to participate in the informal security system.
3. There should be the incorporation of modern technologies by government to equip personnel for the improvement of internal security system.
4. Government should create an easy platform for sharing security information in a bid to have an instant response to arrest security situations.
5. There should be adequate public and private partnership to the funding of security system.
6. The government should take proactive measures towards improving security education and

awareness, job creation and employment among others to discourage factors leading to increased criminal activities. Reduce issue of corruption to the barest minimum in the system in order to boost public confidence.

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