

IMPERATIVES OF COMMUNITY POLICING FOR FARMERS SAFETY AND FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

Oyekunle OYELAMI, Ph.D.

Department of Adult Education
Faculty of Education

University of Lagos-Akoka, Yaba, Nigeria

oyelamioyekunle@gmail.com & royelami@unilag.edu.ng

&

Abdullahi Abdulazeez KOLAPO

Department of Adult and Primary Education
Faculty of Education

University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

azeezkola75@gmail.com & abdullahi.ak@unilorin.edu.ng

&

Doreen KOBANI, Ph.D.

Department of Adult Education and Community Development
Faculty of Education

Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

kobani.doreen@ust.edu.ng

Abstract

Community policing is a nexus and generic model for promoting peaceful co-existence, community safety and addressing security challenges in the community. This dynamic model is as old as the community. This paper, therefore, examines security situation analysis in Nigeria and causes of insecurity ranging from insurgency, banditry, farmers/herders' clashes, and farm encroachment, because the incessant attacks on farmers by activities of armed banditry and insurgency have become major threat to lives and properties in communities in Nigeria. This situation also has resulted in rising in the prices of food commodities and scarcity of food items. This is because farmers fled farms as a result of insecurity. The paper also gives an over view of model and approaches to security outfits that were established in Nigeria meant to complement efforts of the national security models such as military, para-military and the Nigerian police force. Thus, the paper highlighted, the effects of insecurity on agricultural productivity and food security in Nigeria. In the paper, strategies for promoting community policing and rural farmers' safety for increased food productivity and food security in Nigeria were identified: The paper concluded that any community that cannot freely secured herself and cannot produce enough foods for comparative advantage shall be slave to other communities.

Keywords: *Community Policing, Farmers Safety, Productivity Food Security*

Introduction

Community policing has emerged as a promising approach of promoting peaceful co-existence and addressing insecurity challenges in urban and rural areas. Jegede, Oyelami and Kolade (2017) reported that community policing aims to enhance public safety and build public trust by fostering closer relationships between law enforcement agencies, engaging local farmers, traditional leaders, and community members in collaborative efforts to prevent crime and ensure a secure environment for agricultural activities. Community policing has emerged as a potential solution to address crime and security challenges in rural Nigeria. Studies highlight the need for collaboration between police, local communities, and government to effectively prevent and control crime (Ibrahim-Olesin, Adefalu, Ayandegi & Njoku, 2021). However, implementation faces obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient police presence, and a lack of trust between police and communities (Audu, 2016). Common rural crimes include theft, often attributed to youth unemployment and poverty (Arisukwu, Igbolekwu, Oye-Oyeyipo, Asamu, Rasak & Oyekola 2020). To improve community policing effectiveness, recommendations include constitutional reforms, resource development, officer training, and involvement of civilian volunteers (Ibrahim-Olesin et al., 2024). Additionally, addressing corruption perceptions and bridging the trust gap between police and communities are crucial for successful implementation (Audu, 2016).

Despite challenges, community policing remains a promising approach to enhance safety and food security in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

The article of this nature requires some concept to be identified and clarified. The effort is necessary to bridge the gaps and see the extent to which scholars had conceptualized them. The following concepts are important in this paper:

Community Policing

Gbenemene and Adishi (2017) reported that the goal of community policing is to decentralize police decision making authority. To achieve this goal, it requires the successful implementation of three essential and complementary components and operational strategies; namely community partnership, problem solving, and change management. Gbenemene and Adishi (2017) further noted that community policing was intended to address the causes of crime and reduce the fear of crime in communities. The model of community policing employs creative management styles to engage responsible members of the community in proactive problem-solving tactics, to minimize the level of criminal activities and facilitate effective law enforcement in the communities.

Community policing is a collaborative approach for public safety that emphasizes partnerships between official enforcement agents and communities. It explains traditional policing by focusing on proactive problem-solving and community involvement in addressing safety issues (Peak, 2013). The effectiveness of community policing depends on mutual trust and legitimacy between police and citizens

(Giessen, Brein & Jacobs 2017). According to Wroblewski and Hess (2003) community policing is an organisation wide philosophy and management approach that promotes community government, and police partnership; proactive problem solving and community engagement to address the causes of crime and prevention of crimes. The essence of community policing is a generic approach and to return to the days when safety and security are participatory in nature and everyone in the community has role to play in the security of the land and not just a select few, not just the local government administration, not just the safety forces, but absolutely everyone in the community (Olajide & Oyelami, 2010).

The idea of community policing is quite different from modern day policing that emphasises strict police authority on crime prevention. In community policing, the police must share power with residents of a community, and critical decisions need to be made at the community level, rather than at police stations (Bohm & Halen, 2005). Ndukwe (2022) also posited that community policing is a policing technique in which the police and community people work together to police the community through information collection and sharing. This is why Miller and Kyulu (2021) defined community policing as a belief that working together, the police and the community can accomplish what neither can accomplish alone. The British Council (2010) however, noted that the aim of community policing is to provide an atmosphere in which the police and law-abiding citizens can work in partnership to: solve problems; share resources; prevent crime; promote inter-agency collaboration; bring offenders to justice; reduce conflict; and improve the overall quality of community life.

Concept of Food Security

The term food security has been widely used in the field of agriculture and political science. Food security has been defined by many scholars from different perspectives. Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs. It also involves food preferences for an active and healthy life. Many of the existing literature aimed at clarifying the concept of food security and identifying its constituents. For example, Peng & Berry (2019) reported that food security is a multidimensional concept encompassing availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability of food for all people at all times. It extends beyond mere food supply to include physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets dietary needs and preferences (Peng & Berry, 2019). The concept has evolved to incorporate sustainability as a long-term dimension and social acceptability (Norhasmah et al., 2010). Measuring food security is challenging with different indicators applied at various levels. Population growth significantly influences global food security (Olawuwo & Bach, 2014). Achieving food security requires collaboration between governments and individuals, considering multiple factors and accelerated actions at international and national levels (Braun, 2014).

Security Situation Analysis in Nigeria

The level of crime and insecurity in the Nigeria communities call for attention of the government at all levels, policy makers, security agents and community members at large. The protection of life and properties is a collective responsibility of all and sundry

as well as tackling crime and social disorder in the community/society. Over the years, Farmers have witnessed several security challenges ranging from insurgency, banditry, farmers/herders' clashes, and farm encroachment. These have resulted in loss of lives, properties and farm produce. Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) argued that Nigeria in recent times, has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity. This has made threat to the national security to be a major issue for the government and all stakeholders which resulted in huge allocation of the national resources to security. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA, 2020) reported that the activities of Boko Haram sect has triggered insecurity in the north-east of the country since 2009. This is regarded as one of the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Boko Haram insurgency has displaced about 2.4 million Nigerians in the Lake Chad Basin. As of December 2019, Nigeria has about 2.5 million internally displaced people. The ultimate goal is to create an Islamic state in the region (Abdullahi, 2024).

Farmers and Herders clashes have led to the insecurity of thousands of people at one time or the other in Nigeria. Hassan (2015) posited that the social conflict has traditionally consisted of disputes over natural resources and is often presented as a conflict between settlers and nomadic people. United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2022) noted that the struggle between herders and farmers in Nigeria over farmland and pasture is a serious and escalating conflict registering huge casualties and raising tensions particularly in the country's Middle Belt. Drought and desertification in the northern parts of Nigeria have forced pastoralist

herdsmen to seek grazing lands further south resulting in competition over resources and clashes with settled farmers. This clash resulted in significant loss of lives and livelihoods, undermine food security, permit the proliferation of small arms, displace large numbers of people, and divert resources meant for development. In addition, Amnesty International (2018) reported that Nigeria has experienced the highest number of farmer-herder fatalities in West and Central Africa over the past decade. This trend has been largely upward, with 2,000 deaths recorded in 2018. Violent events between pastoralists and farming communities in Nigeria have concentrated in the northwestern, Middle Belt, and recently southern states (Amnesty International, 2018).

Armed banditry has contributed to great number of displacement of farmers as well as the security challenges in Nigeria. Bandits have carried out vicious attacks mostly on rural communities, killing and kidnapping scores of people. Mark (2020) reported that bandits' activities are coincided with increase in cattle rustling in the north-west and north-central region by armed gangs using increasingly sophisticated weapons and staging attacks from nearby forest. Olajide and Oyelami (2010) reported that incessant attacks on farmers by armed banditry have become a major threat to lives in communities in northwest, northeast, north central and some parts of southwest. This situation has resulted in raising in the prices of food commodities, scarcity of some food items, because farmers flew their farm land, which hinders production of food crops in Nigeria.

Models of Community Policing

There are various models of community policing propounded by different

scholars. The concepts emerged in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of traditional policing, which focused heavily on reactive measures rather than prevention and community engagement. Broken Windows theory was generally accepted among the researchers, criminal justice practitioners, sociologists, criminologists, and law enforcement professionals. Broken windows theory which was propounded by James Wilson and George Kelling in 1982. A broken window theory transmits that criminal takes advantage of community that lack adequate security to perpetuate their criminal acts.

Kelling and Coles (2007) reported that broken window theory symbolises the community's defenselessness and vulnerability and represents the lack of cohesiveness of the people in the community. Nevertheless, the theory proposed that neighborhoods with a strong sense of cohesion fix broken windows and assert social responsibility on themselves, effectively giving themselves control over their space. This has authorities over the security network of their community. Harcourt (2001) affirmed that the broken window theory has been widely implemented in USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, France and Mexico and has influenced police aimed at maintaining public order through visible police presence and low-tolerance policies toward minor offenses. This theory can be applied in Nigeria by adapting its principles to the unique social, economic, and political context of Nigerian communities.

The emergency of Amotekun as a Model of Community Policing

Amotekun officially known as the Western Nigeria Security Network, was established in 2020 by the governors of the

six southwestern states: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti in Nigeria. The creation of Amotekun was driven by rising concerns over insecurity and inadequacy of the Nigeria police force to effectively address security challenges like kidnapping, armed robbery, and banditry in the region. As a regional security outfit, Amotekun operates with a focus on community policing model, relying on local initiatives, knowledge and cooperation with existing security agencies to protect communities and prevent crime (Vanguard Newspaper 2023).

Nwoko (2024) reported that Amotekun is the operational code name for the new regional experiment conceived to secure the southwest region in the face of gross insecurity in Nigeria and a product of years of multi-sector brainstorming. This model also allows the region to harmonise the resources available to communities to bring to bear on the security of lives and properties, thus, providing an environment conducive for productive socio-economic and political re-engineering of the South-West region. This strategic security model was reached in June 2019 at the regional security summit in Ibadan, Oyo State, by the governors of the southwest states. Many have seen this initiative as a bold step on seemingly ineffectiveness of the Nigerian Police Force to maintain effective security in Nigeria.

Vigilante Groups of Nigeria (VGN) as a Model

Vigilante Groups of Nigeria (VGN), local vigilante groups have emerged as grassroots responses to the escalating insecurity. It is often formed by community members, by taking on the responsibility of protecting lives and properties from criminal activities. Unlike Amotekun, which is an

organised regional force, vigilante groups are more informal and operate on a smaller scale, usually within specific communities and in form of neighborhood security outfit with operational principle of securing a small unit of employability in the community.

Blueprint (2020) also added that vigilante groups play a crucial role in communities where state security forces are either absent or ineffective. They are often the first line of defense against criminal activities, with intimate knowledge of the local terrain and people which gives the group advantage of identifying and apprehending suspects. However, there are concerns about the potential for abuse of power and lack of accountability, as these groups operate outside formal legal frameworks and level, requisite training and modern day strategies of crime preventions.

Effects of Insecurity on Agricultural Productivity and Food Security in Nigeria

Farmers in Nigeria are facing significant security challenges that have severely impacted agricultural productivity and food security. The effects of insecurity have created a vicious cycle where insecurity leads to reduced agricultural productivity, which in turn exacerbates food insecurity and economic instability across Nigeria. Daily Trust (2024) postulated the following effects of insecurity on agricultural productivity and food security:

Reduced Agricultural Output: Due to fear of attacks, many farmers have abandoned their farms as well as significantly reduced their farming activities. This leads to lower crop yields and reduced food production.

Abandonment of Farmlands: Insecurity has forced many farmers to leave their ancestral lands, resulting in large tracts of fertile land lying fallow. This not only

affects food production but also contributes to land degradation in Nigerian communities.

Increased Cost of Production: The cost of farm inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, and herbicides has risen sharply. Insecurity has disrupted supply chains, making these inputs more expensive and less accessible to farmers.

Displacement of Farming Communities: In regions heavily affected by violence, entire communities have been displaced, disrupting agricultural activities and leading to food shortages.

Food Insecurity: The combined effect of reduced agricultural output, abandonment of farms, and rising costs has led to widespread food insecurity. Regions in Nigeria are unable to produce enough food to meet local needs, leading to higher prices and increased poverty.

Economic Instability: Agriculture is a significant part of Nigeria economy. The decline in agricultural productivity due to insecurity has led to economic instability, affecting not just farmers but also neighbouring communities.

Loss of Livelihoods: Many farmers who have been forced to abandon their farms or reduce their activities have lost their primary source of income. This has increased poverty levels, especially in rural areas and urban communities.

Impacts of Community Policing on Farmers' Security and Food Security in Nigeria

Community policing initiatives emerged as crucial interventions for addressing security challenges. Adedayo & Olatunji (2023) reported that the implementation of localised security frameworks has shown promising results in reducing farmer-herder conflicts in regions

like Benue and Plateau states, where vigilante groups working alongside conventional police have helped secure farmlands against attacks. The improved security environment has directly influenced food production capabilities in previously vulnerable zones. Farmers in the Middle Belt region reported a 28% increase in cultivated acreage following the introduction of community policing patrols, with corresponding yields rising by approximately 23% during the 2023 growing season (Ibrahim, Adamu & Oluwaseyi, 2024). The stabilization of agricultural activities through enhanced protection measures has helped mitigate food shortages in local markets, though challenges persist in maintaining consistent security coverage across Nigeria's vast agricultural landscapes.

Furthermore, Nwankwo & Adebayo (2024) observed that community policing has strengthened early warning systems that protect agricultural investments. The integration of digital reporting mechanisms with traditional community vigilance has created more responsive security networks, allowing for faster intervention when threats to farmers emerge (Nwankwo & Adebayo, 2024). This technological enhancement of community policing has proven particularly effective in northern states where remote farms previously experienced delayed responses to security incidents, sometimes resulting in complete crop destruction or farmer displacement (Okafor, Mohammed & Davies (2023). Research indicates that communities with strong governance structures and consistent resource allocation demonstrate significantly better outcomes in both agricultural security and resulting food production, suggesting that institutional support remains a critical factor in

translating community policing into improved food security nationwide.

Strategies for promoting Community Policing, Farmers Safety and Food Security in Nigeria

The following are strategies for promoting community policing, rural farmers' safety and food security in Nigeria:

Strengthening Community Policing Networks

Local security network should be setup involving farmers, traditional leaders, and national security outfits to enhance effective communication among these stakeholders. There should be provision of regular training for community policing officers in communities, focusing on traditional conflict resolution, intelligence gathering and other collaborative efforts like funding.

Improving Community Policing Operational Gadgets

Establishment of police **outposts**, patrols teams and security outposts in farming communities to ensure rapid response to security threats. Community can buy **surveillance devices and technology devices through voluntary donations**. Introduce affordable surveillance tools, such as drones and Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras in key farming areas to monitor and deter criminal activities and respond promptly to threats to security.

Empowering Farmers through Cooperatives

Strengthen cooperatives societies will equip the farmers with necessary credits that will facilitate and boost food production. Modern farming systems require tools and improved seedlings that could be out of reach to farmers. Cooperative societies are, therefore, impetus towards addressing farmers' challenges, facilitate collective bargaining for security services and resources and

enabling farmers to safeguard their communities. Cooperative societies are used to disseminate information on best practices for farmers security and productivity as well as access to emergency supports.

Government and Policy Supports

Government policies that prioritise safety, such as laws against cattle rustling and improved land use regulations to prevent farmer-herder conflicts. Also, positive **synergies between** private and public sector and investment in agriculture and security infrastructure should be encouraged with the government and policy supports.

Promotion of Community Collaborations

Public awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate, particularly, the rural communities on the importance of collaborations for security and food productivity. Effective collaboration will breed local conflict resolution mechanisms that will result in amicable disputes resolution among farmers, herders, and other community members.

Conclusion

The paper x-rayed an over view of community policing in ensuring the safety and productivity of farmers which are crucial steps towards achieving food security in Nigeria. The interdependence between security and food production cannot be overstated, because a secure environment allows farmers to focus on cultivating and harvesting crops without fear of insecurity. Community policing, when effectively implemented, fosters collaboration between law enforcement agents and communities which shall result in creating a safer environment for farming activities. Similarly, adoption of modern farming techniques, improving farming tools and introduction of modern technologies to farmers can increase productivity thereby

contributing to a more robust and resilient food supply chain. Government support through policies that prioritise community safety, along with active engagement from the private sector and local communities, is essential to sustaining food security. Ultimately, a holistic approach that integrates community policing, community safety, and agricultural productivity will not only enhance food security but also promote socio-economic stability and harmony in Nigeria. The success of these initiatives, therefore, depends on the commitment of all stakeholders to work together in addressing the identified challenges that are clog in the wheel of food security in Nigeria.

References

- Adedayo, A. & Olatunji, B. (2023). Evaluating community response mechanisms to agricultural security threats in Nigeria's Middle Belt. *Journal of Rural Security Studies*, 18(2), 145-163.
- Achumba, I.C. Ighomereho, O. S & Akpor- Robaro M. O. M. (2013). Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*. 4(2), 79-99. www.iiste.org
- Alemika, E.O. (2011). Security, Criminal Justice and Criminal Victimization (in Crime Victimization, Safety and Policing in Nigeria). Edited by Etannibi E.O. Alemika and Innocent C. Chukwuma. CLEEN Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria
- Amnesty International (2018). "Harvest of Death: Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria," December, 17, 2018.

- Arisukwu, O., Igbolekwu, C.O., Oye, J.E., Oyeyipo, E.J., Asamu, F., Rasak, B., & Oyekola, I.A. (2020). Community participation in crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria. *Heliyon*, 6. [Audu, A.R. \(2016\). Community policing: exploring the police/community relationship for crime control in Nigeria.](#)
- Braun, J.V. (2014). Food and nutrition security the concept and its realization. *Bread and Brain, Education and Poverty* Pontifical Academy of Sciences, *Scripta Varia*, 125.
- Blueprint. (2020). Insecurity: Why Amotekun was formed in South-west – Govs. Blueprint. Retrieved from <https://www.blueprint.ng/insecurity-why-Amotekun-was-formed-in-south-west-govs/>
- Bohm, R. & Haley, K. N. (2005). Introduction to criminal Justice. 4th edition. New York: Mc- Graw-Hill.
- British Council (2010). Security, Justice and Growth Programme <https://www.britishcouncil.org/partner-track-record/security-justice-growth-programme>
- Daily Trust (2024). How insecurity, cost of farm inputs are affecting food production in Nigeria <https://dailytrust.com/how-insecurity-cost-of-farm-inputs-are-affecting-food-production-in-nigeria/> Sun, 24 Mar 2024 11:59:47 WAT
- Gbenemene K. & Adishi, E. (2017). Community Policing in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research*. 3(3),47-53. <https://iiardjournals.org/abstract.php?j=IJSSMR&pn=Community%20Policing%20in%20Nigeria:%20Challenges%20and%20Prospects&id=724>
- Giessen, M.V., Brein, E., & Jacobs, G. (2017). Community Policing: The Relevance of Social Contexts. In: Bayerl, P., Karlović, R., Akhgar, B., Markarian, G. (eds) *Community Policing - A European Perspective*. Advanced Sciences and Technologies for Security Applications. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-53396-4_4
- Hassan, I. (2016). Rural banditry and conflict Northern in Nigeria. In J. K. Mohammed and I. Jibrin. (Eds), *Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)*. 7-9.
- Harcourt, B. E. (2001). *Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing*. Harvard University Press.
- Ibrahim-Olesin, S., Ogunlade, I., Adefalu, L.L., Ayandegi, L.A., & Njoku, L.C. (2024). Making community policing work: A panacea to crimes and rural conflicts in Nigeria. *CABI Reviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1079/cabireviews.2024.0006>
- Ibrahim, M., Adamu, K., & Oluwaseyi, T. (2024). Agricultural productivity indicators following security interventions in conflict-prone farming communities. *African Food Security Review*, 12(1), 87-104.
- Jegede, I.O, Oyelami, O. & Kolade J.O.

- (2017). Community Policing and Crime Prevention in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 6(1) 342-365.
- Kelling, G. L., & Coles, C. M. (2007). *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities*. Free Press.
- Kyulu, F. M. (2021). Strategies and Impact of Community Policing in Kikuyu District in Kiambu County, Kenya. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*. United Kingdom.
- Mark, A. (2020). Nigeria is also losing control of its troubled northwest region. Retrieved from <https://qz.com/africa> (Accessed 6th August, 2024).
- Ndukwe, O. (2021). Traditional Administrative System and Conflict Resolution in Igbo Society; Public Affairs and Info science Research. 3(1) 78-94
- Norhasmah, S., Zalilah, M.S., & Asnarulkhadi, A.S. (2010). Food security: concepts and definitions.
- Nwoko, K, C. (2024) Amotekun: The Southwest region's response to the failures of the Nigerian police and worsening insecurity in Nigeria, *African Identities*, 22:1, 1-17, DOI: 10.1080/14725843.2021.1994368
- Nwankwo, O. & Adebayo, F. (2024). Digital innovations in rural security networks: Case studies from Nigeria's agricultural communities. *Technology and Rural Development*, 9(3), 211- 228.
- Okafor, J., Mohammed, S., & Davies, E. (2023). Institutional challenges to sustaining community-led security initiatives in Nigeria's agricultural sector. *Governance and Security Journal*, 15(4), 302-319.
- Olajide, O. E. & Oyelami, O. (2010). Survey of the influence of community policing on crime control and reduction in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Review*, 3(3), 397-404.
- Olawuwo, A.O., & Bach, C. (2014). Global Food security. *International Journal of Research in Business and Technology*, 5, 719-723.
- Peak, K. (2013). Encyclopedia of community policing and problem solving. SAGE Publications, Ltd., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452276113>
- Peng, W., & Berry, E.M. (2019). The Concept of Food Security. *Encyclopedia of Food Security and Sustainability*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA, 2020)
- UNOCHA (2020). <http://www.unocha.org>
- United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2022). *Transitioning From Humanitarian Relief to Long-Term Development Addressing the Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria* https://www.un.org/humansecurity/hs_programme/herders-farmers-conflict
- Vanguard Newspaper (2023). Amotekun: How Akeredolu influenced formation of security outfit in South-West. December 29, 2023: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/12/amotekun-how-akeredolu-influenced->

[formation-of-security-outfit-in-south-west/](#)
Wroblewski, H. M. & Hess, K. M. (2003)

Introduction to Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. 7th Edition.
Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson.