

Lessons Learnt in Implementing Community Policing in Nigeria

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Community Policing

Misperceptions

- Many police officers and stakeholders perceive Community Policing as one of many policing tasks such as crime detection or accident investigation.
- It is seen as one more department in the police force
- Many people presume that community policing is a precise formulaic model or technical specification that can somehow be transplanted into any policing environment regardless of organisational or cultural context.

Community Policing

Reality

- Community policing is not a department
- It is a way of being.
- It is a way of conducting oneself as a professional policeman or policewoman.
- It is the foundation for every policing policy, strategy and operational directive.
- It is a belief system; an idea; a philosophy, in just the same way as one would for example describe the concepts of democracy or human rights.

Community Policing

Reality (cont.)

- It is all embracing i.e. it encompasses every aspect of policing, at every rank and at every role.
- The Community Policing Project is founded on the notion of service and is born out of the need for the Nigeria Police to orientate itself to the demands and expectations of Nigeria's new democratic dispensation.
- Adopting the concept entails a commitment that the police will aim to achieve policing excellence.

Community Policing

Reality (cont.)

- By applying best practice principles & learning to every policing function & process - operational, administrative, management or executive.
- Community Policing Project is founded on the notion of **SERVICE** & is born out of the need for the NPF to orientate itself to the demands & expectations of Nigeria's democratic dispensation.
- It is a living and dynamic set of principles & values against which policing objectives & performance can be measured.

Police organisational Culture

Typically, police in the developing world tend to be

- Structured as rigidly hierarchical quasi-military organisations,
- Decision-making is based on a strict 'top-down' chain of command.

This organisational culture:

- constrains the ability of the police to respond to community influencing and needs,
- It encourages defensiveness and insularity,
- The result is a reactive approach to the policing function

Police organisational Culture (cont.)

Increasingly however

- The pressure for policing to become more open and sensitive to external stimuli is proving irresistible.
- Policing institutions are not immune from the trends towards empowerment
- Hierarchical flattening is gradually being accepted due to the pressing need for specialisation and increasing delegation

The manifestation of the response to these developments can be described as **‘community policing’**.

Policing a Democracy

The key drivers to effective democratic policing are the same as those required for the democratic process itself:

- to be **accountable, responsive** and **representative**,
- thereby to be **effective** in the common interest and the common good.

What is the Policing Purpose?

- In a free democratic society, the role of the police is a privileged one, in the sense that policemen and policewomen are entrusted by their fellow citizens to protect the citizens' fundamental rights to liberty, equality and justice under the law.
- If the police are to be worthy of such public trust, they must provide a service that enriches the quality of life and earns the confidence, satisfaction and active support of the general population.

Where the Police Draws its Authority

The authority of the police in a democracy is derived from two sources: from the law and from public trust in the values that the police represent. To be wholly effective therefore, the authority of the police relies on the consent of the people. This is often expressed as 'policing by consent'.



What should be the Policing Values?

Public trust demands that in exercising their authority the police must:

- Respect human dignity; behave with integrity; act without prejudice to the rights of others, regardless of race, colour, creed, gender or social circumstances
- Be exemplary in their professional competence, in their fairness, compassion, restraint, civility and dedication
- Be responsive to community needs and priorities

Policing Responsibilities

In delivering a high quality of service, the primary responsibilities of the police are to:

- Uphold the rule of law
- Protect life and property
- Prevent crime and the fear of crime
- Preserve public tranquillity
- Detect offences and enable appropriate resolution for victims and offenders
- Befriend those who turn to the police in need

Policing Responsibilities (cont.)

- Ensure a caring, approachable and reassuring community presence
- Promote a sharing of civic duty with their fellow citizens, for the police cannot fulfil the policing purpose on their own

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Heads Up!!!

Let there be no illusion that exceptional leadership, management and operational competencies are required if excellence is to be achieved in meeting the **diversity of testing, competing** and sometimes **seemingly contradictory** policing demands.



Factors of Success

Key determinants of success of community policing:

- Political will, as evidenced in the extent to which government:
 - itself exemplifies integrity and ethical values in its own conduct
 - is prepared to appropriately fund and resource the operational, welfare and self-esteem needs of the policing function
 - and is committed to facilitating service delivery that is non-arbitrary and non-discriminatory.
- Receptiveness of those involved in policing to accept such a challenge.

Rationale for Community Policing

Reasons for adopting a more proactive approach inherent in community policing are philosophical and pragmatic.

At the philosophical level,

- The NPF must be (& be seen to be) open, fair, apolitical, accountable & responsive to public perceptions & expectations so as to serve democratic & humanitarian ideals.
- It should adopt a policing philosophy that is characterised by the notion of “*police service*” rather than “*police force*”, where the most significant performance benchmarks are **public satisfaction, trust & confidence** in the quality of service provided by the police.

Rationale for Community Policing 2

At the pragmatic level, the need for a change in policing is obvious in view of the mounting evidence of the failure of traditional approach to policing which:

- Has the tendency towards focusing on reactive and exclusive law-enforcement,
- Is ultimately not effective in preventing crime and anti-social behaviour within society.
- Has succeeded in developing a police culture that alienates people,
- Has encouraged the police to develop and adopt a 'them versus us' mentality towards the public and vice versa.

Rationale for Community Policing 3

The inevitable outcome of all the negativity in police and public behaviour is that:

- Police image suffers,
- Policing potential is not achieved,
- Suspicion and distrust increases among the public,
 - Public confidence in the police declines, and
 - Citizens withdraw their voluntary support and cooperation.

Rationale for Community Policing 4

At the same time it is important, in the interests of avoiding a sense of exclusiveness, to recognise that policing institutions are not alone in their tendency towards such insularity and even arrogance. Can we not often say much the same thing of, most institutions in developing countries and especially in Nigeria? for example, the legal or medical professions, local government service, senior government positions etc.

Key Principles of community policing

- Ensures the police view their primary role as the provision of high quality service,
- Personnel will be skilled and empowered through effective training and coaching processes to provide that service
- Entails that the police should adopt a problem-solving proactive approach to their work
- Relies upon active partnership between the police and community
- Requires that the community should be involved in deciding policing priorities

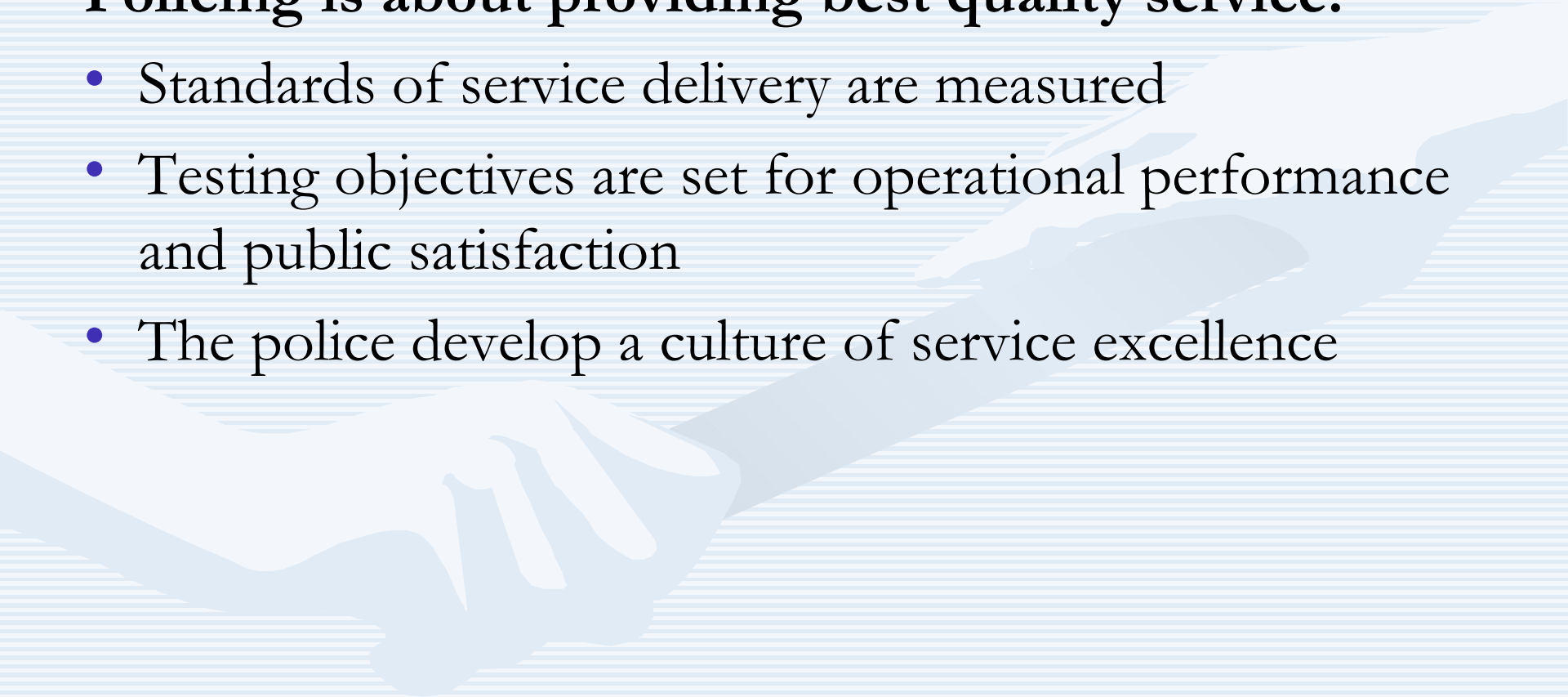
Core Values of community policing

- Respect for and protection of fundamental human rights
- Transparency and openness in the policing function
- Demonstrable commitment at all times to deliver best quality service
- Empowerment of police personnel so that decision making is devolved as close as possible to the point of service delivery
- Willingness to seek, listen to and act upon public opinion and perception
- Police are accountable and answerable for what they do, Police provide effective redress for citizens with a genuine sense of grievance against the police

Characteristics of Community Policing

Policing is about providing best quality service:

- Standards of service delivery are measured
- Testing objectives are set for operational performance and public satisfaction
- The police develop a culture of service excellence



Characteristics of Community Policing 2

Policing is visible and accessible:

- Selected patrol officers are assigned permanent delegated responsibility for policing small areas (“beats”)
- High visibility patrols are conducted, ordinarily on foot, to interact with the public, gain the confidence and cooperation of citizens, and develop local knowledge
- The aim of patrol activity is to be preventative and provide public reassurance
- Patrolling must therefore be directed and focused on clear objectives, not aimless and undirected
- The demeanour of patrol officers is such that citizens will feel able to communicate and seek police assistance

Characteristics of Community Policing 3

Policing involves community consultation, cooperation and interdependency:

- The police participate with the public at large in identifying and prioritising community needs
- The police and community work in partnership to devise and implement agreed solutions to problems
- The community actively engage in the policing role through volunteer schemes, initiating neighbourhood support networks and augmenting police patrol activities

Characteristics of Community Policing 4

Policing involves multi-agency collaboration:

- The police recognise that no statutory (or voluntary) body can make a meaningful impact on social problems if it acts in isolation of others
- The police liaise and work together with other statutory agencies and voluntary organisations in addressing crime and other disturbances to public tranquillity

Characteristics of Community Policing 5

Policing is essentially proactive:

- The underlying causes of crime, incidents and public complaints are analysed and identified
- Rather than simply reacting to the incidence of crime, anti-social behaviour and other sources of public complaint, the police adopt a systematic and integrated problem-solving approach with a view to reducing and preventing such incidents

Characteristics of Community Policing 5

Policing is essentially proactive 2:

- Perceptions and actuality are treated with equal seriousness (e.g. the 'fear of crime'; public perception of police integrity and competence or lack thereof)
- All police personnel and departments can contribute to the problem-solving process, offering ideas and designing initiatives for more effective policing

Characteristics of Community Policing 6

Policing is accountable and transparent:

- Police managers (Senior Officers) are open and accountable about policies, strategies, operations and decisions affecting the community
- All police personnel are accountable for their professional and personal standards and for their treatment of citizens
- Policing effectiveness is monitored, evaluated and open to scrutiny
- Effective means of seeking redress are available to citizens with genuine grievances against the police

Progress Recorded

- Federal level policy support and documentations achieved with corresponding top management buy-in;
- Public surveys (2004-2009) have shown improvement in public perception on Police Service delivery and attitudinal changes in pilot states;
- Establishment of broad stakeholder relationships between the NPF and members of the public, enabling smooth implementation of community policing (PCRC, IPS groups, Civil Society Organizations, Women, Youth groups, religious and Community leaders and other interest groups).
- Improved safety and security through the use of beat patrols, problem solving and conflict resolution methods

Progress Recorded

- Development & approval of operational documents for institutionalising community policing & improving service delivery within the NPF (e.g. 'Force Order' 291 on community policing is in place providing the needed legitimacy for community policing)
- Team of competent police officers now able to support State, Area and Divisional Commands in drawing up and implementing community policing project plans, action plans and process improvement;
- Improved operational linkages & competence at divisional level between NPF and Informal Policing Structures.
- DPO competencies improved through training mentoring

Progress Recorded

- Community policing budget is now being provided by government to ensure implementation.
- 'F' Department conducted a structural and functional review which led to the restructuring of the department to enable it deliver its mandate including the implementation of community policing.
- Improved skills, competencies, supervision & performance management by senior officers in pilot divisions
- Increasing competencies and conscientious service delivery by DPOs and other officers resulting from the training in leadership and managerial skills provided by trained community policing officers

Progress Recorded

- Improved support from NPF management creating the right environment for success
- Increased supervision and monitoring by DPOs of Informal Police System (neighbourhood watch groups) at divisional level, as seen by scheduled planning and debriefing meetings
- Strengthening Police/Community relations for an effective interface, problem identification, prioritization, sourcing and utilization of resources as well as joint problem solving
- Increased police Beat Patrol skills and competencies in Pilot Divisions

Progress Recorded

- Improved support from NPF management creating the right environment for success
- Police/Community relations strengthened for an effective interface, problem identification, prioritization, sourcing and utilization of resources as well as joint problem solving.
- Increased police Beat Patrol skills and competencies in Pilot Divisions leading to improved confidence and information gathering for intelligence-led policing.
- Integration of level 1 Intelligence strategy in Apapa, Victoria Island, Maitama & Gwagwalada divisions with basic modern criminal records generated including photographs and Nominal Index Cards resulting in arrests and crime prevention

Key Lesson Learnt

- The NPF has many highly qualified officers in all aspects of human endeavour but the rigid militaristic structure and operations of the force creates blockages & delayed responses to situations, which inhibits & undermines the ability of officers to contribute to the growth and development of the organisation
- Limited inter and intra departmental consultations prevents competent, diligent and willing officers from contributing to bring about needed improvements in the organisation.
- Many police officers are willing to bring about change but have no skills in doing so

Key Lesson Learnt

- The unwieldy, centralised & regimented nature of the NPF causes delays in the implementation of activities.
- High level buy-in is mandatory to get approvals for all activities and products
- Inter-agency MOUs are necessary to create the will for change within government MDAs.
- The NPF like most MDAs and other stakeholder organisations have very limited skill levels in modern management and service delivery as seen by the absence of best practice such as strategic planning, M&E, process improvements etc.

Key Lesson Learnt

- The implementation process of community policing became more efficient with increasing levels of support by the IGP and other senior managers.
- Opinion surveys are not common in the NPF just like most other MDAs. Where conducted, the results are not used for improving management or policy input.
- Despite SERVICOM, MDAs including the police appear to be ignorant of or choose to ignore public perception and concerns while the 'system' is being serviced even where it fails to meet its goal or purpose.
- Thus the NPF and indeed other MDAs are prone to corruption, ineptitude and poor performance

Key Lesson Learnt

- There is very little evidence that police response is adequately informed by any scientific evidence or its decisions being informed by the public interest.
- Partnership & cooperation between justice sector agencies (police, judiciary, prisons & the legal profession) is very weak, often confrontational which hinders speedy implementation of projects where collaboration & linkages are necessary.
- The NPF is either under-funded or its disbursement process is insensitive to the basic operational needs of police officers. Budget and allocation process is slow and has limited connection to the real time needs of the NPF. These affect operations of the police

Key Lesson Learnt

- Legislation legitimising police operations need to be reviewed on regular basis to improve the operational and legal environment for the police
- Informal Policing Structures operate under different conditions. Some have legislation establishing and regulating their operations while others are operating under a loose community based understanding of the need for safety and security. These make police supervision difficult
- IPS groups operate with relative restrictions from governments and communities in the North but with more autonomy and greater powers in the South.

Key Lesson Learnt

- IPS groups are more active in rural communities where police presence is limited.
- Many Nigerians have more confidence in IPS than the formal policing structure
- Most IPS groups have very limited formal training in safety & security. They apply more of traditional, informal methods which are replete with allegations of human rights and procedure abuses (such as illegal detention, torture and other abuses).
- States and LGAs often fund IPS groups to maintain security in their jurisdictions but they are also accused of using them for oppression. Communities and citizens also support IPS groups directly or through levies.

Key Lesson Learnt

As a result of the issues raised above the MoPA and NPF should endeavour to plan policing and other NPF interventions with significant margins in terms of timing and costs in order to accommodate the uncertainties associated with operations in the safety and security sector.

Present Challenges

- Size and complexity of Nigeria
- Poor capacity among police officers
- Organisational, operational and motivational challenges depicted by poor conditions of service
- Logistical issues regarding topography, poor literacy levels and severe poverty among citizens
- Public and stakeholder Scepticism
- Uncertain political will in and politicisation of the role of police leadership

Concluding Comments

- The foregoing provides the essence of community policing.
- It is the essence of policing a democracy.
- It is the essence of effective policing.
- Such ideals do not become normal practice simply because of the Chief Executive's order or constitutional requirement.
- They become the norm because of careful planning and funding
- Of perseverance and sustained pursuit of ideals and
- Wise and inspiring leadership;

Concluding Comments

- A leadership that is seen to practice the values it preaches;
- A leadership that creates an enabling organisation whereby the skills, attitudes and behaviours to achieve such ideals are inculcated through effective selection, meaningful human resource (HR) policies and personal development processes for individual officers.
- Such processes are an amalgam of structured assessment (assessment centres),
- Formal training (the classroom) and
- Informal/workplace training (coaching, mentoring, appraisal feedback, role modelling & experiential learning)