

# NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AS A STRATEGY FOR CURBING INSECURITY TOWARDS PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN ENUGU STATE

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## Abstract

This study examined neighbourhood watch as a strategy for curbing insecurity towards promotion of community development in Enugu State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 717 respondents comprising 250 Police Officers, 271 members of neighbourhood watch outfit and 196 volunteers from community based organisations in three local government areas in the three senatorial districts of Enugu State. A sample size of 215 respondents was selected. The proportionate sampling technique was adopted in selecting 30% of the population of police officers neighbourhood watch personnel and volunteers from community based organisations in the study area. A self-designed questionnaire titled “Neighbourhood Watch as a Strategy for Curbing in Security Questionnaire” (NWSCSQ) was used as the instrument for data collection in the study. The questionnaire was validated by two test experts and one in the field of Adult Education and Community Development and the other in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the Instrument was tested using the test re-test method. A reliability index of 0.88 was obtained which showed the instrument was reliable. Mean statistics was used to analyse the data collected. The findings of the study among other things revealed that neighborhood watch strategy is used to tackle insecurity in Enugu State through arresting of criminals by neighbourhood watch group, reporting of cult activities to the police and exposure of hideouts of criminals. Based on the findings it was recommended among other things that Government at federal and state levels should provide a legal framework through enactment of legislations to enforce the creation of neighbourhood watch groups in the 36 States of Nigeria. This would deal with the rising spate of insecurity in the nation.

**Keywords:** Neighbourhood Watch, Insecurity, Community Development

## Introduction

Security is one of the major factors that determine the level of development in a nation. There can hardly be any meaningful development in a nation, state or community where there is insecurity. Insecurity obstructs the socio-economic growth of a state in various ways: threats to physical security, the absence of safe living environments, dangers that prevent people from achieving sustainable

livelihoods and the impact upon health and education services (Safeworld, 2008). At the community level, insecurity creates disaffection and disunity among community members and make it difficult for them to come together and carry out community development programmes that would have direct positive impact on their lives.

Unfortunately, insecurity has become a global issue in recent times.

Governments all over the world are grappling with increasing crime rate, gangster activities, violent killings and most recently terrorism etc. For example, following the coordinated terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 which led to massive death and destruction of properties worth millions of dollars, there has been an emergence of different violent extremist groups around the world. Prominent among them are Al Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) which have left immeasurable destruction along their paths. Similarly, in Africa, activities of the Al Shabaab group in Somalia, Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen in northern Nigeria have left thousands of people displaced from their ancestral homes and thousands killed. Activities of militant groups in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have also led to loss of lives and property worth millions and billions of naira. This necessitated the call among world leaders for a collaborative effort in the fight against terrorism and other associated crimes (Sumpter, 2016).

In Nigeria, virtually all the geopolitical zones in the country are being threatened by one form of security issue or the other. From insurgency by the Boko haram sect and violent killings by Fulani herdsmen in the north to militancy and kidnapping in the south and armed robbery and other related crimes in the west and most recently the clamour for an independent nation by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) in the East. According to the Premium Times (2015), the Federal Government of Nigeria earmarked about five trillion naira for internal security and the protection of the territorial integrity of the country in the last five years. State governments have equally allocated hundreds of billions of naira to security. In fact, monies are paid to young men and women by individual citizens and communities to secure them and their properties. In spite of these huge

sums voted and expended on security, it is a common knowledge that Nigeria is presently grappling with the menace of terrorism, kidnapping, cultism, violent killings, hostage taking, communal conflict and armed robbery perpetrated by disenchanting youths.

Enugu State in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria has had its fair share of security issues especially violent killings perpetrated by Fulani Herdsmen in various communities. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 2016, the Vanguard Newspaper reported the killing of about 40 persons by Fulani herdsmen at Nimbo in Uzo- Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State. Ten residential buildings and a church named Christ Holy Church International, aka Odozi Obodo, were also said to have been burnt by the herdsmen just as vehicles and motorcycles were destroyed and domestic animals killed. A similar killing was orchestrated by the Fulani herdsmen in Ndiagu, Attakwu, Akegbe-Ugwu in Nkanu-West Local Government of Enugu State on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2016. A catholic Seminarian, Lazarus Nwafor was slaughtered with machetes and the stomach of a six months pregnant lady with the name Mrs Nwaru was slit open (Vanguard Newspaper, 2016). These crises have made it difficult for community members to come together and carry out development brings that would improve their wellbeing and that of their communities.

Successive administrations in Nigeria both at national, state and local government levels have devised various approaches and strategies to fight crime and improve the security situation in their communities, states and the nation at large. For example, the Federal Government of Nigeria initiated the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) to combat the activities of Boko haram. Similarly, in collaboration with the United Kingdom's Department for International Development

(DFID), Nigeria launched its Security, Justice and Growth (SJG) programme in 2002 to address core issues of security and access to justice (DFID in Ella, 2014). At state levels, various state governments including Rivers and Enugu have supported the security forces (Police, Army, Navy and SSS) with vehicles and other materials to aid their work. Communities have also set up vigilante groups and other similar outfits to curb crime.

Despite these efforts made, most communities in Nigeria are still grappling with different kinds of crimes and security issues which has made the carrying out of community development programmes quite difficult. Eji (2016) attributes this to the fact that the strategies adopted places too much emphasis on the government and traditional policing with little or no attention paid to the communities who have the potential to assist in curbing crimes in their neighborhood.

Policing or maintenance of security is supposed to be everybody's business if it must be effective. This was the view of Kasali and Odetola (2016) when they reported that the capacity of the Nigerian Police alone to maintain law and order in many states have been undermined due to rapidly growing rate of violent crimes. Bank robbery, kidnapping and other related crimes have increased drastically in many parts of the country. For example, many banks have closed in Ogun and Kwara States due to cases of armed robbery.

This underscores urgent need for a shift from traditional policing to a more inclusive and democratic strategy of curbing insecurity where community members will be fully involved and responsible for their safety and that of their communities. This will ensure a lasting process of peace building which will in turn encourage community development

effort and this is what neighbourhood watch is all about.

Neighbourhood Watch usually involves community members coming together in small groups in a local residence to share information about local crime problems, share crime prevention strategies and develop plans for "watching" the neighbourhood and reporting crimes. This strategy has been adopted in communities across the world including Nigeria. For instance, in 2016, Enugu State Governor, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi in response to the incessant killings by Fulani herdsmen and other related crimes adopted the community policing model when he instituted the "Neighborhood Watch Scheme" in all the 470 communities in the state. A total of 25,000 persons were employed with 50 persons from each community nominated by the community leaders. (Punch Newspaper, 2016). Agbo (2016) noted that the setting up of this neighborhood watch in Enugu State has ensured relative peace in Enugu State. The members of this group include Myetti-Allah, cattle rearers, traditional rulers, the Sarikis, other security agencies, down to the local governments. For example in Udi, the herdsmen reported that three of their cows were stolen and killed. The neighborhood Watch investigated the report and paid the herdsmen the sum of 1.5 million when they found the allegation to be true and this has not happened again ever since (Vanguard, 2016).

It is against this background that this study examined neighbourhood watch as strategy for curbing insecurity towards promotion of community development in Enugu State.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Neighbourhood watch is sometimes referred to as crime watch, it consists of an organized group of civilians (residents of a particular community) devoted to the

prevention of crime in their neighbourhood. The essence of neighbourhood watch is to educate residents or community members on how to achieve safe and secure neighbourhoods. However, when there is an incident of crime or suspicion of a criminal activity, members are encouraged to report to the police and not to intervene (Palmer, 2012). Neighbourhood watch can be organized as an autonomous group or may be a function of neighbourhood association or community association. This is different from a vigilante group, they are not expected to take any action when they suspect criminal activity. Their duty primarily is to contact relevant authorities. This implies that they work hand in hand with the police. According to the New York State Police (2013), neighbourhood watch is one of the most effective and cheapest ways of preventing crime and reducing fear. This strategy fights the isolation that crime creates and feeds upon. It creates bond among community members, reduces crimes and improves the relationship between police and the communities they serve.

### **Insecurity**

Insecurity on the other hand is described as the state of being unsafe; liability to give way, be lost, or become unsafe or fraught with danger; want of secureness or stability; instability; liability to damage or loss. Zumve and Torbunde (2015) defines insecurity as lack of security to lives and property, lack of justice and respect for lives, lack of basic needs as food, water, shelter and health. Similarly, Beland (2005) defined insecurity as a state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. This definition describes physical insecurity which is more visible and concrete and it is relevant to other types of insecurity such as social and economic insecurity.

### **Community Development**

Community development as a concept has enjoyed a wide range of definition since its introduction in 1948 at the Cambridge summer conference. However, the practice of community development has existed in most African societies long before its conceptualization. This view was supported by Anyanwu in Adekola (2013) when he noted that in Africa, community development is nothing new. He observed that from the earliest periods of human history, men have sought to improve their lots, and community development is only a modern way of doing this.

The Economic Commission for Africa in Amirize (1998) defined community development as the outcome of a series of qualitative and quantitative change that occurs among rural population. Hence, it is a process in which a set of institutional, social, cultural and technical measures are put in place for the inhabitant of these rural areas with the sole aim of improving their socio-economical and socio-cultural conditions (ECA, 1974). Amirize (1998) explained that community development therefore, constitutes a purposeful effort to create high awareness level as well as alleviate the living conditions of rural dwellers. The emphasis tends to focus more on the poor and ignorant masses whose physical environment, socio-economic, political and living conditions are usually pathetic.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Insecurity is a major issue successive governments over the past few years have grappled with in Nigeria. Enugu State have received their fair share of security challenges such as increased crime rate, herdsmen killings, cultism, kidnapping, communal conflicts, chieftaincy tussle, armed robbery etc. These crimes have affected the socio-economic development of the state and community development programmes at grass root levels.

The government of Enugu State have over the years attempted to curb insecurity using the traditional policing system but apparently this has not effectively reduced crime as increasing cases of insecurity is still evident in some parts of Enugu State. The police seemed to have been overwhelmed by crimes in the area. For instance, Enugu State in the recent past has suffered several attacks from herdsmen, kidnapping and other crimes. The Vanguard Newspaper in 2016 reported the killing of 40 people by herdsmen at Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State. These among many other crimes proved the police alone cannot deal with crimes and criminality.

Though, many studies on community policing approach and its role in crime prevention exist, the potential of neighbourhood watch a strategy in addressing insecurity in Enugu State is yet to be established. The establishment of the potentials of neighbourhood as a strategy for curbing security challenges towards the promotion of community development programmes in Enugu State is therefore the problem of this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine neighbourhood watch as a strategy for curbing insecurity towards promotion of community development in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine how neighborhood watch is adopted as a strategy for curbing insecurity in Enugu State.
2. expose the ways through which the adoption of neighbourhood watch as a strategy in curbing insecurity promotes community development programmes in the study area.

### **Research Questions**

1. How is neighborhood watch adopted as strategy for curbing insecurity in Enugu State?
2. In what ways is the adoption of neighbourhood watch as a strategy in curbing insecurity promote community development programmes in the study area?

### **Method**

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 717 respondents comprising 250 Police Officers, 271 members of neighbourhood watch outfit and 196 volunteers from community based organisations in three local government areas in the three senatorial districts of Enugu State. These are Nkanu West, Ezeagu and Nsukka from Enugu East, Enugu West and Enugu North respectively. A sample size of 215 respondents was selected. The proportionate sampling technique was adopted in selecting 30% of the population of police officers neighbourhood watch personnel and volunteers from community based organisations in the study area. A self-designed questionnaire titled “Neighbourhood Watch as a Strategy for Curbing Insecurity Questionnaire” (NWSCSQ) was used as the instrument for data collection in the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: (“A” and “B”). Section “A” elicited responses on the demographic features of the respondents while Section “B” elicited responses to statement items drawn from the research questions. Responses on the Questionnaire were anchored on a Four-point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The Questionnaire was validated by two test experts and one in the field of Adult Education and Community Development and the other in Measurement and Evaluation. The

reliability of the Instrument was tested using the test re-test method. The responses of the two tests were computed using the Cronbach Alpha statistical technique and a correlation index of 0.88 was obtained to ascertain the reliability of the Instrument. A total of 210 copies of the

administered questionnaire were retrieved by the researchers. Mean statistics was used to analyse the data collected. Any mean score of 2.5 and above was considered “Agree” or “Accepted” while mean scores below 2.5 were considered “Disagree” or “Rejected”

## Results

**Research Question 1:** How is Neighbourhood Watch adopted as a strategy for curbing insecurity in Enugu State?

**Table 1: Neighbourhood Watch as a Strategy for Curbing Insecurity Enugu State**

S/N	Statement Items	Mean $\bar{X}$	Remark
	Neighbourhood Watch is used as a strategy for curbing insecurity in the following ways:		
11.	Arrest of criminals or cultists and hand them over to the Police.	2.90	Agree
12.	Through report of incidences of cult activities to the Police or neighbourhood watch personnel for necessary action.	2.93	Agree
13.	Exposure of hide outs of criminals and cultists in communities	3.15	Agree
14.	Helping the Police to identify potential criminals and cultists in the community.	3.12	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.03</b>	

**Source:** *Researcher's Field Result, 2019*

Data analysis in table 1 revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that neighborhood watch strategy of community policing tackles insecurity in Enugu State through arrest of criminals or cultists and hand them over to the Police ( $\bar{X}$  =2.90), report of incidences of cult activities to the Police or neighbourhood watch personnel for necessary action ( $\bar{X}$  =2.93), exposure of hide outs of criminals and cultists in communities ( $\bar{X}$  =3.15) and

helping the Police to identify potential criminals and cultists in the community ( $\bar{X}$  =3.12).

Given a grand mean of 3.03, the answer to research question 1 is that neighborhood watch strategy of tackles insecurity in Enugu State through arrest of criminals by neighbourhood watch group, reporting of cult activities to the police, exposure of hideouts of criminals and cultists to the police and helping the police to identify potential criminals and cultists.

**Research Question 2:** In what ways is the adoption of neighbourhood watch as a strategy in curbing insecurity promote community development programmes in the study area?

**Table 2 Mean Response of Respondents on how Adoption of Neighbourhood Watch Strategy in Curbing Insecurity Promotes Community Development Programmes.**

S/N	Statement Items	Mean $\bar{X}$	Remark
	The adoption of neighbourhood watch as a strategy in curbing insecurity promotes community development programmes in the following ways:		
28.	Promotion of peaceful coexistence between community members and the Police.	2.86	Agree
29.	Contribution to resource mobilization for community development programmes.	2.75	Agree
30.	Participation in needs identification/baseline assessment for community development programmes.	2.86	Agree
31.	Provision of security for completed community development projects.	2.91	Agree
32.	Confidence building for development agencies, donor agencies and partners.	2.76	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>Agree</b>

**Source:** *Researcher's Field Result, 2019*

The analysed data in table 2 revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that adoption of neighbourhood watch as a strategy in curbing insecurity promotes community development programmes through promotion of peaceful coexistence between community members and the Police ( $\bar{X}$  =2.86), contribution to resource mobilization for community development building for development agencies, donor agencies and partners( $\bar{X}$  =2.76).

With a grand mean score of 2.83, the answer to research question 2 is that adoption of neighbourhood watch as a strategy in curbing insecurity promotes community development programmes through promotion of peaceful coexistence ( $\bar{X}$  =2.86), provision of security for completed community development projects ( $\bar{X}$  =2.91) and confidence between community members and the Police, contribution to resource mobilization for community development

programmes ( $\bar{X}$  =2.75), participation in needs identification/baseline assessment for community development programmes (programmes, participation in needs identification/baseline assessment for community development programmes, provision of security for completed community development projects and confidence building for development agencies, donor agencies and partners.

### **Discussion of Results**

The findings of the study for research question one revealed that neighbourhood watch strategy for curbing insecurity tackles insecurity through the arrest of criminals by neighbourhood watch group, reporting of cult activities to the police, exposure of hideouts of criminals and cultists to the police and helping the police to identify potential criminals and cultists. This findings is supported by the findings of the New York State Police (2013) which revealed that neighbourhood watch is one of the most effective and cheapest ways of preventing crime and reducing fear. This strategy fights the isolation that

crime creates and feeds upon. It creates bond among community members, reduces crimes and improves the relationship between police and the communities they serve. This finding was further supported by the findings of a study carried out by Meyer and Graan (2011) which revealed that the establishment of the Roodekrans Neighbourhood Watch in South Africa led to the successful mobilisation of a total of 1097 residents as members. These members successfully implemented night patrols between midnight and the early hours of the morning. Over one hundred patrols are currently done per month in this inconvenient timeslot, which has resulted in a significant decrease in crime at night, but has led to an increase in daytime crime. However, violent crimes such as armed robberies and carjacking now constitute only 2% of crime in the neighbourhood.

The findings of the study for research question two revealed that the adoption of neighbourhood watch as a strategy in curbing insecurity promotes community development programmes through the promotion of peaceful coexistence between community members and the Police, contribution to resource mobilization for community development programmes, participation in needs identification/baseline assessment for community development programmes, provision of security for completed community development projects and confidence building for development agencies, donor agencies and partners. Supporting this, Skogan (1995) reported that community policing ensures people work together to fight crimes and attain a peaceful neighbourhood where community development can take place. Thomas (2013) also supported this from the findings of his study which revealed that community policing ensures all stakeholders in the development of a community collaborate to ensure a safe neighbourhood where development can

thrive. This would promote peaceful coexistence and encourage participation of people every stage of the community development process. However, the findings of a study carried out by Okafor and Anichie (2018) revealed that so far, community policing as implemented in Nigeria has not ensured security and safety in the country let alone facilitate community development. They noted that, the Nigerian police has been busy policing the community alienating the people more rather than adopting community police. Consequently, insecurity, crimes and disorder have scared investors away from Nigeria, crippled economic activities and hindered development in the communities. So long as the Nigeria Police Force engages in policing the community instead of partnering with the community in matters of security, safety and development in the communities will continue to elude Nigeria.

### **Summary of findings**

1. Neighborhood watch strategy is used to tackle insecurity in Enugu State through arresting of criminals by neighbourhood watch group, reporting of cult activities to the police, exposure of hideouts of criminals and cultists to the police and helping the police to identify potential criminals and cultists.
2. The findings of the study showed that the adoption of neighbourhood watch as a strategy in curbing insecurity promotes community development programmes through promotion of peaceful coexistence between community members and the Police, contribution to resource mobilization for community development programmes, participation in needs identification/baseline assessment for community development programmes, provision of security for completed community development

projects and confidence building for development agencies, donor agencies and partners.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that neighbourhood watch is a strategy adopted in curbing insecurity Enugu State. Through this strategy, criminals are arrested and handed over to the police, their hideouts are exposed and members furnish the police with information on the activities of criminals.

The study also concluded that the adoption of neighbourhood strategy in curbing insecurity promotes community development programmes. Neighbourhood watch among other things promotes peaceful coexistence between community members and the Police and provides security for completed community development projects and confidence building for development agencies, donor agencies and partners.

### Recommendations

1. Government at federal and state levels should provide a legal framework through enactment of legislations to enforce the creation of neighbourhood watch groups in the 36 States of Nigeria. This would deal with the rising spate of insecurity in the nation.
2. All stakeholders in development of communities in Nigeria must advocate for the adoption of neighbourhood watch model in all communities as it has the potential to create the right atmosphere for community development to thrive. It also provides security for completed community development projects and confidence building for development agencies, donor agencies and partners.

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