

ETHICS AND POLICING IN NIGERIA: A CHALLENGE FOR THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The principle of what is right and wrong has remained a genuine concern for all persons over the ages. This is why it has engaged the attention of philosophers from the earliest times. In all cultures, attempts have been made to formulate acceptable mode of conduct for all persons and groups in the society. The cherished ideals of the community are codified to form rules of conduct which ultimately becomes a binding ethical philosophy. In addition to this, any work environment or group where people work together, rules or standard of conduct are developed to regulate the behavior of persons in the work space. There is hardly a profession without a code of conduct. A code of conduct articulates the ethical values which a group adopts as its standard mode of conduct both in their personal and inter personal interaction with others. Professionally, it encapsulates the acceptable minimum level of conduct in the discharge of their professional duties. The Nigerian police is no exception in this regard. The police act as well as the police code of conduct, clearly states the acceptable standard of conduct for an officer while on duty as well as when off duty. This paper intends to interrogate the acceptable conduct of police officers in Nigeria in their line of duty. This paper, will attempt to unravel the underlying factors promoting ethical misconduct in the force and articulate means of improving the overall conduct of men in the force.

Keywords: Ethics, Policing, Code of Conduct, Justice System, Nigeria.

Introduction

The police in Nigeria have of recent come under public pressure. The inability of the police to contain the rising crime wave as well as its use of high handedness in its operational method has remained a source of anger. But, the dissatisfaction came to a climax with the increasing brutality of the Special Armed Robbery Squad. The inability of the police leadership to address the professional shortcomings of the anti-robbery agency metamorphosed into a national unrest that saw many police facilities destroyed and some officers killed.

In the light of the prevailing circumstances, it becomes expedient to discuss policing in Nigeria in the context of the ethical values expected of an average officer. This paper therefore,

examines the conduct expected of every police officer on duty as well as off duty. It equally examines the reason why unprofessional and unethical behavior has remained high among police officers in the discharge of their duties. It is apparent that while the government and the citizens expect the best from the police, the Nigerian state is yet to give its best to the police. Good products usually emanate from good raw materials. That notwithstanding, a law officer is bound to obey the law he is enforcing.

The justice system is heavily dependent on the policing system. If the policing system is not right, then the entire justice system is in jeopardy. The centrality of the police in the justice sector demands that no effort should be spared in getting the police right morally. When a nation arms morally bankrupt persons as policing agents, it has invariably complicated the crime situation in the country.

Clarification of concepts

Policing: The word police according to Roberg, Crank, & Kuykendall (2000) as cited by Idowu (2013) is related to the Greek word *politeuein*, which means to be a citizen or engage in a political activity and a polis, which means a city or state. Police from the above perspective relates to a body of people charged with the responsibility of law enforcement, order maintenance, information gathering amongst others.

In his own contribution Thomas Whetstone (2020) defines police as a body of officers representing civil authority of government charged with policing functions amongst which is the maintenance of public order and safety. However, he posits that since there is a growing consensus that the common feature among all different agencies engaged in work of policing is the legal competence to enforce coercive, non-negotiable measures to resolve problematic situations the confinement of policing to public agencies no longer appears feasible. This work will however be restricted to policing as a public service in Nigeria. From the foregoing this work will attempt to examine ethical implications of police misconduct in Nigeria.

Ethics: The word ethics according to Gardner (1960:3) is defined as the critical study of morality. Furthermore, he posits that it relates to systematic theories of the nature of the life of man. It is the science that concerns itself with the norms of right and wrong. Ethics according to Udaba (2017:144) embraces divine and human dimensions of morality. Divine or religious ethics are those rules of human conduct that draws their authority from the creator or divine personality while human ethics relates to codes of behavior that are derived from human reasoning or laws and directives issued by government. Simply put, it can be said that ethics is simply way to live and maintain right conduct in human society. This connotes that each society must come to terms in respect of what is right and what is wrong. Ethics in this context therefore, refers to those acceptable rules of behavior that should moderate Nigerian Police Force as they engage in their work of maintaining law and order in the polity.

Conduct: The word conduct according to Okafor (2017:126) refers to a person's behavior in a particular place or in a particular situation which could be positive or negative. Code of conduct therefore relates to standards of behavior that governs police work with reference to time, place, persons and situations. They are the positive image the police are expected to reflect in their day to day dealing with the public. A former inspector General of police, articulated this in a handbook for police officers.

Historical Origin of policing in Nigeria

Policing has been a feature of the human society right from creation. According to the Christian bible, when God drove the man and his wife out of the Garden of Eden, he placed Cherubim with flaming sword to keep the man and his wife out of the tree of life. Therefore, policing can be justified religiously from the Christian perspective. Culturally as well, every society has one form of policing or the other prior to modern times. In some African communities' masquerades were used to police certain places.

Historically, traditional African policing according to Idowu (2013) is grounded on community policing which is usually defined by social and religious structures. However, with the advent of British colonialism, policing was transformed into an institution charged with fostering the interest of the colonial masters, thereby destroying the traditional mode of maintaining law and order. He therefore submits that policing in Nigeria dates back to colonial legacy. Besides, while citing Newburn (2004), he states that policing and police work did not take off as a paid profession even though it was considered a noble and incorruptible profession. Over the years, he noted that it underwent three evolutionary stages. The first stage was an era when the populace, though small was responsible for maintaining law and order, which was followed by the stage when the justice of the peace emerged to take responsibility for maintaining the law and justice at the bar. The third stage according to him is the present era, when paid professional police were established to maintain law and order. Consequently, he submits that the police force was a brain child of colonial authority, established to serve their political and economic interest. Unfortunately, the Nigeria Police has continued to tow the line of serving the interest of the powers that be in the socio-economic and political space. In other words, policing in Nigeria has remained a duplication or an extension of its colonial philosophy its attitude of subjugation of the citizenry. What this means is that policing and police work in our nation has come to represent an instrument of protecting the economic, political, social, cultural and religious interests of the ruling class. This ugly trend has in no small measure contributed in dislocating the relationship between the police and the local communities. This has adversely affected public perception of the police.

Soriola (2019), writing on the history of Nigeria Police Force(NPF), states that it was set up to secure the society by ensuring the protection of human rights and freedom, countering crime, promoting public law and order as well as public safety. She notes that it has continued to evolve such that in the early 1900's, when Northern and Southern Nigerian Protectorates were declared the Northern Police was formed from a portion of the Constabulary of Royal Niger Company while a portion of the Constabulary of Niger Coast formed the Southern Nigeria Police. Furthermore, she posits that it was in 1960s, at the birth of the first republic that the police force was divided into regions and then nationalized. What this implies is that the police force originally was directed towards servicing colonial local authorities.

On its contribution buzznigeria.com states that NPF was reformed into seven regional commands which replaced the command structures based on states. Besides it observes that while a commissioner led every command initially the formation was later shared into police provinces and sub divisions driven by local officers. Moreover, it stated that in 1989 NPF

undergone a further reformation which introduced a Quick Intervention Force in every state which was charged with keeping watch over political events as well as suppressing disorders as the nation transitioned to civil rule. Today the Nigerian Police Force is structured into a centralized police force as entrenched in the 1999 constitution. Section 214(1) of the 1999 constitution stipulates that:

There shall be a police force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigerian Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section no other police force shall be established in the federation or any part thereof.

Ethics in Policing in Nigeria

Generally speaking, ethics is studied as part of philosophy, and philosophers over the years have shown great interest in its study. This is because of the crucial place of ethics in human society. How people ought to act, and how they act, is a determinant factor in the pursuit of overall happiness and peace of human society. It is the realization that the quality of life on earth is a function of human conduct that propelled philosophers of varying backgrounds to delve into the study and formulation of ethical theories. There are three popular ethical theories which give insight into human behavior. They are normative ethics, meta-ethics and applied ethics.

Evans and Macmillan (2014:27) define normative ethics as theories of ethics that are concerned with norms, standards and criteria that define principles of ethical behavior. Normative ethical theories include Kantian duty ethics, Utilitarian ethics, ethics of care, virtue ethics, egoism, moral relativism, social contract theory etc. Meta-ethics is concerned with the language used in the evaluation of normative ethics, while applied ethics deals with how normative ethics are practically applied in practical situations. A good understanding of ethical theories and principles is important for the police officer, because the demand of the job confronts him with challenges needing discretion.

Ethics as we have noted thus far encapsulates what a society or an organization has accepted as the standard of behavior. It is also expected that the Nigerian police, being part of Nigerian society should be an example of the ethical standard of Nigerian society as articulated in the Nigerian constitution and other laws. This is because the setting up of the police in the first place is to ensure that they enforce the acceptable pattern of behavior as approved by the Nigerian society. The police therefore, is not only the custodian and enforcer of correct ethical standard but the teachers as well. This explains the deep interest attached to police unprofessional behavior. Again, in normal circumstances, the greatest qualification for a law enforcement officer ought to be his behavior. While skill and educational qualification can suffice for other professions, it ought not to be so with the police. This is because so much is entrusted to his care and discretion.

One of the popular ethical theories in policing is the slippery slope theory. This theory contends that persons, who currently manifest little unethical habits, have a tendency to grow in the unethical conduct until it becomes unacceptable. This seems to be coming from the background assumption that the job predisposes one to unethical conduct more than any other profession. The slippery theory tends to assume that people usually slip down the slope morally. Souryal (2011) argues that indoctrination into the police culture negatively affects

new entrants into the profession. This implies the existence of a culture of unprofessionalism internally in the force and every new entrant is circumstantially compelled to adjust to it. The implication is that contrary to the official code of conduct, there is an unwritten code within the force.

Police conduct has remained a topical issue in Nigeria since its inception. The rank and file as well as the officer cadre of the force has been often accused of bribery, extortion, human rights violations as well as extra judicial killings. Amnesty International, notes that extrajudicial executions, unlawful killings and enforced disappearances by the police is widespread and go largely un-investigated and unpunished (Amnesty International report, December, 2009). They maintain that the police exploit police force order 237 to perpetuate extra judicial murders and culture of corruption.

The Nigerian Police Code of Conduct

Nigeria police as a responsible force was established based on some ethical standards necessary in its pursuit of its objectives and goals. Since the goals of the organization has varied from the pre-colonial, the colonial, the independent and immediate post-independence, the military and post military to the present democratic dispensation, the values of the organization have equally witnessed tremendous shifts. The present focus in Nigeria is to steer policing away from militaristic approach to civil approach. Towards this end, there has been deliberate reorientation programs aimed at instilling a new democratic approach to policing in line with democratic culture and international best practices. The Department of International Development (DFID) and the British High commission have equally supported efforts to reposition policing and access to Justice in Nigeria. This is because of the perceived set back the institution suffered during the military era.

Police all over the world operate within certain acceptable ethical standards, which sometimes are articulated as code of conduct for officers and men of the force. In Nigeria, in addition to the oath, sworn to by every police officer, there are standard codes of conduct that is expected to be complied with by every police officer when on duty and off duty. The purpose of this is to ensure that integrity is maintained in the organization.

In 2012, the then inspector-general of police, Mohammed Abubakar, articulated the Nigerian police code of conduct in a pamphlet which was circulated among officers and men. It is designed to be a pocket handbook which an officer can carry about and make reference to continually. Our review will draw its resources from this handbook.

Like every responsible organization, the Nigerian police has institutionally codified principles of behavior. This is expected to guide the ethical conduct of every police officer while on duty and off duty. The essence is to have a well-disciplined police men and women whose behavior will not bring reproach to the image of the organization. In a book, *Code of Conduct for Officers and Men of the Nigerian Police Force*, Mohammed Abubakar, officers' requirements under the code of conduct are categorized into eight principles (Abubakar, 2012:7-13). We will attempt to examine six of these requirements.

Principle one: 'police officers shall conduct themselves, whether on or off duty, in accordance with the constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria and all applicable laws, ordinances

and rules enacted or established pursuant to legal authority'. This implies that a police officer's life ought to be exemplary. He/she is expected to be above reproach and an example of one who is well behaved and subject to all laws and the constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria.

Police officers as law enforcement officers are actually expected to be exemplary in obeying all laws. They are expected to be exemplary in their respective communities in terms of obeying the laws of the land. It then follows that only the best behaved should be recruited into the force in the first place. Incidentally, there is serious doubt if this criterion is followed to the letter in the recruitment process. It is a great paradox for a law officer to be seen disobeying the same law he is paid to protect as is common in Nigeria.

Principle two: 'police officers shall refrain from any conduct in an official capacity that detracts from the public's faith in the integrity of the criminal justice system'. The criminal justice system has lost much credibility on account of the conduct of police officers. The common incidents of bribery and extortion have weakened public confidence in the criminal justice system, having created an erroneous impression that justice is sold and bought in Nigeria. This has also weakened public confidence in the police.

Principle three: 'police officers shall perform their duties and apply the law impartially and without any prejudice or discrimination'. Though impartiality is the core of accountable policing, the ability of Nigerian police to apply this principle is compromised by the way Nigeria is structured. In the first place, the officers and men were recruited into the force based on their places of origin and this plays a role in subsequent postings and promotion. It is difficult for an officer who was recruited to represent his state/ethnic quota to maintain impartiality at all times. The Nigerian system is remotely controlled by where you come from, and what you are able to do for them.

Principle four: 'police officers shall not, on or off duty, exhibit any conduct which discredits themselves or the force or otherwise impairs their ability or that of the officers or the force to provide law enforcement services to the community'. One need to note here, that this principle is not enforceable. It is obvious that the police lack the will power or the boldness to check how their men act especially when they are off duty. In addition, community members lack boldness to report a police officer to law enforcement agents. Again the principle of esprit de corp in force parlance is interpreted to mean, that a law officer cannot be subject to the law. Only few policemen drive vehicles with valid particulars.

Principle five: 'police officers shall treat all members of the public courteously and with respect'. Based on the mode of training which police officers received, courtesy is a scarce commodity in police language. Their language is always a command tone and convey deep message of force. This is not peculiar to their relationship with the public. Even when senior officers address junior officers it carries a sense of harshness and military tone. This is unconsciously transferred to the public.

Principle six: 'police officers shall not compromise their integrity nor that of the force, by accepting, giving or soliciting any gratuity which could be reasonably interpreted as capable of influencing their official acts or judgements, or by using their status for personal,

commercial or political gain'. A critical look at the code of reveals that the wordings of principle six may create space for misconduct. What constitutes the reasonable threshold of judging a gratuity's ability to influence official acts or judgement? This principle is not measurable and it is a matter of debate to determine what is reasonable interpretation of the gift or gratuity solicited by an officer? This section didn't actually abrogate soliciting for gratification, but only cautions that such should not be reasonably interpreted as capable of influencing judgement. For instance, in many police stations, money is demanded for certain services like bail, opening and closing of case files, transport money to effect an arrest and money for toilet tissue, fuel for patrol vehicles and detergents. These demands do not in any way convey a sense of benefit to any police officer in the light of principle six, and may not be reasonably proven to be capable of influencing the judgement of any officer. But this gives an officer the space to solicit for personal gratuity in the pretext of advancing policing in the community.

To a reasonable extent the content of these requirements are in line with internationally accepted code of behavior for police officers. However, one thing is to have a code of conduct and another thing is to abide by it in daily conduct. This is because theory and practice are sometimes far apart. I actually think that the problem with the conduct of police officers in Nigeria is not a function of poverty of knowledge.

Enablers of Unethical Conduct in the Nigerian police

Police misconduct in Nigeria has remained a recurring issue. In this section attempt will be made to examine some of the causes. This, no doubt will help to afford one an insight into the underlying issues that should be addressed in identifying the way forward.

The Foundation of the force: The foundation of the Nigerian police force appears faulty. The colonialists founded the force on the principle of safeguarding colonial interest and subjugating the natives under British rule and control. The authority of the force was derived from the ruling authority who engaged them to maintain law and order. Law and order in this case, pertains to ensuring citizens conformity to all colonial directives. Again, the principle of protecting lives and property, in practice is the protection of colonial infrastructure, colonial business interest and British citizens and their local agents. Police was then used against the people in collecting taxes and for various oppressive activities. It then became a terror to the people and was never perceived as a creation of the people. On the part of the police, the officers and men took pride in intimidating the citizens with their new found power and the favour they have found with the white ruling elite.

The nature of training and orientation Nigeria police officers receives according to Alemika & Chukwuma (2000) is fraught with a lot of inadequacies one of which is the form of training which makes them psychologically and structurally distant from the people they are meant to protect. This, they note is predicated on the fact that the Nigerian Police Force inherited a training tradition from the British colonial masters which exposed their new recruits to a brutal and oppressive treatment. This culture he submits unfortunately breeds a negative mindset amongst the police personnel which in most cases is demonstrated in their suppressive and brutal attitude to the citizenry they are paid to protect. In other words, the hostile and unfriendly posture of Nigerian police is grounded on their lopsided training which breeds in them a mindset of brutality as a hallmark of expressing authority and power.

It is the colonial understanding that policing needs force to intimidate and oppress that gave rise to certain criteria in the recruitment process, like height and broad chest as criteria for recruiting people into the force. This in turn resulted in disdain and hatred of the police by the citizens.

As a result of the negative image the citizens have come to attach to the police force, several persons were not willing to join the force. From the time of independence to the early 90s, it was only persons who couldn't make their papers in the school certificate exams or who couldn't secure any other job that joined the force. The police were left with no option but to recruit the rejects of the society. In fact, when a child is heady and stubborn, parents were advised to encourage him or her to join the police.

The core personalities that formed the initial core of the force, were wrongly oriented, had poor education and poor morals. And since the command structure is such that demands strict obedience to senior officers, these crops of people became the mentors of subsequent recruits having put in place a subculture patterned after their own mannerisms within the system.

Poor Funding and Remuneration: Historically, the Nigerian police has suffered years of inadequate budgetary provisions. This aptly captured by There is paucity of funds and resources to meet the daily operations of the force. In the midst of this, the officers are expected to deliver. Police stations and barracks are in shabby conditions and most times the police depend on community intervention to fix and renovate their stations. Persons in police cells are not fed because the police claim that funds for their feeding are not provided by the government. Relatives of the detainee are made to provide food for them, thereby providing opportunity for police officers to exploit the relatives. There are allegations that relatives are compelled to pay certain amount of money to transport the food from the police counter to their loved ones in police cell. There are also allegations that government hardly provides for the daily fueling of police official vehicles. This is what pressures patrol teams to extort money from motorists on the highway. It is alleged that police kits which ought to be provided free to every officer now has to be bought.

The challenge with poor funding is that it gives room to officers extending discretion to issues beyond their power. It has never been part of the duty schedule of a divisional police officer, Area commander or commissioner to raise funds for the operation of his command. In 2006, the presidential committee on police reforms alerted the nation to the effect that lack of funds is damaging policing in Nigeria. But as is typical of Nigeria, the report of the committee never received serious government attention. In its December, 2009 report on Nigerian police, Amnesty International observes serious challenges arising from poor funding of the police force. It notes that police stations lack the resources to investigate serious crimes that requires specialized skills, and although all police stations are obliged to keep records, many do not keep adequate documentation of their work. It equally observes that there is no data base of fingerprints, systematic forensic investigation methodology, or sufficient budget for investigations as there are only two forensic laboratories in Nigeria and few forensic staff (Amnesty International, December, 2006 report :11). The implication of this, is that police officers are compelled to work without any modern means of crime detection and analysis. This explains the use of unethical means of investigation like torture to extract what they usually refer to confessional statements. This is corroborated by Owen (2014), who observes

that the use of torture to obtain confessional statements is intrinsically linked to the lack of alternatives means.

Poor funding also reinforces the culture of extorting both suspects and complainants at police stations across the country. Even on the highway motorists, especially commercial vehicles are compelled to pay daily toll at different police checkpoints, thereby demeaning the image and the integrity of the force in general.

Alozie (2019), notes that the Nigerian police force is one of the poorly remunerated despite the risky nature of their job, and this has remained one of the major driver for unprofessional conduct in the force. It is also necessary to observe that civil servants are generally poorly remunerated in Nigeria. It is in recognition of the link between poor remuneration and unprofessionalism that compelled the Nigerian president to approve a new salary regime for the police after the end SARS protest. But to what extent can monetary incentives go in tackling the challenges of a police force without necessary working materials? Again, institutionalized corruption cannot be cured by simply paying the police better. However, better pay should give the government the moral authority to bring the full weight of the law on corrupt officers and equally attract best hands to join the police.

Unconducive Work Environment: Attitudes are sometimes shaped by environmental factors. The environment under which persons work has a direct influence on their emotions and psychological state. It is on record that police stations are poorly furnished and equipped. Oseni (1993) cited by Alozie, laments that the Nigerian policeman has no home. Several policemen sleep in their cars and those who are lucky to be accommodated in barracks, had to contend with the unhygienic environment, and state of dilapidation of the structures. The entire working environment seems to suggest to an average policeman that the government and society don't care about your welfare. This naturally affects the disposition of the men towards the society in the course of their duty.

Godfatherism: Godfatherism according to Onyeozili (2005), is another factor promoting police misconduct in Nigeria. The above concept, he posits has become a dominant force that is jeopardizing the course of justice in the nation, as highly placed public officials use their position of proximity to the seat of power to dictate who gets justice and who does not. By exploiting the venomous and deadly instrument called godfather, some highly privileged members of the society connive with those in the seat of power to derail justice and equity. What this means is that an individual once connected to a godfather can commit any crime and go scot-free. The result he notes is that the police get stocked in their bid to enforce law and order, for in trying to keep their job they end up being perceived by the public as agent of duplicity and injustice.

Vulnerability of the Police Code: The police is expected to protect the state or the government and at the same time secure the citizenry. This places them in a tight corner as they struggle to be wife of two husbands. Unfortunately, the public are often sabotaged as the police strive to please their paymasters- the government that has the right to hire or fire them. Besides their code of conduct has some level of flexibility that allows them to use their discretion in the use of coercive force to maintain law and order. This provision unfortunately makes them highly vulnerable to use force to further self or entrenched interest to the peril of innocent and defenseless citizenry. It is the abuse of the principle of discretion that allows officers to play

God in matters before them. It gives them the sense of having the power to decide who should be released and who should be charged, and what he is to be charged for. There has been instances of charging people for an offence they didn't commit, simply because they refused to accede to the financial demands of the police. Amnesty international observes, that Nigerian police shoot and kill drivers who fail to pay them bribes (Amnesty International, December, 2009). These acts are usually neatly covered up either by branding the victim a robber or claiming the victim died in a shootout with the police.

The Effect of Police Unethical Conduct on the Justice System

The justice system is at the receiving end of police unprofessional conduct. The justice system ought to be the last hope of the common man. The unethical corrupt tendencies of the Nigerian police force, has eroded public confidence in the justice system. This has led to under reporting of crime. The rate at which victims of crime approach the police is a function of their confidence in the organization. Ayodele & Adeyinka (2014), notes that respondents to a study on Public confidence in the police show that respondents only reported incidents to the police just to fulfill all righteousness, and were not expecting the police to do anything to unravel the perpetrators of the crime. Thus, many crimes in Nigeria are never reported and therefore not documented.

The ability of the police to burst crime and reduce its occurrence is dependent on effective and coordinated relationship between the police and the public. This vital link necessary for the police to succeed has been severed because the public has little confidence in the police. Oyemwinmina and Aibieyi (2016: 66), observes that the Nigerian police suffer deficit of public legitimization and support, the public do not trust and support the police because their performance is poor. This is not good for Nigeria as country. This explains why the police have no answer to rising insecurity in the country. It appears the Nigerian police have through its attitudes made itself the enemy of the Nigerian people rather than their friend.

The endsars protests simply unveiled the bottled anger of Nigerians against their police. This was demonstrated by the level destruction inflicted on police infrastructure and personnel. Though perpetrators of these destructions were labelled 'hoodlums' or 'miscreants' it was a demonstration of the degree of disjoint between the police and the people they serve.

The police penchant for bribes is one of the reasons why criminals and criminality in Nigeria is on a continuous rise. Criminals are aware that all it takes to get oneself out of police net is money. It has been alleged that only few officers can say no to huge money. If officer A says no, you can move the money to his superior, who may accept and order the junior officer to submit the case file to him or to another officer who will cooperate. This is the popular notion people have about the operations of the police. This narrative, if not changed, give the common man the impression that justice is for sale in Nigeria. This explains why poor people hardly report issues to the police. They assume that justice in the police stations is purchased. It is also the reason why some persons resort to self-help.

The bad reputation and negative impression the public has about the police, denies the force of high quality manpower as persons who feel they have a good name to protect, never join the force. They are therefore left with no option than to recruit from persons who present themselves for recruitment. These are usually persons who do not see anything wrong with

the unethical conduct of the police or who do not have alternative job opportunity. They are people who are ready to play along or are even driven by the desire to enjoy the benefits of the unethical conduct.

Conclusion

Policing all over the world have shared allegations of abuse of rights and unprofessional conduct. This notwithstanding, the citizens expect the best from the police as an agency of government sustained through tax payers fund. It is our view in this paper that it is possible to have a police force operating within the framework of best ethical standards, if the suggested reforms above are put in place. It is still possible to mend the relationship between the police and the public, since there is no known alternative to the police.

It requires a police leadership and a political class ready to do the needful in terms of discipline, logistics and accountability within the police. There is therefore, great potential for an ethical turn around since most of the unethical conduct are necessitated by the failure of government to adequately provide for the organization and recruit right hands.

Recommendations

The strengthening of police internal and external accountability platforms will go a long way in restoring a sound professional and ethical standard in the Nigerian police as an organization. As it is presently constituted, all the accountability platforms put in place to ensure that officers operate in accordance with its code of conduct and international best practices are deprived of every necessary equipment to perform. The Police Service Commission (PSC) which is charged with the responsibility to recruit, promote and discipline police officers should be given the constitutional and legal space to perform independently and expanded to have offices and presence in different states to effectively tract unprofessional conduct.

The budgetary provision allocated to the policing sector has never been sufficient to meet the operational needs of the organization. Fighting and investigating crime is an expensive project and until the government wakes up to this reality, the quality of policing service rendered to Nigerians will remain at low ebb. This is because insufficient funding remains a driver for institutional corruption in the police. The Nigerian state should demonstrate through the provision of adequate funding her readiness to reform and restructure the Nigerian police. Rather than do the needful, cosmetic approach like change of uniform, change in command structure and even change of name has been the tactics of the government and police hierarchy. What is needed is a change of character, and the government will only have the moral ground to demand professionalism when it has fully met its own obligation to the organization.

The content and context of police academic training should be reorganized to suit the cultural and existential realities of Nigerian society. African society is community based, and as such any policing arrangement must be community oriented as well. As we write, there are some communities that have put a ban on their indigenes reporting non-criminal incidents to the police. Such cases are handled internally by the community elders. Earlier studies done by Etannibi Alemika. O and Chukwuma I. C. for CLEEN foundation has discovered that community members have more confident in the local vigilante groups than in the police force

(Alemika & Chukwuma 2004;11). Therefore, training of policemen should equip them to work within the community without being perceived as oppressors or extortionists.

Professionalism in police work should not depend merely in having gone to police training. Professionalism should be based on the ability of the men and officers to operate within the confines of the professional code of conduct. This implies regular promotion and commendation of officers who demonstrate integrity and incorruptibility in the discharge of their duties, and demotion or outright dismissal of those who display unprofessionalism.

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