

# THE POOR AND INFORMAL POLICING IN NIGERIA

A Report on Poor Peoples' Perceptions and Priorities on Safety, Security and  
Informal Policing in A2J Focal States in Nigeria

(originally produced in 2003  
shortened in November 2004)

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A2J	Access to Justice
CLEEN	Centre for Law Enforcement Education
FC	Focus Community
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FS	Focal State
GRA	Government Reserved Area
IPS	Informal Policing Structures
LG	Local Government
LGA	Local Government Area
LR	Lead Researcher
NPF	Nigeria Police Force
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RA	Research Assistant
SJA	State Justice Adviser
TOR	Terms of Reference

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) is grateful to several groups and individuals for their support and contributions in this study.

Firstly, we thank the British Council's Access to Justice Programme (A2J) for providing the funds that enabled the conduct of this pioneering study and the A2J's Justice Advisers in the four focal states for sparing time from their busy schedules to assist us in the recruitment of researchers and selection of focus Local Government Areas and communities.

Secondly, we thank the research team, comprising Dr. Isabella Aboderin, who led the focus group Discussions and wrote a detailed analysis of data; Dom Pam Sha, coordinated the in-depth interview research and analysed the qualitative data arising from it; Alex Stevens, supervised the in-depth interviewers in Ekiti and analyzed the quantitative data using SPSS. Other members of the research team who played the roles of supervisors, field researchers and assistants are: Dr. Greene Eleagu, Anthony Opara, Okechukwu Nwanguma, Chinyere Okebie, Emmanuel Onyeabo, Hussaini Abdu, Ibrahim Barkindo, Aisha Haruna, Saidu Danladi, Angela Sanni, Kemi Asiwaju, Olabode Folorunsho, Fanen Ade, J.S. Tarpar, Iorkenger Jev, and Shankyula Samuel Terso.

Finally and most importantly, we thank the respondents to the in-depth interviews and participants in the focus group discussions in the four states, who generously gave their time to express and discuss with us their experiences and views on a topic that is of utmost importance to their lives. We hope their contributions and goodwill will not be in vain.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND ACTION POINTS

Debates about how to improve safety and security for urban communities and rural dwellers in Nigeria are beginning to pay increasing attention to informal policing structures (IPS), which are set up by people living in poverty in response to the apparent inability of the formal police to adequately protect them from crime.

However, there is a dearth of literature on the types of informal policing structures that exist, the reasons and rationales underpinning their establishment, the nature of their activities and community perceptions of their work. Extant literature on IPS focuses often on documenting the experience of the victims of vigilantism (which is one typology of IPS) and examining the fidelity of their methods of operation to international human rights norms and standards. Hence, the hitherto ambivalence and uncertainties on the functions of the IPS and the role they could and should play in the poor peoples' quest for safety and security.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to provide documented evidence to inform programme development on the subject. It also fills the observed gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive understanding of the expectations, priorities and perceptions of people living in poverty in Nigeria with respect to safety and security in general and informal policing structures in particular.

The research was undertaken in the four states in Nigeria: Benue, Ekiti, Enugu and Jigawa States. The methods of data collection used were a mixture of quantitative and qualitative, comprising interviews and focus group discussions.

Caution is advised on the use of the findings of the study to generalize on perceptions of people in poverty on issues of safety, security and informal policing in the four states, given the small sample size studied and the exploratory nature of the research. However, the study provides substantial information and insights that have not been provided or analyzed elsewhere.

### **Perceptions of Safety and Security**

The study found that the poor had capacity to identify and explain their safety and security concerns even though they might not be fluent in the language(s) used by policy makers. Their understanding of these concepts went beyond protection from criminal victimization as they saw safety and security as very vital to their ability to sustain their livelihoods as well as to the development of their communities as a whole. This was nicely articulated by a participant in the focus groups:

Safety and security are very important in our communities ... It affects aspects of our health, family coexistence and our lives and properties... It affects everything! Without safety and security, everything would get spoilt.

With the possible exception of Enugu State where the respondents feeling of safety was very low (36.6 %), the majority of respondents in Ekiti (96.6 %), Jigawa (81.7%) and Benue States (66.6%) felt safe. However, in spite of the relatively high level of feeling of safety and security in Ekiti, Jigawa and Benue States, a pervading fear of crime was reported in all the four states of study. Across the four states, at least three-fifth of the respondents expressed some fear of criminal victimization. However, the intensity of the fear varies across the states, with respondents from Enugu State being the most fearful (73.3 %).

The responses of the participants in the study indicated that their priority safety and security concerns around which they expect assistance were:

- Personal safety from criminals, especially armed robbers;
- Protection from harm associated with political thuggery;
- Prevention of violent conflicts;
- Eradication of police corruption and brutality; and
- Security of property from theft and destruction.

### **Perceptions of Informal Policing Structures (IPS)**

Apart from the police, participants to the study identified a total of 16 types of informal policing structures that were established in their communities to deal with crime. The groups were called different names and were differentially related to the traditional practices and authorities of the community. Most of the terms used for this group in local languages translate to vigilante, though more appropriately as guards. When asked of the names by which the informal policing groups in their communities are called, respondents overwhelmingly chose the term vigilante (70.4%) among other choices on the questionnaire (e.g. neighbourhood watchers (8.2%), community guards (1.0%); traditional police (3.1% and others (17.3)). In Ekiti State, the term vigilante was not often used as only 41.7% of the respondents identified the groups with the term, compared to Benue (96.4%), Enugu (71.4%) and Jigawa (68.0%).

The methods of operation of IPS identified include traditional divining methods, traditional protection methods, praying and fasting, and mob action (17.85%). There was also a fairly significant entry of 'don't know' and 'others', which suggests that the methods used by the groups are diverse and not well known by members of the public. Furthermore, the use of traditional divining methods and protection devices, especially in Ekiti and Jigawa states, point to the traditional roots of some of the groups. Majority of the respondents supported the methods used by the groups. In Enugu State, where mob action and 'others' were widely identified as the methods used by the community policing groups, 94.7% supported the use of those practices.

A significant proportion of the respondents said that they used the services of informal policing groups in order to protect their neighbourhoods from criminal attacks; to provide speedy safety and security services which the formal police were unable to offer, and because they were closer to the people than the formal police. They are particularly more widely used in Ekiti (88.9%) and Jigawa (62.5%) where they are more culturally rooted than in Benue (36.7%) and Enugu (38.1%) states.

### **Problems Faced by Informal Policing Groups**

The informal policing groups in the four states studied face a number problems and shortcomings, which require assistance from government and donor agencies in Nigeria in addressing them. Some of the problems, which were identified by the participants include:

1. Lack of Funding by government, except in Ilejemeje LGA, Ekiti State, where the Council authority recently placed the members of IPS in the locality on monthly salary;
2. Harassment and extortion by the police when carrying out their duties, often over their use of locally made guns;
3. Lack of Basic operational equipment, such as flashlights, warm clothing, rain coats and booth, whistles, uniforms, identity cards etc.

#### 4. Lack of recognition by local government authorities in some of the LGAs.

Other shortcomings of the IPS observed by the researchers in some of the LGAs studies included: multiplicity of organizations, poor screening of new members, lack of representation of women and non indigenes in their structures and poor accountability by the non-traditional informal policing groups. However, the most worrying concern about some of the IPS is their possession of locally-made weapons outside the purview of the state. The extent to which such groups contribute to the widespread cases of ethnic, religious and communal violence in Nigeria needs to be investigated, because many well known vigilante groups such as OPC, Bakassi and Egbesu boys operate as ethnic militias. Nevertheless, among the groups that derived their existence from the community traditions and culture, there appears to be some degree of accountability and discipline.

### **Action Points**

The following action points are recommended for a follow up on the study and to address the priority needs of the research community in relation to safety, security and informal policing structures in particular.

#### **1. Establishment of Community Safety and Security Forums**

- For the improvement of community perception of safety, security and relationship with the police, there is a need for periodic and predictable community interaction with the police, through the establishment of community safety and security forum at the Local Government Area (LGA) level. The local government should be encouraged to play a key role in such structure either as convenor or host. The local councils' halls have always served as venue for all kinds of community meetings and could serve as the venue and secretariat for the forum. The importance of taking the hosting or organisation of the forum away from the police is to encourage partnership in crime prevention rather than paternalism, where the community members are treated as mere informants. Participants in such a forum should include representatives all stakeholders in crime prevention in the community including women, non-indigenes and IPS.

#### **2. Regulation of IPS Activities**

- Holding of meeting(s) with traditional authorities and elders in the localities (such as the 8 LGAs in the study) where A2J might consider carrying out a pilot project on standardization of IPS procedure to identify groups that do not bear arms, other lethal weapons or resort to mob justice in their activities. Such traditional authorities and elders could be made to sign undertaken, which would be deposited to the police, vouching that the groups they recommend do not bear arms or resort to jungle justice.
- Coordination of the groups through holding of periodic meetings involving all the certified IPS and the police authorities within an LGA. This meeting could serve as a clearing house for information exchange, peer review, standardization of procedures, screening of members, registration and improvement of their relationship with the police.
- Advocacy for the enactment of by-laws by LGAs to regulate the activities of IPS subject to police supervision. This could be made a pre-condition for the establishment of IPS standardization and assistance project in a locality. A2J could also commission the drafting of model legislation for the regulation of the establishment and methods of operation of IPS at the LGA level.

### **3. Accountability of IPS to the Community**

- Accountability of the IPS to the community they serve should be encouraged by the introduction of report back mechanism where members of the IPS would made to appear before the local community to give periodic account of their steward. Such gathering should include representatives of women. Even if women are not allowed to participate directly because of the risk involved, they could at least provide important information that may prove invaluable to the IPS.

### **4. Reward Mechanism**

- A reward mechanism for groups who play by the rule should be introduced to encourage them. This could take the form of supplying them with simple and non-lethal items such as raincoats, booths, flash-lights etc. USAID/OTI tried this in Lagos State with the neighbourhood watch associations, though not sustained because of their pulling out from Nigeria in 2001.
- Non-governmental organizations working on issues of safety, security and access to justice should also be encouraged to invite members of IPS in their education and training programmes on human rights to enable them appreciate the importance of respecting the due process safeguards of suspects instead of waiting for the IPS to commit rights violations for them to document.
- Progressively, a data base for the documentation of their activities and best practices learnt could be introduced in an effort to share lessons learned and avoidance of repeat of pitfalls experienced elsewhere.

### **5. General Recommendations**

- The issues of improving police capacity to curb crime, substantial reduction of police corruption and brutality against the poor, which were identified by the participants to the study as major contributors to their lack of confidence in the police, should be addressed seriously by the authorities. NGOs working on monitoring, documenting and campaigning against such vices should be supported by A2J, especially in the focal states.
- The high level of unemployment among the youths, which the participants identified as a major contributor to crime, should be addressed by the governments at various levels in the states. A2J should also consider some pilot projects that could engage the youths and get them off the street under some kind of social crime prevention programme.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A significant percentage of the respondents and participants in the study asked for arms and ammunitions to enable them defend themselves and their communities from criminal attacks. An action point was not formulated out of this request because it would require an amendment of the Armed Robbery and Firearms Act, which criminalizes possession of firearms except those licensed for hunting purposes.



## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

A fundamental element of accessible justice is that all people are able to reach and use justice sector institutions without fear of bias or corruption on the part of justice system officials (DFID Programme Document, 2001). In the year 2001, however, 95 percent of Nigerians held the view that some members of the Nigeria Police Force are involved in corruption. Out of this figure, 66 percent saw all police personnel as involved in corruption (Afrobarometer, 2001). Similarly, 92 percent of the people perceived some corruption among judges and magistrates (Afrobarometer, 2001). 58 percent of the people expressed no trust at all for the police. Further, although 58.3 percent of Nigerians reported feeling safer in 2000 than they did five years prior, roughly 40 percent of people knew someone who had been a victim of crime within the previous two years (IFES, 2000).

The World Bank's 2001 report, *Nigeria: Voices of the poor* showed that poor people perceive poverty to be a denial of the right to an enabling and empowering quality of life, not simply the non-availability of materials resources. Poor people are subject to risk, insecurity and vulnerability due to their exposure to danger, victimization or violence and their inability to access justice when wronged.

Many citizens around the country have responded to widespread perceptions of personal insecurity and vulnerability by forming community-based groups – commonly referred to as vigilantes or informal policing organizations. These groups work in a variety of ways – sometimes hand-in-hand with the official police and sometimes not – to confront local crime and insecurity problems.

Much more systematically collected data about what people expect from law enforcement – both official and in the form of informal policing structures is vital. Such information should disclose whether people perceive informal Policing groups as necessary in a democratic dispensation, how people perceive them in relation to the official police, how the activities of these groups affect peoples' sense of safety and security, and what they actually want and expect from official law enforcement. Such information would supplement the available knowledge on the contexts of modern day policing in Nigeria as well as enrich the findings of victimization surveys by revealing underlying expectations and needs (with respect to safety and security) of the public. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the expectations, priorities and perceptions of people living in poverty in the Access to Justice's focal states, with respect to safety and security in general and informal policing structures in particular.

These issues form the focus of the following chapters. Chapter two reviews the literature on why poor people patronize informal policing structures (IPS) and the types of IPS that exist. Chapter three presents the anticipated output of the research. Chapter four discusses the methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter five relates the findings of the study on poor peoples' perceptions and priorities on safety and security. Chapter six discusses the types of informal policing structures identified by research participants, reasons why the poor patronize them and their level of satisfaction with the services of the IPS. Finally, chapter seven concludes the study and outlines some action points that could be considered by A2J in responding to the opportunities and needs of the poor in relation to safety and security, which were identified in the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

Extant literature on informal policing in Africa has centred essentially on the South African experience, especially since the inauguration of multiracial democracy in that country in 1994. The focus has been on one typology of informal policing structures - vigilantism.<sup>2</sup> Emerging studies in the field in other parts of Africa, often commissioned by human rights bodies<sup>3</sup>, have not only followed the narrowness of the mainstream South African discussion but have also used 'right-based' approach in their analysis. This further restricts the use of the rich but diverse information that is often excavated. The major limitation of these studies is that because their focus is often on documenting the experience of the victims of vigilantism and examining the fidelity of the groups to international human rights norms and standards in their activities, they provide little information useful to an exploratory study such as this which seeks to provide an understanding of the different types of informal police structures and what poor people expect from them. This chapter tries to piece together bits and pieces of information buried in the extant but narrow literature on informal policing in an effort to try and answer two questions:

- Why do the people patronize informal policing structures
- What types of informal policing structures exist

#### **Why People Patronize Informal Policing Structures**

In a study on Violent Justice, Vigilantism and State Response in South Africa carried out by the Pretoria-based Institute of Security Studies in 2002, several reasons could be identified on why people patronize informal policing structures. These include perceived rise in crime, poor perceptions about the ability of the criminal justice system to respond to the needs of the victims of crime and the inadequacies of the formal police service (Sekhonyane, 2002:1). This view is supported by other scholars who generally argue that informal policing or what Scharf (2000) calls 'community initiated policing' arise out of a perceived failure of the state to provide citizens with the protection they require (Scharf 2000; Shaw 2000; Abrahams 1998; Findlay 1993; Huggins 1991).

Of the three reasons adduced for patronizing informal policing structures, the strongest in the literature appear to be rise in crime and perceived inadequacies of the police in the providing safety and security to citizens, especially the poor. The perception that crime is on the rise and that the police are not coping very well with the demand for protection by the citizens is acute in countries undergoing dramatic transformation in the economic and political spheres (Shaw, 2002). Providing the socio-political context in which crime appears to be increasing in transitional societies, Shearing and Kempa (2000: 33) argues:

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<sup>2</sup> Exception to this general trend can be found in the studies arising out of the work of the Community Peace Foundation, Cape Town and the important article written by Prof. Wilfred Scharf on Community Justice and Community Policing in Post-Apartheid South Africa, in which he raised many pertinent questions on informal justice systems.

<sup>3</sup> Some of these studies include two carried out by the Human Rights Watch in Nigeria, with the title "The Bakassi Boys: The Legitimation of Murder and Torture" and The O'Odia Peoples Congress: Fighting Violence with Violence. The report on the Bakassi Boys was carried out by Human Rights Watch and the Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN).

The time of political transition from a repressive authoritarian state to a more open democratic society is ... associated with a high degree of crime and disorder that comes with any attempt to break with established repressive modes of policing.

A number of countries can be included in the list of societies in transition that are experiencing increasing citizen concerns about the level of crime. In Latin America these include Brazil, Argentina and Chile; in Africa, South Africa, Nigeria, Namibia and Mozambique; and in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics, Russia, Ukraine and Poland (Shaw, 2002). Writing on the South African experience, Sekhonyane (2002: 1) argues:

South Africa's high crime rate and inefficient criminal justice system cause many people to feel at best, insecure and at worst held to ransom by both criminals and the government. As a result, public confidence in the police and the courts has decreased in the last few years. Many people have turned to self-help safety measures or have sought assistance outside of government for protection against crime.

Relating the experience of Nigeria, Jemibewon (2001: 30) states:

When Nigeria eventually shifted from autocratic military rule to democratic rule on 29 May 1999, Nigerians heaved a collective sigh of relief, so to speak, at the development as it guaranteed them the full exercise of their fundamental human rights. Regrettably, our new-found democracy has to some extent, become a source of insecurity and lawlessness, as these rights were misconstrued and exercised without restraint. The past year under this administration has therefore seen an increase in crime waves in various parts of the country.

Lack of confidence in the police appears to be the most important reason found in the literature on why citizens embrace informal policing structures. In many societies in transition the police are viewed as ineffective by the citizenry (Shaw, 2000) and the list of community grievances against the police include corruption, incompetence, brutalisation of citizens and institutional failure. In the words of Del Buono (2003: 7):

The police along with the military ... are said to be among the three most repressive institutions in society. At best, the police are reported as "largely inactive" in their policing roles; at worst, they actively harass. In all countries, minority or "socially excluded" groups were particularly vulnerable to police extortion and harassment. When the institutional checks and balances on police action disintegrate, the police force is capable of immense repression and exploitation.

The following section reviews types of informal policing structures identified in the literature

### **Types of Informal Policing Structures**

As was argued in the introduction to this section, most of the studies on informal policing available for review focus essentially on the structures and activities of vigilante groups, which is a typology of informal policing structures. However, a closer examination of the modes of operation and structures of some of the groups that are referred to as vigilantes reveals that not all of them fits the classical understanding of the phenomenon of vigilantism as a bunch of death squads that mete out jungle justice on their victims as many of the groups are rooted in their communities and often work in close collaboration with the formal police (Chukwuma, 2002: 11). This was pointed out by Shaw (2000: 48) who

argues that “care must be taken not to generalize on the subject of vigilante groups. Some seek to provide ‘due process for arrested criminals’ in the absence of any viable state institutions in many areas.” Some of the groups that have been labelled as vigilante groups range from neighborhood watches, communal guards, age grades, masquerade cults to hunters’ guilds.

However, in the absence of any extant studies that try to disaggregate all the informal policing structures that have been bundled together under the term “vigilantes” in the literature, the term is used loosely here as a generic term in describing the different types of IPS that have been identified in the literature. At least four typologies of vigilantism can be identified. These are religious vigilantism, ethnic vigilantism, state-sponsored vigilantism and neighborhood or community ‘vigilantism’ (Chukwuma, 2002 11-12). This classification is by no means rigid or exclusive, since one type of the groups could combine the features of two or more. Nevertheless, it is helpful in substantiating the argument that an attempt could be made to differentiate between the group that employ mob justice and crudity in their operations and others that could work and have in fact been working under close police supervision.

Religious vigilantism refers to a typology of vigilantism in Africa that first sprang up in South Africa in the middle of the nineties with the establishment of the new democracy (Shaw, 2002) and has since spread to Nigeria with the introduction of sharia laws in parts of Northern Nigeria in year 2000 (Chukwuma, 2002). The best example of this type of vigilantism could be found in an Islamic group that operated or perhaps still operate in Western Cape in South Africa, known as People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD). According to Scharf (2000: 14), “Their (PAGAD) vision of law and order is more extreme than the constitutional order and they are prepared to break the law in order to achieve their preferred state of being.”

In Nigeria, religious vigilantes that were formed with the introduction of Sharia are known as the *Hisbah* groups. They have made it their duty to enforce such sharia laws as ban on sale and consumption of alcohol, indecent clothing (wearing of trousers and skimpy dresses by women) and arresting of petty thieves, often without authorization by the sharia court. They often impose the punishments for such “offences” on their own without taking the suspects to the designated sharia courts for trial (Chukwuma, 2002).

The second typology is ethnic vigilantism. As the name suggests this refers to groups that organize along ethnic or tribal lines to defend their narrow interests and sometimes carry out crime control functions (Chukwuma, 2002). The best example of this type of vigilante group is the Odua’a Peoples Congress (OPC) active in the south-western part of Nigeria. The OPC, as they are popularly called in Nigeria started out as a self determination group for the Yorubas in 1994 and made incursions into vigilante activities in 1999 (Tertsakian, 2003). Their activities go beyond crime fighting to include agitation for ethnic autonomy. Their motto seems to be “by any means necessary” as their methods of operation include street procession, protest marches, brutality, robbery, torture, lynching and *necklessing* of both criminal suspects and opponents during inter-ethnic conflict (Tertsakian, 2003). They have on occasions been victims of police brutality and extra-judicial killings under a government policy banning their activities and hunting down their operatives (Tertsakian, 2003).

The third typology of vigilantism is state-sponsored vigilantism and refers to a more insidious type of vigilante phenomenon, which operates with the support of governments or state agencies. The emergence of this type of vigilantism is again traceable to South Africa during the apartheid era. According to Scharf (2000: 14):

Broadly speaking the apartheid era vigilantism took the form of specialised police or military units trying to destabilise and intimidate the political opposition (Pauw, 1991), and by sponsoring civilians with an interest (pecuniary, personal or political) to do the same (Haysom, 1986). That form of vigilantism seems to be at a low level at the moment, although there are police investigations in progress at the moment which reveal current police complicity in arms trading to gangs and police complicity with restaurant bombings in Cape Town during the last few years.

In Nigeria, the group that best approximates this typology of vigilantism is the “Bakassi Boys” that were active in three eastern states of Abia, Anambra and Imo State. They began as an initiative of traders in Aba, the commercial city of Abia State, who were worried about high rate of violent property crimes in their markets. But the Bakassi Boys were later hijacked by state governments, which added partisan political ends in their objectives and armed with dangerous weapons including firearms without police check (Tertsakian, 2002). They make routine public spectacles of some of the criminal suspects they capture, who were often paraded naked on the streets, body parts chopped into pieces and later burnt to the cheering of surging and urging crowds (Chukwuma, 2002).

Finally on typology of vigilantism, you have another group, whom for want of a better term, could be called neighborhood or community vigilantes (Chukwuma, 2002). In the words of Chukwuma (2003: 3):

These are groups of people that are organized by street associations in the cities or villages in the rural areas, to man street entrances or villages’ gates as the case may be, at night. They also carry out foot patrols at night to reassure members of the community that some people are watching over their security. They do not carry weapons but rather armed with whistles, which they use in arousing the neighborhoods if there are unwholesome “guests”.

## **Conclusion**

From the foregoing literature review it is clear that knowledge about the different typologies of informal policing structures that exist is limited, apart from vigilantism, which is only one type. It is also clear that many community groups and crime prevention initiatives that cannot be said to be associated with vigilantism have been lumped together under the term with the negative connotations that it implies. It is therefore necessary for this study to identify the different types of informal policing structures that have been established by the poor and their activities in responding to poor peoples’ search for safety and security. This was underscored by Scharf (2000: 20):

In each country ...it is important to get a picture of the range of non-state forms of policing/ordering: Crime prevention within the law but without working with the state to achieve the goals; crime prevention partnerships with state institutions; vigilantism for a particular vision of order differing from the state’s expressed or implied vision of order; private armies belonging to political parties, religious or ethnic groups, specific organisations (such as the taxi hit-squads in SA) or warlords and shacklords.

The next chapter presents the anticipated output of the research.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ASSIGNMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### **Purpose**

The study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the expectations, priorities and perceptions of people living in poverty in the A2J's focal states, with respect to safety and security in general and informal policing structures more specifically.

#### **Anticipated outputs of the Research**

The following outputs were anticipated from the research:

1. A clear identification of the safety and security issues that were noted as being important by interviews and focus group participants.
2. A rank ordering of the safety and security priorities of poor people as revealed by the research.
  - An analysis of peoples' expectations, perceptions and priorities for safety and security as revealed through the interviews and focus group discussions.
  - Suggestions for ways to address issues raised by the research participants during the main phase of the Access to Justice Programme.
  - Description of and rationale for the strategy for recruiting in-depth interview and focus group participants.
  - Detailed description of the training of interviewers.
  - Description of participants including but not limited to: gender, age, marital status, family size, family composition and family living arrangements, housing type, number of years and type of education, occupation, sources of income, religious affiliation, customs, attitudes, previous exposure to the justice system.
  - Copies of all questionnaires and focus group materials (such as exercises and discussion themes/topics).
  - Comprehensive bibliography of all reference materials used. Find attached in appendix I, the complete terms of reference agreed between the consultant and the Access to Justice.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH STRATEGY

#### **Introduction**

The principal methods of data collection used in this study were interview and focus group discussions. These methods of data collection were chosen in order to ensure effective participation of the research subjects and also because the study was an exploratory one and needed flexible methods of data collection that would permit probing of respondents and participants in order to appreciate the underlying assumptions and beliefs that inform their views on the subject matter (Gilbert, 1993; Jupp, 1989). However the interview schedule used contained closed-ended questions, which permitted quantitative analysis of the views of the respondents. What follows are a discussion of the sampling strategy and size; training of interviewers; questionnaire pre-test, conduct of in-depth interviews and focus groups, ethical issues and problems encountered; analysis and data limitation.

#### **Sampling Strategy and Size**

The study took place in the four focal states of Access to Justice Programme (A2J) in Nigeria, namely: Benue, Ekiti, Enugu and Jigawa States. In each state, the two Local Government Areas for study were chosen by the State Justice Adviser (SJA), research assistants for the focus groups Discussions (FGD), in-depth interviewers and their supervisors, on the basis of two major criteria.

- That the chosen LGA should have some measure or experience of informal policing activities
- That one LGA should be predominantly rural and the other urban, so as to capture a range of different experiences and to facilitate rural-urban comparison.

Within these broad criteria, 8 LGA, and a particular focal community within each LGA, were selected mainly in light of practical and logistical considerations. These included, most importantly, the local research assistants' familiarity with them. The selected LGAs were:

- Ushongo (rural), Gboko (urban) – Benue State
- Ileje meje (rural), Oye (urban) – Ekiti State
- Nkanu East (rural), Enugu east (urban) – Enugu State
- Babura (rural), Hadejia (urban) – Jigawa State

The sampling method used for the in-depth Interviews was quota sampling. The advantage of this method is that "there is no need for call-backs, and traveling distances and times are much more reduced (Gilbert, 1993: 76)". The universe of enquiry was poor people, aged fifteen and above, who were living in the selected local council areas in the four focal states of A2J at the time of the research. The sampling population was split into sub-classes and quotas were assigned to them. The variables used were geography, gender and age.

8 focus group discussions were organised with a total of 76 participants, comprising a broad spectrum of community members in the 8 LGAs where the study took place. The objective was to capture a range of different perspectives on policing, safety and security in the states. In each focal community, participants were thus selected from:

- Local women's organisations
- Youth associations

- Occupational groups
- Community development associations
- Religious groups
- Traditional/customary groups
- Market women
- Age groups
- Cooperative societies
- Farmers
- Road transport workers.

The mode of enquiry adopted for the in-depth interviews was face – to – face interview, using an interview schedule consisting of pre-coded and open-ended questions. The advantage of this method of questioning over other methods such as postal or telephone surveys 'is that it is more flexible, has a higher completion rate and when used by skilled interviewers could extract more information than a postal survey (Newell, 1993: 97)' Furthermore, given the high level of illiteracy in Nigeria<sup>4</sup> and low tele-density, any attempt to use postal or telephone survey method in conducting the interviews would automatically exclude the majority of the people, thus calling to question the validity of the findings.

A total of 16 persons, made up of 11 males and 5 female were recruited and trained for the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Out of this number twelve were for the in-depth interviews, comprising 8 interviewers and 4 supervisors. The other 4 making up the 16 were for the focus group discussions. They were trained by the research director and two research coordinators – the coordinator for the focus group component and that of the in-depth interviews. The training comprised of explanation of the purpose of the research; discussion of the phenomenon of informal policing in Nigeria and the poor; qualitative research methods and breakout session for practical discussions on the measurement instruments. Other issues dealt with during the one-day included discussions on the quality control, role of the researchers and supervisors and other administrative details. Find attached in appendix II, the full report of the training.

A pre-test of the interview schedule used in the study held in Enugu State in July 2003 in the two local government councils selected for the study in the state. The objectives were to gauge respondents understanding of the interview schedule, attitude to the study and to find out the average time for concluding an interview and other issues the research team should be aware of in relation to the study. The pilot established that some of the respondents found the interview schedule lengthy and some of the questions repetitive. They also had problems differentiating between the words 'safety' and 'security', when translated into their local languages.

In redrafting the interview schedule to reflect the field observations, efforts were made to reduce the number of questions in the questionnaire from 85 to 79. To make the questions less repetitive, 'don't know' answers were introduced in the structured questions. This necessitated the introduction of skip instructions to the interviewers to enable them jump to other questions if the interviewee answered 'don't know'. Furthermore, in the questions on perceptions of safety and security, feeling of safety was defined to mean personal safety from violence or intimidation, while security was defined to mean security of property from theft or damage. Find in appendix III, the interview schedule used for the in-depth interviews.

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<sup>4</sup> Over fifty percent of Nigerians are illiterate, according to the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index, 1991.



During the main in-depth interview, a total of 120 respondents were interviewed at the ratio of 30 per state and fifteen per local government. The interview schedule was divided into four sessions. The first section, which was close-ended, contained questions on the descriptive profile of the respondents. The second section focused on perception of safety and security. The third section was on respondents' perception of informal policing structures. Section four dwelt on perception of the formal police. The close-ended component of the interview schedules were filled, while the open-ended section were recorded on audio-tapes and transcribed after each day of interview.

The focus groups were initially guided by a loose topic guide, which 'translated' the research questions into topics for discussion and exploration. With successive group discussions, and emerging insights into salient themes and issues, the topic guide was refined into a more structured 'question guide', which comprised a set of key questions and allowed for a more focused data collection. Apart from guiding the group discussions, the topic and question guides provided a measure of consistency across groups, and constitute a publicly available document for discussion and scrutiny (Richie and Lewis, 2003). All the FGD topics or questions for discussion were put to the participants in an open manner, encouraging them to relate, discuss and jointly reflect on and interpret their experiences and views. The sequence in which questions or topics were discussed often varied between groups, depending on the nature and direction taken by participants' accounts. For further details on methodology used for the FGD, refer to appendix IV.

After the field phase of the research the data from the in-depth interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analyzed. The answers to the close-ended questions in the in-depth interview questionnaire were computed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate frequencies, percentages and contingencies (cross-tabulation). Thematic framework reflecting the main sections of the interview schedule was drawn up to generate cross-cutting themes and patterns from the respondents' answers to the open-ended questions.

The process of data analysis for the FGD proceeded in two successive stages (one in-field and one *post hoc* phase) geared towards the inductive generation of themes, patterns, concepts and understandings from participants' accounts. As typical for qualitative research, data analysis did not follow a fixed protocol, but was custom built and evolved during the study (Creswell, 1998). The process began in the field, where it went hand in hand with, and progressively guided data collection; continued after return from the field (Huberman and Miles, 1994; Spencer, Ritchie and Connor 2003). In the post-hoc data analysis stage, thematic frameworks were developed to facilitate the sorting and grouping of evidence, and thus to provide structure for the interpretation of data. These frameworks reflected both the main areas for exploration specified in the topic/question guides, as well as key recurrent themes or concepts emerging in the successive conduct of focus group discussions.

The analyzed data from the two methods of data collection used in the study (in-depth interviews and focus group discussion) were interpreted using percentages and narratives. For further details on the methodology used for the focused group research refer to appendix 5 for the full report.

## **Ethical Issues**

A number of ethical issues arose in the course of data collection. These included the confidentiality, anonymity and consent of the respondents and focus group participants. On confidentiality, they were assured that whatever they disclosed or admitted in the course of the interviews and discussions would be held in strict confidence and not

revealed to anybody, including their close or loved ones. It was easy to make this pledge and keep to it, because the respondents and participants were not asked if they had committed any crime, which on disclosure would have created an ethical dilemma for the researchers. They were also informed about the purpose of the research. The anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed. The questionnaire had no provision for respondents' names or addresses. Similarly, only respondents and participants who agreed to be interviewed or participate in the discussions after the purpose of the study had been explained to them were involved. Furthermore, participants for the focus groups were given consent forms, which clearly stated the study aims, process and organisation. However, the participants (except those from Ekiti) did not sign in light of people's general reluctance to sign formal documents.

Finally, a number of problems and necessity for modification of the terms of reference arose in the course of the research. They, however, were managed in such a way that they had no adverse impact on the anticipated output or their validity, within the context of the fact that the research was an exploratory one.

The first problem, which was encountered while conducting the in-depth interviews, was on over participants understanding of the concept of informal policing, which appeared a bit abstract to some of them when translated into their local languages. This problem was overcome by using the term of whatever examples they gave (vigilante groups etc.) to illustrate the points.

Secondly, separate focus groups could not be organized for women and youths, as it would have shot up the total number of focus groups budgeted for. However, it was ensured that women and young persons were represented in each of the eight focus groups organized.

Thirdly, the interview schedule could not be translated into the four major languages spoken in the four focal states before the commencement of the field research because of time pressure. This problem was overcome by the fact that the field researchers recruited for each of the states were indigenes and were very fluent in English and the local languages, which were their first languages. Furthermore, the key words in the interview schedule such as informal policing, safety and security were translated into the local languages during the training of field researchers. However, the research topics for the focus groups were translated in the four main languages spoken in the states – Tiv, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

Fourthly, the time-frame for the research provided in the TOR could not be adhered to, this was because the materials generated from the qualitative component of the interview schedule and focus groups were quite considerable and needed extension of the deadline for the submission of the final draft in order to do justice to the potentials of the data.

Finally, caution is advised on the use of the findings to generalize on poor people's perceptions of safety, security and informal policing in the A2J focal states. This is because the sample size (184) is very small in comparison with the total population of poor people in the A2J states and of course the fact that the research is an exploratory one. Nonetheless, a reasonable amount of representativeness, at least of prevailing views in the focal community, can be assumed in view of the participant selection strategy, which ensured that as broad a spectrum as possible of different community based groups, as well as individuals not represented by any such group were included. Furthermore, the study provides substantial information and insights that have not been provided or analyzed elsewhere.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, a detailed discussion of the research methods used in the study was undertaken. The chapter also discussed the sample strategy, ethical issues and problems that necessitated modification of the terms of reference and how they were resolved in a way that had no adverse effect on the validity of the data. However, the chapter also called for caution in the use of the findings to generalize perceptions of people in poverty on the issues of safety, security and informal policing, give the sample size. The next chapter provides the respondents and participants' perceptions of safety and security.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### POOR PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF SAFETY AND SECURITY

#### **Introduction**

Safety and security are often used interchangeably. However, analytically, they refer to different concerns. Generally, safety refers to the absence of threat or actual incidence of injury to the lives and limbs of citizens. Thus, safety relates to the condition of freedom or protection of the human person from victimization and avoidable injuries and death. On the other hand, security refers to the guarantee of citizens' properties from theft and unwarranted destruction. Threats to safety of persons and security of property are differentially experienced by individuals and communities. People who experience lack of safety and security tend to exhibit greater level of fear of criminal victimization and other forms of harm to persons, theft and related offences. In this description of safety and security, we have used narrow definitions of the term that are limited to their expression within the context of criminal victimization. Broadly, however, there are economic, political and social dimensions of safety pertaining to the protection of individuals from deprivation in those aspects.

#### **Perceptions of safety and security**

The poor possess capacity to identify and explain their safety and security concerns. Participants in the focus group discussion in Nkanu East Local government described security in the following terms, relating it to economic prosperity.

The issue of security is of great importance. Because it is only when your house is secured can you think of going out to find things and fend for things to put in the house.

As far as I am concerned, safety and security are paramount because wealth accumulated that is not protected is a useless wealth. So I believe that if your life and wealth are secured it will induce accumulation of more wealth.

What is the point of accumulating wealth when the wealth is not secured? I believe that one would be induced more to look for wealth if the wealth would be protected in the end.

Significantly, participants in the focus group in Hadejia described three components of safety and security. First, participants conceived of safety and security as the protection of property and lives from crime. They highlighted the vital importance of such protection to their livelihoods, and to the economic well-being of communities as a whole.

It is very important to us because when we find out that somebody suffered to acquire some capital, if there is no safety and security, if there is no protection of his property and his life, what he has suffered, somebody will come to just steal it away, and that means that this person has suffered in vain. So it is very important to us. For a human being, for a business man, there is no way we can do without safety and security.

Secondly, participants emphasised that safety and security also imply freedom from violence or intimidation, and the absence of fear that comes with it. This emphasis, captured by the following responses by participants in focus group discussion sessions,

may reflect the history of crises and outbreaks of often politically motivated violence along ethnic or religious lines in the LGA.

Security is freedom from torture or intimidation and freedom from danger

Safety is...how somebody feels safe from violence

There will be no violence if there is adequate security, no intimidation in the society

I want to add...that part of the security relates to protection from crises like the two crises we had in Hadejia that involved a Hausa and an Igbo man... Instead of letting those people just reconciling or settling their dispute accordingly, even if it means going to court, instead of that, they just escalated the whole thing. I as an Igbo man could not even enter Hadejia. Many churches were burnt and they looted many other things. So apart from crimes like theft, there are these crises that at times just occur unexpectedly and though at the beginning the persons involved maybe just two or three, at the end the whole town will burn.

Some participants conceived of safety and security in moral terms. As such, they perceived it as fundamental to the stability and welfare of their communities as a whole.

Safety and security are very important in our communities. Without safety and security, the level of immorality would be very high. This will breed criminals and drug addicts in the society. So it affects aspects of our health, family coexistence and our lives and properties... It affects everything! Without safety and security, everything would get spoilt

A participant in the focus group discussion at Ushongo in Benue State stressed the economic dimension of the term security: "My own aspect of security is an environment where there is abundance of employment for the youth. Where people get employed..."

Participants perceived safety and security, above all, as the protection of their property and lives and, the freedom from anxiety and fear of loss or harm that comes with it:

Safety has to do with making sure that one's life and his property is safe from any external attack or making sure your belongings, your property are secured ... there is no interference, and when you are sleeping that you sleep peacefully and no-one disturbs you while you are sleeping. This is...the way I see it.

Some participants also described safety in terms of protection against emotional injury and other forms of distress.

Safety equally connotes the state of mind the way you live your life so that you don't just get emotionally harmed...It has to do with the state of mind. That is even the most important safety. Because where there is emotional restlessness one is even bound to die before ones property is protected

Poor people are particularly vulnerable to experiencing lack of safety and security. As a result, they express their lack of safety and security in terms of their bodily integrity, property, emotional and socio-economic well-being. Below we examine level of feeling of safety and security among the respondents.

### **Level of Feeling of Safety and Security**

There were respondents who felt very safe and secure while there were also those who felt unsafe and insecure.

Table 1: Extent of feeling of safety from violence and intimidation in respondents' neighbourhood

State	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Somewhat unsafe	Very unsafe	Don't know
Benue %	16 53.3	4 13.3	4 13.3	5 16.7	1 3.3
Ekiti %	22 73.3	7 23.3	1 3.3	0 0.0	0 0.0
Enugu %	7 23.3	4 13.3	7 23.3	12 40.0	0 0.1
Jigawa %	15 51.7	9 31.0	3 10.3	2 6.9	0 0.0

Respondents in Ekiti state felt safer (96.6%) than their counterparts from other states. In contrast, respondents from Enugu state reported feeling unsafe (63.3%) more than respondents from other states (Table 1). Similarly, while more than 70% of respondents in the Benue, Ekiti and Jigawa states felt that their property were secured from theft and damage, only 40% of their counterparts from Enugu felt so (Table 2).

Table 2: Extent of feeling of security of property from theft and damage

State	Very secure	Somewhat secure	Somewhat insecure	Very insecure	Don't know
Benue %	13 44.8	8 27.6	4 13.8	3 10.3	1 3.4
Ekiti %	17 56.7	6 20.0	4 13.3	3 10.0	0 0.0
Enugu %	9 30.0	3 10.0	5 16.7	12 40.0	1 3.3
Jigawa %	14 48.3	8 27.6	6 20.7	1 3.4	0 0.0

But in spite of the relatively high level of feeling of safety and security in Ekiti, Jigawa and Benue States, a pervading fear of crime was reported in all the four states of study (Table 3). Across the four states, at least three-fifth of the respondents expressed some fear of criminal victimization. However, the intensity of the fear varies across the states. Table 3 showed that respondents from Enugu State were most fearful.

Table 3: Extent of fear of becoming victim of any type of crime

State	Very fearful	Quite fearful	A little fearful	Not at all fearful	Don't know
Benue %	14 46.7	4 13.3	2 6.7	9 30.0	1 3.3
Ekiti %	14 46.7	1 3.3	5 16.7	10 33.3	0 0.0
Enugu %	19 63.3	3 10.0	2 6.7	6 20.0	0 0.0%
Jigawa %	7 23.3	8 26.7	3 10.0	12 40.0	0 0.0

The reasons offered by respondents for feeling safe include:

- a. Neighbors keep watch of the area, while others are away
- b. Living in fenced houses
- c. Non-engagement in violent politicking
- d. Avoiding dealing or interacting with youths who are engaged in crime and other forms of violence
- e. Avoiding trouble with neighbours
- f. Neighbourhood had very low level of criminal activity
- g. Relying on God who is the protector

These explanations were captured by the responses of many people interviewed in the states. For example, a 29 year old respondent, who is also single and employed from Gboko East, said:

I feel very safe both in the day and night because in our community, people are always around to keep watch of the area. This makes it difficult for thieves and other criminals to dispossess us of our belongings.

Another 18 year old respondent who is a student residing in the GRA in Gboko narrates his feelings of safety thus:

We feel very safe here. We do not experience any security problem in the day and night time because we live in a fenced house. This is why it has been impossible for criminals to harass us.

Similarly, a 39 year old house wife, with a secondary school education, a Christian and who resides in the GRA in Gboko says:

I feel very safe because I live in a fenced house and with a big and strong gate which makes any criminal to think twice before embarking on a criminal mission to our compound.

Respondents who felt unsafe identified the following as reasons for these feelings:

- a. Increase in theft and robbery

- b. Police harassment, intimidation and arrest
- c. Political thuggery by unemployed youths
- d. The use of arms in political and communal conflicts

A 40 year old male, who is a civil servant and had lived in Ushongo LGA for more than 10 years, narrates a political dimension of his feeling of insecurity in the neighbourhood:

I must tell you that I feel very unsafe because I am a member of the opposition party in my LGA and you know to be in the opposition in Nigeria is a crime. You are treated as a leper. I feel my opponents in the ruling party will soon come for my head

Respondents who have a general feeling that their properties are secure from theft and damage identify the following as reasons:

- a. Neighbours cooperate to keep watch of the area while others are away
- b. Living in well fenced houses with fortified gates
- c. Non-ownership of property that will attract criminals
- d. Apartments are always under lock and key while away to work or market
- g. Belief that God is the protector

A 24 year old respondent and a secondary school leaver, and a Christian from Ushongo Local Government Area of Benue State said he does not entertain fears of being a victim of crime, because:

When the fox is out for game, it hunts for full chickens and not eggs. These criminals would usually look for places where they can get property and money. Besides this, I do not look for trouble and prays that trouble never comes my way.

The respondents who expressed a general feeling of insecurity also attributed their perception to the following:

- a. Rampant cases of house breaking and theft
- b. General increase in criminal activity
- c. Use of arms to perpetrate crime
- d. ncreased threat of water erosion to agricultural produce

A male respondent who is about 45 year of age, and a businessman who had resided in Gboko Benue State for more than 10 years said:

...you know there are rampant cases of crime in our area. What frightens me most about these crimes is the way innocent people are mal-treated when caught by these criminals. It is something else. My friend was shot the other day by armed robbers for not possessing any valuable thing, which they could take away. It is terrible

A 43 year old male Pastor from Oye LGA of Ekiti State is fearful:

Because of my personality I feel very fearful. As the pastor of the church what would happen to my congregation if they found out the pastor of the church was a victim of a crime? It would be disastrous. That may be the end of my church.

Also a 35 year self-employed female from Oye LGA of Ekiti State narrated her ordeal with the criminals, which informs her increasing fear of becoming a victim again:



I have been a victim before. This has increased my fears particularly in the night. I pray before I go to bed. My prayer has always been: "God I don't want these people to come any longer". They came in the night asked us to open the door when we refused to open the door, they took a heavy stone to break the door and they opened the door themselves. When they got in they packed everything; clothes, trinkets and even money. They even took away our vehicle but we later got our vehicle back because it is very old; maybe that's why we got our vehicle back. They dropped the vehicle somewhere.

### **Priority Safety and Security Concerns**

The responses of the participants in this study indicate that their priority safety and security concerns are:

- Personal safety from criminals, especially armed robbers;
- Protection from harm associated with political thuggery;
- violent conflicts;
- brutality and corruption; and
- Security of property from theft and destruction.

To address these concerns, respondents indicated the need for employment opportunities for the youth and expanding opportunities for everyone to secure adequate means of livelihood. They emphasized the need for effective police system. Concerns that were expressed in respect of the police include their lack of adequate and appropriate means of preventing and fighting crime; ineffectiveness in responding to distress call; corruption and brutality, and delay in the administration of justice in the country.

The respondents, in response to the question, *what do you need in order to feel safe from violence and intimidation?* identified the following minimum requirements:

- Constant presence of police in the neighbourhood and the establishment of more police stations
- Constant presence of well equipped and trained vigilante groups
- Preventing the free usage of small arms/weapons by members of the community (opinion from Benue) and allowing people to use personal licensed guns (Ekiti State)
- Creation of employment opportunities for idle youths to prevent them from engaging in crime and violence

A 23 year old male in Oye LGA of Ekiti state pleaded that "the government need to assist us to get some ammunition to those people who really need it in order to work effectively. We need some better weapons to be given to the police". Another respondent, a 30 year old unemployed male from Ileje meje of in the same state also responded that:

We can feel safe when we engage in self-defence. I believe that possessing a gun is a self-defence mechanism. The possession of a gun should be guaranteed by our Constitution and it should be legally allowed so that when you are under any serious threat you can deal with it.

In response to the question, *what do you need in order to feel your property is secure?* The respondents identified the following measures.

- a. Presence of privately-owned and community established vigilantes in the neighbourhood
- b. Ownership of gun

- c. Existence of an insurance scheme
- d. Belief in God who is the protector of life and property

Stressing the idea of faith in God as a source of safety and security, a 30 year old unemployed male respondent from Ileje meje of Ekiti State said that:

It is only God that can help you safeguard your property. Even if you have a burglary proof door the thieves will come and just cut it. We believe that if you don't have stolen property then no one will come to take it. Make sure you only have what you laboured for and then no one can take it. If you have any other persons sweat then they will come back for it.

Some of the respondents emphasized the need for an effective formal police system in the country as means of ensuring security and safety. Thus, a 50 year old male and self-employed respondent from Hadejia LGA of Jigawa State said that there should be an:

Effective police or security agents fully paid by the government. Government must improve their welfare in terms of salaries, accommodation and equipment. Sometimes you see a policeman with tattered uniform. They stay months without salary. The government needs to boost the morale of the police because sometimes it is not their fault when they commit one crime or the other or they don't act when they are required to do so. They have so many problems. The government should also increase the number of police because the ratio of police to a citizen in Nigeria is far below average.

When asked what impact their priority safety and security concerns have on their economic welfare and quality of life, a 30 year old unemployed male from Ileje meje of Ekiti State responded that:

...living in a safe and secure environment will improve ones standard of living. For instance, if someone has 1000 Naira, and because the person feels insecure, he/she will spend it to acquire charms for self-protection. If this amount is safe, the owner can keep it and use it for good investment. If you are saving money to go to school but an armed robber takes it you cannot improve your standard of living.

Another respondent, a 24 year old female respondent from Ileje Meje LGA of Ekiti State said that safety and security: "would attract other people into the community like the Ibos that sell things, even the civil servants would come. This would also attract people to come and buy our farm produce such as cocoa, kola nuts etc". Similarly, a 34 year old female respondent from Kenya LGA of Jigawa State in her response pointed out that:

When you have wealth, you can not enjoy it, your family can not enjoy the luxuries of life because you are afraid of enjoying it; afraid that someone might break into your house, terrorize your family or even hurt them when they don't find what they want. When safety and security is improved, people will be free to enjoy their wealth.

A participant in the focus group discussion in Enugu State reported that:

Here in Abakpa where we live the issue of security and safety has affected our means of livelihood. I know of a friend of mine who owns a provisions store. In the evenings when he is supposed to have some customers, when issue of insecurity increases what he does is to close his shop, immediately it gets dark. Because at times, the customer that has come to buy items will turn out to be a customer that has come to rob. Either using a gun to collect cash already earned earlier in the day or to collect items on display in the shop. This friend of mine has suffered this

fate twice in the past years. So what he has done now is to resolve not to open after it has become dark. So when it is getting late he simply locks up. So it is really how is able to run his business, and it is really affecting him because it means he has to close at the period of the day when he would have made the most sales

### **Measures Currently Used to Improve Safety and Security**

Communities and individuals in the four states where the research was conducted employed different methods to improve safety and security. Majority of the respondents were involved in initiating measures to improve safety and security in their neighbourhood. Data from interviews showed the following percentages of people were involved in human safety enhancing initiatives – Benue (60%); Ekiti (69%); Enugu (53.5%) and Jigawa (60.0%). Comparatively, figures for involvement in initiatives aimed at enhancing security of property from theft and damage were – Benue (50.0%); Ekiti (62.1%); Enugu (58.6%) and Jigawa (62.1%). Generally, except in Enugu State, respondents were more involved in measures aimed at securing the safety of persons from violence and intimidation than in those targeted at the security of property.

The following were the most frequently adopted initiatives:

- a. Advising the youths to shun crime and violence
- b. Volunteering information to the community and the police about crimes
- c. Formation of neighbourhood watch groups
- d. Formation of vigilante groups and enrolling as members
- e. Monetary contributions for the welfare of members of the vigilante groups

A 50 year old male and self-employed respondent from Hadejia LGA of Jigawa State explains the initiatives of his neighbourhood as follows:

Whenever there are security problems, we first of all understand the problem, and then we discuss the measures to counteract these problems...we do what we call “addua” [prayer]. Thereafter we collect monetary contributions and pay the Mallam who offers the prayer to God. We then organise a meeting with the police and the vigilante to discuss the matter in order to find solutions to the problem. We offer assistance to them sometimes in the form of fuelling and repairing of their vehicles, buying some local weapons to improve their combat readiness against bandits and buying uniforms.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter a discussion of the participants’ perceptions of safety and security, including their level of feeling of safety, reasons offered for feeling safe and unsafe, priority safety and security concerns, current measures and requirements for improvement in their safety and security was undertaken. The next chapter discusses their perceptions of informal policing structures.

## CHAPTER SIX

### POOR PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF INFORMAL POLICING

#### **Introduction**

The term informal policing system should be used with caution. Many of the agencies employed in rural areas and even in the urban neighbourhoods where the low-income earners are concentrated are rooted in the culture and tradition of the people, within which they form part of the formal traditional structures. Such structures are regulated by and in accordance with the political and cultural practices of the respective communities. For example, respondents were asked about the names of groups, other than the police, established to deal with crime in their communities. Many of the respondents identified policing groups that are founded on traditional practices of age-grade; divination and masquerade cults. Such groups are only informal in relation to the contemporary state police system but not in the consciousness and lived experiences of the people. However in addition to such culturally rooted legacy of policing, there are groups that were formed to arrest upsurge of crime. Such were founded by neighbourhoods or communities and are sustained either by direct participation of residents or through levies to pay employed night watchmen. The study identified several and different types of policing groups in the communities.

#### **Types of Informal Policing Structures (IPS)**

Apart from the police, the communities established several groups to deal with crime. The groups are called different names and are differentially related to the traditional practices and authorities of the community. Most of the terms used for this group in local languages translate to vigilante, though more appropriately as guards. When asked of the names by which the informal policing groups in their communities are called, respondents overwhelmingly (70.4%) chose the term vigilante among other choices on the questionnaire (e.g. neighbourhood watchers (8.2%), community guards (1.0%); traditional police (3.1% and others (17.3)). In Ekiti state, the term vigilante was not often used as only 41.7% of the respondents identified the groups with the term, compared to Benue (96.4%), Enugu (71.4%) and Jigawa (68.0%) The respondents explained that various groups operate in their communities to provide safety and security other than the police. Such groups were called by various names such as:

- a. Mbayer Ikyaior (vigilante)- Gboko East LGA
- b. Landlords Associations (Ushongo LGA)
- c. Motor Cycle Hire Association (Gboko East LGA)
- d. Denon Toffi (Rapid Response Group) in (Gboko East LGA).
- e. "Olodes" (hunters) in Oye LGA of Ekiti State
- f. Egbe (age grade) in Ilejemeje and Oye LGAs Ekiti state
- g. Boys Scouts (Ilejemeje LGA of Ekiti)
- h. Ijofins (warriors, are involved in settling land disputes) in Ilejemeje LGA of Ekiti State
- i. "Yan farauta" (local hunters) in Hadejia LGA of Jigawa State
- j. "Yan gadin dare" (night watchmen) in Hadejia LGA of Jigawa State
- k. Nigerian Defence Corp in Hadejia LGA of Jigawa State
- l. "Kato da gora" (big man with a big stick) in Kenya LGA of Jigawa State
- m. "Yan banga" (vigilante) in Babura LGA of Jigawa State
- n. Ndi-nche (community guard or guards) in Enugu State
- o. Ochi-ogodo (Enugu State)

p. Masquerade cult (Enugu State).

Many of these groups - especially “olode”, “ijofin”, “yan farauta” and “yan banga” – developed from the traditional or cultural practice of hunters within the community providing safety and security. Among the Yorubas, however, the term “olode” or hunter, is now use more loosely to refer to any group involved in the defence of community at night. It is also the case that the term vigilante is now used broadly to refer to groups involved in community self-policing, irrespective of their origin and mode of operation. The confusing and interchangeable use of the term was exhibited by a young male respondent in Oye LGA in Ekiti state, who reported that:

We have security for every quarter. They are called vigilante or “olode”. The elders of the quarters form them. There may be more than one [group] in each quarter but they are all vigilante groups. There is one society in the town that comprises all the hunters that look at the security.

However, another young male respondent from Ilejemeje LGA in the same Ekiti state provided a detailed description of the “traditional” community policing groups and the vigilante group formed later.

We have vigilante. We also call them night watchers and they are employed by the locals, who pay their salaries... We have traditional groups. We call them ‘egbe’ – meaning “ologun” or warriors. It is the age groups ... The egbe serve as protection for the community. The town forms them, the government structure of the community. It has been existing for a very long time ... Looking at the vigilantes most of them are hunters [They were recruited and remunerated by the Local Government Council]. Our own feelings are that they will all have a charm ... Local medicine for protection to protect them from strange things in the night.

Another respondent, an elderly woman, also reported:

There is such a group known as ‘egbe’. The head of the group is known as the Elejoka, next to him is the Elewere followed by the Elegbira. It is a traditional institution that has been in existence since the inception of the community [a local metaphor for time immemorial]. Women are not allowed to join. They are dressed like warlords... they are the ones in charge of the security of the community.

The people interviewed and those who participated in the focus group discussion sessions described the functions of these groups largely in terms of policing the community in the night to ensure security and safety. Some of them, especially those with their origin in the people’s tradition and culture, for example the ‘egbe’ and the masquerades also by supernatural or mystical means engage in ‘criminal’ investigation and punishment.

The description of the informal police structure in Nkanu East LGA also throws light on the structure of informal policing in many parts of the country. In the area (Nkanu), there are three major community-based policing groups with roots in tradition and culture. These are:

- a) The “Ndi-nche” group, also called ‘vigilante’
- b) The “Ochi-Ogodo” process
- c) The Masquerade group

The *Ndi-nche* or ‘vigilante’, as participants described, is primarily engaged in routine patrols of the community throughout the night – the period considered most dangerous in terms of risk of theft or robbery. Through their patrols, they are able to detect suspects or apprehend criminals, as well as deter criminals from operating. They do not carry arms,

and are only equipped with torches and sticks primarily for their own protection. The *Ndi-Nche* is composed of the community youth, for whom service on the group is compulsory, in a sense an obligatory community service. They are convened, supervised and assigned to duty shifts by committee of community elders.

The crime prevention function of the *Ndi-Nche*, as participants noted, is complemented by the activities of community elders who keep watch over houses and property during the day when those of working age are on the farms.

We have two groups that are involved in safety and security in our community - the elderly and the youth. The elderly are involved in the daytime, to look after the compounds when the youth have gone out to the farms. Then at night the youth take over. The duty of the elderly group during the day is to look after the compound and be able to identify visitors and inform the owners of the compounds who were away at that point, who the visitors were and what their missions were. By so doing they are able to identify strange elements at the time people were away at the farms”

The ... young men are divided into groups by the elders and assigned different days as the day they will be on guard. At the appointed time, a wooden gong is sounded signalling when the group for that day is supposed to assemble. They are now assigned to different areas where undesirables are likely to be lurking around [for example] houses built by those who are still ‘abroad’...Their major weapon is a stick and torch light since the area is dark and there may be snakes and other reptiles around.

The Ochi-Ogodo process, as the participants described, is a highly organised, periodic process of detection and then public ‘naming, shaming and punishment’ of wrongdoers in the community. By identifying, and then exposing and subjecting offenders to public punishment and humiliation in the community, the process fulfils a function of crime detection/investigation and corrective justice and, through this, crime prevention by acting as a deterrent. According to focus group discussion participants in Nkanu LGA:

It is a process whereby bad boys within the community are brought before the general members of the community and punished. The masquerades are invited to cane such people publicly. The purpose is to warn would be culprits to desist from a life of crime. The ceremony is organised quarterly but in emergency could be anytime. On that day each village gong is sounded and people troop to a particular village square ‘Obodo Igwesi’ to watch the spectacle. A list of the bad boys is brought by each village head who has already compiled this with elders of his village. The list is read out and the culprits are assembled at a corner then the ceremony of caning commences. If the person mentioned on the list is not found in the assembled he will be regarded as having absconded and the town gotten rid of him... at times the notorious thief is banished from the community as an alternative to handing him over to the police.

The Ochi-Ogodo process, as the above quote describes, is prepared and overseen by village elders and heads who regularly investigate and compile ‘lists’ of offenders in their communities. The public ceremony usually takes place in roughly three-month intervals, but also any time a serious offender is caught.

The *Masquerade* cult is a customary group with perceived metaphysical links. It works to complement some of the functions of the *Ndi-Nche* and *Ochi Ogodo*, by enforcing penalties and sanctions assigned to offenders by community heads or elders.

## Methods of Operation of IPS

Information obtained from respondents showed that most of the informal policing groups operate during the night, essentially as night watchmen, patrolling and apprehending anyone suspected of crime or violating regulations on movement during the night. But in some communities with different and several informal policing groups, different roles may be performed by each of them. For example in the Ileje Meje LGA of Ekiti state, the vigilantes and the 'egbes' performed different though complementary policing roles with different systems of legitimation. According to a young male respondent:

The two groups mentioned above are somewhat different. The 'egbes' are only used in terms [intended to mean during or in times] of emergency on crime issues in the community e.g. they receive letter that armed robbers will be visiting the town. The 'egbes' will mount road blocks in each entrance of the community with help of the vigilantes. They are an old traditional network whose members are not paid. The vigilante is recent due to the presence of the local government and they work every night and they are being paid by the council. They ['egbe' and vigilantes] both work hand-in-hand to combat crime. The vigilante will punish the criminal by giving the person stones, stripping the person also by beating and they [offenders] will be paraded the next day. While the 'egbes' do the same thing, they also use charms, and if they let the person go without any punishment the person will face obstacles while leaving the town. The 'egbes' use walking stick and caps as mark of distinction and their leader is called Elejoka.

It was revealed during interview that the vigilante groups often carry with them the following weapons: machetes, swords, clubs, bows and arrows, whips, locally made guns. But those involved in the collection of intelligence information rarely carry any weapon. Some groups also rely on charms to execute their tasks. A member of one of the policing groups reported that "we use weapons and the necessary things: guns, catapults, whips and spiritual stones" The same young male respondent from Oye LGA of Ekiti said that the vigilantes in his community "are armed with ammunitions and spiritual ammunitions". On why vigilantes carry weapons, the respondents said that the weapons are used for self-defence; to frighten criminals and to punish criminal offenders.

When the respondents were asked about what kinds of methods are employed by the informal policing groups, wide-ranging methods were reported as follows.

Table 4: Methods used by Informal Policing Groups

Methods	Benue %	Ekiti %	Enugu %	Jigawa %
Traditional divining methods	17.9	11.1	0.0	35.7
Traditional protection devices	0.0	44.4	0.0	0.0
Praying and fasting	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0
Mob action	21.4	0.0	42.9	7.1
None	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Don't know	7.1	25.9	9.5	28.6
Others	46.4	14.8	47.6	28.6
Total No. of Respondents To this question	28	27	21	14

The fairly significant entries in the 'don't know' and 'others' categories suggest that the methods used by the groups are diverse and not well known by members of the public. Furthermore, the use of traditional divining methods and protection devices, especially in Ekiti and Jigawa states, point to the traditional roots of some of the groups. Majority of the

respondents supported the methods used by the groups. In Enugu state, where mob action and 'others' were widely identified as the methods used by the community policing groups, 94.7% supported the use of those practices. Comparative figures for other states were Benue (74.1%), Ekiti (75%) and Jigawa (78.3%). In traditional African societies, policing is not always about persons and weapons. People used charms to deter criminals from stealing. As reported by a participant in a focus group discussion in Enugu East LGA:

Generally what we have tried to discuss on policing appears to be on the conventional way. However, there are also some unorthodox ways through which people police and protect their property. This is through the use of native charms or juju whereby the property to be protected is laced with a juju. Whoever touches it may be met with severe consequences.

### **Mode of Recruitment of Members of IPS**

In most communities, the recruits do not pay money to be members, but could make contributions to the smooth operation of the group like any other member. In addition, religion is not a factor that influence membership, rather residency does. Furthermore, in most cases only males are members of the vigilante and traditional policing groups. As for the more traditional policing groups, members were selected on the basis of belonging to a particular age group responsible for defending the community or membership of the hunting occupation by the traditional authority.

The respondents revealed that people become members of the vigilante by signifying their interest. Following such indication of interest, applicants may be required to take an oath to be of good character or to purchase drinks for the older members by the recruit. For example, a 24 year old respondent and a secondary school leaver from Ushongo Local Government Area of Benue State said:

Once you are interested in serving your community, you are welcomed into the group. You don't swear nor pay money. Membership is not restricted on the basis of sex or religion. We use women to get information we want from criminals. The other time, we used a woman who disguised as a groundnut seller stationed in an area we thought suspects could be. She indeed obtained the relevant information we needed.

In Oye LGA of Ekiti State, a respondent and a pastor in community told the interviewer that:

Before anybody can be a member (of the informal policing groups), such a person needs to be somebody whose character is not questionable. They must be members of the quarters...if the quarters notice that someone has been accused of being a criminal he/she automatically cannot be a member of the group. There will be a panel probing into their own past life and that of their families. If the panel notice for instance that the father of an intending member has been a criminal, the quarters will not allow such a person to be a member of the group.

Not all communities screened new members into the groups. Some communities prefer to select the leadership of the vigilante from the group of persons with past questionable character. The community will then closely monitor him. This is done in order to commit such persons and help reduce their tendency to continue with such behaviour. Generally, people intending to join the groups were screened for criminal records. This was so in Ekiti and Jigawa states where 70.4% and 70.8% of the respondents respectively said potential members were screened. Corresponding figures for Benue and Enugu states were 32.1% and 57.1% respectively. Members of the groups also wear uniforms or special



identification. This was especially the case in Benue and Jigawa where respectively 89.3% and 92.0% said group members had uniform or special identification. But only 32.1% and 19.0% of the respondents in Ekiti and Enugu respectively said that informal policing groups in their states had special identification or uniform.

### Reasons for Patronage of IPS

A significant proportion of the respondents said that they used the services of informal policing groups in order to protect the neighbourhood from criminal attacks; to provide speedy safety and security services which the formal police are unable to offer, and because they are closer to the people than the formal police. They are particularly more widely used in Ekiti (88.9%) and Jigawa (62.5%) where they are more culturally rooted than in Benue (36.7%) and Enugu (38.1%) states. A 50 year old male and self-employed respondent from Hadejia LGA of Jigawa State explained that his community engages the services of the vigilante more than that of the police because:

First they [vigilante] are very much around. The office is very close so we can reach it quickly. Not only that, when we report cases to them, we are not subjected to rigorous interviews, making statements and buying papers to write statements like is the case with the police. The police ask a lot of questions and waste your time. They may even try to implicate you in one way or the other. But when you report to vigilante, they handover they try the matter quickly and if they cannot they refer such case to the police quickly. With the police, being an informant, you can become a victim.

Respondents who had used the services of informal policing groups reported a high level of satisfaction. The percentages of respondents' who reported satisfaction are as follows for the four states: Benue (85.7%); Ekiti (79.2%), Enugu (87.5%) and Jigawa (94.1%). These figures are higher than the respondents' level of satisfaction with the formal police system which is as follows: Benue (43.3%), Ekiti (60%), Enugu (46.6%) and Jigawa (67.9%). Notwithstanding, the level of satisfaction with the formal police, especially among respondents from Ekiti and Jigawa States, is not as dismal as might be expected from the general impressions in the media and public discourse.

The respondents gave several reasons why they patronize the services of the informal police organizations (table 5).

Table 5: Reasons for Patronizing Informal Police Organisations

Reasons for patronizing informal police organizations	Benue %	Ekiti %	Enugu %	Jigawa %
Rise in crime	16.7	53.6	26.7	35.0
High cost of the formal justice system	23.3	0.0	10.0	0.0
Lack of access to the justice system	6.7	0.0	6.7	5.0
Delays in the justice system	23.3	14.3	16.7	5.0
The police side with the criminal	10.0	7.1	23.3	10.0
Cultural prohibitions	0.0	7.1	0.0	0.0
Others	16.7	14.3	3.3	35.0
Don't know	3.3	3.6	13.3	10.0
Total No. of respondents	30	28	30	20

From the distribution of responses in table 5, the three most important factors that influenced the respondents in patronizing the informal police organizations were rise in crime (32.4% of the entire respondents in the four states), delays in the justice system and collusion of the formal police with criminals. A male respondent of about 29 years with

university education, but unemployed and a resident of Ushongo LGA for 3 years pointed out that:

The members of these vigilante groups are our people. They live with us and help us. They even resolve conflicts in homes. In fact recently, my neighbour's wife ran to her parent's house after a quarrel with the husband. The husband sought the help of the vigilante to resolve the matter. The leaders of the group handle the matter effectively and quickly too. The woman returned to the house.

Inefficiency and corruption of the Nigeria Police Force featured prominently in the discussion of the focus group members. For participants in the FGD session in Enugu East LGA observed that:

One thing is very clear. One is that we don't have enough police force that can take care of the population.

Vigilante groups were formed because of this issue of bureaucracy. Because you know the police force is a government agency... So when you invite the police they will tell you 'no personnel or no vehicle'... And then when they come they will be coming behind schedule and the criminals will have come to kill and to destroy and the police will be asking 'where are the criminals?'... You might not necessarily blame them because it is because of this problem of logistics and if you look at it is a kind of general problem... [in] Nigeria.

In some areas of the town to even if they have vehicles the roads are just not fit for them to enter. Up till this 1999 when the PTF came in and constructed some roads you could not conceive of any vehicle going into some areas because of the nature of the roads."

The crux of the matter is the issue of corruption. We must be precise because for some years the government has equipped the police especially in the last year because of the election ... But unfortunately because of this issue of corruption... the [police] have the habit of turning up 30 minutes or 1 hour after the armed robbers have left and ...they are very particular about asking how much was [stolen] from you so they know the cut they will take from the armed robbers.

The...thing is that ... if somebody commits an offence and you take him to the police they are only interested in collecting money. And if possible from you and setting the person free. And then we start hearing stories from the police trying to equip even these criminals against the people they are supposed to protect.

The police...normally collect a bribe and set the thief free, thereby putting the lives of group operatives in danger

Those who were handed over to the police were released after giving the police money and no charges were pressed against such criminals. In some cases robbers came back boasting that it will only take some 1000s of Naira off their loot and if the vigilante wanted they can hand them over to the police ten times a month. And it goes without saying that the vigilante become targets of these criminals

From a policy perspective, it is important to understand whether or not the respondents would still patronize the group if the identified problems were solved. The respondents said the informal policing groups would still be patronized because they think that the formal police force is beyond redemption and therefore cannot deliver justice to the poor. Overall, 49% of the respondents said they would continue to patronize the groups even if the observed problems are resolved. As many as 73.1% of the respondents from Enugu state said they will continue to patronize the groups even if the observed problems no longer

exist. A 24 year old female respondent from Ileje Meje LGA of Ekiti State explains why people will still persist in the use of informal police groups in the following way:

Ohun ti oba da, o nfe adura, eyi ti o da na nfe adura” (anything good needs prayers to sustain it and anything bad needs prayers for it to change). Even if the community is safe and the property is secured, you would need to ensure that it continues like that so the olodes and the ijoyes [vigilantes] would still be relevant and functioning in the community.

In the same vein, a 34 year old female respondent from Kenya LGA from Jigawa State says reports that she will still patronise informal policing groups because:

The police side with the criminals. Most of the time before you go back to the police station, the suspects is released. We wouldn't know what has been exchanged between the suspect and the police. Wouldn't it be better to punish the suspect and the police?

It is not all types of cases that the respondents believe the informal police groups could handle or should be reported to them. When asked about the type of issues or crimes they would report to the groups, the respondents' answers vary. The list of issues or crimes they would prefer the informal groups handle include petty theft, petty quarrels, conflict over debts, reporting suspects or persons with questionable characters, domestic violence, and squabbles over land. A 24 year old female from Ilejemeje LGA of Ekiti State said that:

The Olodes (vigilantes) should be given intelligence report about armed robbery attack. Also children that are unruly and are beyond parental control can be disciplined by the olodes. If a child is in the habit of leaving the house late at night, the parent can instruct the olodes to “discipline” such a child when they see him at night after curfew. They should discipline people both young and adults that are prone to being proud and heady.

### **Problems Facing IPS**

The informal police organizations faced several problems among which were multiplicity of organizations, poor organization of the groups, non-representativeness of the organizations in relation to the population they policed (for example women were excluded) in most of them, so also were non-indigenous residents. In some cases, only members of a particular age-grade and hunting occupational group were eligible. The level of screening also is another problem, as only 57% of the respondents said members of such groups were screened. Overall, there is a problem of accountability, more so as most groups worked in the night and possessed weapons. The presence of armed groups outside the purview of the state is problematic. The extent to which such groups contribute to the widespread cases of ethnic, religious and communal violence needs to be investigated, because many well known vigilante groups such as OPC and Egbesu boys are primarily ethnic militias. Among the groups that derived their existence from the community traditions and culture, there appears to be some degree of accountability and discipline. For example, as regards the Ndi-Nche in Nkanu, absenteeism from duty and involvement in criminal behaviour are punished by the community:

At day break, if any of the appointed members failed to turn out for the night guard he is reported to the elders, and the elders will now use the masquerade as an enforcer. They will go to the guy's place and extract a penalty for failing to do his community job. When they get to the guy's house, he normally does not resist paying the fine, being aware of the penalty from the beginning

Furthermore among the same group:

There have been incidents in the past whereby a complaint of stealing was brought against a member of the group. When that occurs the member is reported before the village community members who are then assembled at the village square. Appropriate punishment will now be meted out to the culprit. But this is rare now. As a deterrent, such a person is publicly canned by the masquerade.

### **Shortcomings of IPS**

At a fundamental level, informal policing groups that are armed and managed outside the purview of the state raise several concerns. Their existence in Nigeria mirrors the failure of the state and the danger of gradual drift towards state failure even collapse that may throw up warlords in different parts of the nation. The development in the Niger Delta and activities of the Odua People's Congress in the South-West are pointers in these directions. The existence of informal policing, their composition and methods of operation should also stir concern regarding human rights protection, observance of the rule of law or due process. The use of charms, divination and traditional protection devices by many of the groups to identify suspects underscores these concerns.

Besides the foregoing concern, respondents pointed out to negative tendencies as well as operational difficulties among the several watch groups. A participant at the FGD in Enugu East LGA pointed to the limits imposed on economic activities and movement of the public.

Apart from the criminals, even the vigilante groups make it more difficult for people to operate within certain hours, especially those who have their business during the night period, like bars or restaurants...Some of the vigilante groups now say from 8 (p.m.) or so all businesses should close. You find out that the people who are supposed to make their business at 8 or later will have to close at that time. So this security makes it difficult for our business at times

Like in our place of market you may go on a trip to buy wares from outside town and supposed to supply or sale to your customers later in the day. And it happens that you are back late. The market is supposed to close by 6 pm, and the market security will not allow you to offload your goods and therefore you will lose supplying your customers

Some of the groups have also been infiltrated by touts and thugs, some of who collude with criminals.

And why you have such touts in the groups is because of the amounts of money they are paid. There are certain people who will not like to do it because of the amount of money they are paid. But if their payment should be improved no society would like a tout to help in keeping security

### **Relationship of IPS with the Formal Police**

Some respondents feel that the relationship between formal and the informal policing groups is cordial in their own neighbourhood because the vigilantes complement police work in both the rural and urban areas, make the operation of the police in the remote villages simpler, and transfer difficult and complex cases to the police.

Table 6: Relationship between the Formal Police Organization and Informal Police Groups

Nature of Relationship	Benue %	Ekiti %	Enugu %	Jigawa %
Very cordial	56.7	40.7	59.1	56.0
Somewhat cordial	13.3	22.2	13.6	28.0
Somewhat hostile	13.3	11.1	0.0	4.0
Very hostile	0.0	3.7	0.0	4.0
Don't know	16.7	22.2	27.3	8.0
Total No. of respondents	30	27	22	25

However, some respondents explain that there is a sore relationship between the vigilantes and the police because the police feel that their lawful duties are being performed by untrained groups who are not legally recognised by law, and the opportunity usually available for the police to collect 'side payments' in neighbourhoods when handling cases is blocked. For example, a 49 year old self-employed male respondent from Ilejemeje LGC of Ekiti State captures the sore relationship between the police and the vigilante in the following words:

Their relationship is not cordial since the police believe they are not trained and capable of handling such issue. When the groups report or take a criminal to the police, the police ask some unpleasing questions and sometimes try to implicate the members of the vigilantes. The vigilantes see this as deliberate attempt to frustrate their efforts in eliminating crime in their neighbourhood.

It should be stated that the Nigeria Police Force is not opposed to the formation and activities of community-based crime watch groups provided:

1. The groups are registered with the police;
2. Members are submitted to the police for screening;
3. Members do not bear arms;
4. Members do not detain suspects but rather hand them over to the police for investigation and prosecution if necessary.

## Conclusion

In this chapter a detailed discussion of the research participants' perceptions of Informal policing structures was undertaken. This included identification of the types IPS that exist, their methods of operation, mode of recruitment of members, reasons offered for poor peoples' patronage of them, problems and short-comings of the IPS. The next chapter concludes the study and outlines some action points emanating from it.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION AND ACTION POINTS

#### **Introduction**

This study investigated poor peoples' perceptions of safety, security and informal policing in the four states in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the expectations, priorities and perceptions of people living in poverty in the four states with respect to safety and security in general and informal policing structures in particular. What follows are the outline of the major findings.

#### **Perceptions on Safety and Security**

The study found that the poor had capacity to identify and explain their safety and security concerns even though they might not be fluent in the language(s) used by policy makers. Their understanding of these concepts went beyond protection from criminal victimization, as they added social, economic, political and even moral dimensions. This was nicely articulated by a participant in the focus groups:

Safety and security are very important in our communities. Without safety and security, the level of immorality would be very high. This will breed criminals and drug addicts in the society. So it affects aspects of our health, family coexistence and our lives and properties... It affects everything! Without safety and security, everything would get spoilt.

With the possible exception of Enugu State where the respondents feeling of safety was very low (36.6 %) the majority of respondents in Ekiti (96.6 %), Jigawa (81.7%) and Benue States (66.6%) felt safe. However, in spite of the relatively high level of feeling of safety and security in Ekiti, Jigawa and Benue States, a pervading fear of crime was reported in all the four states. Across the four states, at least three-fifth of the respondents expressed some fear of criminal victimization. However, the intensity of the fear varies across the states, with respondents from Enugu State being most fearful (73.3 %).

The responses of the participants in the study indicated that their priority safety and security concerns around which they expect assistance are:

- Personal safety from criminals, especially armed robbers;
- Protection from harm associated with political thuggery;
- Prevention of violent conflicts;
- Eradication of police corruption and brutality; and
- Security of property from theft and destruction.

#### **Perceptions of Informal Policing Structures (IPS)**

Apart from the police, participants to the study identified a total of 16 types of informal policing structures that were established in their communities to deal with crime. The groups are called different names and are differentially related to the traditional practices and authorities of the community. Most of the terms used for this group in local languages translate to vigilante, though more appropriately as guards. When asked of the names by which the informal policing groups in their communities are called, respondents overwhelmingly chose the term vigilante (70.4%) among other choices on the questionnaire (e.g. neighbourhood watchers (8.2%), community guards (1.0%); traditional police (3.1% and others (17.3)). In Ekiti state, the term vigilante was not often used as only

41.7% of the respondents identified the groups with the term, compared to Benue (96.4%), Enugu (71.4%) and Jigawa (68.0%).

The methods of operation of IPS identified include traditional diving methods, traditional protection methods, praying and fasting, and mob action (17.85%). There was also a fairly significant entry of 'don't know' and 'others', which suggests that the methods used by the groups are diverse and not well known by members of the public. Furthermore, the use of traditional divining methods and protection devices, especially in Ekiti and Jigawa states, point to the traditional roots of some of the groups. Majority of the respondents supported the methods used by the groups. In Enugu state, where mob action and 'others' were widely identified as the methods used by the community policing groups, 94.7% supported the use of those practices.

A significant proportion of the respondents said that they used the services of informal policing groups in order to protect the neighbourhood from criminal's attacks; to provide speedy safety and security services which the formal police are unable to offer, and because they are closer to the people than the formal police. They are particularly more widely used in Ekiti (88.9%) and Jigawa (62.5%) where they are more culturally rooted than in Benue (36.7%) and Enugu (38.1%) states.

However, the informal police organizations faced several problems among which were multiplicity of organizations, poor organization of the groups, lack of resources, non-representativeness of the organizations in relation to the population they policed (for example women were excluded in most of them, so also non-indigenous residents, and in some cases only members of a particular age-grade and hunting occupational group were eligible). The level of screening also is another problem, as only 57% of the respondents said members of such groups were screened. Overall, there is a problem of accountability, more so as most groups worked in the night and possessed weapons. The presence of armed groups outside the purview of the state is problematic. The extent to which such groups contribute to the widespread cases of ethnic, religious and communal violence needs to be investigated, because many well known vigilante groups such as OPC and Egbesu boys are primarily ethnic militias. Among the groups that derived their existence from the community traditions and culture, there appears to be some degree of accountability and discipline.

## **Conclusions and Action Points**

The study found that majority of the respondents in the four states, in response to their high level of fear of crime and lack of confidence in the formal police in guaranteeing their safety and security, patronized Informal policing structures (IPS). And that an average of 83.02 % of them appeared satisfied with the methods used by the IPS. However, the multiplicity of these groups (16 in all) and the use of mob justice by a significant percentage of them (17.8%), raise questions, which should worry A2J but at the same time present opportunities for programmatic intervention. Among these questions are issues about coordination, accountability, representation of women and most importantly, the presence of armed groups outside the purview of the state. It is therefore recommended that if A2J decides to develop programmes on improvement of poor peoples' perceptions of safety and security, which it should do, the following action points are important:

### **1. Establishment of Community Safety and Security Forums**

- For the improvement of community perception of safety, security and relationship with the police, there is a need for periodic and predictable community interaction with the police, through the establishment of community safety and security forum at the LGA level. The local government should be encouraged to play a key role in such structure either as convenor or host. The local councils'

halls have always served as venue for all kinds of community meetings and could serve as the venue and secretariat for the forum. The importance of taking the hosting or organisation of the forum away from the police is to encourage partnership in crime prevention rather than paternalism, where the community members are treated as mere informants. Participants in such a forum should include representatives all stakeholders in crime prevention in the community including women and IPS.

## **2. Regulation of IPS Activities**

- Holding of meeting(s) with traditional authorities and elders in the localities (such as the 8 LGAs in the study) where A2J might consider carrying out a pilot project on standardization of IPS procedure to identify groups that do not bear arms, other lethal weapons or resort to mob justice in their activities. Such traditional authorities and elders could be made to sign undertakings which would be deposited to the police, vouching that the groups they recommended do not bear arms or resort to jungle justice.
- Coordination of the groups through holding of periodic meetings involving all the certified IPS and the police authorities within an LGA. This meeting could serve as a clearing house for information exchange, peer review, standardization of procedures, screening of members, registration with police and improvement of their relationship with the police.
- Advocacy for the enactment of by-laws by LGAs to regulate the activities of IPS subject to police supervision. This could be made a pre-condition for the establishment of IPS standardization and assistance project in a locality. A2J could also commission the drafting of model legislation for the regulation of the establishment and methods of operation of IPS at the LGA level.

## **3. Accountability of IPS to the Community**

- Accountability of the IPS to the community they serve should be encouraged by the introduction of report back mechanism (if they do not exist) where members of the IPS would made to appear before the local community to give periodic account of their steward. Such gathering should include representatives of women. Even if they are not allowed to participate directly because of the risk involved, they could at least provide important information thy may prove invaluable to the IPS.

## **4. Reward Mechanism**

- A reward mechanism for groups who play by the rule should be introduced to encourage them. This could take the form of supplying them with simple and non-lethal items such as rain-coats, booths, flash-lights etc. USAID/OTI tried this in Lagos State with the neighbourhood watch association, though not sustained because of their pull-out from Nigeria.
- Non governmental organizations working on issues of safety, security and access to justice should also be encouraged to invite members of IPS in their education and training programmes on human rights to enable them appreciate the importance of respecting the due process safeguards of suspects in stead of weighting for the IPS to commit violations for the to document.
- Progressively a data base for the documentation of their activities and best practices learnt could be introduced in an effort to share lessons learned and avoidance of repeat of pitfalls experienced elsewhere.



## **5. General Recommendations**

- The issues of improving police capacity to curb crime, elimination of police corruption and brutality against the poor, which were identified by the participants to the study as major contributors to their lack of confidence in the police should be addressed seriously by the authorities. NGOs working to monitor, document and campaign against them should be supported by A2J, especially in the focal states.
- Finally and more fundamentally, the high level of unemployment among the youths, which the participants identified as a major contributor to crime, should be addressed by the governments at various levels in the states. A2J should also consider some pilot projects that could engage the youths and get them off the street under some kind of social crime prevention programme.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A significant percentage of the respondents and participants in the study also asked for arms and ammunitions to enable them defend themselves and their communities from criminal attacks. This request was not included in the recommended action points as it would require an amendment of the Armed Robbery and Firearms Act, which criminalizes possession of firearms except those licensed for hunting purposes. For details of this refer to appendix 5 dealing with full report of the focus group discussions.