POLICE REFORM AND THE RULE OF LAW IN NIGERIA: ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY AND JUSTICE THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

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Abstract

This article examines the urgent need for police reform in Nigeria, focusing on institutional change within the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) as the mechanism to bridge the gap between human rights protections, the rule of law, and actual justice delivery. Institutional change here entails comprehensive structural reforms (such as independent oversight and legal frameworks), cultural shifts toward professionalism and accountability, and operational improvements in training and resource allocation. It analysed key challenges. Accountability was identified as the cornerstone. The article integrates the Nigeria Police Act 2020 and the newly gazetted Nigerian Police Regulations 2025, which aim to curb illegal detention, enforce the Anti-Torture Act 2017, and mandate reporting. Past reforms' failures are critically examined, alongside the potential of decentralization. Practical recommendations for sustainable reform were proposed, including legal and policy interventions, strengthened oversight mechanisms, and collaboration with civil society organizations. The article concludes that robust institutional change, supported by a strong legal system and theories such as procedural justice and social contract, is essential for restoring public trust and promoting justice.

***Keywords**:* Police reform, Institutional change, Accountability, Rule of Law, Procedural justice, Decentralization.

1. Introduction

The Nigerian Police Force has long been plagued by challenges that undermine its effectiveness and public trust. Issues such as corruption, brutality, inefficiency, and lack of accountability have eroded confidence in law enforcement, leading to frequent protests and calls for reform. Notably, the EndSARS protests in 2020 became a watershed moment, highlighting citizens' frustrations with systemic abuses and the urgent need for institutional change.[795]

Institutional change within the NPF refers to deliberate, multi-dimensional transformations in its structures, policies, culture, and operations designed to align policing with democratic principles. This change is critical to bridging the persistent gap between formal human rights guarantees (as enshrined in Chapter IV of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended), the rule of law (predictable, impartial, and accountable application of legal norms), and actual justice delivery (tangible outcomes such as reduced impunity, fair treatment of citizens, and effective protection of lives and property). Without such change, constitutional rights remain aspirational, the rule of law is selectively applied, and justice eludes victims of police misconduct.[796]

This institutional transformation can be theoretically grounded in social contract theory and procedural justice theory. Under social contract theory (as articulated by John Locke), citizens cede certain freedoms to the state in exchange for protection of life, liberty, and property.[797] In Nigeria, persistent police brutality and impunity represent a fundamental breach of this contract, eroding the legitimacy of the state and justifying demands for renewed institutional arrangements that restore mutual obligations. Complementing this, procedural justice theory posits that public perceptions of legitimacy depend not only on outcomes but on the fairness of processes voice (being heard), neutrality, respect, and trustworthiness.[798] When police interactions embody these

[795] IM Emoedumhe and others, 'Catalyzing Change: Analyzing the Dynamics and Impact of EndSARS Protests in Nigeria' (2023) 8(4) *NIU Journal of Humanities* 35-49.

[796] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 'Police Reform' accessed 14 June 2026.

[797] CP Iloanya, P Bosah and CA Okoye, 'Human Person and Social Contract Experience in Nigeria: Lessons from John Locke' (2020) 1(1) *EVAIA: International Journal of Ethics and Values* <https://nigerianjournalsonline.com/index.php/EVAIA/article/view/1038> accessed 14 June 2026.

[798] A Chan, B Bradford and C Stott, 'A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Procedural Justice and Legitimacy in Policing: The Effect of Social Identity and Social Contexts' (2025) 21 *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 349 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-023-09595-5> accessed 14 June 2026.

elements, compliance and cooperation increase; conversely, unfair treatment fuels distrust and protests like EndSARS. These theories underscore that meaningful institutional change must go beyond superficial reforms to embed fair processes and contractual accountability into the NPF's structures and culture.[799]

For instance, institutional change involves overhauling recruitment and training to embed human rights norms, establishing independent oversight to enforce accountability, and adopting community-oriented models that enhance procedural fairness. These reforms address colonial legacies of oppression and post-independence politicization, fostering a police service that not only prevents crime but also models lawful behaviour. When institutions operate within the rule of law through transparent processes and respect for rights, they build legitimacy and encourage societal compliance.[800]

The role of law enforcement extends beyond crime prevention to shaping societal behaviour. When the police uphold accountability and operate within the bounds of the law, it fosters a culture of compliance and trust.[801] Conversely, unchecked misconduct undermines the rule of law, creating a perception that justice is selective or unattainable.

Furthermore, the legal profession and the judiciary play pivotal roles in driving police reform. Lawyers, as defenders of justice, and the judiciary, as interpreters of the law, have the responsibility to ensure that institutional failures are addressed and that those who violate the law are held accountable.[802] This interconnectedness of the police, legal practitioners, and the judiciary underscores the importance of a holistic approach to institutional reform.

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[799] A Chan, B Bradford and C Stott, 'A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Procedural Justice and Legitimacy in Policing: The Effect of Social Identity and Social Contexts' (2025) 21 *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 349 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-023-09595-5> accessed 14 June 2026.

[800] A Chan, B Bradford and C Stott, 'A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Procedural Justice and Legitimacy in Policing: The Effect of Social Identity and Social Contexts' (2025) 21 *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 349 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-023-09595-5> accessed 14 June 2026.

[801] JM Modise, 'Increasing Community Involvement in Law Enforcement Through Procedural Justice to Improve Ties with the Community' (2024) 2(1) *Advances in Social Sciences and Management* 36-61.

[802] RA Kagan, 'American Lawyers, Legal Culture, and Adversarial Legalism' in *Legal Culture and the Legal Profession* (Routledge 2021) 7-51.

This article examines the critical need for police reform in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on how targeted institutional changes can operationalise human rights, strengthen the rule of law, and deliver equitable justice**.** It draws on procedural justice and social contract theories, evaluates the Nigeria Police Act 2020 and 2025 Regulations, analyzes past reform failures, and assesses decentralization prospects.

2. The Need for Police Reform in Nigeria

Police reform in Nigeria has become an urgent and indispensable task due to the numerous systemic challenges that have plagued the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) for decades. These challenges, which include widespread corruption, brutality, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability, have significantly undermined the trust of citizens in law enforcement institutions. Reforming the police force is critical not only for restoring public confidence but also for ensuring that the rule of law is upheld in a democratic society.

2.1 Historical Challenges of the Nigerian Police Force

The NPF was established to maintain law and order, but its history is marred by colonial legacies and structural inefficiencies that continue to shape its operations today. During the colonial era, the police were used as tools of oppression, primarily to enforce colonial policies rather than to serve the populace.[803] Post-independence, this legacy persisted, as the police force became associated with corruption, brutality, and a lack of professionalism. These issues are rooted in systemic deficiencies such as poor recruitment standards, inadequate training, and insufficient funding.

These historical patterns highlight the necessity for deep institutional change. Such change must dismantle authoritarian structures inherited from colonialism, replacing them with democratic institutions that prioritize service delivery, human rights compliance, and accountability. Only through this transformation can the gap between constitutional promises (human rights), legal consistency (rule of law), and real-world outcomes (justice for citizens) be effectively bridged.[804]

[803] TS Akinyetun, 'Policing in Nigeria: A Socioeconomic, Ecological and Sociocultural Analysis of the Performance of the Nigerian Police Force' (2022) 5(1) *Africa Journal of Public Sector Development and Governance* 196-219.
[804] Oni, Olaoluwa Folasade, "Understanding the Failure of Police Reform in Nigeria: A Case for Legal History Through Literature" (2022). LLM Theses. 60. https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/llm/60

2.2 Widespread Corruption and Lack of Accountability

One of the most pressing issues in the NPF is corruption, which permeates all levels of the organization. Officers frequently engage in bribery, extortion, and the misuse of power, eroding public trust.[805] The lack of robust accountability mechanisms further compounds this problem. Internal disciplinary systems are often ineffective, and external oversight is minimal, creating an environment where misconduct thrives. Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of abuse, including torture, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary arrests, with little to no consequences for offending officers.[806]

2.3 Impact of Police Brutality on Society

The culture of brutality and impunity within the NPF has reached alarming levels, as evidenced by the EndSARS protests in October 2020. These protests were triggered by widespread reports of human rights abuses committed by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a notorious unit within the NPF. The protests highlighted the frustration of Nigerian citizens, particularly young people, with a system that prioritizes oppression over protection.[807] While the government disbanded SARS in response to public outcry, the underlying issues remain largely unaddressed, necessitating broader structural and cultural reforms.

2.4 Poor Working Conditions and Inadequate Funding

The poor working conditions of police officers contribute to the challenges faced by the NPF. Many officers operate in unsafe environments, lack basic equipment, and are poorly compensated, leading to low morale and susceptibility to corruption.[808] Without adequate funding and investment in infrastructure, training, and welfare, the police force cannot effectively perform its duties or command the respect of the public.

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[805] A Akinlabi, 'Police-Citizen Relations in Nigeria: A Study of Public Attitudes towards the Police and Policing' (PhD thesis, University of Queensland 2017) https://search.proquest.com/openview/7c681463227dee96f4e13e91ea527ea8/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y accessed 23 January 2025.

[806] Amnesty International, *Nigeria: Time for Police Reform in the Wake of EndSARS Protests* (2020).

[807] IM Emoedumhe and others, 'Catalyzing Change: Analyzing the Dynamics and Impact of EndSARS Protests in Nigeria' (2023) 8(4) *NIU Journal of Humanities* 35-49.

[808] Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: Police Brutality and Accountability Deficits* (Human Rights Watch Report 2021).

2.5 The Importance of Reforming the NPF

Police reform is essential for fostering public trust and ensuring that law enforcement operates within the bounds of the law. A reformed police force can act as a deterrent to crime, instil a culture of accountability, and promote justice in society.[809] Moreover, the police play a crucial role in shaping societal behaviour; when the police adhere to the principles of professionalism and integrity, it sets a standard for other institutions and citizens to follow.

Reform efforts must address both structural and cultural issues within the NPF. This includes overhauling recruitment processes, implementing rigorous training programs, ensuring adequate funding, and establishing effective accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, there is a need for independent oversight bodies to monitor police activities and address public complaints transparently and impartially.[810] Reform efforts must therefore focus on institutional change that integrates human rights training, independent complaint mechanisms, and performance metrics tied to justice outcomes. For example, strengthening internal and external accountability ensures that rule of law principles translate into reduced arbitrary arrests and fair investigations, ultimately delivering justice rather than perpetuating impunity.

2.6 Public Participation in Reform Processes

For police reform to be effective, it must involve active participation from all stakeholders, including civil society, legal professionals, and the general public. Citizens' input is vital in identifying the key areas of concern and ensuring that reform measures align with societal needs.[811] Collaborative efforts between the government, civil society organizations, and international partners can provide the technical and financial support necessary for sustainable reforms.

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[809] MJ Modise, *Encourage the Implementation of Best Practices for Just, Democratic, Accountable, and Professional Police as well as Policing that Improves Everyone's Access to Justice, Safety, and Freedom* (2023) https://www.academia.edu/108982551/Encourage_the_Implementation_of_Best_Practices_for_Just_Democratic_Accountable_and_Professional_Police_as_well_as_Policing_that_Improves_Everyones_Access_to_Justice_Safety_and_Freedom accessed 23 January 2025.

[810] C Torrible, 'Police Complaints and Discipline: Integrity, Lesson Learning, Independence and Accountability: Some Implications of the Reforms under the Policing and Crime Act 2017' (2021) 31(9) *Policing and Society* 1117-1132.

[811] D Asmoro and R Riswadi, 'Legal Deliberation and Police Reform to Increase Transparency and Accountability in Law Enforcement' (2024) 3(6) *Edunity Kajian Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan* 337-344.

2.7 Why Past Reforms Have Often Failed

Despite repeated attempts at reform, including the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in 2020, the enactment of the Nigeria Police Act 2020,[812] and earlier initiatives such as the 2018 and 2020 SARS reform orders, meaningful and sustainable change has remained elusive.[813]

Past reforms have frequently failed due to several interconnected factors. First, weak implementation and lack of political will have undermined legislative gains. The Nigeria Police Act 2020 introduced progressive provisions for accountability, human rights, and community policing, yet enforcement has been slow, with structures like the Police Complaints Response Unit (PCRU) suffering from bureaucratic delays and insufficient independence. Similarly, the newly gazetted Nigerian Police Regulations 2025,[814] which provide detailed operational guidelines on arrests, detention, discipline, and human rights, risk the same fate without dedicated monitoring and resource allocation.[815]

Second, entrenched institutional resistance, corruption, and colonial legacies perpetuate a culture of impunity. Officers and senior leadership often view reforms as threats to established privileges, leading to superficial compliance or reversion to old practices once public scrutiny diminishes.[816]

Third, inadequate funding, poor welfare, and lack of capacity building exacerbate the problem. Under-resourced officers are more susceptible to corruption, while the absence of sustained

[812] *Nigeria Police Act 2020.*
[813] Africa Center for Strategic Studies, '#EndSARS Demands Nigerian Police Reform' (10 November 2020) <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/endsars-demands-nigerian-police-reform/> accessed 14 June 2026.

[814] *Nigerian Police Regulations 2025 (made pursuant to s 138 of the Nigeria Police Act 2020).*
[815] O Ojewale and R Olofin, 'After #EndSARS, Nigeria's Police Must Take Ownership of Reform' (Institute for Security Studies, 4 January 2022) <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/after-endsars-nigerias-police-must-take-ownership-of-reform> accessed 14 June 2026.
[816] OF Oni, 'Understanding the Failure of Police Reform in Nigeria: A Case for Legal History Through Literature' (LLM Thesis, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University 2022) <https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/llm/60> accessed 14 June 2026.

training on procedural justice principles and the Anti-Torture Act 2017[817] allows misconduct to persist.[818]

Finally, failure to address structural and cultural roots such as over-centralization and politicization means reforms remain piecemeal. These shortcomings highlight the urgent need for deeper institutional change informed by social contract and procedural justice theories: one that not only enacts laws but ensures their consistent application to bridge human rights protections, rule of law adherence, and tangible justice delivery.

A critical lesson is that reforms must incorporate strong independent oversight, performance-based accountability, and public participation to avoid repeating historical failures.

3. Accountability as the Cornerstone of Reform

Accountability is the bedrock of any effective police reform initiative, serving as a crucial mechanism to rebuild public trust and ensure that law enforcement operates within the boundaries of legality and professionalism. In the Nigerian context, where systemic corruption, misconduct, and human rights abuses have eroded trust in the police, accountability becomes even more imperative.[819] Without robust mechanisms to hold police officers accountable for their actions, reform efforts risk being superficial and ineffective.

3.1 The Importance of Accountability in Policing

Accountability ensures that police officers are answerable for their actions, decisions, and the outcomes of their operations. It fosters transparency, deters misconduct, and builds public confidence in law enforcement institutions. Studies have shown that accountability systems contribute significantly to reducing police misconduct and improving public trust.[820] For the

[817] *Anti-Torture Act 2017.*

[818] S Asimi, '#ENDSARS: Accountability and Political Will Needed to Win Public Trust in the Nigeria Police' (Transparency International, 13 November 2020) <https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/endsars-accountability-political-will-needed-to-win-public-trust-in-the-nigeria-police> accessed 14 June 2026.

[819] MA Abidogun, *Examination of the Legal and Implications of Police Brutality* (Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos, Nigeria 2023).

[820] TR Kochel and WG Skogan, 'Accountability and Transparency as Levers to Promote Public Trust and Police Legitimacy: Findings from a Natural Experiment' (2021) 44(6) *Policing: An International Journal* 1046-1059.

Nigerian Police Force (NPF), implementing accountability measures is essential to address the public's longstanding grievances regarding corruption, brutality, and impunity.

Procedural justice theory provides a robust framework for operationalizing accountability. By prioritizing fair treatment in everyday interactions, it enhances perceived legitimacy, encourages voluntary compliance, and reduces the need for coercive force. In the Nigerian context, where surveys reveal low trust due to disrespectful and biased policing, adopting procedural justice principles can bridge the gap between rule of law ideals and lived experiences of justice. Similarly, social contract theory reminds us that sustained breaches of accountability undermine the foundational agreement between citizens and the state.

3.2 Systemic Failures and Lack of Accountability in the NPF

Historically, the NPF has struggled with weak internal oversight mechanisms and a lack of external accountability structures. Disciplinary measures for erring officers are often opaque and inconsistently applied, creating a culture of impunity.[821] Officers accused of severe misconduct, such as extrajudicial killings or torture, are rarely prosecuted, and when they are, the processes are prolonged and lack transparency.[822] This failure to hold officers accountable has emboldened bad behaviour and further alienated the public.

The Nigeria Police Act 2020 and the newly gazetted Nigerian Police Regulations 2025 (made pursuant to section 138 of the 2020 Act) represent significant legislative attempts to address these failures. The 2020 Act promotes human rights-compliant policing, establishes the Police Complaints Response Unit (PCRU) for handling misconduct reports, mandates community policing, and requires accountability mechanisms. The 2025 Regulations further strengthen this by providing strict guidelines on arrests and detention (e.g., suspects must be charged within 48 hours or 72 hours in remote areas), prohibiting illegal detention, holding charges, and bail extortion. They reinforce the Anti-Torture Act 2017 by criminalizing torture (with no “orders from above” defence) and mandating detailed custody registers, reporting of complaints, and

[821] Amnesty International, *Nigeria: Time for Police Reform in the Wake of EndSARS Protests* (Amnesty International Publications 2020).

[822] N Banteka, ‘Police Brutality as Torture’ (2023) 70 *UCLA Law Review* 470.

disciplinary procedures. However, the effectiveness of these frameworks hinges on robust implementation, independent oversight, and alignment with procedural justice principles.[823]

3.3 Internal Accountability Mechanisms

Internal accountability mechanisms, such as disciplinary panels and reporting systems, are critical components of any police reform agenda. However, in Nigeria, these systems are often riddled with corruption, inefficiency, and bias. The Police Service Commission (PSC), tasked with overseeing the conduct of police officers, lacks the operational independence and resources to effectively execute its mandate.[824] Furthermore, whistleblower protection within the NPF is inadequate, discouraging officers and civilians from reporting misconduct.

3.4 The Role of External Oversight

External oversight bodies are vital for ensuring that the police are held accountable to the public. Independent commissions, such as the Independent Police Complaints Commission in the UK, serve as examples of effective external accountability models. In Nigeria, calls for the establishment of a similar independent oversight body have gained traction, particularly in the wake of the EndSARS protests.[825] Such a body would provide an impartial platform for investigating complaints against police officers, thereby addressing the trust deficit between the public and the police.

3.5 Judiciary's Role in Enhancing Accountability

The judiciary plays a pivotal role in holding police officers accountable through the prosecution of criminal acts committed by law enforcement personnel. However, in Nigeria, judicial processes are often slow and cumbersome, resulting in delayed or denied justice for victims of police

[823] UG Ehirim and others, 'Strengthening Human Rights Protection in Nigeria: Safeguards Under the Police Act 2020' (2024) 6(3) *Khazanah Hukum* 269 <https://doi.org/10.15575/kh.v6i3.39569> accessed 14 June 2026.
[824] BO Ayo and I Iwara, '"Political Will" as an Impediment to Accountability of Law Enforcement in Nigeria' in *Strengthening Systems Accountability for Enterprise Performance and Development Planning* (Springer International Publishing 2022) 71-102.

[825] DO Okocha and D Agbele, 'Mediating Democratic Engagement: The Impact of New Media on Nigerians' Involvement in Political and Civil Life' in *Disruptive Social Media: Towards a Resilient Social Media Ecosystem in Africa* (2023) 1.

misconduct. Strengthening judicial mechanisms ensures that breaches of the social contract are remedied and procedural fairness is enforced.[826]

3.6 Accountability and Public Participation

Public participation is a crucial element of an accountability framework. Engaging civil society organizations (CSOs), the media, and community groups in monitoring police activities can significantly enhance transparency. CSOs such as the CLEEN Foundation have been instrumental in advocating for police reform and providing platforms for citizens to report abuses.[827] Expanding such initiatives and ensuring their integration into formal accountability structures can strengthen the reform process.

3.7 Technological Innovations in Accountability

Advances in technology provide new tools for ensuring police accountability. Body-worn cameras support procedural justice by providing objective evidence of respectful treatment and neutrality, for example, it has been adopted in several countries to record interactions between police officers and citizens, reducing incidents of abuse and false allegations.[828] Implementing such technology in Nigeria, coupled with clear guidelines for its use, could significantly enhance transparency and accountability.

3.8 The Link between Accountability and Public Trust

Accountability is intrinsically linked to public trust. When citizens perceive that police officers are held accountable for their actions, they are more likely to cooperate with law enforcement and report crimes. Conversely, a lack of accountability perpetuates distrust and fosters a culture of lawlessness. The EndSARS protests revealed the extent of public dissatisfaction with the NPF and underscored the urgent need to rebuild trust through robust accountability measures.[829]

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[826] O Shaeeb and others, 'Clinical Legal Education and the Future of Pro-Bono in Nigeria: A Guarantee for Access to Justice for Accused Persons Awaiting Trial' (2024) 31(1) *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education* 80-125.

[827] DI Nnaji and others, 'Are Civil Society Organizations Doing Enough? Mainstreaming Civil Society Organisations in the Administration of Criminal Justice in Nigeria' (2024) 14(1) *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy*.

[828] Z Vakhitova and others, 'The Merits and Risks of Body-Worn Camera Footage in Domestic and Family Violence Incidents and Legal Proceedings: A Study of Police Perceptions and Experiences' (2023) 33(2) *Policing and Society* 170-186.

[829] EC Onyeozili and others, *Community Policing in Nigeria* (Virginia Tech Publishing 2021).

4. The Role of Legal Professionals in Driving Change

Legal professionals, encompassing lawyers, judges, and legal academics, play a pivotal role in driving institutional reform, particularly in law enforcement systems. In the context of Nigeria's police reform, their involvement is critical to ensuring that reform efforts are grounded in the rule of law, respect for human rights, and adherence to constitutional principles. By leveraging their expertise, legal professionals can advocate for systemic changes, challenge abuses of power, and promote accountability within the Nigerian Police Force (NPF).[830]

4.1 Lawyers as Advocates for Justice

Lawyers serve as vital intermediaries between the public and the justice system. They play a crucial role in representing victims of police misconduct, challenging unlawful actions by law enforcement, and advocating for systemic reforms. Through strategic litigation, lawyers can hold the NPF accountable and push for judicial pronouncements that establish precedents for police accountability.[831] For instance, Nigerian courts have repeatedly declared the use of torture and arbitrary detention by police officers as unconstitutional, often based on cases brought forward by lawyers.[832]

Moreover, lawyers can contribute to legislative reforms by lobbying for laws that strengthen accountability and transparency within the police force. The introduction of clear legal frameworks that address police misconduct, such as the Police Act 2020, often results from advocacy efforts led by legal professionals and civil society organizations. By engaging in public discourse and

[830] NC Ole and O Oke-Samuel and KON Onu, 'Addressing Brutality through Community Initiatives under the Police Act 2020: Opportunities and Limitations of Nigerian Law Clinics' (2023) 57(4) *The Law Teacher* 478-492.
[831] C Okafo, *Beyond the Rule of Law: Grounded Law and Personal Responsibility as the Catalysts for Effective and Efficient Crime Control in Nigeria* (Inaugural Lecture, University of Nigeria 2017) https://www.unn.edu.ng/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Inaugural-Lecture-by-Prof-Okafor-C.pdf accessed 23 January 2025.

[832] FU Banje, *The United Nations Human Rights Committee on Violation of Human Rights by Law Enforcement Officers and to What Extent Is Human Rights Violation Reprimanded? The Nigerian Police Force as a Case Study* (Master's Thesis, Near East University 2021) https://docs.neu.edu.tr/library/9285679910.pdf accessed 23 January 2025.

providing expert opinions, lawyers ensure that reform initiatives are not only reactive but also proactive in addressing systemic issues.[833]

4.2 The Judiciary as a Pillar of Accountability

The judiciary serves as the ultimate arbiter in disputes involving police misconduct, making it a critical player in driving change. Nigerian judges have the power to interpret the constitution, adjudicate on cases of human rights violations, and compel the government to act in line with the law.[834] The case landmark judgement in the case of *Ogugu v. State*,[835] have established the constitutional rights of citizens and set standards for police accountability.

However, the judiciary must also address internal challenges to effectively fulfil its role in police reform. Issues such as judicial corruption, delays in the administration of justice, and lack of independence can undermine its ability to hold police officers accountable.[836] Strengthening judicial processes and ensuring the protection of judges from undue influence are essential steps toward fostering an environment where the judiciary can effectively drive reform.[837]

4.3 Legal Academics and Policymaking

Legal academics contribute to reform by providing critical analyses of existing laws and proposing evidence-based solutions to systemic problems. Their research serves as a foundation for policymaking, offering insights into best practices and innovative approaches to law enforcement reform. In Nigeria, legal scholars have extensively documented the historical and structural flaws of the NPF, providing valuable recommendations for reform.[838] By participating in legislative

[833] DI Nnaji and others, 'Are Civil Society Organizations Doing Enough? Mainstreaming Civil Society Organisations in the Administration of Criminal Justice in Nigeria' (2024) 14(1) *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy*.

[834] NH Worluh-Okolie and J.C. Okoye, 'Legal and Institutional Frameworks for Human Rights Protection in Nigeria: Challenges and Pathways to Effective Enforcement' (2024) 1(2) *Fountain University Law Journal* 200-219.
[835] [1994] 9 NWLR (Pt. 366) 1.
[836] Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: Police Brutality and Accountability Deficits* (Human Rights Watch Report 2021).
[837] CU Akpuokwe and others, 'The Impact of Judicial Reforms on Legal Systems: A Review in African Countries' (2024) 6(3) *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences* 198-211.
[838] TS Akinyetun, 'Reign of Terror: A Review of Police Brutality on Nigerian Youth by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)' (2021) 30(3) *African Security Review* 368-385.

hearings, publishing scholarly articles, and engaging with civil society organizations, legal academics help shape the narrative and policy direction of police reform.[839]

4.4 Collaboration with Civil Society

Legal professionals often work in tandem with civil society organizations (CSOs) to amplify calls for reform. CSOs such as the CLEEN Foundation have partnered with legal practitioners to document cases of police misconduct, advocate for victims, and propose legislative changes.[840] This collaboration ensures that reform efforts are comprehensive, addressing both legal and societal dimensions of the problem.

4.5 The Role of Legal Professional Associations

Professional associations, such as the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), play a significant role in advocating for police reform. The NBA has consistently spoken out against police brutality and has organized campaigns to educate the public on their rights and responsibilities under the law.[841] By leveraging their collective influence, these associations can pressure the government to implement meaningful reforms and hold law enforcement agencies accountable.

4.6 Challenges Faced by Legal Professionals

Despite their critical role, legal professionals in Nigeria face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to drive change. These include systemic corruption, lack of access to resources, and threats to their personal safety when challenging powerful interests within law enforcement. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening the independence of legal institutions, providing adequate funding for legal aid, and ensuring the safety of those advocating for reform.[842]

5. Building a Culture of Accountability in Society

Accountability is fundamental to fostering trust, promoting justice, and ensuring societal stability. In Nigeria, where a history of police misconduct and systemic corruption has eroded public

[839] C Ochonma, *Assessment of Civil Society Organization - Legislature Partnership: A Case Study of the First and Second Sessions of the 9th National Assembly* (Master's Thesis, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies 2021) https://ir.nilds.gov.ng/handle/123456789/947 accessed 23 January 2025.
[840] H Poole, 'The Role of Civil Society and Communities in Combating Firearms Harm' in *Firearms* (Routledge 2021) 174-193.
[841] TS Akinyetun, 'Reign of Terror: A Review of Police Brutality on Nigerian Youth by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)' (2021) 30(3) *African Security Review* 368-385.

[842] Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: Police Brutality and Accountability Deficits* (Human Rights Watch Report 2021).

confidence in institutions, building a culture of accountability is critical. Accountability is not limited to law enforcement; it extends to all societal institutions and individuals, creating a framework where actions have consequences, and justice is upheld.

5.1 The Role of Law Enforcement in Setting Accountability Standards

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) plays a central role in shaping societal norms around accountability. When the police demonstrate integrity, transparency, and professionalism, they set an example for other public institutions and individuals to follow.[843] Conversely, unchecked misconduct by law enforcement undermines the rule of law and sends a message that wrongdoing can go unpunished. This has led to widespread public distrust, as seen during the EndSARS protests, which highlighted the urgent need for institutional reform.[844]

5.2 The Interconnection between Accountability and Public Behaviour

A culture of accountability begins with the realization that actions have consequences. In a society where the law is applied uniformly, citizens are more likely to comply with legal and ethical standards. Studies show that when law enforcement operates within a framework of accountability, it fosters civic responsibility and discourages unlawful behaviour.[845] This interconnection underscores the importance of holding police officers accountable as a means to influence societal behaviour positively.

5.3 Education and Awareness as Tools for Accountability

Building a culture of accountability requires educating citizens about their rights and responsibilities under the law. Public awareness campaigns can empower individuals to hold public officials accountable and demand transparency in governance. Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria, such as the CLEEN Foundation, have played a significant role in educating the

[843] S Conway and L Westmarland, 'The Blue Wall of Silence: Police Integrity and Corruption' in *Silence of Organizations: How Organizations Cover Up Wrongdoings* (2021) 105-132.

[844] Amnesty International, *Nigeria: Time for Police Reform* (n6).

[845] A.-NM Abdi and MB Hashi, 'Exploring Public Cooperation with Police: The Role of Police Accountability, Police Effectiveness, and Public Trust' (2024) *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 1-21.

public about police accountability and human rights.[846] Expanding these initiatives can enhance public participation in the accountability process.

5.4 The Role of Community Policing

Community policing is an effective strategy for building accountability at the grassroots level. By involving community members in policing activities, the NPF can foster trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the public. This approach not only enhances transparency but also provides a platform for citizens to voice concerns and hold officers accountable for their actions.[847] Successful implementation of community policing requires training, resources, and a genuine commitment to engaging with local communities.

5.5 Technology as an Enabler of Accountability

Technological advancements have provided new tools for promoting accountability in society. Body-worn cameras, surveillance systems, and digital reporting platforms can increase transparency in law enforcement operations.[848] For example, implementing body cameras in the NPF could deter misconduct and provide evidence in cases of disputes. Additionally, digital platforms that allow citizens to report misconduct anonymously can encourage accountability without fear of retaliation.[849]

5.6 The Role of the Judiciary in Building Accountability

The judiciary is instrumental in ensuring that accountability is upheld in society. By adjudicating cases of misconduct and ensuring that justice is served, the judiciary reinforces the principle that no one is above the law. In Nigeria, however, judicial delays and perceived corruption have

[846] J Ibekaku-Nwagwu, *Guideline for Civil Society Organizations in the Management and Monitoring of Proceeds of Crime* (2023) https://sussex.figshare.com/articles/report/Guideline_for_Civil_Society_Organizations_in_the_Management_and_Monitoring_of_Proceeds_of_Crime/28191179 accessed 23 January 2025.

[847] KR Hope Sr, 'Civilian Oversight for Democratic Policing and Its Challenges: Overcoming Obstacles for Improved Police Accountability' (2021) 16(4) *Journal of Applied Security Research* 423-455.

[848] Vakhitova and others, 'The Merits and Risks of Body-Worn Camera Footage' (n20).

[849] K Pender and others, 'Compliance and Whistleblowing: How Technology Will Replace, Empower and Change Whistleblowers' in *FinTech* (Edward Elgar Publishing 2024) 485-522.

undermined this role.[850] Strengthening judicial independence and efficiency is critical for fostering a culture of accountability.

5.7 Civil Society and Media Engagement

Civil society organizations and the media are key players in promoting accountability. CSOs act as watchdogs, documenting cases of abuse and advocating for systemic reforms. The media, on the other hand, plays a crucial role in exposing misconduct and raising public awareness. Investigative journalism, such as reports on police brutality, has been instrumental in driving reform discussions in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2020).[851] Strengthening these institutions and protecting them from undue influence are essential for sustaining accountability efforts.

5.8 Challenges to Building a Culture of Accountability

Despite the importance of accountability, several challenges hinder its establishment in Nigeria. These include systemic corruption, a lack of political will, inadequate resources, and public apathy. Overcoming these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes legal reforms, capacity building, and public engagement.

5.9 Decentralisation of Policing: Prospects and Challenges for Rule of Law and Local Accountability

One promising avenue for institutional change in the Nigerian Police Force is decentralisation, particularly through the establishment of state police forces. Recent legislative progress, including the House of Representatives' passage of the Sixth Alteration Bill 2026 (constitutional amendment to allow state police), signals a potential shift from the current centralized system under Section 214 of the 1999 Constitution.[852]

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[850] C Berebon, 'The Judiciary's Role in Protecting the Rule of Law: A Reassessment of Nigeria's Legal System' (2024) 4(2) *Pinisi Journal of Art, Humanity and Social Studies* 8-19 https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Charles-Berebon/publication/387126780_The_Judiciary's_Role_in_Protecting_the_Rule_of_Law_A_Reassessment_of_Nigeria's_Legal_System/links/676143d42d60b863e276b102/The-Judiciarys_Role_in_Protecting_the_Rule_of_Law_A_Reassessment_of_Nigeria's_Legal_System.pdf accessed 24 January 2025.

[851] AU Nomwen and others, 'Perception of Media Campaigns Against Police Brutality Among Edo Residents' in *Politics and Civic* (2023) 33-42.

[852] 'Reps Pass Bill for Establishment of State Police' *Premium Times* (13 June 2026) <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/886852-updated-reps-pass-bill-for-establishment-of-state-police.html> accessed 14 June 2026.

Prospects for Enhanced Local Accountability and Rule of Law: Decentralisation could significantly improve responsiveness to local security challenges, intelligence gathering, and community trust in diverse socio-cultural contexts across Nigeria's 36 states. By bringing policing closer to the people, it aligns with procedural justice theory fostering voice, neutrality, respect, and trustworthiness at the local level thereby strengthening the social contract between citizens and law enforcement. State police formations could enable faster responses to issues like banditry, kidnapping, and farmer-herder conflicts, potentially reducing the trust deficit and enhancing justice delivery. When coupled with the Nigeria Police Act 2020 and 2025 Regulations (which emphasize community policing and accountability), decentralisation could operationalise human rights protections more effectively in local settings.[853]

Critical Challenges and Risks to Rule of Law: However, decentralization is not without risks. Potential for gubernatorial abuse and political capture poses a serious threat to the rule of law. Governors could use state police to suppress opposition, target ethnic/religious minorities, or settle political scores, creating new loci of impunity rather than resolving existing ones. Uneven capacity across states financial, training, and infrastructural, could lead to disparities in human rights standards and accountability, undermining the universality of the rule of law. Without strong national minimum standards, independent oversight (e.g., strengthened PSC or a national complaints commission), and judicial safeguards, decentralisation might fragment rather than unify justice delivery.[854]

Furthermore, lessons from federal systems elsewhere show that success depends on clear delineation of federal/state jurisdictions, robust funding mechanisms independent of state executives, diversity in recruitment, and mandatory adherence to the Anti-Torture Act 2017 and 2025 Regulations on detention and reporting. Failure to address these could repeat the implementation gaps that plagued past centralised reforms.

[853] RE Worden, BP Holladay and SJ McLean, 'Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, and Formal Social Control' in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* (30 January 2024) <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.308> accessed 14 June 2026.

[854] Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2026 Nigeria Country Report* (2026) <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/NGA> accessed 14 June 2026.

Balanced Way Forward: For decentralization to bridge human rights, rule of law, and justice effectively, it must form part of holistic institutional change: embedding procedural justice training, ensuring independent oversight, and maintaining federal coordination for inter-state crimes and national security. Pilot implementations with rigorous monitoring and evaluation are advisable before full rollout.[855]

6. Challenges to Police Reform in Nigeria

Despite widespread acknowledgments of the need for police reform in Nigeria, numerous challenges hinder the successful implementation of reform initiatives. These obstacles are deeply rooted in the structural, cultural, and socio-political dynamics of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and the broader society. Understanding these challenges is essential to formulating effective strategies for overcoming them and achieving meaningful reform. These challenges echo the reasons past reforms failed (see 2.7 above).

6.1 Systemic Corruption

Corruption is perhaps the most significant impediment to police reform in Nigeria. Corruption within the NPF manifests at all levels, from bribery by rank-and-file officers to embezzlement of funds meant for police operations by senior officials.[856] This systemic corruption undermines reform efforts, as financial resources allocated for capacity building and operational improvements are often misappropriated. Furthermore, corruption erodes public trust, making citizens sceptical of reform promises and less likely to cooperate with law enforcement agencies.[857]

6.2 Resistance to Change

Institutional resistance to change is a significant barrier to police reform. Many officers within the NPF view reform as a threat to their established privileges and operational methods. This resistance is compounded by a lack of political will from government officials, who often prioritize short-

[855] A Miango, 'Legal Framework on State Policing in Nigeria' (Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID), 9 June 2026) <https://thecjid.org/legal-framework-on-state-policing-in-nigeria/> accessed 14 June 2026.
[856] CI Oke, 'Corruption in the Nigeria Police Force: A Response to a Hostile State' (2022) 4(3) *Khazanah Sosial* https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/ks/article/view/18060 accessed 24 January 2025.
[857] CI Oke, 'Corruption in the Nigeria Police Force: A Response to a Hostile State' (2022) 4(3) *Khazanah Sosial* https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/ks/article/view/18060 accessed 24 January 2025.

term political gains over long-term institutional reform.[858] Without strong leadership and commitment from the top, reform initiatives are unlikely to gain traction.

6.3 Inadequate Funding

Underfunding of the NPF is another critical challenge. Police officers often operate in substandard conditions, with insufficient salaries, inadequate training facilities, and a lack of essential equipment.[859] These conditions not only demoralize officers but also create an environment where corruption and misconduct thrive. Reforming the police force requires significant financial investment, which is often lacking in Nigeria's budgetary allocations for security.

6.4 Weak Accountability Mechanisms

The absence of effective accountability mechanisms is a core issue that perpetuates misconduct and impunity within the NPF. Internal disciplinary systems are often ineffective, and external oversight bodies, such as the Police Service Commission (PSC), lack the independence and resources to hold officers accountable.[860] This lack of accountability creates a culture of impunity, where officers feel emboldened to engage in misconduct without fear of consequences.

6.5 Public Distrust and Hostility

Decades of police misconduct and human rights abuses have left a legacy of distrust between the NPF and the Nigerian public. This distrust is a significant obstacle to reform, as it hampers cooperation between the police and communities.[861] Public hostility toward the police, as seen during the EndSARS protests, also complicates efforts to implement community policing initiatives that rely on mutual trust and collaboration.

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[858] F Alli, 'Civilian Control, Military Reforms and Internal Security in Nigeria' in *Managing Contemporary Security Challenges in Nigeria* (Springer Nature Singapore 2024) 103-136.

[859] CO Ugwuoke and others, 'Police Job Stress, Workload and Burnout in Nigeria: The Tired and Frustrated Cops' (2024) *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X241270558 accessed 24 January 2025.

[860] BO Ayo and I Iwara, '"Political Will" as an Impediment to Accountability of Law Enforcement in Nigeria' in *Strengthening Systems Accountability for Enterprise Performance and Development Planning* (Springer International Publishing 2022) 71-102.

[861] C Ndukwe and O Nwachukwu, 'Community Policing and Crime Reduction in Ebonyi State: A Study of Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command, Abakalik' (2024) 16(2) *Journal of Policy and Development Studies* 69-103.

6.6 Judicial Inefficiencies

The judiciary plays a vital role in enforcing accountability and upholding the rule of law. However, Nigeria's judicial system is often slow, under-resourced, and perceived as corrupt.[862] These inefficiencies hinder the prosecution of police officers accused of misconduct, allowing impunity to persist and undermining public confidence in the justice system.

6.7 Political Interference

Political interference in police operations is a pervasive problem in Nigeria. The police force is often used as a tool to serve the interests of political elites rather than to protect citizens and uphold the law.[863] This politicization of law enforcement undermines its independence and makes it difficult to implement reforms that prioritize the public good over political expediency.

6.8 Cultural and Institutional Barriers

Cultural attitudes within the NPF contribute to the persistence of misconduct and resistance to reform. Many officers operate within a hierarchical and authoritarian culture that discourages transparency and accountability.[864] Additionally, the lack of diversity within the police force, particularly in terms of gender and ethnicity, can exacerbate tensions between law enforcement and marginalized communities.[865]

6.9 Lack of Public Awareness and Engagement

Lack of public awareness about the role of the police and citizens' rights under the law is another challenge to reform. Many Nigerians are unaware of the avenues available to report police misconduct or to participate in reform initiatives.[866] This lack of awareness limits public

[862] AF Ibrahim and others, 'Crime Control in Focus: Strengthening Nigeria's Criminal Justice System' (2023) 11(3) *Journal of Interdisciplinary Political Science and Administration* 1-12.

[863] M Ojiezele, 'The Nigeria Police and Law Enforcement: The Challenges of Dual Loyalty' (2023) 1(1) *FUOYE Journal of Criminology and Security Studies*.

[864] L Ogunlowo, *Exploring Factors That Prepare Nigeria Police Officers for Performance Improvement* (PhD thesis, Walden University 2021).

[865] EC Nwokike and others, 'Social Injustice and the Threat of Insurgency in Nigeria: An Evaluation' (2023) 2(4) *International Journal of Social Science and Management Studies*.

[866] PO Ebiala, 'Fundamental Rights Enforcement in Nigeria: The Indigent Persons in Focus' (2024) 5 *International Journal of Law and Clinical Legal Education* https://www.nigerianjournalsonline.com/index.php/IJOLACLE/article/view/5277 accessed 24 January 2025.

participation in the accountability process and reduces pressure on the government and police leadership to implement reforms.

7. Conclusion

The need for comprehensive and sustainable police reform in Nigeria is not only urgent but essential to rebuilding public trust, ensuring accountability, and fostering a culture of justice and the rule of law. Decades of systemic corruption, inefficiency, and human rights abuses have eroded the legitimacy of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), leaving citizens sceptical of law enforcement's ability to protect and serve without bias or misconduct.[867] Reform efforts must address these structural and cultural challenges, recognizing the interconnectedness of accountability, professionalism, and societal trust, including careful implementation of decentralisation to enhance local accountability without compromising national rule of law.

Accountability has emerged as the cornerstone of police reform, ensuring that officers operate transparently and within the law. Without robust accountability mechanisms, including independent oversight bodies and effective internal disciplinary systems, any reform initiative risks being superficial and unsustainable.[868] Furthermore, meaningful reform requires addressing institutional resistance, securing adequate funding, and leveraging technology to promote transparency and efficiency in policing.[869]

The role of legal professionals, the judiciary, and civil society organizations in driving change cannot be overstated. Through advocacy, litigation, and public engagement, these actors have the potential to ensure that reform initiatives are not only implemented but also monitored and evaluated for effectiveness. Additionally, community policing and public participation are crucial in bridging the gap between law enforcement and the communities they serve, fostering collaboration and mutual respect.[870]

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[867] Amnesty International, *Nigeria: Time for Police Reform* (n6).
[868] BC Nnadozie, *Public Perceptions of Nigeria Police Monetary Bribery in Awka, Nigeria* (PhD thesis, Walden University 2021).
[869] Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: Police Brutality and Accountability Deficits* (n8).
[870] JM Modise, 'Community Engagement in Policing: A Path to More Meaningful, Knowledgeable, and Successful Public Consultation' (2023) 8(6) *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology* 3892-3906 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376260918_Community_Engagement_in_Policing accessed 26 January 2025.

While significant challenges remain, including systemic corruption, political interference, and public distrust, they are not insurmountable. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach that combines legal, institutional, and cultural reforms with active public participation. Public awareness campaigns, performance-based evaluation systems, and the integration of technology are among the strategies that can help build a transparent and accountable police force.[871]

Ultimately, sustainable reform hinges on political will, adequate funding, and a commitment to upholding human rights and the rule of law. A reformed police force will not only enhance public safety but also serve as a model for accountability and professionalism in public institutions. By prioritizing these efforts, Nigeria can create a law enforcement system that reflects the values of justice, equality, and respect for human dignity.

8. Recommendations for Sustainable Reform

To overcome the implementation gaps that doomed past reforms, sustainable police reform in Nigeria requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that addresses the systemic, structural, and cultural challenges plaguing the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). These recommendations focus on ensuring accountability, enhancing professionalism, and building public trust to establish a law enforcement system that operates effectively within the framework of the rule of law.

8.1 Establish Independent Oversight Bodies

An independent and empowered oversight body, similar to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) in the United Kingdom, is essential to address police misconduct transparently and impartially. The Police Service Commission (PSC), which currently oversees the NPF, should be restructured to operate independently, free from political interference, and equipped with adequate resources.[872] Such a body can investigate complaints, recommend disciplinary actions, and foster public trust.

[871] S Paudel, 'Human Resource Development Oriented Performance Appraisal System in Armed Police Force, Nepal' (2023) 6(1) *Journal of APF Command and Staff College* 168-189.

[872] CT Mbaso, *Policing Terrorism in Nigeria: Challenges for the 21st Century* (PhD thesis, London Metropolitan University 2021) https://repository.londonmet.ac.uk/8403/ accessed 24 January 2025.

8.2 Enhance Internal Accountability Mechanisms

The NPF must reform its internal disciplinary processes to ensure swift and fair handling of cases involving misconduct. This includes establishing transparent complaint systems within police stations, protecting whistleblowers, and enforcing zero-tolerance policies for corruption and brutality.[873] Training officers on ethics, human rights, and accountability should be integral to this process.

8.3 Adequate Funding and Resource Allocation

Sustainable reform requires adequate funding to improve police welfare, infrastructure, and operations. The government should prioritize budgetary allocations to the NPF to ensure officers receive competitive salaries, modern equipment, and access to continuous training programs. Adequate funding reduces the incentive for corruption and enhances operational efficiency.[874]

8.4 Implement Technology for Transparency

Adopting modern technology can significantly enhance transparency and accountability. Body-worn cameras, dashboard cameras in patrol vehicles, and digital monitoring systems can provide evidence in cases of misconduct, discourage abuse of power, and promote professionalism.[875] These technologies should be complemented by clear policies on their usage and data management to protect privacy and ensure integrity.

8.5 Community Policing and Public Engagement

Community policing fosters collaboration between the police and the public, creating a partnership to address local security challenges. This approach emphasizes proactive engagement, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for public safety.[876] Building trust through consistent and

[873] OEV Taylor and others, 'Police Whistleblowing: A Systematic Review of the Likelihood (and the Barriers and Facilitators) of the Willingness of Police Officers to Report the Misconduct of Fellow Officers' (2024) 91 *Journal of Criminal Justice* 102170.

[874] OS Asangausung and others, 'An Assessment of the Challenges of Public and Private Security Organisations in Nigeria' (2024) 4(2) *AKSU Journal of Social Sciences* 134-146 https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Okoro-Asangausung/publication/384199929_An_Assessment_of_the_Challenges_of_Public_and_Private_Security_Organisations_in_Nigeria/links/66ee3cff19c9496b1fb2ce87/An-Assessment-of-the-Challenges-of-Public-and-Private-Security-Organisations-in-Nigeria.pdf accessed 24 January 2025.

[875] Vakhitova and others, 'The Merits and Risks of Body-Worn Camera Footage' (n20).

[876] D Stephens and others, *Forging Problem-Solving Partnerships to Address Unprecedented Community Safety Challenges: Police and Private Security Relationships* (Florida State University Policing, Security Technology, and Private Security Research & Policy Institute 2023)

transparent communication can reduce tensions and encourage citizen participation in maintaining law and order.

8.6 Strengthen Judicial and Legal Frameworks

Reforming the judiciary is critical to ensure timely prosecution of police misconduct and protect victims' rights. Streamlining judicial processes, establishing special courts for police-related cases, and enhancing the independence of the judiciary are necessary steps toward strengthening the legal framework for accountability.[877] Legislative amendments should also address gaps in existing laws, such as the Police Act 2020, to ensure comprehensive oversight and clear operational guidelines for officers.

8.7 Capacity Building and Professional Development

Continuous training and education for police officers are essential for fostering professionalism and ethical behaviour. Training programs should focus on human rights, conflict resolution, and community engagement, equipping officers with the skills necessary for effective policing.[878] Capacity building should also extend to senior leadership, emphasizing the importance of transparency and accountability.

8.8 Promote Collaboration with Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in monitoring police activities, advocating for victims, and driving public awareness campaigns. Collaboration between the NPF, CSOs, and the media can strengthen reform efforts and create a unified front for accountability.[879] Establishing platforms for dialogue between these stakeholders ensures that reform measures address the concerns of all parties.

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https://criminology.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu3076/files/1%20Center%202024/Police%20%26%20Private%20Security%20Roundtable%20Final%20Report.pdf accessed 24 January 2025.

[877] J Kwon, 'Jurisdictional Overlap: The Juxtaposition of Institutional Independence and Collaboration in Police Wrongdoing Investigations' (2024) 18(2) *Regulation & Governance* 551-572.

[878] PDI. Gabriel and JI Sunday, *An Analysis of Recruitment and Training Policies in Nigerian Police* (2023) https://www.academia.edu/download/117454606/An_Analysis_of_Recruitment_160_183.pdf accessed 24 January 2025.

[879] M. Omilusi, 'Two Decades of Civil Society Activism and Advocacy: Navigating the Labyrinth of the Development and Security Agenda in Southwestern Nigeria' (2023) 4(1) *Journal of Governance, Security & Development*.

8.9 Introduce Psychological Support Systems

Policing is a high-stress profession, and the mental health of officers often goes unaddressed. Establishing psychological support systems, such as counselling services and stress management programs, can improve officers' well-being and reduce instances of misconduct resulting from emotional or mental strain.[880]

8.10 Develop Public Awareness Campaigns

Educating citizens about their rights and responsibilities under the law is crucial for fostering accountability. Public awareness campaigns should focus on empowering individuals to report misconduct, understand legal procedures, and engage with law enforcement constructively.[881] This can be achieved through collaborations between CSOs, the media, and educational institutions.

8.11 Institutionalize Performance-Based Evaluation

Introducing performance-based evaluation systems can incentivize professionalism and discourage misconduct within the NPF. Officers should be evaluated on their adherence to ethical standards, successful resolution of cases, and community relations. Rewarding exemplary performance and addressing poor behaviour promptly creates a culture of accountability and professionalism.[882]

8.12 Promote Gender and Diversity Inclusivity

Ensuring diversity within the NPF can enhance its effectiveness and improve its relationship with marginalized communities. Recruitment and training programs should emphasize gender balance and representation from various ethnic and religious groups, fostering an inclusive environment that reflects Nigeria's diversity.[883]

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[880] Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: Police Brutality and Accountability Deficits* (n8).

[881] OE Owonibi, 'Repositioning Police-Citizen Interactions for Curbing Acts of Criminality in Nigeria' (2023) 11(2) *International Journal of Continuing and Non-formal Education* https://ibadanadulteducationjournals.com.ng/media/2024/09/Repositioning-Police-Citizen-Interactions-for-Curbing-Acts-of-Criminality-in-Nigeria.pdf accessed 26 January 2025.

[882] K Briggs, *Beneath the Badge: Exploring the Complexities of Police Culture and Mental Health* (DiP, Western University 2024) https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/436/ accessed 26 January 2025.

[883] OL Onuorah, 'Managing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion in Nigerian Public Organization: Strategies, Challenges and Opportunities' (2024) 25 *Nigerian Journal of Management Sciences* 1b.

8.13 Safeguards for Decentralization

Establish national standards, independent funding, and oversight to maximize benefits while mitigating risks to the rule of law.