

## **A REVIEW OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MILITARY REGIMES TO SOCIAL MOBILIZATION IN NIGERIA, 1966 – 1996**

***Basil C. Nwankwo, Ph.D.***

Professor and Dean,  
Faculty of Management Sciences  
Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

***Stephen Ocheni, Ph.D.***

Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Abuja, Nigeria

***Moses Atakpa, Ph.D.***

Head of Service,  
Kogi State, Nigeria

### **ABSTRACT**

The work is a critical review of social mobilization policies and programmes under the military regimes in Nigeria from 1966-1996. The findings from the review indicate that the social mobilization programmes pursued under the military regimes/administration in Nigeria had laudable objectives but were implemented using faulty strategies, approach and poor planning. For example, the use of coercion in place of persuasion and enlightenment for implementing the programme of War against Indiscipline, popularly known as WAI by the Buhari/ Idiagbon regime, made the programme vulnerable to relapse once the opportunity presented itself by the overthrow of the regime by the General Babangida Administration. Similarly, the behaviour of the military leaders and their policy makers which is reminiscent of precepting instead of leadership by example had serious discouraging effects on the majority of the Nigerians who were supposed to imbibe the ideals of the programmes. Also, corruption which resulted in the mismanagement of the available financial resources meant for the implementation of programmes weakened the institutional capacity of the agencies to effectively manage and sustain the programmes. The implementers of the social mobilization policies and programmes under the military regimes, it was discovered, were more interested not on the success of the programmes but on their personal aggrandizement which accounted for the failures recorded and the unsustainability of these programmes beyond the lives of the regimes and administration which introduced them.

**Keywords:** Military Regimes; Social Mobilization; Nigeria; Implementation

## INTRODUCTION:

Nigeria is a country blessed with rich mineral resources necessary for effective and efficient development. However, the country is torn apart by social, economic, political and religious upheavals and instability. Right from the colonial period, Nigeria as an entity or unit lacked social integration and national consciousness which is a prerequisite for a formidable nation-state.

On attainment of independence in 1960, the first major problem that confronted the new political leadership and elites was how to carry out effective social mobilization of the masses in order to consolidate the gains from independence. In other words, how can Nigerians be socially, politically and psychologically mobilized in order to maintain a stable and strong united state.

Nigeria as a state has been plagued by problems of different magnitude and complexity. For example, there is widespread indiscipline and corruption among the people. Corruption has taken different shapes and forms in Nigeria such as endemic corruption, planned corruption and developmental corruption.

Endemic corruption according to Acha Ndubuisi, “is the abuse of office which occurs in varying degrees. It prevails in the administrative systems which control exclusively the distribution of scarce welfare services. In Nigeria, this form of corruption is usually seen among the police, customs, banks, courts, hospitals, various ministries, and educational institutions. Money is given to, or demanded by, public officials so that they will ignore the rules of conduct set up by the government for public good...”

Planned corruption as defined by Ndubuisi, “is an instrument of control by politicians to retain power at all costs. Under planned corruption, grants, favours and rewards replace the acquisition of desired goods according to legally defined, objective need, merit or rational qualifications. The most important person, the chief executive dispenses the wealth of the nation as he pleases regardless of rules of conduct. This he does to retain his power. Licking his boots, singing his praises and ostentatious allegiance to him dominate the behaviour of those who want to share in the spoils. If one wants to avoid disgrace or get to the top, one must comply with the dictates of the chief dispenser of spoils.

Developmental corruption according to Ndubuisi, is associated with the administrative systems that handle numerous development project such as capital investments, award of contracts, for building ports, roads, airports, dams, schools, hospitals, houses, etc. Usually, public officials who award such contracts demand for ten percent “kick back” as their own personal share from the job. When the public official collects ten percent of the contract amount from the contractor, the resultant effect is that he can no longer supervise the job and the contractor will do a shoddy work which will not last.

The above forms of corruption have been destroying social, economic and political development in Nigeria since 1960. On the political side to be specific, Nigeria has witnessed all forms of political instability, hoodlums, thuggery, arson, rigging of election and annulment of election. All these have contributed to general instability in the government with the concomitant effects of coups and counter coups. This has also shaken the unity of Nigeria resulting in a thirty months civil war from 1967-1970.

The social lives of Nigerians just like the political life are characterized by tribalism, ethnicity, discrimination, hatred, rancour and bitterness. The different tribes that make up the country do not see themselves as brothers and partners in progress with the responsibility of building a strong and virile nation-state. The citizens from the different tribes or more than two hundred and fifty ethnic groups in the country are still pedestrian and selfish in thinking and actions whenever there is a national problem. This has been largely responsible for the low social integration and national consciousness among the citizenry. Attempts to use such measures like Federal Character, Quota System, National Interest, Geographical Spread and State of Origin as a means of promoting social integration and nation-building among the different tribes that make up the country have equally failed.

Economically, the Nigerian state has not fared better. The country is in a state of economic quagmire and woes. The rate of inflation is embarrassing; the activities of the “419” group is destabilizing; the rate of collapse of the financial institutions are alarming; economic sabotage is the order of the day and the value of the currency (Naira) is nothing to write home about. The economic situation in Nigeria has reduced the country to the status of a poor and beggar nation with the concomitant problems of unemployment, armed robbery, prostitution, drug trafficking, embezzlement of public funds and a host of other social vices.

The educational system in Nigeria is also in shambles. The students are no longer interested in their studies. They engage in all forms of examination malpractices in order to pass to qualify for a certificate. The examination malpractices cut across primary to tertiary levels. The teachers both at primary and tertiary levels are no longer interested in their jobs. Their conditions of service they claim are poor and they engage in other things to make ends meet. Hence, they abandon their primary duty of teaching the students. Also, government more often does not pay them their salaries and allowances as and when due, which sometimes result in the

teachers going on a protracted strike to press home their demands.

With this state of affairs which has plunged the country into chaos and anarchy, the problem that usually agitates any Nigerian leader or administration, be it civilian or military is how to cleanse the society and move the country forward. The solution to the problem has always been sought in social mobilization or mass mobilization of the citizenry. For example, the civilian government of Shehu Shagari sought solution to this problem during his administration through “Ethical Revolution” which was intended to achieve social mobilization of the citizens or masses.

This work as we know is set to examine the roles or attempts by the military at social mobilization in Nigeria. In other words, how has the military attempted to mobilize the citizens socially; for what, and did they succeed or fail?

Social mobilization has been seen as a panacea to Nigeria’s problem and since the military has ruled this country more than their civilian counterparts, it is adequate to examine or appraise their efforts on social mobilization as a solution or way forward for the nation’s development.

### **SOCIAL MOBILIZATION EFFORTS UNDER MILITARY REGIMES IN NIGERIA:**

It is important to note that the term *social mobilization* is used interchangeably with *mass mobilization* and so is it in this work. It is considered equally important to clarify the meaning of social mobilization or mass mobilization before examining the efforts so far made by the military in Nigeria on social mobilization of the citizens.

Deutsch, defines social mobilization as “a name given to an overall process of change, which happens to substantial parts of the population in countries which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life. Social mobilization takes place where advance, non-traditional practices in culture, technology and economic life are introduced and accepted on a considerable scale. It is not identical therefore, with the process of modernization as a whole, but it deals with one of its major aspects...”

Okonkwo, quoting Deutsch, is of the view that “Social mobilization carries with it the idea of breaking with old and traditional methods of living and moving into new situations involving new patterns of behaviour. Mobilization thus involves two stages of action: the stage of uprooting or breaking away from old settings, habits and commitments; and the induction of the mobilized persons into some relatively stable new patterns of group membership, organization and commitment.”

The definition that has meaning or relevance to the military efforts at social mobilization in Nigeria is the one that is contained in the MAMSER Handbook of the Directorate for Social Mobilization. It defines social mobilization as “the process of pooling together, harnessing, actualizing and utilizing potential human resources for the purpose of development. It is a process whereby human beings are made aware of the resources at their disposal, and are also motivated and energized to collectively utilize such resources for the improvement of their spiritual and material conditions of living.” An addendum to the above definition was given by Okonkwo, quoting the Political Bureau, “Social mobilization must be seen in terms of involving the people in taking part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare. In other words, social mobilization and political education should aim at increasing people’s level of awareness or cognition of political and other issues so that they can apply their energies positively and participate actively in the social and political life of the country.”

The military in Nigeria has engaged efforts at social mobilization of the populace for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons as identified by Okonkwo, are:

1. To enable the people to participate in their own economic and social development.
2. To sensitize them into political awareness and so enable them to take an interest in what goes on at the political level.
3. To mobilize them for electoral purposes so that they take part fully in elections to legislative and other bodies.
4. To mobilize the resources of the people for economic recovery and economic development.
5. To get people to be involved in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare.
6. To make the people conscious of their security and law enforcement agencies.
7. For greater productivity of food and industrial products and thus make the people self-sufficient and self-reliant.
8. To ensure a viable democratic system.
9. For a moral crusade to rid the society of a number of societal vices like corruption, nepotism, indiscipline, dishonesty, embezzlement of public funds, smuggling, the use of hard drugs, etc.
10. To raise the level of individual and national consciousness thus instilling the spirit of nationalism and patriotism in the people.

11. To integrate a marginal population into the economic, political and social life of the country.
12. To transform the environment, rehabilitate the people and engage in reconstruction.
13. To improve the literacy level of the people and thus unchain them from the shackles of ignorance and disease and thus enable the people live better lives and understand the world around them.
14. To pull the people together in order to fight a common cause, e.g. war, national disaster or the ravages of endemic or other diseases, etc.
15. For the unification of the country.

Furthermore, Okonkwo, while discussing the importance of usefulness of social mobilization quoting Dr Takaya observed that “it is the only weapon which brings the citizen to the understanding of the meaning of citizenship, evokes in him special love for his community and awakens him to his rights and obligations as a member of a civil society.” Additional advantages associated with social mobilization according to Okonkwo, include the following:

1. It encourages the emergence of a basic national ethics.
2. It provides a machinery for social control right from the grassroots.
3. It implants the ideas and common yardsticks for social justice, equity and fair play.
4. It defines and educates officials on what constitutes the basic, irreducible human rights and spells out the responsibilities of the state in clear terms towards its citizens.
5. It makes the citizens aware of their rights and how to protect and advance them.
6. It inculcates in citizens the sense of empathy and respect for the rights and feelings of others.
7. It makes citizens aware of their civic obligations to the society and to the state.
8. It provides the citizens the opportunity and forum for non-confrontational but effective inputs.

The military in Nigeria through its different programmes on social mobilization has shown avowed commitment to the realization of the above ideals and objectives or advantages associated with social mobilization exercises. In fact, a close examination of the objectives of the social mobilization programmes embarked by the military would reveal their determined efforts to enlighten the people’s minds and liberate them from the chains of cur, superstition, ignorance, poverty and disease which have undermined the country’s effort at effective and efficient development. The only way to move Nigeria forward as has been envisaged by the military and other political elites in the country is through a well packaged, comprehensive, and effective social mobilization programmes.

The military as we know has made a lot of strides or substantial efforts at revolutionizing the minds and lives of Nigerians through different programmes of social mobilization which it introduced in the country. Some of these include: General Gowon’s programme of Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (3Rs); Gen. Murtala Mohammed’s “unlabeled social revolution”; Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo’s “Operation Feed the Nation” (OFN); Gen. Buhari/Idiagbon programme of War Against Indiscipline, popularly known as WAI; President Ibrahim Babangida’s National Orientation Movement (NOM) which was later known as the Directorate for Social Mobilization, Economic Recovery and Self-Reliance (MAMSER) and the Gen. Sani Abacha’s National Orientation Agency (NOA).

The above are the different social mobilization programmes pursued by the past military administrations aimed at finding solutions to the socio-political, economic and religious problems confronting the country. We now intend to examine in detail the different social mobilization programmes under the military administrations with the intent to find out how they functioned and what they set out to achieve. We shall later on appraise the success or failures of these social mobilization programmes.

The first attempt at social mobilization under the military in Nigeria is Gen. Gowon’s programme of Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (3Rs). The unfortunate Nigerian Civil War which lasted for thirty months from 1967-1970 resulted in social, economic and political disintegration of the country. At the end of the civil war, Gowon’s regime declared a condition of “no victor and no vanquished.” It therefore pursued a policy or programme of social mobilization aimed at “Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation” of all the factions to the war. The essential objective of this programme was to keep Nigeria one and fully integrate all factions to the war with the activities of the centre. The cardinal objective of the programme also was to give every Nigerian a sense of belonging based on principles of social equity, justice and fairness. This social mobilization programme was in vogue until Gowon’s regime was overthrown by Gen. Murtala Mohammed on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1975.

The second attempt at social mobilization was Gen. Murtala Mohammed’s “unlabeled social revolution,” which according to Okonkwo, “sought to inculcate work ethics and discipline among others, in Nigerians.” Gen.

Murtala Mohammed's administration did not last long for his social mobilization programme to make any meaningful impact.

The third attempt at social mobilization was Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo's "Operation Feed the Nation" (OFN). According to Okonkwo, "one of the disastrous effects of the oil boom period of the Gowon era was the neglect of agricultural production and the steady rural-urban drift. This neglect resulted in growing food shortages and steadily growing food import bills. To stem this tide, the Obasanjo regime launched the "Operation Feed the Nation" campaign, a.k.a. OFN. The campaign was launched by Gen. Obasanjo on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1976. The aims among others were:

- 1) To mobilize the nation towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance in food production.
- 2) To encourage that sector of the population (e.g. schools, universities, military establishments, private individuals, etc.) which relies on buying food, to grow its own food.
- 3) To encourage general pride in agriculture through the realization that a nation that cannot feed itself cannot be truly proud.

Speaking during the occasion of the launching, Gen. Obasanjo had this to say: "The Federal Military Gov is convinced that this operation, that is, the OFN, is not only necessary but long overdue. In the last few years, the country has witnessed an alarming decline in agricultural production. Government has had to import increasing quantities of a variety of food items from abroad. Prices of foodstuffs have galloped. To make matters worse, young men and women have been drifting from rural areas into the cities in unprecedented numbers, leaving behind them old men and women who cannot be expected to meet the growing needs of the country for food." Along with boosting food production, the OFN aimed at rural dev through the establishment of locally based agro-industries, the construction of feeder roads, the provision of housing, educational facilities, water and electricity. These if fully implemented, would have increased food production, stopped the rural-urban drift and would have saved the country a lot of foreign exchange.

A lot of money was invested in the scheme. Several of OFN councils and committees were set up at the national, state and local government levels, with varying functions. Assistance was given to the people in the form of technical advice and the provision of essential farm inputs such as livestock feeds, fertilizers, pesticides and farm implements. Production of food crops such as cassava, rice, groundnuts, vegetables, maize and livestock was emphasized. Also cash crops production was encouraged. Government did not go into food production by itself; it only encouraged the people to do it themselves, and thus learn that there is dignity in labour.

The issue of whether Operation Feed the Nation as a social mobilization programme/strategy succeeded or failed will be examined later.

The fourth attempt at social mobilization under the military was the Gen. Buhari/Idiagbon "War Against Indiscipline" popularly known as WAI.

The military coup that ushered in Buhari/Idiagbon regime was carried out on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1983. This coup overthrew the Second Republic civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. The overthrow of Shagari government it was generally believed, was triggered off by the excessive indiscipline which characterized the administration and the concomitant, unparalleled election rigging which brought him back to power a second time in 1983. As Okonkwo, quoting Alex Chigbuh observed, "Indiscipline seemed to have become a way of life of most Nigerians during the Second Republic headed by President Shehu Shagari. The situation of near lawlessness was so disheartening... The indiscipline prevailed at the top echelon of the Shagari administration. There was contract inflation by the various political office holders..."

On assumption of office therefore, the Buhari/Idiagbon administration embarked on a programme aimed at wiping and cleaning the Nigerian society of general indiscipline that has gripped the populace for so long.

On March 20, 1984, therefore, Major Gen. Tunde Idiagbon, then Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters launched the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) otherwise called the National Consciousness and Mobilization Campaign. The objectives of WAI were to instill in the minds of Nigerians the noble ideals of national consciousness, mobilize their minds and gear them up to a sense of nationhood, patriotism and above all, discipline. In an address titled, "The Noble Ideals of National Consciousness," delivered by Major Gen. Idiagbon at the launching of the WAI campaign, he declared that indiscipline manifested itself in such evils as greed, dishonesty, indecency, discourtesy, vandalism, ostentation, selfishness and insensitivity to filthy surroundings. The task of government was therefore to mobilize the people for national consciousness, national pride and for the war against indiscipline, the aim being to create the right atmosphere for better understanding and mutual respect among Nigerians. These will lay the foundation for the Nigeria of tomorrow where discipline, self-reliance, harmony, peace and national pride will prevail.

The WAI campaign was launched in phases:



1. Phase One: The Queue Culture: This aimed at inculcating in Nigerians the idea of queuing at bus stops, at post office counters, wherever things are being distributed, etc.
2. Phase Two: Work Ethics: This was to inculcate in the people the right attitude to work, to do a good day's job for a good day's pay. People were to learn to be industrious, punctual, be on seat, etc.
3. Phase Three: Patriotism and Nationalism: Nigerians were to be mobilized to love their country and to always ask for what they can do for their country and not as had always been the case, what the country can do for them or what they can gain or loot from their country.
4. Phase Four: War Against Corruption and Economic Sabotage: People were to eschew bribery and corruption and cease to engage in all activities (e.g. smuggling of petroleum and its products out of the country of smuggling rice, second hand clothing, etc. into the country) that run down the economy of the country.
5. Phase Five: War Against Filth: A campaign to make people clean their surroundings (offices, homes) of all filth. A day (last Saturday of every month) was set aside for people to clean homes, surroundings and offices of everything that makes them filthy and may lead to the spread of diseases.

In order to achieve the objectives of WAI, the then Federal Military Government set up a WAI Brigade made up of three divisions:

1. Vanguard – Consisting of school children;
2. Crusaders – Consisting of junior and senior secondary school students; and
3. Patriots – Consisting of people of 18 years and above.

The Brigade had a national headquarters made up of a National Advisory Committee. At the state level were State Implementation Committees responsible to the National Advisory Committee (the National Headquarters). To reach the people in order to mobilize and galvanize them into achieving the goals of WAI, various communication channels were employed. The print media – newspapers, posters, magazines, cartoons, handbills and leaflets – and electronic media – radio and television were used. Finally, personal contacts through the various Federal Information Centres were employed. The success or failure of WAI as a social mobilization programme will be addressed later.

The fifth attempt at social mobilization of the Nigerian citizens under military regime was the Military President, General Babangida's National Orientation Movement (NOM), later known as MAMSER.

When Gen. Ibrahim Babangida overthrew the Buhari administration in August 1985, according to Okonkwo, "he said he had to do it to put an end to the oppressive regime of Buhari, and reinstate those fundamental human rights and democratic principles which had been overthrown by that regime. Realizing the importance of social mobilization, the regime in its early days articulated its process of mobilization through the National Orientation Movement which was a deliberate attempt to move away from the bad image of WAI. The philosophical foundation of the National Orientation Movement (NOM) was made known by President Babangida in his address at the launching of MAMSER on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1987. The President observed that, "we have, at any rate tried to live up to the principle of leadership by example through our commitment to Fundamental Human Right, Justice and the Rule of Law as enunciated at the inception of this administration. As a consequence, thousand of our citizens detained for over twenty months, without charge, trial or ascertainable guilt under the law regained their freedom, their lives and their property... The nation's abhorrence and rejection of those decrees were crystallized in the Armed Forces Ruling Council's inauguration of the National Reorientation Movement and in the promise to evolve a social mobilization programme for both the civil population and the Armed Forces. The principal aim is to produce a state of mind; a consciousness in our citizens at all levels of society and in all walks of life; which will inculcate in them the civic virtues and responsible civil societies."

The details of the objectives of the National Orientation Movement made public contain the following:

1. to restore and sustain discipline in our national life;
2. to inculcate the spirit of nationalism and patriotism in all Nigerians;
3. to instill in the populace a sense of absolute loyalty to the fatherland;
4. to ensure and uphold leadership by example;
5. to restore respect for our culture and encourage its development;
6. to foster respect for constituted authority;
7. to revamp the economy through hard work, and the intensification of agriculture so as to ensure self-sufficiency in food production.

The National Orientation Movement (NOM) did not last long because it was later intermingled and superseded by other social mobilization programmes developed by the same administration. This fact was attested to by

the President himself when he remarked that “our own attempt to bridge the gap and give greater meaning and relevance to the lofty ideals contained in the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the 1979 Constitution; and to the goals of the Social Reorientation Movement and the Social Mobilization Programme, has given birth to the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and Directorate of Employment.” All these new Directorates later gave way to the Directorate for Social Mobilization, Economic Recovery and Self-Reliance (MAMSER).

The social mobilization programme of MAMSER was comprehensive and far-reaching. According to Okonkwo, quoting the Daily Times of Nigeria editorial, the aim of MAMSER is to increase awareness and inculcate in these target groups, the virtues, values, benefits of nation-building, national pride, self-reliance and social justice. It also added that MAMSER will inculcate in Nigerians, a sense of discipline, patriotism and nationalism. The aims and objectives of MAMSER were further made clear by President Babangida in his address at the launching of the eradication of all those features of our behaviour in the past which have made our society a byword for disharmony, dishonesty, distrust and disservice, and a haven for those who prefer to embrace and promote in their conduct, the least attractive traits in human nature. He also stated that “it is to raise our individual and collective national consciousness and enable us dream great dreams and attain lofty goals; to seek and to attain what is noblest in human nature; to place the highest value and respect on the dignity of human life; to re-discover the meaning of duty and to accept responsibility; to pursue earnest endeavours and to take pride in personal advance only through dedication and hard work; to respect one another and to guard the rights of others jealously as we guard our own; to believe in rules and to respect and play by the rules and above all to return to those times not so many years ago when everyone accepted that the community and the nation’s interests came first and personal interests last” that MAMSER was set to achieve. In other words, MAMSER will help reinstate “freedom, democracy, equality of citizens before the law, justice, fair-play and the fundamental human rights of all citizens...”

The followership, the President noted, “must be educated to understand and to appreciate; be morally and spiritually committed, socially awakened and fully mobilized to conform in its every behaviour to those principles and practices which guarantee the fulfillment of societal goals.” The mission of MAMSER the President observed is “all-embracing and its main aim educative.” This he summed up as thus:

1. to enlighten, educate and motivate all citizens towards the goals and objectives of the Nigerian state;
2. to create a responsible and responsive leadership through the dissemination of appropriate political rules;
3. to create a responsible and conscious public through the dissemination of appropriate rules;
4. to encourage a functional dialogue between the government and the people through the establishment and inculcation of political norms; and
5. to develop and sustain adequate political conventions which will guarantee a positive and stable political culture.

The success or failure of the social mobilization programmes under the Military President, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida will be examined later when appraisal on social mobilization programmes under the military regimes in Nigeria will be discussed.

The last social mobilization effort or attempt to be examined under military regimes in this work is that of Gen. Sani Abacha. Gen. Abacha came to power in 1993. His administration just like the predecessors, also embarked on social mobilization programme. The social mobilization programme under Gen. Sani Abacha is known as the National Orientation Agency (NOA). The National Orientation Agency as a social mobilization outfit did not differ significantly both in form, shape, content and structure from what obtained under the General Ibrahim Babangida’s administration. The only remarkable difference could be seen in the change in nomenclature or name which is from MAMSER to NOA. However, the then Director-General for National Orientation Agency, Professor Elo Amucheazi, still feels that there is a difference between NOM/WAI and MAMSER with NOA, because he sees the latter as an amalgam of the former and more importantly NOA is in a “vantage position, since it is in a position to learn from the mistakes of preceding organizations...”

The next thing we intend to discuss is the appraisal of the impact of the different social mobilization programmes of the military on the Nigerian society.

#### **THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MOBILIZATION ON THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY UNDER MILITARY REGIMES/ADMINISTRATION:**

It is generally believed that the Social mobilization efforts of the military have not yielded any meaningful impact or positive change in the lifestyle of most Nigerians. In fact some critics are of the opinion that if any impact has been made at all on the lives of Nigerians from the social mobilization programmes pursued under

the military it is at best negative. They argue that in Nigeria as at today, general indiscipline both in our private and public life has continued to increase unabated; drug trafficking is soaring high; armed robbery is on the high side; murder or assassination of innocent citizens has assumed a new dimension; examination malpractices have reached the highest peak; economic sabotage is a frequent event; overt disrespect to constituted authority is now a norm; and above all corruption and fraud, especially 419 are now identical with Nigerian national identity. In fact, it is generally believed or shared among Nigerians that things have gone from bad to worse. It may be no exaggeration for one to say that the present life of Nigerians is intermeshed and interwoven with chaos and anarchy. It is strongly felt among Nigerians that it is this ever increasing negative attitude in the lives of the citizens which has reached embarrassing level that had compelled the military administration of Gen. Sani Abacha to embark on some hard cleansing exercise to restore the country back to the path of sanity. For example, promulgation of the failed banks decree; failed public corporation and parastatals decree; economic sabotage and miscellaneous offenses decree; etc., were all aimed at recovering and punishing all those who have been involved in ill-gotten wealth and looting of public treasury. The present situation in the country is an indication that “negativism” has reached a point of no return in the social and public lives of Nigerians and the country is heading to a complete doom. It is also a strong indication that all the social mobilization programmes pursued under the military regimes have fallen on deaf ears and no success has been achieved from the exercise.

It may be interesting to ask why these various social mobilization programmes introduced by the past and present military regimes have not attained any measure of success. For example, the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) was criticized for the “high-handed manner in which it was implemented.” Amucheazi observed that “changing a people’s orientation is only possible through persuasion, not coercion.” He further noted that the failure of the past social mobilization attempts is essentially due to a number of factors/reasons which include:

1. They involved “talking down at people.” Their approach was top-to-bottom. The populace was undisciplined and it was the duty of government to change them. One inevitable consequence of this cavalier stance of government was that people immediately began to scrutinize the lifestyle of those in government. Invariably, they did not pass the test, leading to charges of hypocrisy. Expectedly, Nigerians came to see the exhortations of government about discipline and patriotism as a mask for its own failure.
2. They were guided by the system of ideas that could not fundamentally transform the people’s system of production.
3. The approach adopted did not allow for effective communication between government and the governed. Such communication is absolutely important to the success of national orientation and mobilization. It is one thing for government to admonish the governed about good virtues and to make good policies on their behalf. But it is another criticizing what they do not agree with in the actions of government. In any case, unless the governed are constantly made aware of the good deeds of government, and unless they are convinced about such good deeds, government actions will be in vain and its preaching will be empty moralizing, signifying nothing.

The failure of the past social mobilization efforts under the military according to Okonkwo, has largely been as a result of the following factors or reasons:

- a. The problem with the political leadership: The military/political leadership did not lead by example. They preached one ideal and acted another. They were corrupt, having assumed power not necessarily to serve the people but to amass wealth even for their generations yet unborn. They were therefore not sources of inspiration for the ordinary citizens.
- b. Another reason for the cause of their failure or poor performance is faulty planning. For the mobilization programmes to really succeed, there must be adequate planning which most of the programmes lacked.
- c. Lack of clear ideological direction also militated against the programmes.
- d. A serious militating factor is inadequate implementation strategies arising from poor planning.
- e. Corruption in high and low places. Many of the implementers of the programmes saw in the programmes not as avenues to advance national interests but as avenues for the enrichment of themselves and their friends. Contracts for inputs into the programmes were cleverly embezzled either individually or by syndicates.
- f. There was the wrong choice of channels of communication. The mass media were generally used as channels of communication oblivious of the fact that not all Nigerians had access to them. Messages did not therefore reach the majority of the population and the wonder was that a harvest was expected where no seeds were planted.
- g. The programmes – arising from the point made above – were aimed mostly at the minority urban dwellers, leaving out the majority rural dwellers. The programmes did not therefore have the impact that was expected of them.

The social mobilization programmes, although generally adjudged a failure, in our opinion should not be



discarded or abandoned, rather the strategies for implementation should be modified. We shall explain more on how to make the programme a success in our recommendations.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The social mobilization programmes pursued under the military regimes/ administration in Nigeria had laudable objectives and therefore, should be encouraged. However, the programmes were implemented using faulty strategies, approach and poor planning.

First, the use of coercion in place of persuasion for implementing the programme like in WAI, is not the best because it has a high tendency for relapse once the opportunity presents itself. This was exactly what happened with the overthrow of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime that introduced WAI.

Secondly, the behaviour of the leaders which is reminiscent of preempting instead of by example is discouraging to the majority of Nigerians who are supposed to imbibe the ideals of the programme. It is a popular saying that "example is better than precepts." In other words, "charity begins at home." By implication we are saying that our leaders should first of all purge themselves of corrupt practices before expecting the larger public. This is because theirs tend to reinforce the "negativism" or poor quality attitude already held by the wider society.

Finally, the mode of communication should be modified and intensified. More efforts should be made to reach the people live, either during community meetings, market days, at homes, on weekends or during church services. The present method where heavy reliance is placed on print and electronic media has proved to be grossly inadequate, more so where over 80 percent of the population are illiterate and impoverished. It can also be added that the character of those appointed to execute/implement the social mobilization programmes contributed to the failure. The implementers were more or less interested not on the success of the programme but on their personal aggrandizement, hence, the resources meant for the programme were not effectively managed and utilized for its success. Like most Nigerians they exhibited high prebendal attitude to public office. It is suggested that for the success of the programme, appointment should not be based on political connections. It is recommended that only men and women of proven probity and impeccable integrity should be appointed to manage such sensitive public programmes.

### REFERENCES:

- [1] Acha, F. N. (1991). *Nigeria What Hope?* Enugu, Nigeria: CECTA (Nig.) Ltd.
- [2] Amucheazi, E. (1995). National orientation and national development in Nigeria. In A. E. C. Oguma et al (eds.), *National Orientation and National Development in Nigeria*. p. 6.
- [3] Azikiwe, N. (1974). *Democracy with Military Vigilance*. Nsukka: African Books Co. Ltd.
- [4] Bienan, H. (1971). *The Military and Modernization*. New York: Adine-Atherton.
- [5] Deutsch, K. W. (1961). Social mobilization and political development. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 55, p. 493. 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept.
- [6] Dudley, B. (1982). *Into to Nigerian Government and Politics*. Nigeria: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- [7] Ikoku, S. G. (1985). *Nigeria's Fourth Coup D'etat: Options for Modern Statehood*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- [8] Janowitz, M. (1964). *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- [9] Johnson, J. J. (1962). *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries*. N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- [10] MAMSER Handbook of the Directorate for Social Mobilization, 1988.
- [11] Nwabueze, B. O. (1977). *Constitutionalism in the Emergent States*. London: C. Hurst and Company.
- [12] Nwankwo, A. (1984). *Civilianised Soldiers: Army-Civilian Government for Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- [13] Nnoli, O. (1986). *Introduction to Politics*. Ikeja: Longman.
- [14] Ojiakor, N. (1977). Military as an instrument of nation-building in Nigeria: An assessment. In Ojiakor, N. & Unachukwu, G. C. (eds.), *Nigerian Socio-Political Development: Issues and Problems*. Enugu: John Jacob's Classic Publishers Ltd.
- [15] Okereke, O. O. (1995). The civil service in a distressed economy: The Nigerian experience. *Alvana Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 4, No. 1.
- [16] Okonkwo, I. J. C. (1990). The problem of mass mobilization in Nigeria: A case study of MAMSER. Unpublished *Postgraduate Diploma Project*, submitted to the Sub-Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, p. 13.
- [17] Webstar, A. (1984). *Introduction to the Sociology of Development*. London: Macmillan Publishers.

----