



CHALLENGES IN THE RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION OF WORLD WAR II VETERANS, 1946-1960

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Abstract

Soon after the end of the Second World War in 1945, the British Government in London came out with a programme aimed at resettling the British retirees who actively participated in the said war. One of these resettlement Schemes was known as Resettlement and Rehabilitation Programme. Northern Nigeria, for example resettlement centres were established in 1946 and attracted a lot of attention from both the retirees and those soldiers who were in active service. This study sets out to investigate the rationale behind the establishment of the resettlement and rehabilitation programme and furthermore, role played by the retirees in its association. The resettlement, for example, formed by the association of Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association (NEWA), in order to achieve their set goals. The methodology applied is the qualitative approach in which primary sources including archival materials relevant to the study was used. Again, Annual Reports, personal diaries, correspondences, were also used. Oral interviews were also conducted with resource persons, ex-servicemen, administrators and civilians who had witnessed the activities of the association within the study areas. In which text books, articles in journals and pamphlets were also analysed. The study observed that there was no proper resettlement, rehabilitation and resulted in the poor integration. The findings explicitly show that NEWA depended on charity which the members of the society were unwilling to donate for the sake of the fallen Heroes in spite of appeals by government and traditional rulers. The second World ex-servicemen still think of being resettled, allocated good land and to have their children employed, educated and supported by government and not always by NEWA which could not solve their welfare needs satisfactorily and these posed serious challenges to their cherished welfare and these challenges formed the bases of discussion in this study.

Keywords: Challenges, Second World War, Resettlement and Rehabilitation Programme, Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association (NEWA)

1.0 Introduction

The Second World War broke out in 1939¹. The Nigerian soldiers who participated in the war, fought gallantly and in the process,

won distinguished medals². However, after the end of the war, some of the veterans were retired from active service either because they were incapacitated or because of age. Soon after their retirement, the

¹ G. O. Olusanya. *The second World war and politics in Nigeria, 1939-1953*, Lagos: University of Lagos press, 1975, p.41.

² S. M. Dule, et al., *History of the Nigeria Army*, Abuja: Nigeria Army Educational Corps School, 1994, p.93



British Colonial Government in Nigeria came out with “Resettlement and Rehabilitation of the Ex-Servicemen” with a view to reintegrating them back into civil society. However, this was not without problems as the jobs offered to these retirees were not commensurate with their former status when compared to the British soldiers who were retired alongside Nigerians and were brought into the country. These foreigners were given preferences in terms of employment in both public and private sectors of the economy³. As would be expected, this brought about a lot of problems between the Nigerian retirees of the Second World War and their British counter parts. Moreover, this gave birth to the establishment of an Association of Ex-Servicemen called the Nigeria Ex-Servicemen Welfare Association (NEWA), a non governmental organization (NGO), in 1946⁴. The aims of the Association were to take care of their welfare and to serve as a platform for channeling their grievances to the Nigerian colonial Government⁵ especially as it affected the Resettlement and Rehabilitation of its members. Since the Association’s finances came from donations, it was unable to do much to improve the standard of living of its members. From 1946 when NEWA was formed, nothing much had changed significantly in the status of members⁶. At the end of 1945, the colonial government in Nigeria was faced

with the problems of maintaining a large number of troops. Government could not afford to keep more soldiers than it needed for its normal role in the colonial order. The number to be laid off was estimated at 37,784⁷; hence the need to demobilize and resettle the surplus troops. This move, gave rise to the formation of the Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association. This association took off with so many constraints to bear. Some of these constraints included lack of adequate staff to man the activities of this nascent association; lack of funds to cater for the needs and aspirations of its old aged members, disabled Destitutes, orphans left behind by the ex-soldiers and their widows, and yet several problems included unemployment of its members; and, the general lack of unity among the members of the association and the disunity among leadership of the organization itself. Finally, the poor relationship which existed between the civilian populations and the ex-soldiers who were expected to be reintegrated back into civil life, was also a major challenge considered in this study. These challenges were discussed as follows.

Lack of Enough Staffers to Run the Association

In the Northeast, Nigeria, it was reported that, most of the members of the association were illiterate farmers, and the few ones that, could read and write abandoned the association for greener pasture. Therefore, those who manned the association were illiterates. In areas where the population was considerably dense, the Divisional Officers (D.Os) were directed to handle the affairs of

³ O. Chiegwe, *Studies in social change* (Benin: University of Benin press, 2000), p.203.

⁴ O. Olusanya, *The Second World War and politics in Nigeria 1939-1953*, Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 1975, p.97.

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ Yola Prof. S. P. No 21/1946. Annual Report on the Department of Department of Labour and on the Resettlement of Ex-servicemen, 1945.



the ex-servicemen and the secretariats of the association. In the remotest areas too, there were no staff to handle the affairs of the ex-servicemen. The colonial government suggested that, in employing clerks for the association, a native tribe of the area, be employed so that, when paying homage to the emir by the ex-servicemen, the clerk as a mouth piece of the association, would speak in the native language of the emir. This suggestion however, could not be achieved due to lack of available staff or person to handle such position. This might not be unconnected with the apathy of the ex-servicemen towards the association.

It is important to note that, being a charitable organization, the association was not in a position to employ or reinstate a worker to handle its affairs, rather, it relied on the colonial government to post personnel who would then handle the association in conjunction with the District Officers serving in the districts.

During the first half of the year, the work of resettlement and rehabilitation of ex-servicemen was carried out by the labour department due to shortage of staff need for the work. The first step taken by the Colonial government on staffing, faced by this association to correct the problems, was the establishment of rehabilitation centers. This, invariably encouraged men to move from the provinces to come to Lagos in search of employment, and plans were made for a country-wide organization to provide facilities for ex-servicemen to obtain employment in the vicinity of their homes. A repaid expansion of staff became a matter of paramount importance in order to man the resettlement offices which were required in many centres. Therefore, much is left to be desired as far as the staff development was concerned. The general statistics showed that, the total ex-servicemen demobilized

were 32,784 and those that were registered for employment were 16,122 and only 4,738 were placed in employment⁸.

The movement of workforce from the provinces to Lagos, created yet another problem of lack of adequate staff to run the local resettlement offices and the few ones that did the work, were over worked, thus adding more problems to the association in its efforts to resettle and rehabilitate its members adequately. In addition to lack of adequate personnel to advance for the centers' shortages of funds to man the association was also a serious challenge faced by organization.

Inadequate Funds to Run the Association

The association worked hand in hand with the colonial government in providing welfare and the resettlement of the ex-servicemen. Initially, it was the military establishment that provided the funds needed by the ex-servicemen to enable them reach their homes after their discharge from military service. The funds for the repayment of transportation had been made available under a newly created vote, known as head 44 meant for war measures with a subhead "46 meant for the resettlement of ex-servicemen"⁹. Therefore, the problem was that, all expenditure for the whole of the northern provinces were controlled from Kaduna Regional Office of the association and no liabilities or expenditure was incurred without prior approval from Kaduna. Payment, however, took longer time to be carried out, and this too added to the problem of lack of funds. Be that as it may, the payment of ex-servicemen to reach

⁸ Yola Prof. No 4517. Report on the Department of Labor and the Resettlement of Ex-Servicemen, 1945

⁹ Yola Prof. No 4517. Report on the Department of Labor and the Resettlement of Ex-Servicemen, 1945



their home town became a problem and as a result, they were prone to all sorts of illnesses, distresses, uneasiness and above all lack of respect for law and order, hence they became frustrated. Again, the ex-servicemen spent longer period before reaching their home towns. This led to many of them becoming broke and without money as most of them had spent their discharge allowances while waiting to be conveyed home. Records revealed that sometimes lorry owners turned down offers which they consider as too meager leaving government and the association with large numbers of public and grants from government all combined, were not enough to cater for the resettlement and rehabilitation of ex-servicemen. For instance, the association's liquid assets could not afford to cater for all the needs of its members. Based on actual expenditure during 1947, its minimum estimated requirements during the year, 1947, totaled €19,000¹⁰, the association observed that the results of the 1947 poppy day were most disappointing and if it were to continue its activities of reaching out for the welfare of the ex-servicemen throughout Nigeria, it must therefore, obtain additional financial support from the public.

It is possible that, owing to lack of detailed instructions, it appeared that there had been a misunderstanding on the disposal of donations collected in the NEWA appeal, and in many cases, owing to lack of knowledge of the allocation, these collections had been used by councils to pay for NEWA activities during the past few months in 1947. As such, the central council of NEWA through its Northern Province Secretary, Col. J.S. Vorley, directed that, on

account of this confusion, all NEWA donations were to be transferred to its main account in the British Bank of West Africa (BBWA) at Lagos¹¹. This decision, however, made it unfavourable for the association to function effectively for the majority of its members leave in their respective areas of domiciles, making it too difficult to be reached on time.

Yet in another development, NEWA became very much passive in their efforts to assist its members withdraw from their savings with less difficulties. The problem at first sight appeared to be a simple one, that is to provide funds at the right place at the right time. In fact, it presented considerable difficulties as there were so many uncertain factors that affected NEWA's smooth operation, for example, the extent to which its members were 'scattered' from dispersal centres and their ultimate destinations, hence, unfortunately, accurate and advance information about these ex-servicemen within and without the provinces was unavailable. In such a situation, authority to approve withdrawals by the ex-servicemen from their savings accounts was delegated to District Officers and in anticipation of the approval of the Chief Commissioners in the provinces. In the same vein, it was impossible for NEWA to forecast with any degree of accuracy what proportions of the amounts shown in the schedule would be required at the respective provinces under study or to what extent the ex-soldiers who were scattered to more remote places before withdrawing their deposits would be ascertained?

¹⁰ Mai Prof. No 26/3355-3504. NEWA's Account, 1947.

¹¹ Circular letter. No. NEWA/26/3355-3504, 1947.

Donations Received and Transferred to Lagos Main Account.



Problem of Employment of Ex-servicemen

NEWA had contributed immensely to the provision of welfare to its members not only in the areas of providing financial assistance but also in the areas of helping ex-servicemen obtain paid employment in both the public and private sectors of the economy. NEWA was, however, constrained with difficulties in its efforts to assist its members secure or obtain paid employment.

Government in its promise to the ex-servicemen for providing employment as soon as they returned home from the battle front, lived much to be desired. Government at an initial stage had shown its readiness by enacting an Ordinance for the employment of the ex-servicemen. It reserved some specific jobs for the ex-servicemen and directed all employers of labour to abide by the ordinance and in some cases, a quota was fixed at 5% (five percent) of the ex-servicemen were to be considered before employing any applicant, apart from the reserved jobs such as watchmen, messengers and so on.

According to NEWA, the colonial administration had no satisfactory policy with regard to resettling the ex-servicemen and many of them were no longer interested in returning to their homes in the villages because there was nothing to attract them there. They had acquired new wants, new taste and new desires which could not be satisfied in the villages and their outlook now differed radically from what it was before the war, making resettlement in the villages difficult. A large number had learnt new skills and trades in the forces and were not ready to go back to agricultural life. Sometimes, even the private sectors violated the provisions of the ordinance in which it was stated that they were to employ ex-

servicemen in their companies by sticking to the laid down rules and regulations.

NEWA, to which some of the ex-servicemen applied for succor and support and which might have helped in the situation, was not established to cater for all ex-servicemen. Despite this, however, it did provide money for training some ex-servicemen and for setting up others in business and employment.

Added to this problem, was the coming of the British ex-servicemen into the country who secured jobs while many Nigerian ex-servicemen were still roaming the streets looking for employment in Lagos and the provinces.

It must be pointed out that the idea of business entertained by many of those who applied for help from NEWA were considered to be too much for NEWA to bear. In addition most of them were required to pay tax despite the fact that they were out of work. As a result, NEWA became restless in trying to contain the discontentment of its members who constantly disturbed the members of society by breaking the law such as committing acts of rapes, thefts and fighting. Sometimes NEWA would assist through court settlement and sometime it could not. It was precisely in this respect that, the provisions made for welfare were utterly so disappearing. Social service had been interpreted in its narrowest sense, as the provision of recreational centres, mobile cinemas and magic lanterns. Such welfarism were not only unrealistic imitations of English youth centres, with little relation to their African setting, but also tended to accentuate the danger that Africans would always look to government as something from which they might expect benefits or welfare rather than something to which they owed duties.



Lack of Unity Among the Organization

NEWA which was established to provide succour and assistance to ex-servicemen who were recruited between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one years, were either too old at the time of their retirement, infirm or destitute and who could not fend for themselves, appeared to be too many in the country. It, however, negates their sense of unity. The lack of unity prevented the ex-servicemen's association from effectively tackling issues of development of Nigeria. In 1949, an attempt was made to organize the ex-servicemen on a regional basis, but within the western provinces alone, there were disparities, for instance, those from Warri and Ilesha, did not like the idea led by those at Ibadan which was to be made the headquarters of the region consequently, it was resolved that they were to be organized on a provincial basis. This division, however, had made NEWA unimportant in the region.

Another area of lack of unity of the association was the multiplicity of ex-servicemen's organization, each highly localized and isolated and working at cross-purposes but each claiming to represent the interests of all ex-soldiers. The association was aware of this weakness, for at the inaugural meeting of the supreme council of ex-servicemen held at McNeil Road, Yaba, and formally launched in 1948 at the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos, the Secretary of NEWA council, Col. J.S. Vorley, declared: "efforts should be made to avoid mushroom ex-servicemen's associations....I must say frankly that it only help to weaken the organization"¹². Other bodies like the Lagos

ex-servicemen and the National Federation of Ex-Servicemen's Association of Nigeria and the Cameroon's existed. Even the supreme council was not a full representation of all the Ex-soldiers: The Northern provinces for example, were not represented despite the fact that the majority of ex-soldiers came from that part of the country¹³. This lack of unity could be attributed to some factors, namely; the clash of personalities and the ambition for leadership on the part of some of the ex-soldiers which made it difficult for them to work together. Secondly, the country was too vast and with poor communication facilities and inadequate funds as indicated earlier to organize effectively a national body of ex-servicemen.

The Relations between Civilians and the Ex-servicemen

Ideally, it was government key plans to resettle and rehabilitate the ex-servicemen back to civil life by introducing "back to land scheme". It was in the same vein, the aim of the association of the ex-servicemen ordered to achieve. But these dual efforts were not without problems. Right from its inception, the resettlement of the ex-servicemen which was established in 1947 in Bornu province, marked the first civilian/ex-soldiers settlements which was designed to bring both parties to leave together in the same environment so as to reintegrate the latter back to civil life. It could be recalled that, most of the ex-servicemen of the northern provinces were farmers before they were recruited into military service and after being discharged from the military service, they all returned to their localities where they were reunited with their families. According to one of my informants, Shettima Ali Monguno, some of

¹² Olusanya; G. O. The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria 1939-1953, (Lagos: Evans brothers ltd; 1973), P.99.

¹³ *Ibid*



the returning ex-soldiers came back with a lot of money¹⁴ and bought houses, farmlands and got married. These resulted in the rise of bride price (Dowries) and sometimes the soldiers used force to speed up the marriage processes. These activities were generally disliked by the public, and this explains why the civilians started to dislike the ex-service-soldiers. This is exemplified in the fact that during the annual Appeal for Donation, the civilians hardly contributed for obvious reasons.

The association of the ex-servicemen indicated that both civilians and ex-servicemen came together to form the association. For instance, in Maiduguri NEWA council, holding a meeting in the District Officer's city's office, revealed that Mr. N.F. Cooke, Assistant District Officer (A.D.O) served as the Chairman, Mr. H.W. Musgrove B.B.W.A was the Secretary while members were:- Mr. K.B. Keith A.D.O Mallam Umar Yakub Native Treasurer, Mallam Mustapha Othman, District Head Yerwa and Ex. R.S.M. Umaru Yerwa¹⁵. Thus, throughout the provinces within the study areas showed that both the ex-servicemen and the civilians were brought together with the sole aim of reintegrating the ex-soldiers back to civil life.

Another instances where the ex-servicemen and civilians settled was in "Sojiri" (ex-servicemen settlement) in Bornu province. Here, the colonial government, in its giant stride to reintegrate the ex-soldiers brought 27 civilians and 23 ex-soldiers with a civilian as their head. They were all

empowered with cash and farming implements so that they could live and farm together. It was anticipated that with the passing of time, the settlement would be expanded to accommodate more ex-servicemen. It is observed that in most of the areas where similar settlements were established, there appeared to be misunderstanding between the two inhabitants, such as lack of reciprocal respect, abandoning site for lucrative jobs in towns which were not forthcoming and sometimes looking down upon local people or more appropriately the civilians which NEWA found it difficult to contain this behaviour on the part of the ex-service men.

Other problems faced by NEWA as a result of the relationships which existed between the ex-soldiers and the civilians were cases of theft, rapes and inability to repay loans received. For instances, EX.NA/50611 Njidda Numan was sentenced to two years for theft on 1/1/1948, EX.NA/58798 Sunday Karawoda was sentenced to one year for rape on 9th of August, 1947. Similarly, EX.NA/127742 Turare Dom was sentenced to two years for theft on 4th of June, 1947. also EX.NA/72420 Fava Saranda was sentenced to four months for theft on 16th of June, 1947 and EX.NA/119862 Bello was sentenced to one year for theft on 5th October, 1947¹⁶. Yet EX.NA/1125133 Gambo Azare owed a certain amount of money to a civilian trader and was afraid the civilian would get his discharge book on failing to pay him¹⁷. In some cases, NEWA received complains from wives of the ex-soldiers that their husbands abandoned them. One Adama Kano, wife of Hassan Fort

¹⁴ Shettma Ali Monguno, an Elder statesman, Educationist and Philanthropy based in Maiduguri. 2012

¹⁵ Mai Prof. No 423/69. 1947. NEWA, Maiduguri District Council Meeting.

¹⁶ Yola Prof. No 12/14/13, 1948. Ex-servicemen imprisonment

¹⁷ Letter No C/9/18. 1947. Discharge Book-AORs



Lammy (EX.NA/80304) residing at the Sarkin Bagharmi, Bauchi province, reported to NEWA that eight months ago, her husband, during demobilization, passed through Bauchi to Biu or Potiskum district without telling her anything or his movement to return to pick her up again.

Generally speaking the behaviours of the more better disciplined ex-servicemen, as indicated by NEWA, had been remarkably good. The troublesome ones, NEWA maintained, had invariably been those with short service or poor characters. Hence the return of ex-servicemen had helped a little to provide stability to a society where their relationships with their civilians counterparts. Some of them lacked societal norms and values, thus flouting the authority of the leaders, causing untold hardship or trouble with the civilian traders in the market, in the cinemas or hotels. In fact, they jeopardized the working of an ordered society in colonial Nigeria.

Conclusion

NEWA as an association of the ex-servicemen was not only responsible for providing welfare to its members but also to see to it that its members adequately fit into the society and could fend for themselves as any other member of the society in which they happened to be.

The resettlement centers provided for the ex-servicemen had developed into towns and supported a large population of ex-servicemen. For instance, in sojiri; the Chadians who had retired from the Nigerian regiment of the WAFF and who had decided to stay in Nigeria, had settled down and inter-marry with their civilian counterparts. Their children today occupied high positions in civil service, politics and businesses. In Bornu, for example, Doctor Hama Kim was a consultant in the State Specialist Hospital in Maiduguri and he was a son to Major

Hama Kim, a Second World War veteran. Similarly, in Adamawa, Buba Marwa one time Governor of Borno States, was a son to a Second World War veteran. The same thing goes to Professor Balla, a Lecturer in University of Maiduguri, is a son to Yerima Balla, also a Second World War veteran and again Tukur Yusuf Buratai, the former Chief of Army Staff, is a son to Yusuf Buratai, the second world war veteran, to mention but a few. Other areas where ex-servicemen could be found also developed into wards and helped to expand the population of the areas as in the case, in Bornu, of Gamboru Liberty, Bullabulin ward, Maisandari ward and Wulari all within Maiduguri township among other places in the country.

On the other hand, those ex-service men who chose to stay in the villages in Bauchi province more especially in Gombe Division, the bulk of the ex-servicemen took to agriculture in areas like Shonghom, Billiri and Kalitungo. This development had resulted in the increase of the agriculture output and so brought about growth and development of the local markets in the area, making Gombe division as a market centre within Bauchi province.

However, other ex-servicemen who chose to stay in big cities like Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Enugu and Port Harcourt, helped the Nationalist in their quest for independence which yielded a positive results as it had resulted in the Nigeria's attainment of independence in October, 1960.

Another important stride made by NEWA was the provision of paid employment to its members in both Government and private companies. The ex-servicemen occupied positions of messengers, security, plumbers, electricians, drivers e.t.c. This had led to a reduction in crime and carter for any manpower shortfall that was experienced by



the colonial Administration. These positions occupied by the ex-servicemen had propelled Government works to be sustained and Society reoriented.

Therefore, the resettlement of the Second World War veterans by their associations had shown that an association could come together and proffer solutions to societal problems. Government alone cannot be left to have the monopoly of providing development to its people. Sometimes Government itself should encourage this more to help reduce its challenges. School enrolment were increased, towns developed, crime rate decrease, and finally expansion of markets, agricultural outputs. The results of the study indicate that there were no resettlement, rehabilitation, willingness on the part of civil society to donate to the welfare of ex-servicemen in their midst and above all no real integration. The outcome of the findings clearly indicate that these ex-servicemen still think of being resettled, allocated good land for farming. They want government to pay their pension and to have their children employed, educated and sponsored. NEWA alone could not afford to cater for all the ex-servicemen's welfare needs because, it relies on donations which is not always reliable and too small as well as disappointing.