



## The Emergence of Ex-Servicemen's Welfare Associations in Nigeria after the Second World War

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### Abstract

The outbreaks of the First and Second World Wars forced the British colonial government to recruit and conscript colonial subjects in large numbers to fight for the survival of the British Empire in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. After the wars, the demobilized ex-servicemen started to seek a change of attitude from the colonial government because of the new experiences they had acquired during their military services outside Nigeria. One of the significant outcomes of the wars was the eventual proliferation of Ex-servicemen welfare associations throughout the country. The demobilized soldiers started organizing themselves into associations to address their welfare issues because the colonial government failed to provide jobs for the majority of them. This paper argues that the emergence and proliferation of ex-servicemen's welfare association in Nigeria was due to the failure of the colonial government to resettle and rehabilitate the ex-soldiers into meaningful civil life despite their contributions to the survival of the British Empire.

**Keywords:** Army, Colonialism, Ex-Servicemen, Legion, Veterans

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### Introduction

Since the beginning of colonial rule in Nigeria in the early years of the twentieth century, one of the major challenges faced by the British colonial government was how to preserve the ambivalence of the colonial system on the colonial subjects. By the 1930s it had been established that colonialism was one inevitable phenomenon that the four corners of the inhabited globe must live with. In other words, Europeans had succeeded in extending their powers to the areas that were hitherto out of the purview of the colonial system. Although by the 1930s colonialism did not provide the much-needed impetus for peace even among the Europeans, the international system remained temporarily stable until the balance of powers was upset by the incessant pressure from the newly emerging world powers (Germany, United States of America and Japan) with their ambitious quest for hegemonic influences. In the Far East, by the beginning of the 1930s, the Japanese made it clear to everybody that their aim was the dissolution of the British Empire, or at least to end the British colonial experiment in Southeast Asia and the Indian sub-continent. While in continental Europe Hitler was exhibiting vengeful attritions toward the other European States by gradual erosions of the



sovereignty of the European states, especially France. With these enormous challenges, the European powers' capacity to confront their enemies they must source alternative and additional resources from their colonies. Hence, the British decision to involve its colonial subjects in the conflict to halt the looming disaster in both Europe and the colonial world, especially in the Southeast Asia region. Consequently, Nigerians and many other Africans were recruited and conscripted and forced into joining the imbroglio of European armed forces to save the British Empire from the imminent collapse.

Between 1939 and 1945 many Nigerians together with many other Africans fought on various fronts and different capacities and eventually helped the British Empire to survive the Japanese onslaught. At the end of the war, these Nigerians and other African contingents were demobilized and abandoned at the mercy of their societies, unlike their European counterparts who were treated with the required attention. However, when some African contingents realized the intention of the colonial government and the Military Authorities they started clamouring for attention and equal treatment. The colonial government responded with the establishment of a government-sponsored welfare association for the veterans which proved inadequate and unsatisfactory. The Veterans took it by themselves and started the process of establishing their own military veterans' association, similar to the ones found all over the world. By 1946 they came up with the idea of establishing the Nigerian Legion; an ex-servicemen welfare association for veterans of the First and the Second World War.

#### **Post-Second World War British Policies on Nigerian War Veterans**

Some claims show that up to 1918, there were no clear blueprints proposed by the British colonial government to resettle and rehabilitate the mobilized Nigerians, who fought on the side of the British and her Allies.<sup>1</sup> It is very difficult if not impossible to accept this assertion in it is because the British Government's plan for demobilization and resettlement appeared in the January and February 1919, issues of the *Monthly Labor Review*. The plan provided for the demobilization of armed forces by trades in accordance with the needs of industry and only as rapidly as the industry was prepared to absorb them. Obviously, less direct control could be exercised by the Government in the demobilization of civilian war workers. The plan contemplated, however, active assistance by the Government in the reorganization of the industry.<sup>2</sup> However, this may not be far from the fact that at the time there were no moral dimensions in the colonized-colonizer relationships because since the Berlin conference the guiding principles that governed the relationships between the colonial powers and their subjects had been the right of conquests which was then the legal framework for colonial rule.<sup>3</sup>

However, the issue was not the same in Europe and other areas that were affected by the war. In Britain and other European countries, the idea of how to deal with veterans' affairs was designed to

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<sup>1</sup> Uba, C. N. *Colonial Army and Society in Northern Nigeria*. Kaduna: Baraka Press, 1998. P. 43

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin, M. S.. *Demobilization and Resettlement in the United Kingdom; Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 8(5) May 1919.

<sup>3</sup> Babou, Cheikh Anta. "Decolonization or National Liberation: Debating the end of British Colonial Rule in Africa." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*: Vol. 632. 2010. Pp. 41 – 54.



involve governments and the general public to shoulder the burden of taking care of the ex-servicemen since it was concluded that the governments could not cater for the needs of the war veterans.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, from the on-set, it was made clear that Europeans did not take the risk of abandoning the veterans after their demobilization from the army for obvious reasons. As such they adopted different measures to curtail the consequences of creating a community of disgruntled class of ex-servicemen amidst several other post-war challenges.<sup>5</sup>

In England, and elsewhere, a new kind of agriculture known as the “farm colony” was developed purposely to cater for the millions of returning soldiers from the battlefield. This is because it is believed that a large number of the ex-soldiers would be accommodated in such a program. Official commissions in England developed plans by which the state sold to the returning ex-soldiers ready-made farms of from three to thirty acres, which a single man cultivated. The farms were grouped about a size of a village community, with educational, recreational and cooperative agencies for marketing and buying. Then an educational expert would be shouldered with the responsibility of directing the activities of the colony. The veterans were sold small farms, with a house, barn, and sufficient capital on easy terms, the state advancing nine-tenths of the capital, to be re-paid on long-term instalments. The idea behind the program was that the ex-soldiers should remain on the farm under these conditions, and it was believed that production would increase, and a new interest in agriculture would be awakened. The successes of the program in Europe led to its advocacy in the Americas and elsewhere. Such a program proved very helpful as this involves no permanent burden to the nation. It pays for itself.<sup>6</sup>

It also appeared that Britain was not unmindful of the plight of European veterans after the First World War. It, however, maintained the idea that the War’s burden could not be met by State alone. Therefore, the notion of “Voluntarism” was used by Britain to escape the inherent burden of taking responsibility for her unpopular policies toward the veterans. And this assisted the British government in shifting the burden from the shoulders of the State to the society through the application of the idea of public benevolence as fundamental channel for developing ex-servicemen’s organizations in Britain.<sup>7</sup> As early as 1943, the British colonial government set up the Hoskyns – Abraham Committee to look into the situation and proffer a cogent guideline on how best to demobilize the soldiers that participated in the Second World War.<sup>8</sup> The Committee came up with the following broad provisions that could allow the government to conduct demobilization and resettlement of ex-soldiers exercises successfully:

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<sup>4</sup> Deborah, Cohen. *The War Came Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914 – 1939*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. P. 10

<sup>5</sup> Frederic C. Howe, “A Constructive Program for the Rehabilitation of the Returning Soldiers” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 80, *Rehabilitation of the Wounded* (Nov., 1918), pp.

<sup>6</sup> Frederic C. Howe, “A Constructive Program for the Rehabilitation of the Returning Soldiers”...Op cit.

<sup>7</sup> Deborah, Cohen. *The War Came Home: Disabled Veterans ..... op cit*

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey, I. Nwaka. “Rebellion in Umuahia, 1950 – 1951: Ex-servicemen and Anti-colonial Protest in Eastern Nigeria.” *Transafrican Journal of History*. Vol. 16(1987). Pp. 47 – 62. P. 53



- i. A considerable proportion of the demobilized soldiers would be seeking paid employment, preferably with the government. Therefore, undue haste in the exercise must be avoided, and that no expense should be spared if the final result is a satisfactory citizen in employment is produced, as against a discontented and unemployable ex-soldier.
- ii. The labour Department should endeavour to register all ex-soldiers and set up „Holding Camps“ where they and their families would remain for some time under some form of military discipline and supervision to prepare and train them for civil employment. iii. The program for post-war economic reconstruction and development should be designed in a manner that would create and provide employment for ex-soldiers.<sup>9</sup>

The demobilization of African troops started in 1945, precisely in October. Ernest Bevin was appointed the British minister of Labor and National Service and he became the general overseer of the whole demobilization exercise. When the exercise commences it was expected that by October 1946 it was going to be completed. Therefore, the troops of the Royal West African Frontier Force started to be demobilized in October 1945. The returning Nigerian troops disembarked in Lagos which was their designated demobilization centre. The ex-soldiers' pay were calculated and documentation of everyone was also completed there and discharge books were issued to everybody. In return, all the ex-servicemen were ordered to return all equipment and the surplus clothes in their possession. From there all the ex-servicemen were directed to move to their dispersal centres at the staging camps in their respective provinces. The following staging camps were stipulated in the Northern Nigerian provinces by the colonial demobilization agency for convenient execution of the demobilization exercises. They include Bauchi, Gboko, Gusau, Kano, Katsina, Kontagora, Lokoja, Otukpo, Yola and Zaria. From these centres, each ex-soldier was discharged and sent to his place of origin or place of enlistment.<sup>10</sup>

In 1945, the government had established the Resettlement Branch of the Labor Department, backed by the Employment of Ex-servicemen's Ordinance No. 48 of 1945, to register demobilized soldiers and obtain for them such employment as was available. The Ordinance obliged employers to reinstate all ex-soldiers in their pre-enlistment jobs. There were also the legal obligations on employers to hire ex-servicemen up to a specified quota to fill any vacancies that would occur in their establishments. The quota restrictions implied that preference would be given to ex-soldiers by employers until not less than 10 to 15 percent of those employed were ex-servicemen. In addition, 100 percent of all vacancies for messengers, gatemens, and cleaners and 50 percent of vacancies for motor drivers were to be reserved for ex-soldiers. Accelerated salary increases were approved for them to cover the period of their services, and slightly lower educational standards were sometimes required of them for employment. Disability pensions and gratuities were paid to those who were incapacitated as a direct result of their service in the army.<sup>11</sup> Circular, Notices and Instructions were constantly issued for the retraining of ex-servicemen at the Trade Training Schools and in some agricultural and educational institutions. A "Supernumerary Vote" was set up to enable government

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey, I. Nwaka. "Rebellion in Umuahia, 1950 – 1951: Ex-servicemen ..... p. 53

<sup>10</sup> Miller, E. A. *Colonial Annual Report on the Department of Labor and the Resettlement of Ex-soldiers, 1945*, Lagos: Government Printers, 1946. 18

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey, I. Nwaka. "Rebellion in Umuahia, 1950 – 1951: Ex-servicemen .... P. 55



departments to engage ex-servicemen in excess staff in permanent employment. Disused army toolkits were to be issued at nominal cost to interested tradesmen to enable them to establish on their own. Also, ex-soldiers were exempted from liability to pay tax for the two financial years immediately following their discharge from the army.<sup>12</sup>

### **Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association (NEWA)**

The demobilization exercise in the Nigerian Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) started in October 1945; therefore, after these exercises, the colonial government facilitated the formation of an association under the patronage of His Excellency the Governor-General of colonial Nigeria. The central aim of establishing the association was to be able to poster the spirit of comradeship and self-help among the ex-servicemen.<sup>13</sup>

The first attempt by the British Colonial government in addressing the eventualities of the Second World War was the intervention into the affairs of the demobilized veterans of the War. First of all the colonial government developed a Rehabilitation centre (unit) at the 37<sup>th</sup> Military General Hospital in Accra, Ghana. This is to ensure that those soldiers that need serious medical attention as a result of the war were catered for.<sup>14</sup> The idea of establishing this unit emanated from initial Britain's rehabilitation scheme intended to serve both African and European soldiers serving in the colonial military. However, the unit was short-lived, because it was closed in 1947 and the colonial government allowed the Voluntary agencies to take over the responsibilities of the disabled soldiers.<sup>15</sup>

One significant impact of the First and Second World Wars on the colonial world was the consequent emergence of institutionalized veterans' organizations throughout the world, Africa inclusive. The idea of the formation of the Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association (NEWA) emanated from the assumption that government alone could not carry out the gigantic task of catering for the social welfare and future economic situations of the demobilized soldiers of the Second World War. When it was formed, NEWA was affiliated with the British Empire Service League (B.E.S.L) and came under the patronage of His Excellency the Governor-General of colonial Nigeria. Its inaugural Chairperson was Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma.<sup>16</sup>

The mobilization and the difficulties of demobilization of soldiers who were recruited to serve the British colonial government in the execution of the Second World War placed considerable strain on imperial systems which were not completely resolved through postwar reforms. Therefore, the events that led to the subsequent establishment of NEWA were the complaints from the discharged

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<sup>12</sup> Miller, E. A. *Colonial Annual Report on the Department of Labor and the Resettlement* . .op cit. p.18

<sup>13</sup> Abubakar, Muhammad. "The Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association and the Resettlement and Rehabilitation of the World War II Veterans: A Study of an NGO Under Colonial Rule, 1946 – 1960", (PhD History, UNIMAID, Dec. 2015). p. 44

<sup>14</sup> Jeff, D. Grischow, *The Journal of African History*. Vol. 52. No. 2. (London: Cambridge University Press, 2011). P. 180

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Abubakar, Muhammad, "The Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association.... Op cit. P. 45



soldiers from the military service about resettlement and compensation policies.<sup>17</sup> In 1944, an ex-servicemen's division was established in the Department of Labour to register veterans and servicemen. The division registered 3,000 veterans, but the government could find jobs only for 150. Therefore, the general outcomes of the whole scenario of involving colonial subjects in the centre of European conflicts were the pressure for reforms of the entire colonial machinery in order to avoid the inevitable socio-economic and political crisis inherently present in the aftermath of such conflicts.

### Legal Status of NEWA

NEWA appeared as a legal non-governmental organization in the colonial system, supported by the provisions of appropriate colonial legal instruments. Since the British colonial government was not unmindful of the problems of creating jobs for the veterans, it became inevitable to provide a required legal framework for the smooth running of the colonial system. Thus, in March 1945; the Legislative Council passed the Employment of Ex-servicemen's Ordinance, which authorized the government to restore veterans to "civil life". The enactment of this Ordinance led to the establishment of NEWA which took over the assets of the various Pro-war funds and organizations established during the Second World War.<sup>18</sup> This is necessary, because, it is a crucial step toward addressing the socio-economic problems of the African soldiers who participated in the Second World War. Therefore the organization was legally established by the British colonial government in Nigeria. Thus, NEWA was established as a legal veterans' organization by the British colonial government for the purpose of addressing the anticipated challenges associated with the poorly addressed veterans' issues. The law related to the establishment of the veteran organizations in Nigeria is traceable to the enactment of the 1946 Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association (NEWA), ordinance No. 32, which was consolidated in 1948 and 1958. As contained in the 1958 version of the Laws of Nigeria, according to section 3 of this Law; the Nigerian Ex-servicemen/s Welfare Association was established. It constituted a statutory corporation with the powers to sue and be sued in its name. The principal reason for the establishment of the Association is to ensure that the interest of veterans is amply taken care of with adequate legal support for the avoidance of future uncertainties. It was vested with the responsibility of fostering camaraderie and the general welfare of its members.<sup>19</sup> The NEWA (vesting of certain charitable Funds) Act No. 33, 1947 consolidated in 1948 reinforced the Law of 1946, since superseded. In 1960, however, the Law of 1946 as amended was further altered by the NEWA Act No. 42 of 1960 to bring up to date the designation of Governor and vest his functions in the Minister of each of the applicable Region responsible for fraternal matters such as the NEWA. From 1946 to 1964 the legal status of NEWA remained effective and all binding throughout Nigeria. However, with the enactment of the Nigerian Legion Act No. 18, 1964 as amended, the former position of NEWA was changed. According to section 1 of the 1964 Act, the Nigerian Legion was established to replace NEWA.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Toyin Falola, *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. P. 159

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Charles, Mwalimu, *The Nigerian Legal System Vol. 2 Private Law*. Newyork: Peterlang, 2009. P. 1019

<sup>20</sup> Ibid



When NEWA was established it emerged with its structures for the proper conduct of its vested functions. The first Headquarters was positioned in Lagos and branches were opened all over the country, especially in places where there was the existence of large number of ex-servicemen. The northern Nigerian branches had their regional Council in Kaduna. Then sub-committees were formed to ensure the establishment of branches in all the existing districts in Northern Nigeria. The sub-committees were to serve as linkages between the provincial and Regional Councils and remain closer to ex-servicemen in their districts. The representatives of ex-servicemen and Native Authority officials formed the members of the sub-committees.<sup>21</sup> At the central council level, the patron of the organization was His Excellency, Sir Arthur Richards, the Governor-General of Nigeria. The Chairman of the organization was the Area Commander of the Nigerian Regiments, S. MacDonald Smith, and the Vice-Chairman was Captain A. B. Jones. Other members of the Association were: E. D. F. Mann, S. A. I. Bucknor, Officer Commanding 2<sup>nd</sup> Nigerian Regiment and Col. J. S. Vorley served as Treasurer and Secretary of the Association.<sup>22</sup>

At the Regional Council in Kaduna Mr L. H. Goble, Secretary of Northern Provinces served as the Chairman, members were, Captain G. D. Boutflower, Major L. N. Barker, Simpson a military representation, Ciroman Kano, R.S.M. Oseni Bako, Emir of Kontagora, Mr J. Landfield, B. B. W. A. Kaduna, Captain N. P. Roberts, U.A.C. Kano and the secretary was J. G. Lenox-Corynham, the Resettlement officer.<sup>23</sup> When NEWA was established, it took over the control of the Funds of the „Nigerian Ex-servicemen“s“ Benevolent Funds“, better known as „Win-the-War-Fund“, and also the „Disabled-Soldiers Funds. The amount taken over by NEWA was some £65,000, and it was considered insufficient to finance the annual current expenditure of the association. Thus, special appeals were made to help NEWA out of its situation. During the WWII, the Nigerian government made grants available to the Nigerian troops at the war fronts for their welfare under the care of the Officer Commanding the Nigerian Regiments while abroad. These grants were reduced progressively as the demobilization exercise of the returning soldiers progressed. The grant of £8,000 was diverted to NEWA to be used for the welfare of the ex-servicemen in 1948, the year in which the demobilization of Nigerian troops was concluded. The association expected some income of £25,000 in future years which was to come from other sources.<sup>24</sup>

By Ordinance No. 32 of 1946, the government established the Nigerian Ex-servicemen’s Welfare Association, (NEWA), a supposedly non-political charitable association, sponsored by the government and affiliated with the British Empire Service League. NEWA was a statutory corporation whose members at both the national and regional levels were neither elected by nor responsible to the ex-servicemen themselves. NEWA had 87 district councils, two in Lagos, thirty-four in the North, twenty in the West and thirty-one in the East.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Abubakar, Muhammad, “The Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association.... Op cit. P. 45

<sup>22</sup> Abubakar, Muhammad, “The Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association.... Op cit. P. 46

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>25</sup> Abubakar, Muhammad, “The Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association.... Op cit. P. 46



### Other Ex-Servicemen's Organizations

Although NEWA was the most widely recognized ex-servicemen's association during the colonial period, there was existence of many groups of ex-soldiers that formed themselves as unions outside the parameter of colonial control. As early as mid – 1946, there was a national association known as the Nigerian Union of Demobilized Servicemen but it was later overtaken by a much more effective grouping of ex-soldiers known as the Nigerian Ex-servicemen's Union (NESU), and then appeared Nigerian Federation of Ex-servicemen's Association. Each of the above-mentioned groups had a different set of leaders, priorities and strategies, some of them contradictory and conflicting, especially as the ethnic factor began to gain prominence in Nigeria in the 1950s.<sup>26</sup>

### Activities of NEWA: Successes and Challenges

From its inception, NEWA as a charitable organization of ex-servicemen had its overriding functions and responsibilities which made it possible to achieve some of its objectives. The following objectives define the scope of NEWA's activities:

- i. promoting comradeship between ex-servicemen,
- ii. raising and administering funds for the benefit of ex-servicemen,
- iii. assisting necessitous ex-servicemen whether by a grant of money or otherwise,
- iv. establishing and maintaining such welfare Bureau as it may deem fit,
- v. establishing and maintaining such hostels as it may think fit, for aged or infirm ex-servicemen and their families and,
- vi. furthering the general interest and welfare of ex-servicemen.<sup>27</sup>

By 1947 there were more than 100,000 ex-servicemen in Nigeria, and Northern Nigeria was accommodating the largest proportion of this number. And by the same 1947 NEWA was only capable of raising the donation of £67,200 pound sterling which was very insufficient by any standard to cater for the needs of such a large number of ex-soldiers and their dependents. This is the reason why NEWA's capacity failed to address the challenges it faced during the time of its existence. Therefore, since the major elements in the organization were people that shared similar destinies and predetermined ideals of what their lives should look like the organization must employ some strategies in discharging its duties toward the members. In this regard, some basic provisions were made in order to give the organization the maximum opportunity it needed to serve its members efficiently. It is expected that NEWA is poised to provide loans for deserving projects undertaken by ex-soldiers and to assist in the general welfare issues of members it outlines some key areas of interest to its members. NEWA was prepared to provide:

- i. grant to meet the transport of the families of ex-servicemen,
- ii. grant to assist the genuine destitute person who had exhausted his gratuity legitimately and not squandered it,
- iii. grant to assist in technical training or further education which cannot be obtained under government Resettlement schemes,

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<sup>26</sup> Geoffrey, I. Nwaka. "Rebellion in Umuahia, 1950 – 1951: Ex-servicemen ... p. 54

<sup>27</sup> Abubakar, Muhammad, "The Nigerian Ex-servicemen Welfare Association.... Op cit. p. 53





- iv. grant for the education of the eldest son and possible assistance towards scholarships. (This is because District Council's grants were only limited to the fees of the secondary schools),
- v. grant to assist ex-servicemen during the early weeks of his resettlement on a farm to assist him by tools, these were outright grants, not loan,
- vi. to supplement government disability pensions in the case where an ex-servicemen was unable to maintain his family on his own pension and limited earnings,
- vii. grants in case of sickness or accident causing disability incurred after the ex-servicemen's demobilization,
- viii. grants to widows and dependents of ex-servicemen,
- ix. grants to enable destitute ex-servicemen to travel on compassionate ground.<sup>28</sup>

NEWA administered funds vested in it by statute as well as monies derived from government subvention and the proceeds of the annual Poppy Day collection. It is also expected to provide relief for very needy ex-soldiers and their families in the form of hardship allowance and loans for small-scale agricultural or industrial enterprises. The annual reports of NEWA indicate that in the first three years of its existence, it disbursed some £80,000 pound sterling without appreciably affecting the crucial question of unemployment among ex-soldiers. However, NEWA insisted that it would not recognize or cooperate with any ex-servicemen's organization with professed political views or which sought special treatment for ex-servicemen as a class.

Despite its shortfalls in getting the necessary funds to execute its programs, NEWA had attempted to achieve some of its objectives. One area which NEWA made an outstanding contribution to its members was to secure employment by putting pressure on potential employers to consider the applications of the ex-soldiers in accordance with the stipulations of the colonial government's directives. NEWA followed applications to Native Authority institutions, private companies and individual contractors in order to secure employment for its members. Ex-servicemen apprentices were also assisted to acquire necessary skills or other training from different trades and agricultural institutions.<sup>29</sup>

Since resettlement and rehabilitation of ex-soldiers were the key aspects of NEWA's programs, the organization had succeeded in granting loans to its members to the tune of £2:10:00 a month for an unmarried member or £3:0:0d a month for a married member. The amount was usually given to those apprentices to enable them to acquire requisite skills from their masters. The amount was also paid directly to the master who trained the apprentices and this exercise was to last for six months only. NEWA had succeeded in providing accommodation for the old and disabled ex-servicemen in various parts of the provinces. In places like Jos and Maiduguri, "Sabon Gida" and Sojiri" were established respectively as permanent settlements for ex-servicemen, a legacy that still remains standing. In several other provinces, such infrastructure was absent because a large number of ex-servicemen were accommodated by their family members after they were demobilized from the army.<sup>30</sup> NEWA had also succeeded in its efforts to improve the welfare of the ex-servicemen by

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<sup>28</sup> Servicemen Welfare Association.... Op cit. p. 51

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>30</sup> Servicemen Welfare Association.... Op cit. P. 45



building additional vocational training centres in arts and crafts and also started ex-servicemen's clubs and recreational halls in towns where there were a good number of ex-servicemen.<sup>31</sup>

NEWA had been facing several challenges since its foundation in 1947 ranging from a poor turnout of its members during its annual and seasonal activities to revenue generation difficulties. Many members of the association were not giving it the required cooperation to serve them better, in fact, some members were not mindful of the existence of the association. The sources of revenue that NEWA enjoyed were seriously inadequate. The main sources of its revenue were the government's benevolent subvention, contributions from the general public and proceeds from Poppy Day sales. The collections from these sources were sometimes negligible and in others outright absence of any significant response. This rendered the association almost incapable of achieving many of its objectives on a substantial scale.<sup>32</sup> Another area where NEWA faced serious challenges was the area of unpaid pensions and gratuities and other allowances on discharge from the duty of its numerous members. In other instance, the difficulties associated with obtaining the war medals of its distinguished members as well as rectification of disputed entries in some ex-servicemen's discharge papers constituted a serious threat to its ability to discharge its duties effectively.

### **Conclusion**

The outbreaks of the Second World War and its attendant outcomes provided the enabling environment for the emergence and proliferation of Veterans' organizations in Nigeria in particular and the rest of Africa in general. NEWA, being a government-sponsored and recognized Ex-servicemen organization played a prominent role in making the life of the demobilized soldiers bearable to some extent. However, the activities of the organization remained largely regulated by the colonial government, thus, making the organization less active in the discharge of its primary responsibility. It was this reality that forced some elements, among the veterans to challenge the monopolistic tendencies of NEWA, where they came up with the idea of the establishment of the Nigerian Legion against the British colonial interest. Nigerian Legion was unofficially established in 1946 despite vehement but cautious resentment from the British colonial government in Nigeria. However, throughout the colonial period, Nigerian Legion was not given much credence by the colonial government because of its political susceptibility and the fragile nature of the entire colonial system at that time. Therefore, Nigerian Legion was only granted parliamentary recognition in 1964, as an official version of the Ex-servicemen organization in Nigeria.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Servicemen Welfare Association.... Op cit.P. 46



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