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Social Implications of Human Waste Disposal in Nigeria Prisons: A Case Study of Prisons in Akwa Ibom State

Etim, Paulinus Emmanuel

Department of Geography & Regional Planning

University of Uyo, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT - The social implications in mode of human waste disposal in Nigeria prisons in Akwa Ibom State were investigated. Result of the study revealed that Uyo prison and Ikot Abasi Prison adopt the bucket system and use the inmates to dispose of the waste indiscriminately around the prison environment. In Ikot Ekpene prison, water closets are maintained with tolerable sanitary condition. Social implication of some disposal methods relates to dehumanization of the inmates involved in transporting the waste to the dump sites. Pollution of the immediate environment and water bodies have resulted in the outbreak of epidemic within the prison environment. Introduction of water flush system toilets in all the prisons and enlightenment on the proper usage can greatly improve sanitation and health in our prisons.

KEYWORDS: Bucket System, inmates, dehumanization, conventional use, water flush system.

INTRODUCTION

Waste refers to any material considered to be no longer useful and which may be dumped and thrown away. There are two main types of waste namely, solid and liquid waste. The solid waste refers to domestic waste like waste from food preparation, sweeping, discarded household items. Another solid waste is municipal waste i.e. waste generated in commercial centres. The third solid waste is industrial waste, for example, wood waste, waste from abattoirs and food processing industries, metal scraps from garages. The liquid waste refers mainly

to industrial waste and this includes effluent from industrial activities and human waste (excreta).

For the purpose of this study, the main focus shall be on human waste and its implication in mode of disposal in Nigeria Prison Service. According to the World Health Organization, 80% of death in developing countries are due to problems with water and the disposal of human waste (Penal Reform International 2000). Human waste contains viruses, bacteria and microbes of all kinds constituting a high risk for public health. Apart from the sanitary aspects, bad management of the disposal of such waste inevitably leads to soil destruction and pollution of the air and nearby water sources. Although this is of course a universal problem, it is even more relevant in context of African Prisons, which are overcrowded, lacking resources and are often in a state of dilapidation.

The perusal of literature brings home the fact that we have only fragmentary information on the subject of mode of human waste disposal (toilet) as a private secluded place to help the body relieve its waste. Toilet is part of history of human hygiene which is a critical chapter in the history of human civilization and which cannot be isolated. Toilet is a critical link between order and disorder and between *good and bad environment*.

In a situation where one ignores the subject of toilet and the disposal of the human waste, when the society is faced with human excretions (urine and faecal matter) with totally inadequate system of its collection and disposal, the society thus has a constant threat to health hazards and epidemics. It was only in the 16th century that a technological break through came about and which help, the human beings to have clean toilets in houses. This break through did not come about easily and human race had to live in insanitary conditions for thousands of years. (Bindeswar, 1995). In contrast, the twentieth century had given a pride of place to toilet in the home rather these are more opulent, more spacious than anytime in the past. While the provision of toilet in the house solve household problem of cleanliness, the challenge remained as to how to dispose of human waste at city level. This was also solved when the sewerage system was introduced. (Haussamann 1858). Haussamann described beautifully the sewage system. He said that "The underground galleries which are the organs of the big city will work in the same way as organs of the body, without being revealed..." In 1970, realizing the sewage facilities will remain out of the reach of the society at large, Sulabh international introduced a pioneer technological twin pour flush latrines and human excreta based biogas plants. This, we believe gives an appropriate solution to dispose off and recycle of human waste into fertilizes, electricity, and working gas.

Musa, (1990) confirmed that since the establishment of Uyo prison at the present site and the construction of staff quarters in 1959, there is hardly a change in mode of disposal of the human waste rather than the bucket systems provided for such purposes in each of the apartment. He also stated, that two world wars and economic recession, which followed, had worsened the condition of prisons. The present day worldwide humanizing attitude towards imprisonment started at this period. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for prevention of crime and treatment of offenders adopted in 1955 influenced many countries towards the new directive, although the situation has not been fully realized in many countries of the world, there are increasing evidences to show that even those which have embraced the new philosophy are beginning to have a second look at the efficacy of the new approach.

At a workshop organized for District Environmental Management Committees of the eighteen districts in the Ashanti region, poor sanitation ranked among the first three environmental problems in most cases. Poor handling, treatment and disposal of waste stems from a variety of economic, social and cultural conditions. These conditions could be summed up in one word "Hazard". Hazard, after Zimmermann's interpretation, only exist relative to human activity, aspirations and needs. In the context of Barrows (1923), the work started with a focus upon flooding problems in the United States, and consequently covers other individual hazards, multiple hazards in regions and man-made hazards. This researched paradigm originally designed for natural hazards has proven equally applicable for man-made hazards particularly in the area of pollution (waste). Before pollution can be controlled, hazard researchers believe that improved understanding is needed for the sources, extent and response to contamination in affected areas. Determining the perception of pollution is viewed as a basic component of research directed towards effective social control of environmental disruption.

This study shall concentrates mainly on Akwa Ibom State prisons and focus shall be purely on human waste, method of disposal and the implications of such disposal on the staff and inmates of the prison. The objective of the study shall include the following:

- (a) To improve the health hygienic condition in the prisons.
- (b) To assess the methods of waste disposal in the prisons.
- (c) To Identify the problems associated with the method of the disposal.
- (d) To make recommendations based on findings.

The study relevance shall be based on the fact that awareness shall make sanitary conditions to be improved in the prisons. What is obvious is that in the face of increasing pollution prospect in the Nigeria Prison Service, very little has been done to study and assess them. This study shall serve the purpose by identifying the lapses and correcting them where necessary.

STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in the Nigeria prisons service, Akwa Ibom State. The Akwa Ibom State prison command consist of five (5) prison stations namely, Uyo prison Ikot Ekpene prison, Eket prisons, Abak prison and Ikot Abasi prison. For the purpose of this study, three (3) prisons were randomly selected which include Uyo prison, Ikot Ekepne prison and Ikot Abasi prison to cover the three (3) geopolitical zones of Akwa Ibom State. Uyo prison was first sited at Ibia Oku waterside at the edge of Uyo central Ravine in 1930 by the then Divisional Officer Mr. Brooks. The lack of land for expansion necessitated movement of the prison to the present location by the then district officer, Major James in 1959. (Musa, E. 1989) Ikot Ekpene prison is situated along Aba – Uyo road. Information regarding the establishment of the prison could not be obtained. This is attributed to effect of civil war in the prison between the years. 1960 – 1970.

Ikot Abasi prison is located at the southern end of Ikot Abasi. The prison is flanked by the police station, High Court and Opobo Boat – Yard Quarters. The present prison was changed from Opobo prison to Ikot Abasi prison in 1912 by Mohammed Bello Boundary Adjustment which removed Opobo town from Cross River State to River State.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study data were obtained from survey of the areas selected. Oral interviews with the inmates and officers occupying government quarters was a vital part that gave much information on the subject matter. Data were also obtained from the prison medical units to ascertain the health status of the inmates between 1990 – 2000. Secondary data were also employed, making use of official reports and publication from internet and journals.

DATA PRESENTATION: *The Related diseases as outcome of environmental pollution encountered by prison inmates from 1990 – 2000.*

DISEASE AND NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES PER YEAR												
	Total	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990
Scabies	4045	479	261	359	300	483	477	462	344	301	258	321
Ring Worm	3753	449	385	316	495	463	312	305	200	266	306	256
Ezema	4043	337	440	356	478	420	323	318	208	496	407	260
Herpes Zoster	3489	451	260	318	346	333	206	210	349	214	680	122
Herpes	2160	302	103	110	202	304	361	136	102	205	226	109
Cholera	2483	316	321	106	137	146	391	206	112	325	254	169
Typhoid fever	2109	269	241	260	153	174	182	269	132	144	163	122
Dysentery	2760	290	343	368	137	142	266	111	278	269	365	199
Hernia	1206	113	79	108	156	109	131	92	65	69	163	121
Peptic Ulcer	1347	96	62	92	99	167	198	124	113	108	156	132
Pyronichia	63	07	04	03	03	03	05	09	10	07	04	8
Tonsillitis	51	02	05	13	06	03	04	02	02	08	02	4
Angular	77	03	03	10	03	05	09	10	14	03	06	11
Hypertension	87	10	14	13	08	06	03	08	07	05	07	6
Conjunctivitis	39	05	04	02	02	03	06	06	02	03	04	2
Rectocele	32	03	03	02	02	04	03	04	05	02	02	2
Haemorrhoid	68	16	10	03	02	02	06	08	02	04	09	6
Anaemia	96	10	05	05	04	02	07	09	15	11	10	18
Arthritis	81	07	06	04	03	03	12	10	03	06	12	15
Otitismedia	51	02	02	11	06	04	06	02	03	03	04	8
Demencia	145	11	14	20	09	07	05	10	20	15	11	23
Schizophrenia	116	06	15	11	10	06	08	03	05	09	13	20

Source: Prison Infirmary

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result from interview showed that Uyo prison and Ikot Abasi prison adopted the primitive system of defecating, by using bucket systems. Findings from Ikot Ekpene prison showed that there was some extent of sanitary where the water flush system are practicable in the prison yard, while in the staff quarters, a central pit toilet is introduced. It was also evidenced that both the prison yard and the staff quarters of Uyo and Ikot Abasi prison were colonially constructed to carry the attached bucket in each of the apartments.

The content of these bucket (excreta) are disposed off daily in a dehumanizing manner, by the prison inmates and escorted by the prison staff (see figure 1).



Fig 1: Inmates carrying excreta in buckets

The dump sites and paths leading to the toilet locations extremely unsightly.



Fig 2: Excreta dump sites in Nigeria Prisons.

Uyo Prison in particular is facing an unsustainable situation. The prisoners live crammed together in the cells, in extremely precarious conditions of health and hygiene. In this situation, the capacity of the sanitary facilities, which were built for a much smaller population, is far below requirements. When speaking with occupants of the quarters, studies also revealed that a lot of people complained of diseases and noisome smell directly linked to these indiscriminate defecating and disposal. These diseases range from skin infections like scabies, ringworm, ezema, herpes zoster, herpes simplex and others like cholera, malaria, dysentery, hemia, peptic ulcer anaemia, arthritis, demencia, schizopremia and other related diseases.



Fig. 3: Excreta being disposed of behind the prison farmland.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Disposal of waste (excreta) in the surrounding environment of Uyo and Ikot Abasi prisons poses numerous problem due to lack of awareness of the health implication of insanitary practices and absence of modern toilet facilities in the prisons. Seasoned measures are here recommended to mitigate against poor waste management in the prisons. These include:

1. Environmental education should be conducted in the Nigeria Prison Service to create awareness of the consequence of poor waste disposal.
2. Provision of the requisite sanitary facilities like the water flush system toilets, tissue papers etc for the staff and inmates of the prisons.
3. If awareness of the hazard, means of coping with its existence and feeling of the community about what should be done are ascertained, policy makers should be able to select strategies which will be accepted by the affected areas.

4. There should be an introduction of the principle of biogas in the prisons. This will enable the destruction of all the organic waste by microbes, using a unit of waste treatment. During this process, the microbes use part of the organic material to produce gas while the rest constitutes a liquid substrate that has been purified of its pathogenic substances and can be used as a fertilizer. The biogas technique does not constitute a hygiene risk as there is very little handling of the waste and the germs are destroyed during the process.

CONCLUSION

Hippocrates the father of medicine (C 400 BC) considered the human environment as the most important factor affecting the well being of man. The quality of air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the lifestyle we live all affect our well-being. Certainly, the pollution or contamination of the human environment affects our cultural well-being. Once this complex in which we live is polluted, human life is endangered. (THE GUARDIAN May 31, 2005, P. 65)

Seeing this challenge, the subject of toilet and its sanitary aspect is as important if not more than other social challenges like literacy, poverty, education and employment. Rather, subject of toilet is more important because lack of excremental hygiene is a national health hazards while in other problems the implications are relatively closer to only those who suffer from employment, illiteracy and poverty. The study of the toilet and its hygienically condition is an important subject matter.

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