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Housing and environmental improvement in Nigeria

Administrative and technical strategies

ABSTRACT:

The various types of housing systems in Nigeria were studied and the differences noted. The existing public health facilities within the different systems in various cities, towns and villages were assessed, identifying areas of sufficiency and deficiency. The need for environmental improvement in all categories of housing systems was established and far-reaching suggestions and recommendations which will ensure a definite improvement in the quality of housing and environment were made.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND NATIONAL AWARENESS:

Various Nigerians including but not limited to Aluko, Fadahunsi, O. O. Oladapo, Oluwande and Obadina have, at various times and places talked about different aspects of environmental problems, protection of the Nigerian environment and even conservation of resources in achieving solutions to the problems of the environment. The most striking and most relevant landmark in national awareness in Housing and the Environment was in 1976 (the environmental sanitation year) when the Nigerian Society of Engineers chose the theme for that year's Annual engineering conference as "Housing and Environmental Development in Nigeria". The conference was held in Port Harcourt and useful recommendations were made.

NATIONAL AWARENESS:

National awareness of the need for the improvement of the environment among individuals communities, local, state and the federal government in Nigeria has always been on the increase. In 1983 the Environmental Pollution Agency Bill was submitted to the National Assembly but unfortunately it never became law before the new administration took over on December 31, 1983. The awareness, since 1984 can be said to be unprecedented.

There was hardly any week in 1984 that the mass media particularly the press does not carry an article or a policy statement either by an individual or an agency or representative of government on the issue. Sanitation committees and task forces have been set up by some state governments while sanitation edicts have been promulgated by some. Silent wars in one form or the other are being waged against filth in different parts of the country. This national awareness is undoubtedly the first right step in the improvement of the environment in which the various housing systems and patterns develop.

LAND DEVELOPMENT AND TOWN PLANNING:

Aside from population the most important factor that affects environmental development and improvement in Nigeria today is land development. This is because the type of land development and housing patterns can, to a large extent, dictate the type and/or cost of any sanitation and surface water systems to be provided or the type of environmental improvement that can be embarked upon. In areas where the buildings are closely grouped together difficulties occur with respect to access and available space for construction of facilities to improve the environment. On the other hand in areas where the buildings are too widely spaced the costs of sophisticated environmental improvement facilities like sewerage are usually not within reach of the few people that live on the land.

Planning of development in most of the cities, towns and communities in Nigeria today has been devoid of all-embracing overall plans and control has been the responsibility of various government agencies without adequate coordination. While markets, motor-parks, council roads, maternity centres and dispensaries are controlled by the local government, state buildings, state roads, some new estates and the state Government

Residential Areas are all controlled and maintained by the state governments. The Federal Government however looks after the development, improvement and control of Federal roads and buildings. The various Planning Authorities all over the country are in charge of development and control of privately owned estates. The unpatriotic and corrupt attitude of many officials in the Planning Authorities have contributed in no small measure to development of modern slums. In addition to the controlled housing development enumerated above, random unplanned and uncontrolled housing development resulting in traditional slums still exists in the 'Old Town' areas of Nigerian cities. Within these central core areas the greatest problem inhibiting environmental improvement is access. There is no doubt that the apparent lack of coordination among the various government agencies controlling different portions of the cities towns and communities is a basic vital factor affecting environmental improvement.

HOUSING PATTERNS AND QUALITY OF HOUSES:

Before any specific improvement in the quality of the environment can be suggested recommended or implemented mention has to be made of the patterns of housing and quality of the houses themselves. In Nigeria today, all possible housing patterns and house qualities exist. These can be itemised as follows:

- (a) Old Development
- (b) Private New Development
- (c) Government Residential Areas and Government Agency Owned Estates
- (d) Rural Development.

The pattern of housing in the central core of Abeokuta is shown in Table I.

STRATEGIES FOR BETTER HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT:

1. Administration:

In order to ensure effective implementation of the technical recommendations in this paper and reduce or remove the present state of confusion in the administration of Housing and Environmental Improvement, it is imperative to establish relevant organised bodies and restructure existing ones in Housing and Environment at the Federal, State and Local Government levels in Nigeria. This could take the following forms:

- (a) The Housing Division of the Federal Ministry of Housing and Environment should be merged with the Federal Housing Authority to be in full control of Federal Housing matters including regional, urban and rural planning in the country. The new set up should operate on profit-oriented basis and cater for itself and coordinate the activities of the states counterparts.
 - (b) The Housing Divisions of the State Ministries of Works and Housing should be merged with the State Housing Corporations or Authorities and Boards to be in full control of all State Housing Matters including urban and rural planning in the State. They must also operate on profit-oriented basis and fend for themselves.
 - (c) The long awaited Environmental Protection Agency must be set up immediately and absorb the Environment Division of the Federal Ministry of Environment to be in charge of regulation, prevention or control of environmental hazards at the Federal level. It should coordinate the activities of the State counterparts.
 - (d) The Public Health divisions of all the Local Governments in the country whose manpower, to date are grossly inadequate should be merged with Sewerage and Drainage divisions of the States Ministries of Works and Housing to constitute State Wastes Disposal Boards to be in charge of wastes collection and disposal and control of environmental hazards in the States.
 - (e) A Coordination Bureau for Housing and Environment must be set up to do nothing but coordination of the activities of the Federal and State Housing Organisations and Wastes Disposal Boards as well as those of the existing Federal Ministry of Water Resources and the States Housing Corporations and Boards and relevant Institutions of Higher Learning.
- ##### 2. Institutional and Industrial Cooperation:

To date, there has not been any marked relationship between institutions and industries on one hand and Government Agencies on the other in matters relating to the problems of the

TABLE I - PATTERN OF HOUSING IN THE CENTRAL CORE

Sample Area No.	1	2	3	4	5	6
No. of Compounds	27	20	14	6	9	13
No. of Houses in Compounds	126	118	63	26	81	64
No. of Single Houses	6	7	4	26	4	1
Total No. of Dwelling Houses	132	125	67	52	85	65

environment. The little study carried out for this paper revealed that NISER made an effort in 1974 in this direction when it organised a seminar on Research Needs in the Field of Environmental Sanitation. A few meetings were held by key participants in the Seminar as a follow up to the seminar. Since 1976, nothing has been heard again and the relationship between that institution and the then Ibadan Wastes Disposal Board has been killed. In 1977, Adedipe and Nwoboshi both of the University of Ibadan prepared a paper for the Ford Foundation, West Africa Office on Resource and Environment-Oriented Research Programmes in the Ibadan Area and recommended among others that the Foundation should consider supporting of research programmes in Environmental Sanitation, Land Use and Natural Resource Management, Pollution of Air, Water and Food. The strong recommendation put forward in this paper is that Industries should be sponsoring environment-oriented research programmes by cooperating with the various institutions where relevant courses are offered. The institutions, must however, ensure that the research subjects to be approved are those that are relevant to the Nigerian environment. Also both the institutions and industries must ensure adequate cooperation with the various tiers of governments in ensuring that existing and would-be legislations to protect and improve the quality of housing and environment are strictly abided with.

3. Housing Improvement:

Some of the strategies which can be adopted to ensure Housing improvement in Nigeria today include:

Slum Upgrading:

So far, only Lagos can be said to have experienced an amount of slum upgrading in Nigeria. As a matter of fact cities and towns like Abeokuta, Ibadan, Oyo, Bauchi, Kano, Onitsha, Asaba, etc. are all long overdue for slum upgrading. Nigerians have always reacted sharply against slum upgrading. This is mainly because residents to be affected are always reluctant to leave the environment in which they have been for years. Slum upgrading projects have now assumed international outlook. Casablanca in Morocco, Peru, Togo and Tamale in Ghana have all benefited from USAID in this direction.

Housing Finance for Existing Substandard Houses:

The policy of different housing agencies in Nigeria on loans is to grant loans for new buildings. To ensure the much desired good physical and mental health for Nigerians and a healthful environment for them, this policy must right away include loans on low interest basis for home improvements. Alternatively, the loans may be in form of tools and materials to be paid for by the beneficiary.

Decentralization of Urban Development:

This is an area where Nigeria governments, federal and state have not shown much interest. Except for Ajoda in Oyo State and Abuja the new Federal Capital, development of secondary cities has been at a standstill since Adam. Though creation of secondary cities can be expensive, it should be noted that the environmental problems created in the existing big cities may, without adequate control cost more to abate than developing new settlements, well planned and more organised than older towns.

4. Environmental Improvement:

In order to ensure improvement in the quality of the Nigerian environment some of the most vital steps to take include the following:

War Against Garbage:

The overall strategies for improved refuse collection consist of:

A study to provide the guidelines of the most suitable method for the particular community.

Pilot schemes to test the proposed methods.

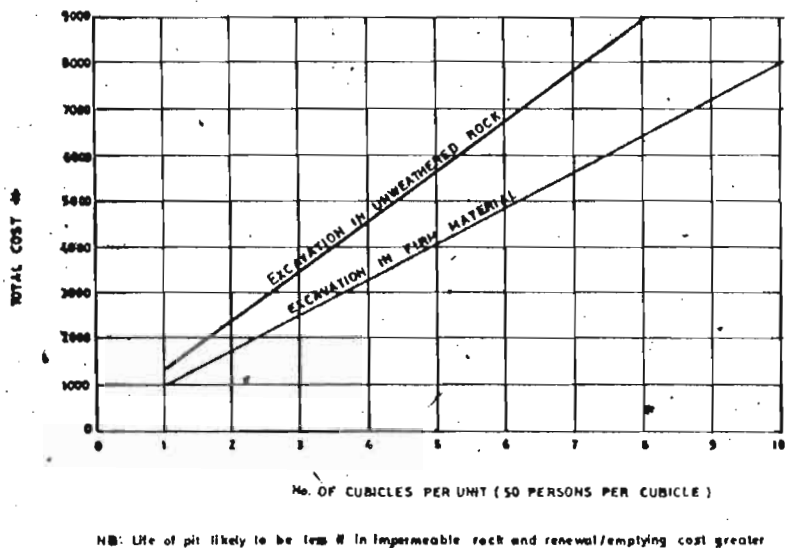


FIG 1

COST GRAPH - PIT LATRINES

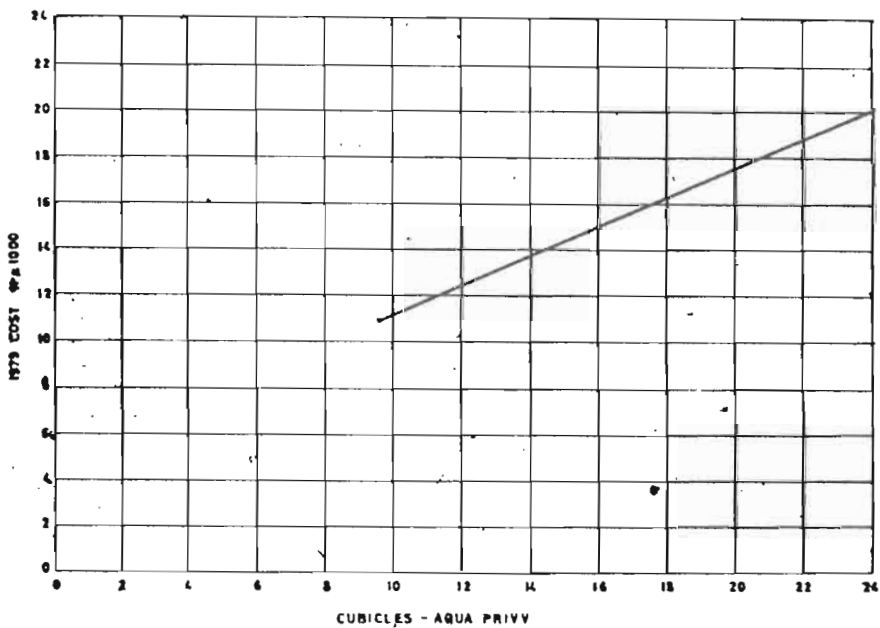


FIG 2

COST GRAPH - AQUA PRIVIES

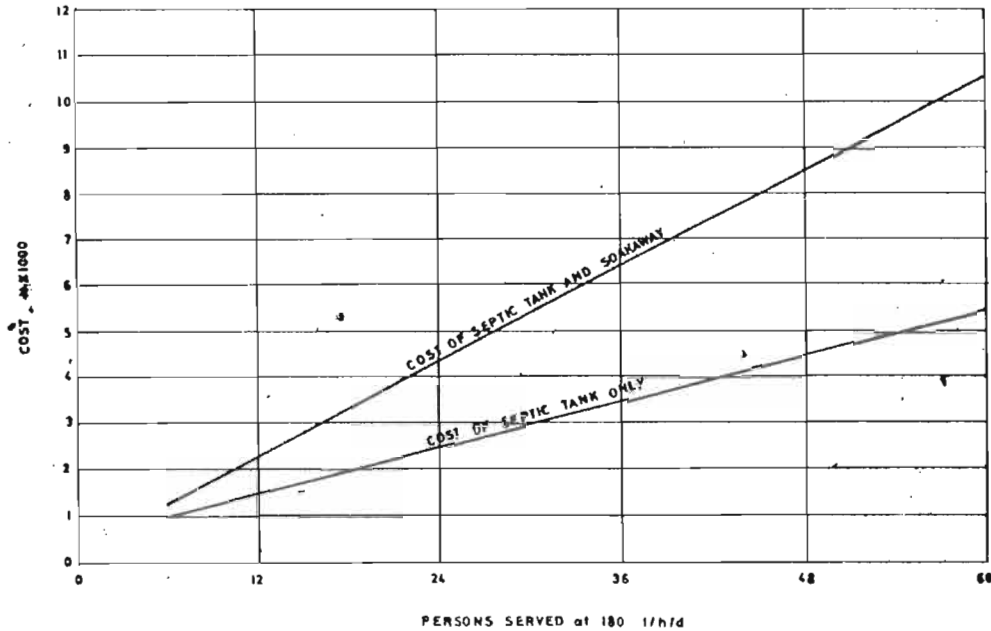


FIG. 3 COST GRAPH - SEPTIC TANKS

Preparation of masterplans based on the result of the pilot projects and

A meticulous implementation of the Masterplan.

Appropriate Technology for Sanitation:

Results of various studies in which the author has been involved in Nigeria since 1969 have shown very glaringly that more than 80% of the population of the study areas cannot afford the capital cost of the sewerage system. Therefore the only reasonable strategy for Nigeria to adopt for excreta and wastewater collection and disposal is the 'Appropriate Technology' options. The cost graphs for some of these options for the City of Abeokuta on which the author worked in 1980 are shown in Figs. 1 to 3.

Sanitation in Housing Estates:

Most of the package treatment plants installed in many housing estates in Nigeria have broken down for years for lack of spare parts with no hope of reactivation. In the light of these, wherever sewerage is to be installed, the treatment recommended is the Wastes Stabilisation Pond System - reasonably effective, cheap and hardly breaks down.

Appropriate Technology for Water Supply:

Like for sanitation, the immediate measures strategy for supply of water to Nigerians is by construction of deep wells and boreholes both filtered with either handpump or submersible powered pump where possible.

CONCLUSION:

Before Nigeria can be certain of an improvement in the quality of its housing and environment it must first of all discard the idea of keeping up with the Joneses, hold the bull by the horn in making necessary administrative reorganisations, start improvement in low-income communities, put aside sophisticated tastes and concentrate on low-cost options appropriate technology and recognise the need for multi disciplinary approach, coordination and cooperation among various government bodies, industries and institutions of higher learning to achieve the much need housing and environmental improvement.

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