

**FACTORS AFFECTING ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION AND ROLES
OF SANITARY OFFICERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY IN ESAN WEST
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE.**

BY

RICHARD ONOIGBORIA OKAKA^{1,2}, AND OKONIGENE D.²

Abstract

The paper tried to examine the factors affecting environmental sanitation and the roles of sanitary officers in the 21st century in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State. The paper tried to define environmental sanitation, the role of good environmental sanitation, the economic benefits and the good functions of environmental health officers. The paper concluded that environmental sanitation is the basis for the protection, promotion and reservation of good health and therefore recommended amongst others that the government must create budget for environmental health programmes, and that private sector participation should be encouraged.

Keywords: Sanitation, Health, Environmental sanitation, Hazard, Health Officer.

Introduction

Esan West Local Government is one of the eighteen local governments in Edo State and its headquarter is Ekpoma. It is made up of ten wards. There is one state university and several markets and the people are predominantly farmers. The population of the local government is 125,842 (National Population Commission, 2003). Environmental sanitation has become tropical world wide,

^{1,2} DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AMBROSE ALLI UNIVERSITY
EKPOMA, EDO STATE.

so much that no day passes by without the issue discussed somewhere in the world. Environment is defined as consisting of the air, water, land, human beings or animals living herein and the inter-relationship which exist among these or any of them (Osakwe, 2005).

Sanitation refers to safe disposal of human waste or excreta. Access to adequate sanitation implies the availability of hygienic facilities at convenient distance for users. This is important for the women and girl child who are at risk of being exposed to physical attack or molestation if they have to travel long distances at night to use toilet facilities. Poor school attendance of the girl child, especially during menstrual period is attributed to the absence of adequate sanitation in school. This situation is made worse if girls have to share the same toilets with boys. In the same cases, a significant drop in school enrolment of the girl child is traceable to the absence of adequate sanitation facility in school (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2007)

It is estimated that about 2.6 billion people representing about 40 percent of the world population do not have access to safe or improved sanitation: of these about 77 percent live in rural Areas. A survey conducted for the federal ministry of water resources in 1997 showed that 70 percent of household in small towns (semi urban areas) rely on pit latrine for disposal of human waste. The national policy on water supply and sanitation reckons that only 29 percent of those living in rural areas have access to safe sanitation while 42 percent of those living in Urban and semi-urban areas have access to safe sanitation, millennium Development goals report 2004 for Nigeria puts access to safe sanitation in rural and urban areas of 45 percent.

The result of care welfare indication Questionnaire (CWIQ) survey on access to safe sanitation in urban and rural areas of Nigeria for the 36 states of the federation and the capital Territory shows that there is a higher level of access to safe sanitation in the urban areas (67.6 percent) than in the rural areas (38.2 percent). These are clearly shown in table 1 below.

Table 1.1: Access to Safe Sanitation in Nigeria by States

State	Rural %	Urban %
Abia	53.1	95
Adamawa	23.6	34.9
Akwa Ibom	37.9	82.4
Anambra	26.3	39.4
Bauchi	88.5	95
Bayelsa	32	1.9
Benue	39	65.6
Borno	29.1	44.1
Cross River	13.7	66.2
Delta	44	73.8
Ebonyi	37.1	65.1
Edo	28.6	90
Ekiti	52.1	70
Enugu	26.4	32.2
F. C. T.	35.8	49.4
Gombe	22	39.1
Imo	37.2	60.4
Jigawa	64.1	76.8
Kaduna	62.7	90.9
Kano	34.3	60.5
Kastina	38.4	62.8
Kebbi	34.4	58.9
Kogi	31.4	51.9
Kwara	61.4	82.1
Lagos	74.3	84.1
Nassarawa	38.6	38.6
Niger	54	82.7
Ogun	38.7	87.6
Ondo	44.7	83.5

Osun	66.9	81.2
Oyo	66.5	85.4
Plateau	19.1	81.9
Rivers	44.2	68.4
Sokoto	45.5	81.4
Taraba	16.9	31.8
Yobe	36.5	50.4
Zamfara	45	71.9

Source: National Bureau of Statistic 2006 Core Welfare Indication Questionnaire (CWIQ) Survey

The world health in recognition of the importance of environmental sanitation declared 1981 to 1990 as international drinking water and sanitation decade. It is ironical to say that this was far from being achieved as the world body failed to recognize that not only was change in behavior required to ensure that facilities are correctly utilized but the intervention must be so designed that they are acceptable to the recipient community whether it be rural or urban.

Objectives of Environmental Sanitation

OTTAH (2000) listed the objectives of environmental sanitation as follows. Environmental sanitation is to create and maintain condition in the environment that will promote health and prevent diseases. Man's environment contains elements which are essential for life and maintenance of good health. In addition the environment contains potential hazards. Man has wide range of tolerance of environmental conditions because of his ability to adapt such biological adaptation was it limit and breakdown of adaptation represent the unset of disease.

However, one of the ways to prevent the breakdown of adaptation is by reducing the hazardous and hostile elements in the environment through proper environmental sanitation.

Focus of Environmental Sanitation

Environmental sanitation in particular deals with; Sanitary disposal of refuse and sewage to keep our surroundings in healthy condition. Water sanitation to ensure that water is portable, safe and wholesome. Provision of good housing to ensure that they provide as few opportunities as possible for the transmission of diseases and also promote healthful habit for its occupation. Pollution control and noise abatement. Good sanitation or hygiene while others like markets and instrumental health control form part of environmental health practice. Control of insect vectors and often post also animals referrals of infection.

The Edo state government, in recognition of the importance of environmental sanitation, declared the last Saturday of every month as environmental sanitation day in line with the WHO declaration of 1981 - 1990 as the decade of sanitation and safe drinking water.

Roles of good sanitation in health and productivity

The roles of good sanitation of the environment cannot be stressed enough given that improvement of environmental condition was recognized as crucial to public health even before discovering the microbes and their link disease and death. Apart from cholera and other diarrhea diseases, numerous other diseases come to us through poor environmental conditions and faulty habits. Thus, with good environment sanitations, communicable and most non communicable diseases will be a thing of the past hence promoting health and longevity and improving productivity as numerous man hours lost in hospitals and other health care centres would have been gained. Also government spending on curative services will be channeled to improving preventive facilities and building industries. Good environmental conditions encourage learning at industries and promote concentration and productivity in industrial setting. Even at leisure or recreation, sanitation promotes good psychological dispositions and indeed

positive health behaviors. On the contrary, poor environmental conditions encourage stress, poor concentration, increased accidents, diseases and invariably death. (Annonwu, C.O, Amadi A., Nwankwo, B., Nnadozie, Oguejiofor, N., Nwoga, K., Uchechukwu, O. 2009).

Economic benefits of environmental sanitation

A proper and efficient of environment sanitation wards off diseases thereby promoting good health and longevity. A good environment attracts investors. It improve the aesthetic value of every nation. It has an economic cost advantage in that people spend less to ward off diseases than to embark on disease cures. It encourages international trade thereby generating revenue for the nation. It enables a high global rating for the nation and elevates our reputation. A clean environment can serve as huge collateral for any nation in terms of loan or grants. It creates room for cross fertilization of resources, since most foreigners would settle in the place, introducing their economic strategies which will boost the

existing economy inter-alia. It enables a nation to be part of the global campaign on the preference for preventive medicine in place of clinical medicine. (Zaccheaus, 2008)

Factors affecting environmental sanitation in Esan West Local Government Area

Factors affecting environmental sanitation in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State in the 21st century are: lack of fund, lack of equipment for environmental sanitation exercise, lack of enforcement, absence of refuse bin, absence of refuse dump site, socio-cultural belief, lack of information, shortage of sanitation officers, political will and commitment, negative attitude of people towards sanitation practice.

Lack of fund (Finance)

Environmental pollution be in one hand, air or water needs huge financial involvement to remedy. For instance oil spill on water need million of naira to arrest the situation. Money that could have been used for developmental projects, improve

workers welfare or education and research is diverted to solve pollution problem (Olomukoro, 2010). Fund for environmental health (EH) services have been poor over the years compared with other sub-sector.

Lack of equipment for environmental sanitation exercise

All equipment for environmental health services are imported, local fabrication is not encourage. Due to high cost and lack of sustained commitment on the government, essential equipment are hardly imported (Aniefrok, 2005).

Enforcement of government Policy (Weak)

Many people had agreed that policies are non-existent but the fact is that no nation exists without one form of policy or other. Policies directed towards improving environmental health services in Nigeria are weak and ineffective. In addition to this is the fact that most environmental health legislation are either obsolete, inconsistent or had failed to take cognizance of the cultural setting in which they are supposed to operate and

this calls for serious concern. The immediate need for a suitable legislation to address specific environmental health issue is urgent (Alaniya, 2005).

Absence of refuse bin

Effective waste management cannot be complete without a final disposal site. In Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, there is no sanitary land fill site anywhere.

Lack of information

June 28th of every year was declared as a 'national environmental sanitation day by President Olusegun. It is the responsibility of the government to educate the masses through appropriate agencies of the menace of government should aim of achieving environmental objectives, by educations the masses on the importance of environmental sanitation.

Absence of disposal site

The Urban and rural areas of the Esan west local government area are closely associated with unsanitary conditions is accumulation of filth and garbage.

In this local government there is no sewage systems in any town open drains and septic tank are the order of the day. Sometimes most of the sewage are discharged into the sea which are the source of drinking water for both human and animals.

Political will and commitment

In Esan west local government, there is poor political will and commitment towards environmental sanitation. The lack of political will also include the lack will to make realistic plans and the poor will to implement plans. There is need to increase the commitment of all.

Lack of manpower

Most local government lack qualified man power to carry out environmental sanitation in their respective local government areas. For environmental to be comprehensive and total there should be qualified man-power to carry out the effective assignment in their areas of assignment.

Negative attitude toward environmental sanitation

Environmental health awareness is very low among Nigerians and the people

of Esan west local government of Edo state, hence there is few participation in environmental health by members. Today in the 21st century people still regard issues like waste management as solely government responsibility lance to play little or no role of all.

Effiong and Samuel (2006) also list the problems of Environmental sanitation to include: climatic and ecological factors, underdevelopment and prevailing socio-economic conditions (infrastructural limitations, settlement patters, living standard), illiteracy, poor public enlightenment and lack of community involvement, limited/poor planning and organizations of environmental sanitation programmes (inadequate advice/limited competence and poor operational mechanism/machines).

Functions of environmental health officers (EHOS)

Environmental health officers (also known as public health inspectors) are responsible for carrying out measures for protecting public health, including administering and enforcing legislation related to environmental

health and providing support to minimize health and safety hazards. They are involved in a variety of activities for example inspecting good facilities, invert gating public health nuisances and implementing disease control.

Environmental Health Officers (EHOS) are focused on prevention, consultation, investigation, and education of the community regarding health risks and maintaining a safe environment. EHOs bring to the public on understanding of microbiology, risk assessment, environmental science and technology, food science as well as the skills and knowledge related to the tracking and control of communicable disease. They must also have strong investigation skills and through understanding of the application of legislation related to public health and the environment.

Schaelor (2010) list the major roles of EHOs as follows:

- * Investigates health hazards in a wide variety of locations,
- * To take action to mitigate or eliminate the hazards,

- * Maintain sanitary standard for good safety set by the regulating authority,
- * Inspection of swimming pools and substandard housing conditions, Public schools, day cares, nursing homes, tattoo parlors, inspect wells, private water systems, and individual subsurface sewage disposal,
- * campground inspections, tanning saloon, beauty salon, mobile home park, responsible for complaints such as animal bites, garbage complaints, odour and sewage overflow.

Function of environmental health officers (EHOs)

The World Health Organization (WHO) and Royal Society of Health (RSH) have identified and listed the functions of EHO according to Asust (2010), to include; waste management, food control or (food sanitation), pest one vector control, environmental health control of housing or housing sanitation, epidemiological control, air quality management, occupational health safety, waste resources management, noise control,

protection of recreational environment, radiation and health, control of frontiers, air and sea ports and border crossing or (health education), promotion and enforcement of environmental health quality standards, collaborative efforts to study the effects of environmental hazards (research), Environmental Health Impact Assessment (EHIA).

Towse and Kettler (2009) also identified some of the functions of EHOs as follows: investigate complements from resident about nuisance (including noise and odour) arising from business or domestic activities, promote awareness of neighboring nuisance and abate them appropriately, monitoring and management of environmental safety and protection at a higher level of practice, initiation, implementation and evaluation of environmental health services, involvement in designing and inspecting of all types of premises and situation for environmental, occupational and sanitation requirement and compliance, provision of technical advice in the enactment and enforcement of laws,

regulations and bye-laws relevant to public and environmental health, conducting research activities in communities and the environmental health problems and suggesting solutions to the problems, participating in the surveillance and control of communicable diseases at local, state, national and international levels, participation in the formulation and development of health policies for the management and improvement of public health and its sustainability, facilitation of change towards positive health and its sustainability, production of ICT in the relevant areas of public health, planning teaching and training program for environmental health personnel and other related health workers, and community on issues that relate to environment and public health, engagement in continuing education and research in public health.

Conclusion

Poor health is a very important aspect of environmental health. Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State lack basic amenities to keep their local government clean. There is need for

the local government to embrace the modern amenities for keeping the local government clean so that they can achieve the health goal. Our apparent inability to secure better environmental conditions necessary for our continued good health at present or in the near future is our collective irresponsibility that must be addressed by one and all.

Recommendations

1. All government must create budget for Environmental Health (EH) programmes.
2. Private sector participation should be encouraged. First, government must involve necessary policies and regulatory framework for smooth operation and participation of private organization in EH programmes.
3. Government should make funds available for the purchase of equipment for effective operation of EH programmes.
4. There is urgent need to establish zonal public health laboratories in the six geo political zones in the country.
5. Government should encourage research in EH matters and private organization should support such research for the overall benefit of the country.
6. The Federal Ministry of Health and Environment should identify suitable institution, in collaboration with National University Commission for the training of EHOs at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
7. Federal government should as a matter of urgency through the National Assembly enact Environmental Health Control and Enforcement Act to address all EH issues in the country.
8. Government should review existing policies on EH and bring them in line with today's realities. There is urgent need to streamline all agencies involved in EH services with a view to merger them and make them more focused.
9. Government should identify and institute appropriate mechanism for inter and intra-

- sectoral collaboration of all agencies in EHP.
10. What is most paramount in this renewed thinking and relaunch of EHP is information, education and communication (IEC).
 11. Workshops and seminars should frequently be organized by the government to sensitize the people about environmental sanitation and its importance to health.
 12. Environmental sanitation should be integrated into the educational system so that youth will have good knowledge of sanitation very early in life that will help them in later life.
 13. The EHOs should always inform their people about the dangers of dirty environment.
 14. Local government should provide dust-bin in strategic positions and emptied every day.
 15. Laws should be enacted on indiscriminate dumping of refuse.
 16. High technology should be invented by the local government to re-cycle waste so that it can be beneficial to the community.
 17. Well qualified sanitary officers should be employed to assist in checking the environment.
 18. Government should invest more on environmental sanitation and encourage states and local government areas to do so.
 19. Every major market should have a resident EHO or sanitation officer.
 20. National assembly may consider new laws to replace the obsolete regional environmental health laws.

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