

An Assessment of Prison Overcrowding in Nigeria: Implications for Rehabilitation, Reformation and Reintegration of Inmates.

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Abstract: *In recent times, prisons in Nigeria have witnessed unprecedented increase in the admission of prison inmates. This alarming rate turns out to housing prison inmates beyond the capacity at which most prisons were built for. It then hinders the goals of reformations, rehabilitation and reintegration. As a result, this study assesses the capacity and current lockup of prison population in six geo-political zones of the Nigeria. Based on this assessment, it was discovered that most prisons across the zones were housing more than capacity in which they were originally built for, while majority of the inmates are awaiting trials. This clustering and crowding of prisoners together in a choky cell that in originally may be meant for five inmates and housing 20 – 30 inmates may arouse prison violence, aggressive behaviour and reduce the quality and sense of psychological wellbeing of the inmates. It is therefore recommended that programs and policies that will increase the wellbeing of the prison inmates should be embraced as this will improve the lives of the inmates and the aim of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of prison inmates back to the larger society can be achieved.*

Keywords: *Prison Overcrowding, Rehabilitation, Reformation, Reintegration, Inmates*

I. Introduction

Overcrowding in Nigeria prisons occurs where the numbers of prisoners exceeds prison capacity to an extent inmates cannot be housed in a humane, healthy and psychological manner. In Nigeria, overcrowding is generally called congestion. It constitutes a serious challenge in Nigeria prisons especially in prisons located in the metropolitan cities. In such prisons, cells in Nigeria, facilities hold as many as twice or thrice their capacity. In such cells there is hardly enough room for prison inmates to move body and limbs freely. In such state each prisoner is allocated a “post” which approximately is a space of a foot and a half.

Majority of the prisons in Nigeria are congested and overcrowded and this create enormous problem in prison management process in terms of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration. The capacity of Nigerian prisons has remained virtually the same for the past two decades notwithstanding the alarming increase in prison population. These prisons were built by the colonial administration and native authority predating to the era Nigeria gain independence in 1960. The conditions of these prisons are in an alarming state of despair with no sense of maintenance or renovation reflective of long neglect by the Nigeria government. In fact, most of the prisons constructed at this period are old, in bad shape and at the brinks of collapse. However, few prisons have been constructed with most substandard materials, which are a far cry from modern prisons across the globe. Examples of such new prisons include, Gusua Medium Prison, Kebbi new Prisons (1991), Medium Security Prisons Kirikiri (1993), Funtia (2003), Oyo and Eket Prisons (2007) respectively.

Considering the act of imprisonment as the most effective form of sanctions of offenders, nevertheless, in the last few decades, inmate’s population in Nigeria have grown substantially, to the extent leading to overcrowding. The overcrowding tends to alter the psychological, physiological and behavioural wellbeing of the inmates (Crystal, 2004). The massive influx of inmates that begun in recent times as a result of delay in judiciary process has produced a rate of growth in the nation’s inmates population that scholars and legal commentators have repeatedly described and characterized as unprecedented. Aduba (2005) reported that the total prison capacity during the period of 1978 to 1981 was 27,257, but it was revealed that in 1978, the average monthly population was 32,332; in 1979 it was 34,770; in 1980, it was 35,332; and in 1981 it was 38,477 (Nigeria prison services, 1978-1981). The percentage of ‘overcrowding’ thus was 18.61 in 1978, 27.56 in 1979, 29.43 in 1980, and 41.16 in 1981. Currently, Nigeria prisons are housing 49,000 in two hundred and thirty four prisons out of which 20% are convicts while the rest are awaiting trial inmates (Amnesty International Report, 2012). This imaginable condition of overcrowding is relatively easy to recognise when one sees it situations where there is no enough room for prisoners to sleep; no facilities to provide enough food, health care or any form of constructive activities; insufficient staff to ensure that prisoners are safe; lack of accommodation to hold separately types of prisoners who should be kept apart- juveniles from adult; awaiting trails from convicted , or lack of capacity to admit any more numbers so that emergency measures have to be taken in the form of amnesty, emergency accommodation or the holding of prisoners in police custody.

II. An overview of prison population in Nigeria

Overcrowding in Nigeria according to Nigerian Prisons Service Statistic as at 30th June, 2011, (Dept. Of statistics PHQ, Abuja) and prisons audit is a phenomenon in prisons in urban centres. Ayade (2010) observed prison congestion in Nigeria, and noted the trend of congestion on selected prisons, the same prisons were audited by the National Human Rights Commission in collaboration with the United Nations Development Project and Norwegian Agency for Development Corporation as presented in the tables below:

Table (1): Capacity, Lockup Number of Awaiting Trial Persons and Convicts in North East Zone

Prison	Capacity	Lock up	Convict	Awaiting trail
Adamawa state				
1. Ganye	200	180	83	97
2. Jada	100	104	89	15
3. Jimeta	300	412	113	299
4. Numan	400	174	139	35
5. Michika	100	87	40	47
6. Yola Central	500	324	149	174
Bauchi State				
7. Azare	152	84	61	23
8. Bauchi	500	741	111	630
9. Jama' are	320	68	56	12
10. Ningi	110	68	56	12
11. Misau	120	44	39	43
Borno State				
12. Bama	320	67	62	5
13. Kukawa Satellite	72	31	2	29
14. Biu	130	102	80	22
15. Gamboru-Ngala	76	31	18	13
16. Gwoza	680	379	222	157
17. Maiduguri Farm	120	114	114	Nil
18. Maiduguri New	680	-	-	-
19. Maiduguri Maximum	1,600	732	273	459
20. Kakawa	100	45	18	27
21. Mongono	36	32	16	16
22. Kumshe	50	38	24	14
23. Konduga	30	26	26	Nil
Taraba State				
24. Gembu	200	128	64	64
25. Jalingo	250	408	139	269
26. Serti	150	79	63	16
27. Wukari	320	179	110	69
Yobe State				
28. Gashua	104	123	109	14
29. Nguru	94	45	45	45
30. Potiskum	832	285	130	155
TOTAL	8646	5130	2321	3691

There seems to be no noticeable congestion in this zone Jalingo but what is glaring is that convicts outnumbered the awaiting trial inmates. It is only in few prisons like Yola Bauchi, Jimeta, Maiduguri mazimum, Jalingo, Guluk and Potiskum that have higher awaiting trial inmates than convicts. This zone was operating below capacity as of 30th June, 2010.

Table (2): Capacity, Lockup Number of Awaiting Trial Persons and Convicts in North-West Zone

Prison	Capacity	Lock up	Convict	Awaiting trial
Jigawa state				
1. Kazaure Farm	150	60	44	16
2. Birnin Kudu	300	114	114	Nil
3. Kaduna State	100	57	27	30
4. Makarfi	350	155	152	3
5. Kujama Prison Farm	100	83	57	24
6. Birnin Gwari	208	482	Nil	Nil
Kaduna State				
7. Borstal Training Institute	378	218	122	96
8. Zaria	20	54	17	17
9. Kafanchan	548	867	331	534
10. Katsina State	110	153	123	30
11. Katsina	238	733	166	567
12. Funtua	160	254	64	190
Kebbi State				

1. Zuru	320	112	78	34
2. Old Kebbi	100	128	75	53
3. Medium Security Kebbi	250	226	226	440
4. Argungu	532	568	128	441
5. Yelwa Yuri	690	1,249	309	912
Sokoto State				
6 Sokoto Central	160	129	104	25
7. Gusau	600	698	284	414
Kano State				
8. Kano Central	690	1218	309	940
9. Wudil	160	129	105	122
10. Goron Dtuse	600	698	284	414
Total	6,964	8,360	2,844	5,321

In the North West Zone, out of the 22 prisons selected 12 as of 30th June, 2010 were operating under capacity while 8 prisons located at the urban cities were congested operating almost twice their capacities example, Kaduna Borstal Training Institute with a capacity of 280 holds a population of 482 juveniles while Kauna Maximum, Kano, Goron, Dutsen, Gausau, Yelwa Yuri, Katsina, Funtua and Kafancha were apparently congested. These same prisons housed more ATPs than convicts' exception of Yelwa Yuri. Out of those not congested only Kano central has more ATPs, the rest have more convicted persons. While the sun total reveal there were more ATPs 696 against convicts with a population of 8,360 while the prison capacity in the overall was overcapacity with lock up of 2,855 above capacities of 6,494.

Table (3) Capacity, Lockup, Number of Atps and Convicts in North Central Zone

PRISON	Capacity	Luck up	Convict	Awaiting Trial
Niger State				
1. Agaje	60	3	12	1
2. Bida	200	69	49	20
3. Kagara	50	55	45	10
4. Lapai	63	64	63	1
5. New Bussa	288	68	42	26
Nasarawa State				
6. Keffi	130	280	9	181
7. Lafia	300	316	63	251
8. Nasarawa	104	31	24	6
9. Wamba	68	47	40	7
Kwara				
10. Ilorin	122	298	70	228
11. Lafiagi Farm	34	45	44	1
Kogi State				
12. Ankpa	30	27	14	12
13. Dekina	34	23	16	18
14. Idah	102	23	17	6
15. Kabba	200	68	38	30
16. Koton Karfe	50	131	17	114
17. Medium Security Okene	114	102	48	54
18. Lakushi Farm	150	52	52	-
19. Lantang	150	34	24	10
20. Jos	1,150	771	216	555
21. Shendam	130	51	30	21
22. Wase	100	21	20	1
23. Panshin	162	55	22	32
Benue State				
24. Gboko	810	220	118	102
25. Makurdi	280	481	96	385
26. Otukpo	118	85	28	57
FCT Abuja				
27. Kuje	320	669	136	533
28. Suleja	250	358	187	171
Total	5,569	4,457	1,591	2,817

The table above shows that in this zone, only five prisons, Ilorin, Keffi, Makurdi, Kuje and Suleja were congested reflecting the trend of city prisons overcrowding while those in the suburbs are not. Kuje, Suleja, Jos. Ilorin, Okene, Katon, Karfe, Kabba and Jos have higher number of ATPS more than convicted prisons. The

zone was generally operating below capacity; it has the capacity of 5,569 but housed 4,457 inmates. The number of ATPs as of 30th June, 2010 was 1,591 far above the convicts of 281.

Table (4) Capacity, Lockup, Number of Awaiting trials And Convicts South East Zone

Prison	Capacity	Lock up	Convicts	Awaiting Trial
Abia State				
1. Aba	500	483	114	369
2. Umuahia	400	980	46	734
Ebonyi State				
3. Abakaliki	388	938	92	846
4. Afikpo	200	104	23	81
Enugu State				
5. Enugu	638	1,042	169	1,045
6. Oji River	320	146	20	126
Imo State				
7. Owerri	548	1,580	143	1,433
8. Okigwe	540	264	47	217
Anambra State				
9. Onisha	326	898	43	855
10. Akwa	238	497	27	470
11. Orreh Farm	100	48	48	Nil
12. Arochukwu	180	51	22	28
13. Ibite-olo	250	55	55	Nil
Total	4628	6886	849	620

Overcrowding in this zone is seven out of 13 prisons all located in the cities such as Owerri, Umuhia, Enugu, Akwa, Onitsha, Abakiliki, and Aba prisons. In all these prisons, ATPs far outnumbered those convicted in nine prisons and housed inmates over capacity. The total sum shows that the zone has the capacity of 4628 but house 2886 above twice its capacity while at of 30th June, 2010 the number of convicts was 849 above ATPs with a population of 620 inmates.

Table (5): Capacity, Lockup, Population of Atps and Convicts in South West Zone

Prison	Capacity	Lock up	Convicts	Awaiting Trial
Lagos State				
1. Kirikiri Female	106	170	34	136
2. kirikiri Medium	704	1,680	172	1,508
3. Kirikiri Maximum	1056	880	255	625
4. Badagry	130	310	111	215
5. Ikoyi	800	1,745	111	1,634
Oyo State				
6. Agodi	394	646	69	577
7. Oyo				
Ekiti State				
8. Ado Ekiti	200	309	54	255
Ondo State				
9. Akure Medium	320	541	49	492
10. Owo	180	80	43	37
11. Okitipupa	66	76	39	37
12. Ondo	80	72	22	50
Osun State				
13. Ilesha	586	381	77	304
14. Ile-Ife	320	147	26	121
Ogun State				
15. Abeokuta	502	830	249	578
16. Ijebu-ode	49	298	28	270
17. Shagamu	48	174	7	167
18. Ilaro	126	222	27	195
Total	5670	8831	1372	7201

Out of the 19 prisons in the zone, 8 prisons in the suburb are operating under capacity while 11 prisons in the major towns Akure medium, Ikoyi, Agodi, kirikiri female, Badagary, Ado Ekiti, Shagamu, Ejobu-Ode and Abeokuta were congested with higher ATPS and five other prisons not overcrowded holds more awaiting trial persons than convicted persons. On a general summation, the zone with a capacity of 5670 was housing 8831 inmates well over its capacity. On 30th of June, 2010, the number of convict was 1372 which was below the number of ATPs with a population of 7201.

Table (6): Capacity, Lockup, Awaiting trials and Convicts in South-South Zone

Prison	Capacity	Lock up	Convicts	Awaiting Trial
Akwa Ibom State				
1. Abak	200	134	30	104
2. Eket	124	173	40	133
3. Ikot Abasi	400	132	43	89
4. Ikot Ekpene	614	466	137	333
Cross River				
5. Obudu	50	24	13	11
6. Ogoja	400	42	14	38
7. Ikom	200	57	15	57
8. Obubra	128	79	29	50
9. Calabar	250	611	86	525
Delta State				
10. Agbor	179	185	12	173
11. Kwale	262	184	33	141
12. Ogwashi-Uke	64	319	46	273
13. Sapele	294	263	27	263
14. Warri	307	556	156	400
Edo State				
15. Auchi	200	185	36	148
16. Benin city	1,216	879	83	796
17. Oko	307	523	122	401
18. Ogba Prison farm	106	53	53	Nil
19. Ozalla farm	200	150	50	Nil
20. Ubiaja	240	141	31	110
River State				
21. Ahoada	150	347	74	273
22. Elele farm	200	70	70	Nil
23. Port Harcourt	804	2,927	284	2,636
Total	6645	7941	6897	6897
Ground total	33122	41603	15874	25547

Source: Department of Planning and Statistics, Prison headquarter, Abuja & Ayade 2010

The same trend of congestion in prisons at urban centres is evinced in South, South zone eight prisons: Calabar, Oko, Warri, Ikot-Abasi, Kwashi-Uke, Agbor, Port-Harcourt and Ahoada out of twenty four are overcrowded with more ATPs. Benin and Sapele Presents rare case scenario where there was no congestion in prison in the urban centres. As of 30th June, 2010 the number of inmate houses in the zone was above capacity which is 5357 while the lockup was 8443. It also showed that the ATPs was equal the number of convicts.

III. Implications for reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration

Reformation: This is the process of making the inmate better by trying to change his delinquent behaviours. It means infusing in him the will to refrain from criminal behaviour. Article 59 of the United Nations on minimum standard rules for the treatment of offenders' states: To this end (Reformation) the institution should seek to utilize all the remedial, educational, moral, spiritual, and other forces and forms of assistance, which are appropriate and available and should seek to apply them according to the individual treatment needs of the prisoner.

Rehabilitation: Prison rehabilitation means bringing the offender to normal life. According to Omoni & Ijeh (2009), rehabilitation is a transitional or after-care service rendered to inmates to avoid revolving-door re-arrests. To rehabilitate an inmate, he/she must be "straightened out" deep within his/her own personality. He/she maintains that the rehabilitative activities of the modern prison which generally have been of two kinds: Psychological or psychiatric treatment and Educational or vocational programmes.

Reintegration: This is the process of preparing inmate in a reformed and rehabilitated manner back to the society. This is achieved by engaging inmates in a useful programmes like: educational programme that would enable inmates leave the prison with more skills and be in a position to find meaningful and long-term employment (Rhode, 2004). Also, vocational programme that will provide job training that prepares inmates with the know-how and training for today's workplace. Inmates can be trained in carpentry, construction trades, computer programs and repair, horticulture, painting, plumbing and much more.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

This assessment does appear to have implications both for prison authorities and Prison Inmates as well. For the Nigeria Prison Authorities, the International Standards states that each prisoner must have enough space, although definitions of adequacy vary from country to country and depend among other factors on how

much tire prisoner spend in their cells. It is one thing to sleep in a confined space another to spend 23 hours a day there. The UN Standard Minimum Rules do say that all cells and perimeter walls and dormitories must have adequate heating, lighting and ventilation and that every detainee or inmate should have his/her own bed or mattress with clean bedding to enhance the psychological wellbeing of the inmate. But this study discovered that many of these inmates fall short of these basic needs.

Moreover, the prisons of study for this research work hold more prisoners than the official capacity. By implication, the minimum required standard in respect of dimensions eg. Minimum space per prisoner of not less than 3.4sq^m and area within the security perimeter of 20 – 30sqm person was not observed. This clustering and crowding of prisoners together in a choky cell that in originally may be meant for five inmates and housing 20 – 30 inmates may arouse violent and aggressiveness among the inmates. In most prisons, there tends to be more overcrowding among the awaiting trial male (ATM) than the convicted as revealed from the study. As a result, there is a need to keep the awaiting trials apart completely from the convicted prisoners because this may lead to gross violence of prison unrest since most often both the awaiting trials and convicted do have some things in common.

As for the prison inmates, the circumstances may differ for non-violent inmates in a crowded environment. For such individual inmates, any violent behaviour manifested may, in fact, be in response to their environment. Yet, it is not the restrictiveness, but the dangerousness of the environment that compels nonviolent inmate to engage in aggressive acts. In order to improve inmate conditions in overcrowded prisons, having identified that prison overcrowding contributed to the following problems: reduced staff morale, security and control difficulties, staff and inmate health and wellbeing problems, increased levels of conflicts and violence; and failure of rehabilitation resulting in increased re-offending it is recommended that:

Clinical Psychologists have significant role to play in the areas observing the personality, victim empathy and remorse; language and body movements of the inmate and gives psychological interpretations to them. The Clinical psychologist would help to identify the personality type (A or B), noting that Type A are achievers and risk takers and Type B are hedonists. The implications of this are that trying to achieve by all means or taking too much risk (as in Type A) could lead to crime. Equally, wanting to live life to the fullest without stress or hard work (as in Type B) could as well lead to crime. It as a result of psychological assessment that would also help to cognitively interpret the offender-e.g. the kind of schemas the offender holds (does he/she glamorised violent culture, etc). Is the offender remorseful, or does he/she thinks that he/she is a victim of State crime). This could help to interpret his/her risk level (low, medium, high) to the prison population; and the community and society to which he would return.

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