

**INFRASTRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE CHALLENGES IN THE METHODIST
CHURCH NIGERIA, DIOCESE OF UZUAKOLI:
A RECIPE FROM NEHEMIAH 1:3**

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Abstract

This study examined the challenges of infrastructure maintenance in Methodist Church Nigeria, Diocese of Uzuakoli. Often times, huge amount of money are invested in the development of infrastructure but little or nothing is budgeted for maintenance purposes. This poor or lack of maintenance culture has rendered many useful infrastructures such as buildings, roads, vehicles, power plant and water supplies useless and impotent, especially in Methodist Church Nigeria, Diocese of Uzuakoli. This research employed historical method aiming at the reflection of Nehemiah 3:2 while the researchers embarked on physical tour, on the spot assessment and inspection of the infrastructure at Methodist Church Nigeria, Diocese of Uzuakoli to identify the types of infrastructure, the level of decay and determine the causes of deterioration and proffer recommendations for improvement. Information for the study were gathered through observation, interviews and reading of related books, journals and unpublished materials with the aim of eliciting information on the challenges of maintenance culture in Uzuakoli Leprosy centre and so on. The findings revealed that adequate maintenance culture is lacking in Methodist Church Nigeria, Diocese of Uzuakoli. It was discovered that poor maintenance culture over the years has rendered many buildings, roads, factories, palm plantation, power plant and water supplies and vehicles useless and impotent to the extent that trees have grown inside some of the abandoned buildings. It was further discovered that maintenance culture which encompasses adequate care and good management of infrastructure has not gained ground in the consciousness of most Methodist Clergy and Laity. The study recommended that individuals should emulate Nehemiah in his mind set and optimism in rebuilding the falling walls of Jerusalem without shifting blames. The Church must imbibe good maintenance policy and engage in massive enlightenment programme to inculcate maintenance culture in the minds of all Methodist Church Nigeria members, both Clergy and Laity. Infrastructure maintenance should be prioritized if they are to serve their purposes and also live up to their expected life span.

Key Words: Infrastructure, Maintenance, Problem, Church

Introduction

Methodist Church Nigeria is a formidable mainline Church in Nigeria. The Church has been in existence for over One hundred and seventy-six years (176 years). It has immensely contributed to the growth and development of Nigeria. It has also transformed lives and impacted positively on the Community and region where it is located through the preaching of the gospel, human capacity building and construction of many infrastructures. However, lots of these infrastructures procured or constructed by Methodist Church Nigeria, particularly in the Diocese of Uzuakoli are faced with maintenance challenges resulting in decay, deterioration and ultimate defects of various degrees. Achieving infrastructural development would be attainable if existing infrastructures are constantly maintained. Lack or poor maintenance culture has drawn Methodist Church Nigeria a thousand steps backward and one of the great strides that could salvage the Church from the total mess of infrastructure decay is adequate maintenance culture. Sadly, maintenance culture as a way of life, habit, an attitude or character is lacking in most Nigerians whether in the home, church, office, schools, hospitals, refineries and so on. It is therefore very vital and obligatory for Church leaders and every member of the church to consistently strive to ensure that this culture is imbibed in all its ramifications.

Methodist Church Nigeria and Infrastructure Maintenance

Infrastructure maintenance is an enormous challenge facing sustainable infrastructure development in Methodist Church, Nigeria (MCN), evidence of which is the level of deterioration of infrastructures in most, if not all the dioceses of Methodist church, Nigeria. The condition of most infrastructures are therefore a clear evidence that maintenance activities are not incorporated into the church's policy nor in the life-cycle costing of infrastructure development at the planning, designing and execution stage despite the importance of infrastructure in the daily activities of the church.

The adequacy and efficiency of infrastructure in Methodist church, Nigeria diocese, directly affects the efficiency and effectiveness of output from the diocese. Maintenance as the upkeep of infrastructure, means of renewing infrastructure, a way of retaining its value or a process of keeping its parts so that it will always serve the purpose for which it was constructed, established, built or procured, is lacking in Methodist church Nigeria especially in the diocese of Uzuakoli. Poorly maintained, un-serviced and faulty infrastructures are inadequate, inefficient and ineffective as they cannot function

optimally and therefore cannot serve the purpose for which they were constructed, established, built or procured. Physical infrastructure at the various Methodist's stations in Uzuakoli diocese such as buildings, palm plantations, roads, roofing sheets industry, piggery, poultry, oil mill, power and water plants etc. were neglected and left to rust and decay as a result of lack or poor maintenance culture.

Lack or poor maintenance culture is an enemy that causes decay, deterioration or total breakdown of infrastructure hence the church must cast away this enemy of the church just as the church cast out demons and enemies that attack human beings. One of the greatest challenges facing effective maintenance of infrastructure in Methodist church Nigeria today is not only poor infrastructure design, finance or the availability of adequate technology for construction but also maintenance of the infrastructure after delivery.

Infrastructure Maintenance Problems in the Diocese of Uzuakoli

On the spot examination of infrastructures at Methodist College, Uzuakoli; Methodist High School' Uzuakoli; the Motherless Babies Home; Nkechi Cowill Hospital and the Leprosy research centre, Uzuakoli revealed that most of the infrastructures were established over seventy (70) years ago. Infrastructures are expected to exist for a long time, if they are managed and maintained properly. Also the ministers in charge and property stewards are responsible for checking, maintaining, improving and adopting the existing infrastructures in addition to the construction of new ones. It appears that in the diocese of Uzuakoli, poor or lack of maintenance of infrastructures have resulted in much public concern as people have called on the conference to see that part of the money generated by the European medical doctors at Methodist Royal Cross Hospital, Ugwueke Alayi in the diocese is used to urgently rehabilitate the infrastructures at Uzuakoli diocese as they would generate more money for Methodist church, Nigeria. There is evidence that a substantial number of infrastructures such as buildings, roads, water supply, factories, power plant and other infrastructures have decayed and deteriorated below the point of economic repair because of lack of concern by ministers in charge over the years, property stewards, the users as well as poor design and execution. This is particularly true of buildings, roads, roof sheet factory, poultry, piggery and other infrastructure scattered all over the diocese where no efforts have been consciously made to budget for their maintenance. The policy of maintenance which should be enforced for infrastructures to be maintained is neglected in the diocese. Ahwoi (2012) states that, the lack of maintenance culture in Uzuakoli diocese was causing the Church a great deal of money which could have been channeled into development projects. To him the attitude of ministers in charge now is to develop new infrastructure and neglect to repair or rehabilitate the existing ones thus failing to abide by the axiom "a stitch in time saves

nine.” The culture of maintenance as an integral part of infrastructure development is lacking in the diocese of Uzuakoli. Undoubtedly most diocese of Methodist Church, Nigeria, (MCN) is guilty of this menace. Indeed lack of maintenance in general is really causing undesired pains to Methodist Church, Nigeria. It is therefore imperative to assess the challenges of maintenance culture in Uzuakoli diocese in order to improve upon maintenance practice by the Clergy and the Laity.

Most infrastructures at Uzuakoli diocese are in a state of decay, disrepair or abandonment. For instance, the famous Methodist College Uzuakoli and the training institute now called Methodist high school, Uzuakoli that produced notable political and religious leaders in Nigeria, the research centre and the leprosy settlement that cured notable personalities like Harcourt white but now renamed Nkechi Colwill Methodist Hospital Uzuakoli are in a derelict state because of years of neglect. Adedokun (2011) observes that without an effective and efficient maintenance culture, any effort at infrastructure development will amount to nothing. The demand for infrastructure in Methodist church Nigeria is increasing geometrically but the provision remains minimal and, in some cases, stagnant thereby necessitating effective maintenance of the available infrastructure for their sustainability and optimal performance.

Various Defects in Infrastructure

Methodist Church Nigeria, stations are littered with laudable but failed, decayed and deteriorated infrastructure due to lack of poor maintenance culture. Kunya (2012), discussing various defects in infrastructure catalogued the following as common defects namely: - peeling of wall surface, rising dampness in substructure, floor slab failure, doors and windows defect, leaking roof, foundation failure and sagging of beam. He further opined that proper maintenance require correct diagnosis of defects, current remedial measures, sound technical knowledge of infrastructure usage, management of infrastructure as well as the formulation and implementation of integrated plan and policies to sustain utility and functionality. Other researchers listed various forms of infrastructural defect that may arise as a result of long years of neglect, poor or lack of maintenance culture.

Infrastructural defect may be aggravated by its exposure to rainfall, direction of prevailing winds, microclimate, atmospheric pollution and the height of the infrastructure. Lee (1976) emphasizes that defects in an infrastructure may occur from faults other than structural and result in inconvenience and discomfort to the user. For example, cracks in buildings normally result from failure or defective construction, the cracks give rise to air infiltration, heat loss and reduced sound insulation all of which result in reduced

efficiency of the buildings. Ipingbemi (2010) discussing the causes of infrastructure defects states that it include the use of inferior or substandard materials, poor management of facilities such as door – lock, louvers, lack of regular inspection and routine checks, poorly designed fire suppression systems that causes un-insulated (PVC) pipes to freeze and burst and lack of qualified professionals. He further stated that the major objective of maintenance is to preserve infrastructures in their original functional, structural and aesthetic condition so that they will retain their value for a long period of time. The durability of the infrastructure is also influenced by frost action, crystallization of salts, sunlight, biological agents, abrasions and impact of chemical action and corrosion and incompatibility of substandard material used in repair.

It is highly essential that the cause of dilapidation must be carefully diagnosed before carrying out the repair work. For instance, a good roof which is well maintained should last the life span of a building and it is ‘penny wise and pound foolish’ to save money on roof during construction, because if it ever requires replacement, it will cause more money, serious dislocation of production, services or other activities within the building. A leaking roof apart from causing considerable inconvenience to users, can lead to accelerated deterioration of other parts of the building such as ceiling, floors, walls and cause cracks and serious damage to decoration and electrical installations furniture etc. To avoid roof defect, traffic over a roof should be kept to a minimum and where it is possible, essential appropriate walk ways and access ladders must be provided. Roof should be inspected at least once every three (3) years to ensure adequate maintenance activity. Other form of defects in infrastructure includes dampness, painting defects and plumbing defects.

Factors Responsible Infrastructure Problems in Methodist Church Nigeria, Uzuakoli

When problems occur in infrastructure, they gradually deteriorate the structure. The causal factors of infrastructure problems in Uzuakoli and Nigeria at large include the following:

Poor design or Standard of Construction

Some problems originate from the point of design and construction of the infrastructure. The use of inferior, substandard or poor-quality materials in construction may lead to a deterioration of the infrastructure.

Intensity of use

An infrastructure that is used by careless and destructive users is more likely to experience high degree of wear and tear than a similar one with careful or meticulous users.

Climatic Factors

Weather often affects the external parts of the infrastructure and the severity varies depending on the location, season of the year and the type of materials used. The cumulative effect of solar radiation, rain penetration, wind, atmospheric pollution and chemical action cause corrosion of infrastructure.

Biological Factors

Human activities such as excavation, sinking of wells and blasting of rock near certain infrastructure like buildings can cause cracks on the walls and may eventually lead to its collapse. Rodents or Insects like termite etc. can attack infrastructure components such as the wood used for door, roofing, ceiling and furniture. Also rat and mouse can attack infrastructure components and cause quick and accelerated damage to infrastructure.

Unauthorized Alteration

Some users in their effort to change the features of the infrastructure to suit their taste may damage some parts or create conditions that will have negative effects on the functionality of the infrastructure.

Number of Users

For instance, as a result of acute shortage of housing in Nigeria and Methodist church, an apartment meant for two (2) people often end up being used by eight or more persons. This affects the infrastructure negatively at the long run. It also results in constant breakdown of the infrastructure and later it will be uneconomical to continue to repair the infrastructure.

Improper Usage

Improper use of infrastructure can lead to deterioration which if not promptly checked or managed could be dangerous to the infrastructure.

Lack of infrastructural facilities

The erratic supply of electricity and acute shortage of water supply have in most cases negatively affected the maintenance of infrastructure.

Lack of Maintenance account

In all the dioceses of Methodist Church Nigeria, no account is kept for maintenance purposes. Maintenance account should be maintained in each local Church, circuit and diocese to ensure that infrastructures are repaired, maintained and well taken care of as the money in the maintenance account would be readily available for maintenance purposes as at when due.

Wanton Destruction of Infrastructure

Some users are so careless to the extent of vandalizing the infrastructure they are using or taking care of. A visit to Methodist Church, Nigeria, diocese of Uzuakoli, revealed that the infrastructures are deliberately left in shambles and in an unusable condition. In some cases, electric wires and cables are left exposed dangerously in most buildings and electric fixtures and fittings broken. Such acts of destruction regrettably make maintenance a difficult task and burdensome.

Lack of Technical Skill

Sometimes it is difficult to get a qualified and experienced technician or technical manpower to carry out certain types of repairs, many technicians claim to be experts in repair work yet in the course of repairs they damage the infrastructure more thus posing more problems. In certain circumstances, the repair work may take several attempts of trial and error before good result is achieved. At other times, in the process of repair work, the infrastructure will either be spoilt or situation gets out of hand and a great deal of damage may occur.

Neglect of Essential Services

Most users neglect rendering essential services such as lightening the environment, cleaning of infrastructure parts, clearing of surrounding bushes or grasses, drains and gutters and these pose serious maintenance challenge.

Fund

The major challenge of infrastructure maintenance in the diocese of Uzuakoli is lack of funds. It is not easy to access fund for infrastructure maintenance purposes. The budget of the diocese does not cater for maintenance; hence the churches are not resourced to carryout maintenance work periodically and regularly. The money for infrastructure maintenance is not pre-allocated to property stewards. Usually, it is the responsibility of the Minister in charge of the church or infrastructure to source for fund for maintenance. As a result, the diocese cannot effectively and efficiently maintain the entire infrastructure in the diocese because of financial constraint. To ensure continuous availability of fund for maintenance each local church, circuit and diocese must set aside certain amount of money in a maintenance account for maintenance purposes.

Development Matrix

The church and some infrastructure developers do not appreciate the importance of the four major factors of infrastructure development which are, the design of the infrastructure, Finance, Technology and Management of the infrastructure. According to David and Arthur (1989) prior to the commencement of construction, there should be an

appropriate design that will ensure easy maintenance of the infrastructure. Also, the technology and fund to finance the construction should be taken into consideration.

Corruption

Ogbu (1986) avers that corruption does not only impair maintenance of infrastructure by raising the cost of maintenance but can also reduce the quality of materials by the use of substandard materials. Corruption among most maintenance personnel in Nigeria is very high presently and unbearable for effective maintenance purposes. Ministers should use honest professional and true Christians to carry out maintenance work in the Church.

Ownership of Infrastructure

The Clergy and the Users do not regard the infrastructure as their own and therefore have passive attachment in relation to the efficient use and maintenance of the infrastructure. They see it as the Church infrastructure hence they handle it without due care and proper maintenance. The clergy and users of Church infrastructure should be sensitized and made to understand that they are part owner of the infrastructure and therefore must handle them with care and maintain them adequately.

Availability of Physical Resources

The availability or non-availability of physical resources affects decision in that, when suitable materials for maintenance work are not available it becomes difficult to undertake maintenance. Again, even if suitable materials are available but not in adequate quantities and the alternative materials are not available it will deter people from undertaking maintenance activities. The level of craftsmanship in terms of both skills and efficient numbers can also affect decision to carry out maintenance.

Import of Nehemiah 1:3 on Infrastructural Development in MCN Uzuakoli

A concise historical context of the text reveals the devastating nature of Jerusalem as contained in Ezra 2:1 and Nehemiah 1:3. Baker (2008) notes that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah appear as a single work from the earliest manuscript: however, Elliger and Rudolph (1997) present them separately in Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia with distinctive Hebrew words in the text under consideration that shows the extent of deplorable state of Jerusalem. The infrastructures concerned in this episode are the wall, gates and Temple of Jerusalem. The Hebrew word *stc,r"êpom*. From the root *Yr;P;*, which means to break or tear down suggests the deterioration level of the destruction of the wall of protection *hm;wox*. The city of Jerusalem had lost her protection and became porous for the invaders. According to Green (2008) the burning of the gates and the Temple presented in the Hebrew words: *vae(b' WtiC.nlh'yr<P['v*.W suggests that they were desolated and

completely burnt; with fire. The implication of the fire here is that the burnt infrastructures needed replacement or reconstruction.

Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy and Carm (2000) describe scenario as disaster caused by Nebuchadnezzar about 150 years earlier that brought a perplexing report and sad news from Zion of gates or courthouse destroyed in flames. Baker (2008) avers that lack of a city wall meant that the people were defenseless against their enemies. According to him, the excavations at Jerusalem around 1961-1967 revealed that lack of wall on the eastern slopes also meant the disintegration of the terraces there. In 586 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and broke down the walls around (2 Kings 25:10). But theologians disbelieved that Nehemiah's sorrow was determined by Nebuchadnezzar's havoc rather the episode recorded in Ezra 4:7-23 explains how Artaxerxes I commanded the Jews to stop rebuilding the broken walls of Jerusalem as a result of the protest by Rehum and Shimshai probably before or around 444 BC. Therefore, Nehemiah's annoyance was not the Nebuchadnezzar's led destruction but aggressive destruction of the aforementioned new reconstructed walls (Ezra 4:7-23).

Dickson (2011) adds that Nehemiah was born in exile and before he got to Judah, over 50,000 returnees had gone to Judah over 92 years from initial destruction in 586 BC. Hinson (1990) observes that Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel and Ezra had led returnees on different occasions to rebuild Jerusalem, but oppositions and discouragement terminated the reconstruction. All these delay and challenges that affected the infrastructural development of Jerusalem could be applied to Methodist Church Nigeria, Diocese of Uzuakoli and elsewhere.

Bright (1972) asserts that such prolonged damage rendered Jerusalem too poor, harassed and dispirited. It raised economic tensions, bankruptcy and syncretistic religious practices that affected Yahwism. The poverty, discouragement, lethargy, syncretism and assimilation of foreign practices rubbed the people their unique integrity that depicts their election and covenant. Development was impeded by untold contamination. The aforementioned characteristics are not far-fetched in the deplorable state of infrastructures in Uzuakoli Leprosy centre and others. The Church, Government and individuals should put hands on deck to rebuild the infrastructural ruins of Uzuakoli just as King Cyrus, Nehemiah, Ezra, Zerubbabel, Sheshbazzar and other good spirited Israelites did despite the oppositions.

Recommendations for Infrastructural Maintenance in Methodist Church, Uzuakoli

On the spot assessment of infrastructure at Uzuakoli diocese has shown that most infrastructures in the diocese have failed, decayed and abandoned due to poor or lack of

maintenance culture. Maintenance strategy should be adopted for old and existing infrastructures and given serious consideration before embarking on the development of new ones so that they can function optimally and yield value for the money invested in them. No doubt, without maintenance, the aim of investing in infrastructure will end on dead rocks, because despite the huge sum of money invested in the infrastructure it will not last the estimated life span, and then the church cannot even retrieve the amount invested let alone gain some profit, hence the need to adopt the following strategies to ameliorate the problems.

The Need to Imbibe Maintenance Culture

Poor maintenance culture is very palpable in Methodist Church, Nigeria, diocese of Uzuakoli as many infrastructures are left or abandoned to deteriorate and decay after many years of usage.

David and Arthur (1989) view it as disheartening to perceive the fact that after huge sums of money had been expended in infrastructure development, it would be left to deteriorate, fail and decay after years of usage due to poor maintenance culture. Methodist Church, Nigeria, must not wait until an infrastructure is in a state of disrepair or badly damaged before embarking on maintenance because it will involve too much money that it will be impossible to repair or maintain. Methodist Church Nigeria, diocese of Uzuakoli should imbibe preventive maintenance culture.

Technology of Maintenance

This involves all the factors that influence or bring about the need for maintenance work. It is also concerned with the need for stability, safety, and comfort including thermal, acoustical installation and hygiene. Seeley (1987) asserts that new infrastructure such as buildings should meet the performance standards prescribed by the regulatory bodies. The technology of maintenance is aimed at finding the best solution to the challenges of infrastructure maintenance. Technology of maintenance identifies challenges and minimizes them at the design stage or even at the construction stage. Seeley emphasized that it is important that the challenges of maintenance and running cost of infrastructure should be considered at the design stage because defects in the infrastructure might be due to a variety of faulty design decision, such as: Unsuitable materials, incorrect assessment of loads, inadequate appreciation of conditions of use, incorrect assessment of exposure

Urgency of Work

Maintenance work should be carried out immediately the need arises to avoid further deterioration or damage to the infrastructure. The following points should be considered

and implemented to ensure good maintenance of infrastructure in the Methodist Church Nigeria:

The conference should as a matter of urgency direct dioceses, circuits and local churches to appropriate fund for the maintenance of infrastructure under their control. Infrastructure should not be allowed to get to a deplorable condition before carrying out maintenance work. The church leaders and members should be given orientation on maintenance culture and the need to have a personal attachment to Church infrastructures in relation to their efficient use and adequate maintenance. Property stewards should be trained to enhance their knowledge of infrastructure management and maintenance. The conference should encourage all local Churches, circuits and dioceses to list the entire church infrastructure under them and the property stewards should from time to time inspect them to ensure that they are in good condition, to serve the purpose for which they were constructed or procured. Every member of Methodist Church, Nigeria, (MCN) on personal basis must imbibe maintenance culture in order to enjoy the best of the infrastructure.

Methodist Church, Nigeria, (MCN) should have a policy on maintenance culture which must be effective at all diocese circuits and local church levels to guide its operational activities and enhance effective and efficient maintenance practices. Maintenance of infrastructure as a course of instruction should be introduced into the curriculum of all Methodist theological institutions and also the lay preachers' class. One of the criteria for promoting the clergy to the next level should be on the basis of infrastructure development and maintenance rather than by favoritism and tribalism because accomplishment of maintenance activities hangs on leadership.

Conclusion

The Church, Government and individuals should put hands on deck to rebuild the infrastructural ruins of Uzuakoli just as King Cyrus, Nehemiah, Ezra, Zerubbabel, Sheshbazzar and other good spirited Israelites did despite the oppositions. Lack of infrastructural maintenance has done great harm to both the Church and Nigerian society but rescuing the situation on time will restore economic and social dignity of the people. Property stewards at all points should be admonished to supervise and continuously keep church infrastructure in good working condition and the same time, members and church workers should be sensitized and encouraged to embrace maintenance culture in order to add value to the infrastructure and life of the user. Individual members should emulate Nehemiah to ensure that good and high-quality materials are used in construction or repair work so that the infrastructure can function optimally and also withstand the climate condition of the area. Blames should be avoided while undertaking infrastructural repairs. Qualified professionals should be engaged in the design or construction stage of the

infrastructure in order to prevent some defect such as resounding echo etc. Proper maintenance awareness and education is required in order to improve the perception of the clergy and laity on the importance of maintenance culture and enhance effective maintenance practice. Every Nigerian should be more proactive rather than reactive to maintenance work to preserve national property.

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