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SOCIAL MINISTRY OF IKOYI BAPTIST CHURCH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON
THE REINTEGRATION OF PRISON INMATES

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ABSTRACT

The treatment and acceptance of ex-convicts in the Nigerian community is of utmost concern to the writer of this thesis. The judgmental and condemnatory attitude of the society towards ex-convicts, various national dispositions as well as the church reaction towards the ex-convicts' re-integration are considered.

In pursuance of this study, the Ikoyi Baptist Church (IBC) social ministry effort towards converted ex-convicts and societal reactions to ex-convicts to such persons before the completion of their various jail terms were evaluated. Furthermore a first-hand experience of how IBC evangelizes both convicts and ex-convicts, and the process of rehabilitation is documented for re-evaluation and further recommendations. The challenges and the sustainability of social ministries were critically observed in accordance with the world' best practices.

An appraisal of the impact of Ikoyi Baptist Church social ministry on prison inmates and the determination of the challenges of reintegrating prison inmates in the Nigerian society with the corresponding recommendations on re-integration of prison inmates into society was considered. This was achieved using several statistical instruments of analyzing research findings. Consequently the findings of this thesis shows that, Ikoyi Baptist church is positively impacting inmates through her social ministry, but there is no national provision for the re-integration of ex-convicts in both the Nigerian constitution and the Nigerian annual budget. Based on the findings of this research work, recommendations cutting across various stakeholders involved in the process of effective re-integration of converted ex-convicts as well as the societal role were given.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The general observations from this research are that Ikoyi Baptist church has done appreciable job in their efforts to reintegrate inmates into the normal society by:

- i. Building a clinic in the prison with regular provision of drugs and the conduct of medical check-up for inmates.

- ii. Employing competent lawyers to advocate for inmates where necessary.
- iii. Building a church auditorium with provision of musical instruments for inmates within the prison compound.
- iv. Sponsoring inmates to distance learning schools (National Open University) and paying for their WAEC and NECO external examinations for those who wish to further their formal education.
- v. Organizing poverty alleviation training programmes for inmates on how to start and run some small scale businesses such as recharge cards sales, snail farming e.t.c and supporting them with the start-up capital.
- vi. Conducting regular church service with the inmates on Wednesdays between 10am and 12 noon.
- vii. Providing beds, soap, clothes food, water, books, magazines, tracts for the inmates.
- viii. Paying regular visit to the prison to promote moral living among the inmates and ultimately win their souls for our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, the disincentives or the reasons why some social ministries do not achieve their objectives of inmates reintegration are summarized in the following facts:

- a) Most prison ministries in Nigeria if not all lack adequate fund to cater for inmates' essentials needs for reintegration.
- b) Poverty and unemployment in Nigeria promote recidivism
- c) The perception of imprisonment as a punitive rather than corrective measure makes reintegration frustrating.
- d) The unkind attitudes of prison staff to the inmates hardens the inmates making reintegration difficult.

- e) Lack of persistently devoted personnel in prison ministration.
- f) The government bureaucratic bottleneck countered by prison ministers before inmates can be contacted makes integration difficult.
- g) Corruption – some prison ministers divert inmates’ management fund to personal use.
- h) Poor management of prisons by the government makes reintegration difficult if not impossible.
- i) Unnecessary long time delay in the prosecution of suspects already in the police custody frustrates social workers.
- j) Near absence of pro-bono services by lawyer – The poor have no lawyers to defend them.
- k) The centralization of prison management in Nigeria – Every prison in Nigeria is managed by the Federal Government of Nigeria.
- l) Inadequate number of prisons in Nigeria – Nigeria only has 227 prisons which accommodate over 40,000 inmates. Definitely, there is congestion and this makes prison ministries more frustrating.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The writer of this thesis hereby recommends the following for improvement in the re-integration of ex-convicts:

5.3.1 More Volunteers

There is need for increase of more social workers. Churches, volunteers, community groups and NGOs should provide meaningful programmes for prisoners. Even where space is limited the involvement of volunteers contributes to improved morale and reduces inmate idleness.

5.3.2 Staff Training

Staff members should be trained in basic communication and relational skills. They should be conversant with building respectful and humane relationships, anger management and conflict mediation. This will improve both staff and inmate morale.

5.3.3 Non-sentenced Prisoners

Prison overcrowding is sometimes caused by a slow court system and as a result the number of remand or non-sentenced prisoners increases substantially. Some non-sentenced prisoners may not have appeared in court due to lack of legal representation and while others may be eligible for bail. This requires appraisal

5.3.4 Review Cases

The number of non-sentenced prisoners should be reduced by establishing a process for lawyers, prosecutors and judges to review the legal status of individual detainees and make appropriate recommendations to the court.

5.3.5 Speed Release

Volunteer lawyers or paralegal volunteers should be organized to help inmates prepare for bail hearings and to reduce the amount of time they may have to wait for their cases to be heard.

5.3.6 Sentenced Prisoners

Many persons sentenced to prison do not represent a real danger or threat to the community. The court has ordered them imprisoned because few

other meaningful alternatives for punishment exist. Effective alternatives can be used to reduce the prison population.

5.3.7 Increase Alternatives

A crucial meeting with judges, politicians, community leaders, lawyers and other relevant groups should be convened to discuss the use of alternative community-based punishments rather than prison for non-dangerous offenders. Consider holding the meeting at the jail or prison to expand awareness of existing conditions.

5.3.8 Use Furloughs

Political support and legal authority should be proposed and established so as to permit trustworthy prisoners to leave during the day or weekends for employment, family visitation or community service activities.

5.3.9 Long-term Solutions

Overcrowded prisons are more difficult to manage humanely and effectively. As need for living space increases the space available for educational, recreational, cultural, and religious activities is often reduced or entirely eliminated. This entrenched problem and solutions require careful work and strong political will. Some of the creative measures taken to address this problem have included: mobile court judgments; Judges use of probation and community service as an alternative to prison; legislators adoption of sentence reforms to reduce the length of sentences; Parole boards are given authority to release and supervise prisoners who pose little danger to society; and Parole boards sanction technical parole violators (e.g., fail to report on time) outside prison

5.3.10 Reduce Idleness

