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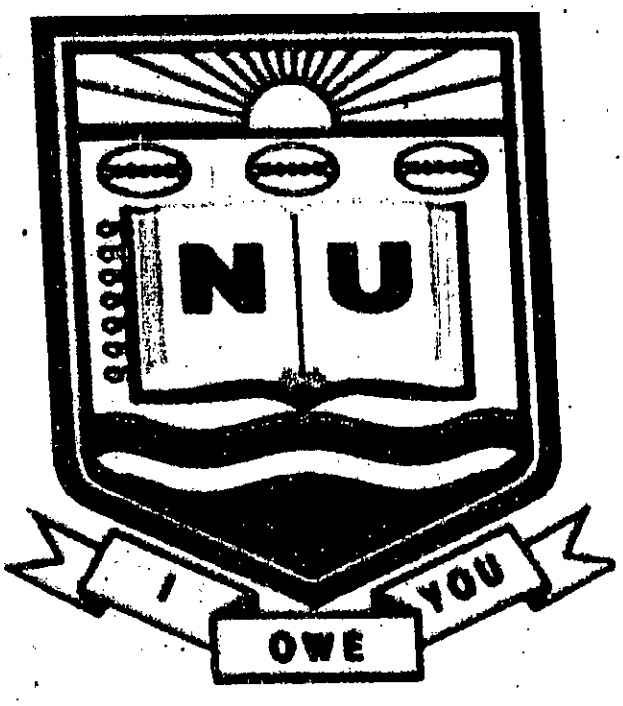

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Faith-Based Organizations and Environmental Hazards: A Study of Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper looked at the proliferation of religious enclaves along the ever busy Lagos- Ibadan Expressway and analyzed the attendant hazards. The aims were to identify the attractions the highway offers; the ensuing environmental implications and steps to tackling the pollutions to make Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) nationwide eco-friendly. Adopting descriptive research design; data were collected through the use of a self-structured questionnaire, participant observation and unstructured interview. Two Hundred and Fifty copies of the questionnaire were administered in Lagos and Ogun States out of which Two Hundred and Twenty Two (222) were retrieved. The survey was by systematic random sampling. Three research questions raised were answered and data analyzed using the percentages. The study made these findings: The large expanse of land and its strategic location and serenity make the Highway attractive to religious bodies; environmental hazards identified included traffic jam, noise, filth, and deforestation. The paper made the following recommendations: development of a Faith–Based environmental program; green sermons; strict enforcement of environmental laws; and recycling among others. The paper will hopefully generate awareness as it brings to the fore a local instance of an often overlooked environmental pollution. It will also contribute to the avalanche of literature on Religion and Environment. The thesis of the paper is that while the larger picture of climate change looms globally; local cases that are the contributory factors should not escape attention.

Key Words: Faith-Based Organizations, Environmental Hazards, Expressway, Religious Enclaves.

Introduction

More than ever before, in the annals of world history, environmental issues have become one of the most pressing. Hence, Nihinlola (2013) posited that the world is facing critical ecological crises and that if nothing pragmatic is done to redress the trends, a "global ecological suicide" looms. Global as ecological and environmental cases are, local contexts make the matter peculiar and so a source of concern for every responsible individual. In addition to ecological problems like drought, flood, depletion and climatic changes; environmental pollution in different parts of Nigeria are on the increase. The hazardous magnitude is perilous and frightening. There are endemic challenges that each of the six zones contend with. While Niger Delta region battles with oil spillage; the Eastern States are plagued with erosion; deforestation threatens the Northern part of the country (Amanyie, 2006; Sibani, 2014; Macaulay, 2014). However, the South West is piqued with flooding and the pollution occasioned by the proliferation of religious enclaves along the ever busy Lagos- Ibadan Expressway.

No doubt, The Expressway is the busiest road in Nigeria today (Hassan, Dina & Olushola, 2016). This is because it is the only highway that links the other parts of the Nation to Lagos – the commercial capital. The 110 kilometre Expressway was officially opened to traffic as a toll road in August 1978 by the then Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo. It spans three States: Oyo, Ogun and Lagos. Another factor that contributes to the high flow of traffic along the Highway is that Lagos City has the highest concentration of vehicles in the country. As Nigeria's most urbanized city and with a population of over 10 million; Lagos is a built up area of 17500ha, and is regarded as a mega city (Mabogunje, 2002). Due to the size of land and high migration, the city is ever spreading in "an amoebic fashion into surrounding rural areas, hence the proliferation of peri-urban settlements adjacent to Lagos" (Lawanson, Yadua and Salako, 2017). Hence, movement in and out of Lagos is soaring and the Expressway very hectic.

Two of the villages along the corridors sideways the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway that have been experiencing the highest pressure as the Metropolitan Lagos spills over to them are Ibafo and Mowe in Ogun State. According to the Lagos Mega City Report of 2006 quoted by Lawanson, Yadua and Salako, (2017), these and others smaller villages are already under heavy and intense pressure of physical growth with very few indicators of real development. Perhaps, the most conspicuous sight on the highway is the high concentration of religious enclaves and camp grounds. It has been aptly described as the *Heavens Gateway* (Oshitelu, 2001). It is the Religions' Highway or Faith Haven. From the old Ibadan toll gate to the Lagos end of the road, some of the religious bodies that occupy vast area of land are:

1. SAT *Guru Maharaji* Village, Ibadan;
2. The Church of the Lord/*Aladura*, Ogere-Remo;
3. Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM) Prayer City;
4. The Methodist Youth Village;
5. The Redeemed Christian Church of God (Redemption Camp);
6. Gideon's Village;
7. Deeper Life Bible Church Camp;
8. The Gospel Faith Mission International (GOFAMINT);
9. The Youth Camp of the Assemblies of God Church;
10. Cherubim and Seraphim, *Ayo ni o;*
11. The *Nasrullahi Fatihi* Society of Nigeria (NASFAT);
12. Prophet Samson Ayorinde's World Evangelism Bible Church;
13. *Doulos* Ministry of Pastor Charles Achonwa;
14. Success Camp of the New Testament Assembly;
15. Cherubim and Seraphim Church (Unification);
16. The Prayer City of Christ Apostolic Church;
17. Upper Room Baptist Church, Camp Ground; and
18. Christ Healing Evangelical Church.

The term, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), is used in this work to mean spiritually-centred or religious-based groups and organizations. Of help is the clarification of Woldehanna, Ringheim & Murphy (2005:27) that the term FBOs refers *both to places of worship such as temples, churches and mosques and also to service organizations that have a mission that is inspired by faith.* Therefore, in this study, all the places of worship and enclaves along the Expressway are regarded as FBOs. Citing copious sources, Fanlran (2011: 13) defined the environment as "everything that surrounds"; "the natural surrounding or social condition in which people live"; and "the sum total of all the external conditions which may act upon an organism or community to influence its development or existence ... the surrounding air, light, moisture, temperature, wind, soil and other organisms..." As such, the environment is the totality of man's visible or natural location or world and is a determinant of his/her survival or otherwise. Also, the environment of a people is the area of land they inhabit, including all that the land supports like plant and animal lives, water bodies both running and stagnant and the atmosphere overcasting that land. To a social scientist this is the extent of the environment of a community of people (Oyewole, 2013). However, the environment is much more complex to a natural scientist. It is both the physical and non-physical; the biotic – life forms, flora, fauna and micro-organisms – and the a-biotic, which can also be seen as both internal and external (Oyewole, 2003).

To a Christian, the environment is simply God's whole created world – spiritual and physical - of which man is an integral part (Gen. 1). The Holy Bible spells out "the history and story" of creation and the place of mankind in it (Adejuwon, 2012). So, to *Gnanakan (1999: 2);*

> *The word 'environment' has been around for a long time. It refers to the complete range of physical and biological conditions that surround us. We are all part of a particular environment, a surrounding. Human beings, and every other organism; i.e. trees, plants, animals etc., cannot exist outside of a given environment. 'Environment' is the term used to refer to nature and all that surrounds it. Sometimes we will use it synonymously with creation.*

The discipline that deals with the interrelationship in and between organisms, living and non-living, within the environment is known as Ecology. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2015: 465) simply puts it as study of the "relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment". The emphasis is on the interaction and interdependence between the environment and the inhabitants. The wanton destruction of the ecosystem has given rise to crises like pollution, global warming, desertification, deforestation, and natural disasters such as earthquakes, tidal waves, drought and famine (Nihinlola, 2013).

The historical root of the world ecological crisis has been traced by Professor Lynn White Jr. to "Judeo-Christian arrogance to nature" (Taiwo, 2007-2008). The stand of White since the 1967 publication of the book "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" has helped raise the much needed awareness among Christians about the environment. Manus (2003) traced the history of the Christian concern for the care of the environment from the 1961 World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in New Delhi to the 1983 Seminar held at Vellore, India under the theme: *Christian Perspectives on Stewardship of the Earth's Resources*; the Inter-Church consultation on "Peace with Justice for the Whole Creation" which produced the 1989 Basel Declaration; and the 1991 World Council of Churches (WCC) conference at Canberra with the theme *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.* At the home front, many Christian bodies have taken up the challenge of environmental degradation. One of such is the Man & Nature Study/Action Centre (MANASAC) that birthed the Sacred Earth Ministries (SEM). As a fully registered body under the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC); SEM is a voluntary Non- Governmental Organization (NGO), non-profit sharing and an evangelical cum humanitarian organ. Its vision is "to forge a community of Christians and other religionists who are sufficiently knowledgeable, concerned and committed to take such actions, alongside others in the secular community, that guarantee sustainable environmental and economic development" (Faniran & Nihinlola, 2012: xxvi-xxvii). In Islam, environmental awareness is also robust. Two concepts are related to the development of natural resources as stipulated in the Holy Qur'an. These are *Tafakkur* (Reflection) and *Taskhir* (Subjection). *Tafakkur* ensures the acquisition of relevant scientific knowledge; while *Taskhir* results in mastery over nature through application of appropriate scientific laws to fabricate, design, process and manufacture. However, *Taskhir* is not the subjugation of nature with a view to destroying the ecosystem (Muhibbu-Din, 2003).

The Lagos-Ibadan Expressway has engaged the attention of scholars for some reasons. Lawanson, Yadua & Salako (2017) studied the environmental challenges of the peri-urban settlements along the Highway. They revealed a high level of dealings between the settlements and the Lagos Megacity as over 60% of respondents were working in Lagos. The study also showed an increment in land and rental value. Environmental problems observed included filth, noise, traffic congestion, and poor planning. On their part, Hassan, Dina & Olushola (2016) analysed the effects of religious activities on traffic flow along the Expressway. They observed the unprecedented growth of religious centres along the Highway. They highlighted the impact on traffic like congestion, delay, accidents, parking difficulties and environmental pollution. Finally, Abolade; Falaye & Anibijuwon (2014) studied the waste generation and disposal techniques within three religious camps. They identified food waste as the most generated and that the waste management system was poor. In conclusion, they recommended better waste storage facilities and disposal, recycling, enforcement of waste disposal regulations and the use of incinerators.

Therefore, the proliferation of FBOs along the Highway has thrown up many issues such as space contestation; rural-urban drift; legal tussles occasioned by land speculators; and particularly the environmental hazards. This study looked into the whole gamut of the emerging environmental hazards, immediate and future implications. The scenario has been aptly described by Oshitelu (2001: 95) thus,

These church organizations are creating fast growing communities, which seems good but there are potential problems. Most of the buildings erected are largely underutilized, mainly of absentee house owners ..... The large crowd of congregation constitutes a heavy drain on the lean if not scanty facilities available in the host communities. The church organizations and their members made little financial contributions to their host communities. They pay no tax either to their host village, community, looal government or State Government. Resources of the communities are being exploited.

This paper, therefore, probes into the activities of these and other religious bodies along the highway. The aims are to identify the specific attractions; the far ranging environmental implications and to proffer pragmatic steps to tackling the pollutions thereby making Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) nationwide eco-friendly. The paper will hopefully generate awareness as it brings to the fore a local instance of environmental matter. It will also contribute to the literature on religion and ecology. The thesis of the paper is that while the larger picture of climate change looms globally; local cases that are the contributory factors should not escape attention.

Statement of Problem

One of the indexes of Nigeria being the most religious nation according to the World Value index is the preponderance of worship centres (Medrano, 2017). Being a secular state, the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and association (Abe, 2010). This explains the rapid multiplication of churches all over every available space. Until of recent, proliferation of worship places was common in the urban areas; where shops, public places, abandoned/uncompleted buildings, warehouses, hotel and cinema halls are booked and used for prayer meetings and Sunday worship. The cities and towns seem congested and expensive. The recent trend is the movement away from the hustle and bustle of city life to a more expansive and serene environment. Thus, the land along the Lagos-Ibadan expressway is being utilised for camp sites and religious enclaves. This has recently become an environmental issue as the line between the sacred and the secular becomes thinner by the day due to the indiscriminate location of worship places. Why do people complain about the myriad of religious enclaves along the ever-busy expressway? What can be the reasons for the cluster of churches along the road? To provide answers to these and other questions, there is the need to examine the Faith-Based Organizations and levels of environmental hazards along the expressway.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is an examination of the Faith-Based Organisations' occupation of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway with the aim of determining the extent of environmental hazards. Specifically, the purpose is to find out the followings.

1. Determine the attractions to the religious organizations along the Lagos – Ibadan expressway.
2. Identify peculiar environmental hazards caused by the large concentration of campgrounds/religious enclaves along the expressway.
3. Point out steps to ameliorate the situation.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the attractions to the religious organizations along the Lagos – Ibadan expressway?
2. What peculiar environmental hazards are caused by the large concentration of camp grounds/religious enclaves?
3. How could the situation be ameliorated?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research survey method. The population involved religious leaders and faithful – Christians and Muslims; commuters, road transport workers, government officials, residents of concerned communities like Ibafo and Mowe, law enforcement agents. The sampling frame consisted of participants selected through the convenient sampling technique. This technique is based on the availability of the study participants during the administration of the instruments. The research instruments consisted of self-developed questionnaire, structured and unstructured oral interviews and participant observation. The survey covered only Lagos and Ogun States because the main area of consideration is that part of the expressway. The survey was carried out between the months of July and December, 2017, a period of six months. Two research assistants were trained on the purpose of the study and how to collect data. In eliciting information from respondents, the researcher used a self-structured questionnaire titled "Faith-Based Organizations and Environmental Hazards along Lagos-Ibadan Expressway Questionnaire" (FBOEHLIQ). The questionnaire was made up of two parts (Sections A and B). Section A sought the demographic information such age,

religion/denomination, profession, gender and educational level. Section B contained 32 items that examined the views of people on the topic. Two hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were distributed out of two hundred and twenty two (222) were retrieved. The researcher selected participants through the stratified random sampling technique took part in the exercise. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given to experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Religious Education. Their corrections were used in the final draft of the questionnaire. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study consisting of 30 students of the Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, not included in the main study was used. Their responses were subjected to Cronbach Alpha Statistics and a reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained which justify the use of the instrument for the main data collection. Using the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), the researcher analysed the data.

Result and Discussion of Findings

Responses to the first research question on the attractions of the religious organizations to the Lagos – Ibadan Expressway. Six reasons were given. Participants rated them in these order: the abundance of land; its strategic location and accessibility; its serenity; proximity to Lagos and Ibadan, two major cities in Nigeria; and its nearness to the headquarters of most of the churches that are located in Ibadan or Lagos. For administrative conveniences, the sixth factor cannot but be expected. To corroborate this fact, the Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM) has her International Headquarters at Onike, Iwaya, Lagos. Also, the Deeper Life Bible Ministry (DLBM); the New Testament Assembly and the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) are headquartered in Lagos city. Except for few villages that dotted the Highway, the expanse of land is enormous. The quietude of the area frees worshippers from the hustle and bustle that characterize Ibadan and Lagos cities. On many occasions, Jesus Christ withdrew to solitary places for meditation. He taught his disciples to do same (Matt. 14: 13, 23; Mark 6: 31-32). The presence of guest houses within the enclaves like the Redemption Camp and MFM attest to the fact that people retreat there for private devotion, conferences, and the like.

Participants confirmed that the most disturbing of the environmental hazards on the Expressway is the vehicular peril. Of our 222 respondents, as many as 174 (78%) did not enjoy traveling on the Highway due to the hazards such as traffic jam, armed robbery, emissions and noise heightened by the religious activities. According to Bakare (2017), driving along the Highway is worrisome on those days. Hence, commercial transporters hike fares because traffic jams are detrimental to vehicle engines as well as heighten fuel consumption (Bakare, 2017). In addition, findings revealed increase in the frequency of vehicular accidents/breakdowns, robbery and deaths. This confirms Sibani (2014) and Hassan, Dina & Olushola, (2016) assertion that gaseous release from heavy duty vehicles during construction works coupled with the vehicular emissions have harmful effects on humans, animals and the environment. Other hazards attested to are noise pollution, filth, deforestation and dislocation of landowners. In a related assessment, Omegoh (2017) noted that churches in particular contribute to noise pollution in Lagos City. This they do through the use of overhead vehicle speakers and *ahuja* speakers especially at night during vigils. What constitutes noise on the Highway according to the findings are siren from Very Important Personalities (VIPs); generating plants; mobile record/jingles and horns from impatient drivers held in traffic.

The nature of filth identified included food, human wastes and nylons of 'pure water' among others. It is noted that the highway is often left filthy after religious programs to which 186 (84%) agreed. This is due to the indiscriminate disposal of wastes as noted by Abolade; Falaye & Anibijuwon (2014). Participants noted that religious bodies only tidy up their tents but leave the Expressway unattended to. A travel down the highway during and after any of such programs corroborates this negligence. A greater percentage of participants (168, 75%) agreed that such filths block drainages and aid flooding. In addition, they cause disgusting stench thereby constituting undue distractions to passersby. Also, Lawanson, Yadua & Salako (2017) confirmed the indiscriminate disposal of waste along the corridor. All over the world, deforestation is a major ecological problem. On the Lagos – Ibadan Expressway, thick forests are fast paving way for religious enclaves to which 138 (62%) of the participants agreed. Interestingly, 96 (43%) did not see anything wrong in farmlands giving way to camps. However, 114 (52%) noted that too much occupation endangers animals and plants. Though no zoological survey had been carried out,

personal observation revealed that crops like cassava, kola nut, *Awusa* (*monodara brevipes*), as well as trees like *Iroko* (African Teak or Swamp Mahogany), *apepe* (West African Rosewood), *arere* (African Maple) are fast disappearing. Finally, the second research question found that further displacement of people along the Highway could lead to the Niger Delta crises version (Oshitelu, 2001). Findings showed that people are displaced when large expanse of land is sold out. Observation carried out showed that the following villages are being hemmed in on all sides by the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Camp Ground: Mowe, Ofada, Imedu Nla, Imedu Okepa, Maba, Olowotedo as well as the Greenland's Academy, Esther International School, the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) *Ayo Ni O*, and the Deeper Life Camp. It was reported by Okonkwo (2015) that over 300 families these nine villages: Agunfoye, Ososanya, Isaga Kekere, Isaga Nla, Ebute Agbara, Pagbo, Igbonla Adeleye, Igbonla Akinremi and Olaparun in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State have complained over the encroachment of their land by the RCCG during the construction of the Three Kilometres Auditorium of the Church. That such occupation may not abate is confirmed by 72 (32%) of the participants. Interview conducted showed the wrong assumption among many that the vast land is unused or uncultivated. However, a second look at the terrain proved otherwise. The adjoining villages are being occupied by hundreds of subsistence farmers whose activities are interrupted in the process of occupation and expansion of religious enclaves. According to Lawanson, Yadua & Salako (2017), a very high percentage, 86%, along the Expressway, has farmland cultivated by peasant subsistence farmers. In the struggle for survival, the poor have often fallen on what they have. After decades of military dictatorship, poor leadership and corruption, Nigerians have become poverty-stricken that some could sell their tomorrow for today. In the words of Gnanakan (1999: 143),

The poor, when exploited, exploit their environment to alleviate their poverty. Many poor farmers sell their lands to rich industrial or urban estate developers, causing environmental complications on the one side but rendering them poorer in the long run. Any economic benefit is temporary. In the other cases, there are people who in their poverty are compelled in their desperation to strip their environment of all natural resources that could help them survive.

As original owners relocate after selling their lands, the psychological effects of permanent detachment to what once constituted their farmlands or villages can be better imagined. In Africa, ones identity is boosted when recalling or visiting the village of birth or childhood. Particularly in Egba land, the village-identity contributes to one's roots. Hence, the saying: omo *Egba ti ko ni abule, omo ale ni* (meaning *whoever claims to be of Egba origin but has no village-root is but a bastard).* Indiscriminate disposal of landed property out of excruciating poverty and greed is the major cause in the rise of land speculators and court cases. For example, the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM) has been entangled in court cases on the land on which the Prayer City is situated. In fact, the General Overseer, Dr. D. K. Olukoya, confessed to have bought the land twice (Sahara Reporters, 2016). Also, the Church dragged the Ogun State government to court seeking for perpetual injunction restraining any act of revocation of the land. The State Government contended that the land occupied by the Prayer City was originally earmarked for Ibafo Independent Power Plant (IPP) (Fortune, 2008). The RCCG was also ensnared in a similar fate (Oyewale, 2014). To some respondents, the FBOs impede growth and development though others argued that the overriding presence of the FBOs contributed to the opening of the area for other enterprises. Residential estates like the Gateway Village, Paradise City, Riverview, Havillah and Sparklite Estates, are springing up. Private schools and universities are not left behind (Lawanson, Yadua & Salako, 2017). This study shows that the occupations are of mixed blessings to all, particularly the host communities.

Finally, attempts made to elicit information on what could be done to make the highway eco-friendly revealed diverse opinions. As a way out of unending traffic gridlock, participants advocated for the speedy completion of the expansion of the Highway and the construction of by-passes or new routes. Those interviewed commended the RCCG for the construction of the Sagamu Link Road. Others opined that camps and enclaves should give ample room off the Highway or be relocated. All agreed that environmental laws should be strictly enforced. As a way out of this and other ecological problems; 180 (52%) participants wanted the introduction of Environmental Education in schools; the importance of awareness creation has been pointed out by Evelyn & Tyav (2012). Surprisingly, there was a tie (78 or 35%) among participants as to whether further establishment of camps be

allowed or not. In the spirit of freedom of religion that the nation's constitution guarantees, any restriction or outright prevention of new camps would be legally contested. Aside ethnicity, religion is perhaps the most sensitive and contentious topic in Nigeria's polity. More occupations should be expected in future considering the enormous wealth at the disposal of some churches (particularly the Pentecostals); the poverty in the land and the high level of religiosity.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper brought on the front burner one of the contributory factors to ecological crises. Like the proverbial little drops that make the ocean, it is the often overlooked cases like this that coalesce to endemic and intractable threats to humanity. The analysis shows how individuals and groups contribute to the crises. The study also confirms the relatedness of human actions and inactions to the ecological problems of the generation. Furthermore, the study validates the complexity of ecological hazards accentuating why all hand must be on deck to save the environment and humanity. Just like every perennial challenge therefore, the recommendations would be in two folds: immediate or short term remedies and long span action points. Part of the pressing solution would be ample off-the-road parking provisions and improvement in the waste management system by the FBOs and compliance with environmental regulations. Environmental boards or committees need revitalization. They also need to cooperate with relevant government agencies like the Lagos State Ministry of Environment. To discourage open defecations and waste dumps, mobile toilets be procured while the use of incinerators be employed. The message of 3Rs - reduce, recycle and reuse should be preached and adopted in the waste-to-wealth generation scheme. On its part, the government should expedite action on the expansion of the highway and construct alternate routes to decongest it. Also, relevant law enforcement agencies like the Police and Federal and States Road Safety Agencies should be reinforced to ensure maximum security and total compliance with extant traffic regulations. Recommendations that form part of the long term remedies are: environmental sensitivity be raised through green sermons that balance Christian teachings on *dominionship* with that of *stewardship*; introduction of Environmental Education (EE) in the schools curricular and planting of trees to create green environment. Finally, since the establishment of new enclaves may not be ruled out in future, it should be ensured that they are not too close to the highway.

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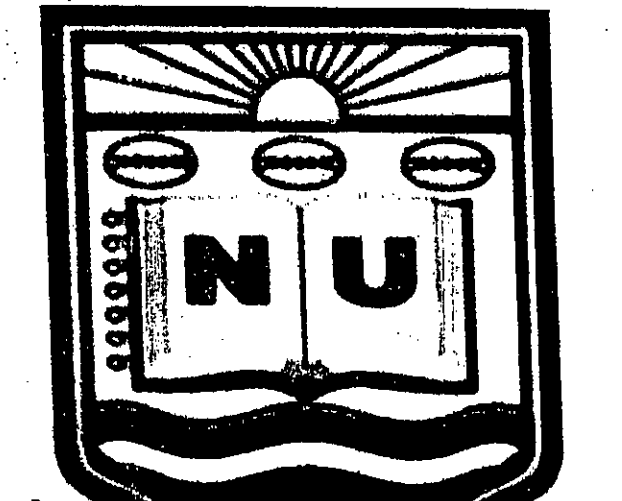

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Faith-Based Organizations and Environmental Hazards: A Study of Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper looked at the proliferation of religious enclaves along the ever busy Lagos- Ibadan Expressway and analyzed the attendant hazards. The aims were to identify the attractions the highway offers; the ensuing environmental implications and steps to tackling the pollutions to make Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) nationwide eco-friendly. Adopting descriptive research design: data were collected through the use of a self-structured questionnaire, participant observation and unstructured interview. Two Hundred and Fifty copies of the questionnaire were administered in Lagos and Ogun States out of which Two Hundred and Twenty Two (222) were retrieved. The survey was by systematic random sampling. Three research questions raised were answered and data analyzed using the percentages. The study made these findings: The large expanse of land and its strategic location and serenity make the Highway attractive to religious bodies; environmental hazards identified included traffic jam, noise, filth, and deforestation. The paper made the following recommendations: development of a Faith–Based environmental program; green sermons; strict enforcement of environmental laws; and recycling among others. The paper will hopefully generate awareness as it brings to the fore a local instance of an often overlooked environmental pollution. It will also contribute to the avalanche of literature on Religion and Environment. The thesis of the paper is that while the larger picture of climate change looms globally; local cases that are the contributory factors should not escape attention.

Key Words: Faith-Based Organizations, Environmental Hazards, Expressway, Religious Enclaves.

Introduction
More than ever before, in the annals of world history, environmental issues have become one of the most pressing. Hence, Nihinlola (2013) posited that the world is facing critical ecological crises and that if nothing pragmatic is done to redress the trends, a "global ecological suicide" looms. Global as ecological and environmental cases are, local contexts make the matter peculiar and so a source of concern for every responsible individual. In addition to ecological problems like drought, flood, depletion and climatic changes; environmental pollution in different parts of Nigeria are on the increase. The hazardous magnitude is perilous and frightening. There are endemic challenges that each of the six zones contend with. While Niger Delta region battles with oil spillage; the Eastern States are plagued with erosion; deforestation threatens the Northern part of the country (Amanyie, 2006; Sibani, 2014; Macaulay, 2014). However, the South West is piqued with flooding and the pollution occasioned by the proliferation of religious enclaves along the ever busy Lagos- Ibadan Expressway.

No doubt, The Expressway is the busiest road in Nigeria today (Hassan, Dina & Olushola, 2016). This is because it is the only highway that links the other parts of the Nation to Lagos – the commercial capital. The 110 kilometre Expressway was officially opened to traffic as a toll road in August 1978 by the then Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo. It spans three States: Oyo, Ogun and Lagos. Another factor that contributes to the high flow of traffic along the Highway is that Lagos City has the highest concentration of vehicles in the country. As Nigeria's most urbanized city and with a population of over 10 million; Lagos is a built up area of 17500ha, and is regarded as a mega city (Mabogunje, 2002). Due to the size of land and high migration, the city is ever spreading in "an amoebic fashion into surrounding rural areas, hence the proliferation of peri-urban settlements adjacent to Lagos".(Lawanson, Yadua and Salako, 2017). Hence, movement in and out of Lagos is soaring and the Expressway very hectic.

Two of the villages along the corridors sideways the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway that have been experiencing the highest pressure,as the Metropolitan Lagos spills over to them are Ibafo and Mowe in Ogun State. According to the Lagos Mega City Report of 2006 quoted by Lawanson, Yadua and Salako, (2017), these and others smaller villages are already under heavy and intense pressure of physical growth with very few indicators of real development. Perhaps, the most conspicuous sight on the highway is the high concentration of religious enclaves and camp grounds. It has been aptly described as the *Heavens Gateway* (Oshitelu, 2001). It is the Religions' Highway or Faith Haven. From the old Ibadan toll gate to the Lagos end of the road, some of the religious bodies that occupy vast area of land are:

1. SAT *Guru Maharaji* Village, Ibadan;
2. The Church of the Lord/*Aladura*, Ogere-Remo;
3. Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM) Prayer City;
4. The Methodist Youth Village;
5. The Redeemed Christian Church of God (Redemption Camp);
6. Gideon's Village;
7. Deeper Life Bible Church Camp;
8. The Gospel Faith Mission International (GOFAMINT);
9. The Youth Camp of the Assemblies of God Church;
10. Cherubim and Seraphim, *Ayo ni o;*
11. The *Nasrullahi Fatihi* Society of Nigeria (NASFAT);
12. Prophet Samson Ayorinde's World Evangelism Bible Church;
13. *Doulos* Ministry of Pastor Charles Achonwa;
14. Success Camp of the New Testament Assembly;
15. Cherubim and Seraphim Church (Unification);
16. The Prayer City of Christ Apostolic Church;
17. Upper Room Baptist Church, Camp Ground; and
18. Christ Healing Evangelical Church.

The term, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), is used in this work to mean spiritually-centred or religious-based groups and organizations. Of help is the clarification of Woldehanna, Ringheim & Murphy (2005:27) that the term FBOs refers *both to places of worship such as temples, churches and mosques and also to service organizations that have a mission that is inspired by faith.* Therefore, in this study, all the places of worship and enclaves along the Expressway are regarded as FBOs. Citing copious sources, Faniran (2011: 13) defined the environment as "everything that surrounds"; "the natural surrounding or social condition in which people live"; and "the sum total of all the external conditions which may act upon an organism or community to influence its development or existence ... the surrounding air, light, moisture, temperature, wind, soil and other organisms..." As such, the environment is the totality of man's visible or natural location or world and is a determinant of his/her survival or otherwise. Also, the environment of a people is the area of land they inhabit, including all that the land supports like plant and animal lives, water bodies both running and stagnant and the atmosphere overcasting that land. To a social scientist this is the extent of the environment of a community of people (Oyewole, 2013). However, the environment is much more complex to a natural scientist. It is both the physical and non-physical; the biotic – life forms, flora, fauna and micro-organisms – and the a-biotic, which can also be seen as both internal and external (Oyewole, 2003).

To a Christian, the environment is simply God's whole created world – spiritual and physical - of which man is an integral part (Gen. 1). The Holy Bible spells out "the history and story" of creation and the place of mankind in it (Adejuwon, 2012). So, to *Gnanakan (1999: 2);*

> *The word 'environment' has been around for a long time. It refers to the complete range of physical and biological conditions that surround us. We are all part of a particular environment, a surrounding. Human beings, and every other organism; i.e. trees, plants, animals etc., cannot exist outside of a given environment. 'Environment' is the term used to refer to nature and all that surrounds it. Sometimes we will use it synonymously with creation.*

The discipline that deals with the interrelationship in and between organisms, living and non-living, within the environment is known as Ecology. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2015: 465) simply puts it as study of the "relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment". The emphasis is on the interaction and interdependence between the environment and the inhabitants. The wanton destruction of the ecosystem has given rise to crises like pollution, global warming, desertification, deforestation, and natural disasters such as earthquakes, tidal waves, drought and famine (Nihinlola, 2013).

The historical root of the world ecological crisis has been traced by Professor Lynn White Jr. to "Judeo-Christian arrogance to nature" (Taiwo, 2007-2008). The stand of White since the 1967 publication of the book "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" has helped raise the much needed awareness among Christians about the environment. Manus (2003) traced the history of the Christian concern for the care of the environment from the 1961 World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in New Delhi to the 1983 Seminar held at Vellore, India under the theme: *Christian Perspectives on Stewardship of the Earth's Resources*; the Inter-Church consultation on "Peace with Justice for the Whole Creation" which produced the 1989 Basel Declaration; and the 1991 World Council of Churches (WCC) conference at Canberra with the theme *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*. At the home front, many Christian bodies have taken up the challenge of environmental degradation. One of such is the Man & Nature Study/Action Centre (MANASAC) that birthed the Sacred Earth Ministries (SEM). As a fully registered body under the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC); SEM is a voluntary Non- Governmental Organization (NGO), non-profit sharing and an evangelical cum humanitarian organ. Its vision is "to forge a community of Christians and other religionists who are sufficiently knowledgeable, concerned and committed to take such actions, alongside others in the secular community, that guarantee sustainable environmental and economic development" (Faniran & Nihinlola, 2012: xxvi-xxvii). In Islam, environmental awareness is also robust. Two concepts are related to the development of natural resources as stipulated in the Holy Qur'an. These are *Tafakkur* (Reflection) and *Taskhir* (Subjection). *Tafakkur* ensures the acquisition of relevant scientific knowledge; while *Taskhir* results in mastery over nature through application of appropriate scientific laws to fabricate, design, process and manufacture. However, *Taskhir* is not the subjugation of nature with a view to destroying the ecosystem (Muhibbu-Din, 2003).

The Lagos-Ibadan Expressway has engaged the attention of scholars for some reasons. Lawanson, Yadua & Salako (2017) studied the environmental challenges of the peri-urban settlements along the Highway. They revealed a high level of dealings between the settlements and the Lagos Megacity as over 60% of respondents were working in Lagos. The study also showed an increment in land and rental value. Environmental problems observed included filth, noise, traffic congestion, and poor planning. On their part, Hassan, Dina & Olushola (2016) analysed the effects of religious activities on traffic flow along the Expressway. They observed the unprecedented growth of religious centres along the Highway. They highlighted the impact on traffic like congestion, delay, accidents, parking difficulties and environmental pollution. Finally, Abolade; Falaye & Anibijuwon (2014) studied the waste generation and disposal techniques within three religious camps. They identified food waste as the most generated and that the waste management system was poor. In conclusion, they recommended better waste storage facilities and disposal, recycling, enforcement of waste disposal regulations and the use of incinerators.

Therefore, the proliferation of FBOs along the Highway has thrown up many issues such as space contestation; rural-urban drift; legal tussles occasioned by land speculators; and particularly the environmental hazards. This study looked into the whole gamut of the emerging environmental hazards, immediate and future implications. The scenario has been aptly described by Oshitelu (2001: 95) thus,

> *These church organizations are creating fast growing communities, which seems good but there are potential problems. Most of the buildings erected are largely underutilized, mainly of absentee house owners ..... The large crowd of congregation constitutes a heavy drain on the lean if not scanty facilities available in the host communities. The church organizations and their members made little financial contributions to their host communities. They pay no tax either to their host village, community, local government or State Government. Resources of the communities are being exploited.*

This paper, therefore, probes into the activities of these and other religious bodies along the highway. The aims are to identify the specific attractions; the far ranging environmental implications and to proffer pragmatic steps to tackling the pollutions thereby making Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) nationwide eco-friendly. The paper will hopefully generate awareness as it brings to the fore a local instance of environmental matter. It will also contribute to the literature on religion and ecology. The thesis of the paper is that while the larger picture of climate change looms globally; local cases that are the contributory factors should not escape attention.

Statement of Problem

One of the indexes of Nigeria being the most religious nation according to the World Value index is the preponderance of worship centres (Medrano, 2017). Being a secular state, the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and association (Abe, 2010). This explains the rapid multiplication of churches all over every available space. Until of recent, proliferation of worship places was common in the urban areas; where shops, public places, abandoned/uncompleted buildings, warehouses, hotel and cinema halls are booked and used for prayer meetings and Sunday worship. The cities and towns seem congested and expensive. The recent trend is the movement away from the hustle and bustle of city life to a more expansive and serene environment. Thus, the land along the Lagos-Ibadan expressway is being utilised for camp sites and religious enclaves. This has recently become an environmental issue as the line between the sacred and the secular becomes thinner by the day due to the indiscriminate location of worship places. Why do people complain about the myriad of religious enclaves along the ever-busy expressway? What can be the reasons for the cluster of churches along the road? To provide answers to these and other questions, there is the need to examine the Faith-Based Organizations and levels of environmental hazards along the expressway.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is an examination of the Faith-Based Organisations' occupation of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway with the aim of determining the extent of environmental hazards. Specifically, the purpose is to find out the followings.

1. Determine the attractions to the religious organizations along the Lagos – Ibadan expressway.
2. Identify peculiar environmental hazards caused by the large concentration of campgrounds/religious enclaves along the expressway.
3. Point out steps to ameliorate the situation.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the attractions to the religious organizations along the Lagos – Ibadan expressway?
2. What peculiar environmental hazards are caused by the large concentration of camp grounds/religious enclaves?
3. How could the situation be ameliorated?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research survey method. The population involved religious leaders and faithful – Christians and Muslims; commuters, road transport workers, government officials, residents of concerned communities like Ibafo and Mowe, law enforcement agents. The sampling frame consisted of participants selected through the convenient sampling technique. This technique is based on the availability of the study participants during the administration of the instruments. The research instruments consisted of self-developed questionnaire, structured and unstructured oral interviews and participant observation. The survey covered only Lagos and Ogun States because the main area of consideration is that part of the expressway. The survey was carried out between the months of July and December, 2017, a period of six months. Two research assistants were trained on the purpose of the study and how to collect data. In eliciting information from respondents, the researcher used a self-structured questionnaire titled "Faith-Based Organizations and Environmental Hazards along Lagos-Ibadan Expressway Questionnaire" (FBOEHLIQ). The questionnaire was made up of two parts (Sections A and B). Section A sought the demographic information such age,

religion/denomination, profession, gender and educational level. Section B contained 32 items that examined the views of people on the topic. Two hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were distributed out of two hundred and twenty two (222) were retrieved. The researcher selected participants through the stratified random sampling technique took part in the exercise. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given to experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Religious Education. Their corrections were used in the final draft of the questionnaire. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study consisting of 30 students of the Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, not included in the main study was used. Their responses were subjected to Cronbach Alpha Statistics and a reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained which justify the use of the instrument for the main data collection. Using the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), the researcher analysed the data.

Result and Discussion of Findings

Responses to the first research question on the attractions of the religious organizations to the Lagos – Ibadan Expressway. Six reasons were given. Participants rated them in these order: the abundance of land; its strategic location and accessibility; its serenity; proximity to Lagos and Ibadan, two major cities in Nigeria; and its nearness to the headquarters of most of the churches that are located in Ibadan or Lagos. For administrative conveniences, the sixth factor cannot but be expected. To corroborate this fact, the Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM) has her International Headquarters at Onike, Iwaya, Lagos. Also, the Deeper Life Bible Ministry (DLBM); the New Testament Assembly and the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) are headquartered in Lagos city. Except for few villages that dotted the Highway, the expanse of land is enormous. The quietude of the area frees worshippers from the hustle and bustle that characterize Ibadan and Lagos cities. On many occasions, Jesus Christ withdrew to solitary places for meditation. He taught his disciples to do same (Matt. 14: 13, 23; Mark 6: 31-32). The presence of guest houses within the enclaves like the Redemption Camp and MFM attest to the fact that people retreat there for private devotion, conferences, and the like.

Participants confirmed that the most disturbing of the environmental hazards on the Expressway is the vehicular peril. Of our 222 respondents, as many as 174 (78%) did not enjoy traveling on the Highway due to the hazards such as traffic jam, armed robbery, emissions and noise heightened by the religious activities. According to Bakare (2017), driving along the Highway is worrisome on those days. Hence, commercial transporters hike fares because traffic jams are detrimental to vehicle engines as well as heighten fuel consumption (Bakare, 2017). In addition, findings revealed increase in the frequency of vehicular accidents/breakdowns, robbery and deaths. This confirms Sibani (2014) and Hassan, Dina & Olushola, (2016) assertion that gaseous release from heavy duty vehicles during construction works coupled with the vehicular emissions have harmful effects on humans, animals and the environment. Other hazards attested to are noise pollution, filth, deforestation and dislocation of landowners. In a related assessment, Omegoh (2017) noted that churches in particular contribute to noise pollution in Lagos City. This they do through the use of overhead vehicle speakers and *ahuja* speakers especially at night during vigils. What constitutes noise on the Highway according to the findings are siren from Very Important Personalities (VIPs); generating plants; mobile record/jingles and horns from impatient drivers held in traffic.

The nature of filth identified included food, human wastes and nylons of 'pure water' among others. It is noted that the highway is often left filthy after religious programs to which 186 (84%) agreed. This is due to the indiscriminate disposal of wastes as noted by Abolade; Falaye & Anibijuwon (2014). Participants noted that religious bodies only tidy up their tents but leave the Expressway unattended to. A travel down the highway during and after any of such programs corroborates this negligence. A greater percentage of participants (168, 75%) agreed that such filths block drainages and aid flooding. In addition, they cause disgusting stench thereby constituting undue distractions to passersby. Also, Lawanson, Yadua & Salako (2017) confirmed the indiscriminate disposal of waste along the corridor. All over the world, deforestation is a major ecological problem. On the Lagos – Ibadan Expressway, thick forests are fast paving way for religious enclaves to which 138 (62%) of the participants agreed. Interestingly, 96 (43%) did not see anything wrong in farmlands giving way to camps. However, 114 (52%) noted that too much occupation endangers animals and plants. Though no zoological survey had been carried out,

personal observation revealed that crops like cassava, kola nut, *Awusa* (*monodara brevipes*), as well as trees like *Iroko* (African Teak or Swamp Mahogany), *apepe* (West African Rosewood), *arere* (African Maple) are fast disappearing. Finally, the second research question found that further displacement of people along the Highway could lead to the Niger Delta crises version (Oshitelu, 2001). Findings showed that people are displaced when large expanse of land is sold out. Observation carried out showed that the following villages are being hemmed in on all sides by the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Camp Ground: Mowe, Ofada, Imedu Nla, Imedu Okepa, Maba, Olowotedo as well as the Greenland's Academy, Esther International School, the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) *Ayo Ni O*, and the Deeper Life Camp. It was reported by Okonkwo (2015) that over 300 families these nine villages: Agunfoye, Ososanya, Isaga Kekere, Isaga Nla, Ebute Agbara, Pagbo, Igbonla Adeleye, Igbonla Akinremi and Olaparun in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State have complained over the encroachment of their land by the RCCG during the construction of the Three Kilometres Auditorium of the Church. That such occupation may not abate is confirmed by 72 (32%) of the participants. Interview conducted showed the wrong assumption among many that the vast land is unused or uncultivated. However, a second look at the terrain proved otherwise. The adjoining villages are being occupied by hundreds of subsistence farmers whose activities are interrupted in the process of occupation and expansion of religious enclaves. According to Lawanson, Yadua & Salako (2017), a very high percentage, 86%, along the Expressway, has farmland cultivated by peasant subsistence farmers. In the struggle for survival, the poor have often fallen on what they have. After decades of military dictatorship, poor leadership and corruption, Nigerians have become poverty-stricken that some could sell their tomorrow for today. In the words of Gnanakan (1999: 143),

The poor, when exploited, exploit their environment to alleviate their poverty. Many poor farmers sell their lands to rich industrial or urban estate developers, causing environmental complications on the one side but rendering them poorer in the long run. Any economic benefit is temporary. In the other cases, there are people who in their poverty are compelled in their desperation to strip their environment of all natural resources that could help them survive.

As original owners relocate after selling their lands, the psychological effects of permanent detachment to what once constituted their farmlands or villages can be better imagined. In Africa, ones identity is boosted when recalling or visiting the village of birth or childhood. Particularly in Egba land, the village-identity contributes to one's roots. Hence, the saying: omo *Egba ti ko ni abule, omo ale ni* (meaning *whoever claims to be of Egba origin but has no village-root is but a bastard).* Indiscriminate disposal of landed property out of excruciating poverty and greed is the major cause in the rise of land speculators and court cases. For example, the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM) has been entangled in court cases on the land on which the Prayer City is situated. In fact, the General Overseer, Dr. D. K. Olukoya, confessed to have bought the land twice (Sahara Reporters, 2016). Also, the Church dragged the Ogun State government to court seeking for perpetual injunction restraining any act of revocation of the land. The State Government contended that the land occupied by the Prayer City was originally earmarked for Ibafo Independent Power Plant (IPP) (Fortune, 2008). The RCCG was also ensnared in a similar fate (Oyewale, 2014). To some respondents, the FBOs impede growth and development though others argued that the overriding presence of the FBOs contributed to the opening of the area for other enterprises. Residential estates like the Gateway Village, Paradise City, Riverview, Havillah and Sparklite Estates, are springing up. Private schools and universities are not left behind (Lawanson, Yadua & Salako, 2017). This study shows that the occupations are of mixed blessings to all, particularly the host communities.

Finally, attempts made to elicit information on what could be done to make the highway eco-friendly revealed diverse opinions. As a way out of unending traffic gridlock, participants advocated for the speedy completion of the expansion of the Highway and the construction of by-passes or new routes. Those interviewed commended the RCCG for the construction of the Sagamu Link Road. Others opined that camps and enclaves should give ample room off the Highway or be relocated. All agreed that environmental laws should be strictly enforced. As a way out of this and other ecological problems; 180 (52%) participants wanted the introduction of Environmental Education in schools; the importance of awareness creation has been pointed out by Evelyn & Tyav (2012). Surprisingly, there was a tie (78 or 35%) among participants as to whether further establishment of camps be

allowed or not. In the spirit of freedom of religion that the nation's constitution guarantees, any restriction or outright prevention of new camps would be legally contested. Aside ethnicity, religion is perhaps the most sensitive and contentious topic in Nigeria's polity. More occupations should be expected in future considering the enormous wealth at the disposal of some churches (particularly the Pentecostals); the poverty in the land and the high level of religiosity.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper brought on the front burner one of the contributory factors to ecological crises. Like the proverbial little drops that make the ocean, it is the often overlooked cases like this that coalesce to endemic and intractable threats to humanity. The analysis shows how individuals and groups contribute to the crises. The study also confirms the relatedness of human actions and inactions to the ecological problems of the generation. Furthermore, the study validates the complexity of ecological hazards accentuating why all hand must be on deck to save the environment and humanity. Just like every perennial challenge therefore, the recommendations would be in two folds: immediate or short term remedies and long span action points. Part of the pressing solution would be ample off-the-road parking provisions and improvement in the waste management system by the FBOs and compliance with environmental regulations. Environmental boards or committees need revitalization. They also need to cooperate with relevant government agencies like the Lagos State Ministry of Environment. To discourage open defecations and waste dumps, mobile toilets be procured while the use of incinerators be employed. The message of 3Rs - reduce, recycle and reuse should be preached and adopted in the waste-to-wealth generation scheme. On its part, the government should expedite action on the expansion of the highway and construct alternate routes to decongest it. Also, relevant law enforcement agencies like the Police and Federal and States Road Safety Agencies should be reinforced to ensure maximum security and total compliance with extant traffic regulations. Recommendations that form part of the long term remedies are: environmental sensitivity be raised through green sermons that balance Christian teachings on *dominionship* with that of *stewardship*; introduction of Environmental Education (EE) in the schools curricular and planting of trees to create green environment. Finally, since the establishment of new enclaves may not be ruled out in future, it should be ensured that they are not too close to the highway.

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