

Re-thinking the Role of Family & Community in Rehabilitation of Convicts by Nigerian Correctional Service

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Abstract

Children are birthed and reared in families. If convicted and after serving their sentence, they return to their family and community. While in custody, the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) rehabilitates convicts by equipping them with literacy and vocational skills. Despite this, ex-convicts face enormous challenges which include stigmatization, unemployment, lack of accommodation. This paper examined how family and Town unions can play more meaningful roles in rehabilitation and aftercare. The study is mainly doctrinal but includes interviews with relevant persons and Agencies. It finds that family and Town Associations/Unions play strong, supportive roles in community socio-economic development in Southern Nigeria. It recommends the NCoS set up formal linkages to allow such associations if willing play a role in Rehabilitation of Convicts in custody. It should partner with Religious and other Non-Governmental Agencies set up half way houses to ease resettlement challenges. The paper recommends Social Welfare departments of Government handle Aftercare which will allow for NCoS to concentrate on custodial and non –custodial matters.

Keywords: Ex-convict, Stigma, Community, Rehabilitation, Town Associations.

1. Introduction

Offending is a recurrent theme in human nature. The criminal Justice system enacts several sanctions to convey its abhorrence of criminal behavior which come into force upon conviction after a criminal trial. Imprisonment is a custodial sentencing option provided for as sanction for certain offenses under criminal Statutes in Nigeria. Other non –custodial sentences exist in the Criminal

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Code, the Penal Code and Criminal Justice Act 2015.¹ Offenders come from family units and communities and upon release they return there. Therefore, families and by extension communities play a very important role in typical African settings. This paper argues that it is an opportune time to re-think more effective roles for involvement of family, Town Associations/Unions, religious bodies etc in ensuring effective rehabilitation of convicts.

2. Conceptual Clarification

The Nigerian nation is made up of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The country has an estimated population of 200 million with at least 250 tribes, different languages and cultures. It is alleged that Nigeria is a mere geographical expression, thus, significant number of the populace hold fierce allegiance to their tribe, mother tongue and socio-cultural practices.

Family is said to refer to a group of persons consisting of parents and children; father, mother and their children.² In this sense, family is seen as nuclear family. However, in this paper, family is used in the loose sense of the word that is, a group of blood relations; all the relations who descend from a common ancestor, or who spring from a common root. Family meetings hold regularly and kinsmen function as a legal body assisting during family difficulties and settling disputes.³ He refers to this as collective responsibility. By community is meant persons from same geographical setting such as village or town who also meet regularly. By community is meant a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.⁴ The members are linked by common ancestral ties with identifiable traits and characteristics. For the purpose of this paper, non- governmental bodies and religious organizations in a given locality are also regarded as community based. A convict is one who

¹ 1.Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015) is a Federal legislation that introduced radical provisions especially in non- custodial sentences in Nigeria. It only applies in Federal courts and the Federal Capital Territory. However, more States have domesticated this Act.

² Black's Law Dictionary, Centennial Edition, (1990) 6th Edition, St Paul, Minn West Publishing Co, pp 333,604, 1194

³ Dambazau, A. B(1986) . Law and Criminality, Ibadan, University Press, 1986 pp70-78, 140.

⁴ Community:Definition & Meaning Dictionary.com. <https://www.dictionary.com/browsewe>, (accessed 4 February 2022).

has been adjudged guilty of a crime and is serving a sentence as a result of such conviction.

Community Associations

These are associations based on communal ancestry or geographical similarity. In major towns across the country especially when there is a sizeable population of the indigenes of that particular town resident, an association is formed. This association is seen as a branch with similar branches all over the nation to run affairs of the union. There is a national body with an executive who co-ordinate affairs of the unions. This is a prototype for town unions in the Southern part of the country. The associations are registered by the Corporate Affairs Commission as non-profit organisations. Certain duties flow from being members of community associations, what Dambazau refers to as Reciprocal responsibility.⁵ Members pay an amount of money as annual/monthly dues and are expected to attend town meetings regularly, attend social events of the community and other members scrupulously and be good ambassadors of the community wherever they reside. Membership is only open to persons who are indigenes of that community. The unions provide social support to communal brethren on important occasions of their lives such as marriage, death, child birth, indigency, trouble with Law Enforcement e.t.c by visibly rallying around and being of assistance. Also, in some cases, various town unions form State associations, that way, they form a strong pressure group.⁶ Amazingly, such bodies also exist in Europe, United States and in diaspora, wherever Nigerians are resident. The bodies play an egalitarian role in the affairs of the community. They liaise with the traditional rulership institutions in their towns and make their presence felt through community based projects designed to uplift the standard of living of the people and alleviate communal

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⁶ Interview with Mr M. Bluejack, Assistant Secretary, Bonny Improvement Association, and selected indigenes of Bonny LGA, Rivers State(Aouth-South Nigeria), 3rd March 2022. Bonny town is in Rivers State and the local indigenes are Ijaws. Thus, they are members of the Bonny Improvement Association, (BIA). The body exists in major cities in Nigeria. It teams up with other town unions from the State to have Rivers State Community in the Federal Capital Territory(FCT), Abuja. It may also team up with other Ijaw groups who exist in Bayelsa, Delta, Ondo to form Ijaw Union.

hardship.⁷ This is because the presence of federal or state government is not often seen in terms of concrete developmental terms.

Another usefulness of the associations is to bring political pressure to bear on government when perceived marginalization of their 'son' or 'daughter' from that community in federal or State appointments/selections or siting of projects/political patronage is done. The unions are recognized by State Governments. They assist indigenes in getting appointments, promotions, scholarships and sundry opportunities in both private and public sector. With the present unemployment levels, most parents ensure they remain members of their town unions in order for their children to benefit when opportunities arise. When members have challenges such as bereavement, ill health, mental health challenges or police entanglements, every effort is made to assist such members financially and in reaching out to secure legal representation etc. Thus there is wide acceptance of the Town unions and its membership is considered desirable. Its aims and objectives promote not only members welfare but community well-being. Thus, their outreach where ever they are located to persons from their towns/villages is very strong and their contacts back home in their towns is solid.⁸

Dambazau argues that modernity has transformed Nigerian communities from simple, homogenous, mechanical and traditional ones to complex, heterogeneous, organic and modern ones.⁹ It has moved from an agricultural rural based economy to a semi-industrial

⁷ An example is Dikenaofeyi Development Union(DDU) of Isiala Mbaino Local Government Area(LGA) of Imo State, an autonomous community of six different clans. The branch of the town union is in every State of the Federation. There is a National Executive with a tenure of four years and its Presidency is rotated among the six different clans. Each clan takes up a post in the executive to promote inclusiveness. At Christmas, they return to the villages. On December 26th meetings hold. Interview with National Chairman held on 12 January 2022. DDU in the diaspora built a block of classroom in the Isiala Mbano community in 2021. The Union also provided palliatives during Covid-19 lockdown. The National body fixed rural roads, markets and renovated the Catholic church, the people are predominantly Catholic. The DDU is recognized by their State Government and the National Chairman aka President General meets with Imo State Government along with the LGA Chairman when matters affecting the community arise.

⁸ In an interview, The National Chairman of Iyamoye Development Union, (1DU) Ijumu Local Government Area(LGA), Kogi State. Stated that there are branches in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and in other States. There is a National Executive led by a National Chairman, Hon M. Akintola. In an interview, The National Chairman IDU stated that in December 2021 whilst at the hometown, he was informed of an old man left near naked for several days on the street. On interviewing him, the old man said he had lost the only two sons he had, had no spouse and wanted to die. The Chairman said he made arrangements for supply of food, contacted his relatives and ensured home care was paid for him by the Association.

⁹ *ibid*

one. That may well be largely true but it is this very complex modernity that contributes as a driving force when persons arrive cities outside their local home town to seek identity and cluster together for a sense of “roots” with their communal associations.

The reality is that Town Unions or Associations are very influential although sometimes manipulated negatively in a show of ‘primordial sentiment of kinship.’¹⁰ Recently, two ex-governors serving jail time for corruption were granted pardon by President Muhammadu Buhari. Their two communities planned a grand communal reception for them. They are ex- Governor Jolly Nyame of Taraba State convicted of corrupt enrichment, and ex- Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State also convicted of corrupt enrichment. Their respective town unions were the Bokkos Town Union for Dariye and Mumuye Cultural Development Association for Nyame. It did appear that leaders of those communities tended to rate kinship of higher importance than the moral flaws that got their sons into jail. For Aftercare of ex- convicts, Government can steer this influence positively especially those who are not the high and mighty in society. It will also assist to ensure security of the community by working against recidivism.

Caveat

The structures examined above and suggested as a framework for enhanced rehabilitation and especially Aftercare apply more to towns with virile unions which exist more in the Southern part of the country and areas of predominant Christian population in the North. Even so town unions are specifically referenced as they pertain to geographical entity not necessarily ethnic affiliations which may cut across several Local Government Areas or States. It will be a herculean task trying to effectively monitor an ex-convict in such a case.

¹⁰ THE NATION (2022), Editorial, Show of Shame! Sunday May 1, p13. Ex –Governor Nyame (1999-2007) was convicted of misappropriating N1.6 Billion Naira and the sentence reduced to 12 years while ex-Governor Dariye was convicted of laundering N1.16 billion public funds and sentenced to 14 years’ imprisonment, later reduced to 11 years by the Appellate court.

3. Imprisonment

The prison (or correctional center) is responsible for the custody of the final product of the criminal justice process. Section 35 of the 1999 constitution confers on every citizen a right to personal liberty and no person may be deprived of such right except in execution of the sentence or order of a court and with respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty.¹¹

A prison is defined as a public building or other place for the confinement of persons whether as a punishment imposed by the law or otherwise in the course of the administration of justice.¹² This is why Tarhule opines that restraint is the hallmark of imprisonment.¹³ There is no society without a form of corrections or prisons by whatever name called. It is said that prisons are necessary to keep offenders from ‘infecting’ other members of society’.¹⁴ So, prison punishes, it deters the imprisoned from offending again, it deters others from offending and thus sharing the prisoner’s fate.¹⁵ However, whilst the offender is incarcerated, if he is left to his devices, whatever led him into a life of criminality is not identified and dealt with, those character flaws will manifest back to a life of crime upon release. In fact, it is argued that many people became hardened criminals in prisons and would always find their way back to prison after their release.¹⁶ This paper concedes to this fact and supports Corrections, However, it must be acknowledged that certain factors outside of the offender which also affect his ability to as it were readjust to an upright life. In this context, it is argued that communal affiliations play a critical role in helping the offender whilst in custody maximize the rehabilitation facilities he can access.

¹¹ Section 35(1)(a) of 1999 constitution.

¹² Blacks(fn 2)1194

¹³ V. A. Tarhule, Corrections under Nigerian Law, Lagos Innovative Communicates, 2014, 153

¹⁴ T. Alabi & S. Alabi, ‘Pains of Imprisonment’, A sociological analysis of Experience of Inmates in Ilorin and Kirikiri Prisons, Journal of Research in Peace, Gender & Development, September 2011, Vol 1

¹⁵ J.D. Mclean & J.C. Wood, Criminal Justice & Treatment of Offenders, London, Sweet and Maxwell, 1969. 94.

¹⁶ Ogbozor et. al., (2006), From Hell to Hell: The Travails of Ex-prisoners in Nigeria, Paper presented at the 11th International Conference on Penal Abolition (ICOPA XI), held in Tasmania, Australia).

Nigerian Correctional Services (NCoS).

In Nigeria, Corrections falls under the Federal Exclusive List of the 1999 Constitution.¹⁷ Therefore, there are no State owned or privately owned prisons. A convict is held in the custody of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS). However, the 1999 Constitution has now been amended to make Corrections on the Concurrent List. States can now set up their Correctional Service and facility.¹⁸ On the 31st July, 2019, the NCoS was signed into law changing the former name - 'Nigerian Prison Service' to Nigerian Correctional Service. It is now responsible for custodial and non – custodial sentences.¹⁹

The NCoS is headquartered in Abuja. It has eight (8) Directorates: Finance & Accounts; Health & Welfare; Human Resources; Inmates Training and Productivity; Non-custodial sentences; Operations; Staff Training and Development; Works and Logistics. Nigeria has 298 prison formations in which reside a total of 70, 797 inmates against its official capacity of 50,153.²⁰ The ratio of Pre –trial Detainees to convicts is 72.4%. One of the side effects of this overcrowding is to make rehabilitation facilities stretched thin to cover inmates.

Effects of Prisonization

It must be noted that the conditions of the nation's prisons directly affect the offender's capacity and willingness to turn from a life of criminality. Alabi & Alabi state that the living conditions in the nation's prisons are appalling and damages the physical and mental wellbeing of the inmates.²¹ Inmates live with poor sanitation, lack of food, lack of medication, over- crowding, poor clothing and sleep on bare cold floor. Ibikunle submits that the nations prisons are over-stretched and high number of Awaiting Trial Persons

¹⁷ Item 48, Second Schedule, Part 1, Exclusive Legislative List, 1999 Constitution (as amended). There are 68 items in the Exclusive Legislative list. These items are items that can only be handled by the federal government.

¹⁸ Rauf Aregbesola, Minister of Interior, 2 Day High Level Conference on Decongestion of Corrections Management, Sheraton Hotel, Abuja, May 11 & 12 2023.

¹⁹ Annual Report 2019, Nigerian Correctional Services, ix

²⁰ See <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/Nigeria>, 7th March 2020. Accessed 7th March 2022. See also World Prison Brief/Nigeria. [https://www.prison.org/Nigeria/World Prison brief](https://www.prison.org/Nigeria/World%20Prison%20brief). 7th March 2020.

²¹ F n 14

(ATP's) make it difficult to concentrate on convicts.²² As stated above, the ratio of ATP's to convict population is 72.4%. Thus, it is suggested that separate holding facilities be built for ATPs. It will have the added advantage of not allowing interaction of hardened criminals with petty /non- violent offender.

Second, the nation's prisons are described as 'human cages' with no facilities for correction, reformation or vocational training.²³ However there are laudable rehabilitation programs in place in Nigerian Correctional facilities as shown hereafter.

4. Rehabilitation Programs

Presently, the NCoS has the following rehabilitation programs:

1. Educational- The NCoS allows inmates enrol for high school diplomas. There is also the degree and post graduate education via the National Open University, Nigeria (NOUN) programs. Out of a total of 22,000 convicts, 913 inmates enlisted in the educational program²⁴, which is 4.15%. As of 2022, there are 465 inmates running various degree programs, 85 on post-Graduate programs and four enrolled on doctorate program within the custodial facility.²⁵ A total of 560 inmates have been enrolled for the WAEC/NECO Examinations.²⁶ This reflects a total of 1,114 learners and 2,300 for Adult Literacy classes in several custodial centers. This effort by the inmates to improve their educational levels will stand them in good stead. It is good investment in human capital by NCoS. Communal associations should be encouraged to fund their kith & kin who are studying in prison.
2. Prison Farms-There are 18 prison farms spread across 14 States and the FCT. The farms are of different categories. In 2019, Farm centers, Agriculture projects and market gardens trained a total of 1,620 inmates and generated a revenue of

²² Shajobi-Ibikunle, 'Challenges of Imprisonment in the Nigerian Penal System: The Way Forward', *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol. 2, No. 2. 2014, 94-104.

²³ Alemika E, *The Smokescreen, Rhetorics and Reality of Penal Incarceration in Nigeria*, *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 1983, Vol 7 147-149.

²⁴ Annual Report (2019), Nigerian Correctional Services, p 43.

²⁵ Blueprint Newspaper (2021), Friday November 12, p6

²⁶ West African Examinations Council(WAEC) and National Examinations Council of Nigeria. are examination bodies for Secondary School graduate West African Examinations Council(WAEC) and National Examinations Council of Nigeria. are examination bodies for Secondary School graduate

N59, 511,828.00.²⁷ The Nigerian Prison Service Act (now abrogated) had as one of its objectives a mandate to generate revenue which the NCoS does not.²⁸ Therefore, if agriculture units generate such huge sum as revenue, what portion of it goes to the inmates? It is submitted that a better deal should be worked out for inmates. This serves two purposes: 1) To assist the inmate meet up with family responsibilities even in detention and 2) to serve as seed money for such inmate when released. For the latter, it will serve his after-care needs. It is further advocated that a form of savings scheme be promoted for inmates such that the Government matches the amount saved with an equal amount as a grant when the inmate is released.

3. Vocational Training Skills-The Social Welfare & Aftercare Service Unit of the NCoS ensures inmates acquire vocational skills whilst serving their jail time. Table 1A reflects data on various skills available for the inmates to be trained. It shows that as of 2019, a total of 700 inmates took part in the training. This is made up of 636 male and 64 female inmates. It is commendable that such a scheme exists but it is still grossly inadequate when measured against total convict populace. However, it is in the interest of family of incarcerated persons that they acquire skills with which they can fend for themselves upon release. Table 1B shows there is inadequate number of inmates supplied with after care materials upon release. It serves better purpose to encourage their families get involved by partnering with NCoS for this. The most patronized vocational skills are photography, Haircut and Tailoring. The NCoS is now going the way of Public Private Partnership (PPP). It has recently concluded arrangements for training of inmates in shoe making, garment production and

²⁷ (fn 3) 97-99

²⁸ Nigerian Correctional Service(NCoS) Act,2019, hitherto known as the Nigerian Prisons Act. Cap P129, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria,2004. The objectives of the NPS were to "Take into custody all those legally interned; Produce them before the courts as and when due if they are on remand; Identify the causes of their anti-social conduct; Set in motion mechanism for their re-training and reformation preparatory to returning them back to society as normal, law abiding citizens; Generating revenue for the state through the use of prison farms and industries.

Leather production.²⁹ .The effectiveness of educational and vocational training available to the inmate whilst in prison impinge on their ability to survive and thrive after release.

5. **Role of Family during Incarceration**

At the point of entry in the correctional facility, there is data capture wherein relevant information of the offender is captured. These include information as to State of origin, home town etc. With these, we submit that the NCoS can swing into action and notify the respective town Association/ union that their kinsman is in prison. The objective is to place them on notice about his presence in prison and to get communal support back up for the convict. It also assists the inmate family who may be located far away from where he is incarcerated and unable due to poverty or poor finances to ensure visits in prison. Thirdly, it opens up greater access to help and support whilst serving a sentence. Fourth, the union is informed and aware about whatever particular vocational or educational pursuits the NCoS undertakes as part of its rehabilitation efforts.

Emotional & Psychological Support

As the closest emotional unit, the family should be able to provide emotional support to the offender whilst undergoing penal corrections. This presupposes the family ties are still strong and binding. This may not be the case as some families tend to buckle under the strain of an absent parent or of having a child who has had repeated brush with the law, and may have spurned repeated entreaties or effort by the same family to ‘straighten him’ out. It must not be forgotten that the mere fact that the family member is in custody has already exposed the family, nuclear and extended to opprobrium in society. It would not be easy for such family members to consider the emotional needs of the family member in custody. They may not be aware of the complex negative emotional feelings of a convict, the hopelessness, sense of normlessness, deprivation by convicts aside for guilt for those who have been unable to play their role as father, or mother or the head of family due to their

²⁹ Interview with Head, Public Private Partnership (PPP) Unit, NCoS, April 7th 2022. The project is for a 20year lifespan.

incarceration. So, family units need to maintain links and good relationships while the member is incarcerated. Being locked away in State custody for crime should not mean being locked out of family support.

Economic Support

Families can support the NCoS' efforts to enhance the value and impact of rehabilitation during incarceration. The family should be aware of available vocational training their family member is undergoing in prison. Where there is deficiency in the training, if allowed (and it is hoped the NCoS) will so do, efforts may be made to supply machinery or pay for expertise to train or attract funding. In advance, the family will prepare better to 'receive' such member.

6. After-Care of Convicts

The 2019 NCoS Act provided for limited aftercare of convicts. Section 19(1) states that

'Where it appears that it is in the interest of the public or inmate that, upon discharge, he is to be assisted with transportation towards effective reintegration, the Correctional Service shall provide: inmates upon discharge, funds for transportation of the discharged inmates to their place of abode.

Paragraph (a) of sub-section 1 provides for aftercare support service; and paragraph (b) provides for any other support as may be deemed appropriate by the Correctional Service.'

It is the view of the writer that this section is inadequate. It appears there is lack of acknowledgment of the seriousness of the role aftercare plays in stabilizing an ex-convict in the Nigerian socio-economic environment. The language used is not mandatory but optional, at best discretionary. This may be due to government acknowledgment of its inadequate funding of the prisons. Ogu states that the majority of the inmates

are from poor, broken homes without employable skills or literacy skills, a point well taken by the writer.³⁰ Therefore, this paper submits this should have disabused the minds of the drafters of the legislation. Section 19(1) should not be optional but obligatory.

The deficiency of section 19 is especially clear when it is a fact that there are no half way houses or the equivalent in Nigerian justice or social welfare system. Neither in my view is there a viable Cooperative system to enable inmates best utilize their savings whilst working in Correctional centers on the several laudable schemes being run by it. Furthermore, section 19, sub section 1, paragraph B speaks of after- care support services but is silent on what constitutes this aftercare support by NCoS. This should not be so. More worrisome is the fact that transportation is the only issue specifically mentioned.

Siddique argues that After-care can be explained in two ways: First in the sense that like probation the released ex -convict is under the care and supervision of a social worker. This is the narrow meaning. Second, it can be understood in its wider context as all efforts to enable the released offender overcome various social, economic and psychological problems after release from prison.³¹ From the earlier examination of section 19 of the NCoS Act, the narrow meaning of aftercare cannot be applicable in the Nigerian criminal justice system. Also because probation as a penal sanction though provided for under the ACJA 2015 is yet to commence. Therefore, after-care is best applicable in its wider meaning.

It is said that theoretically, the difficulties of a prisoner are over after his release since not only is his personal freedom recovered but his prison training makes him a fit person to start a new life on a clean slate. In practice, this is rarely the case. Many a prisoner approaches the end of his prison

³⁰ Interview with Ogechi Ogu, Deputy Director, Prisons Rehabilitation & Welfare Action (PRAWA) Abuja on 18th February 2022. PRAWA is a Non- Governmental Organisation.

³¹ Siddique A. S 's *Criminology & Penology*, (2009) S.M.A. Quadri, 6th edn, Eastern Book Co. P205,318.

sentence in a state of bewilderment and fear as to what the future will hold for him. There is no social work establishment to undertake follow up of the offender. Before 1942, re-integration back into society did not present much problem because most prisons were rural based. The discharged prisoner, mostly unskilled villagers returned to their rural dwellings and life of village vocations either farming, fishing, etc. With the growth of large towns and cities, discharged prisoners had problems of resettlement. Government reacted by establishing prison welfare system for discharged prisoners in 1946 with 3 Full time Aftercare Officers. The scheme did not last long. During the Second World War, the voluntary National Discharged Prisoners Aid Society (DPAS) was set up by several leading citizens in Lagos to help discharged prisoners. It soon faded away. There are of course several existing vibrant NGO's in the field of prisoner welfare today including aftercare.

Officially, there exists the Social Welfare and Aftercare services Unit in the NCoS.³² Out of the thirteen (13) activities of the Unit's mandate, the following stand out as relevant to after care: 1)Guidance and counseling programs-behavior modification therapy and earning scheme;2)fostering communication between inmates and the outside world; 3)Improve family/community ties; post release (aftercare) preparation.

A cursory examination of the foregoing will reveal core activities to survival outside of the prison walls is lacking. That probably informs on the non-content of section 19 of the NCoS Act to expound what should be after care initiatives. Even if was envisioned, the Unit is clearly unable to offer these services, there is the challenge of manpower,

funding and overwhelming job specifications-thirteen –in all supposedly undertaken by the Unit. After care is too vital to be an appendage to other activities, which is not meant to denigrate the work of Correctional Agency. However, if After-care does not succeed, recidivism rates will go up as the released offender soon falls back into the waiting arms of his criminal gang. Then all the efforts that had been made to rehabilitate such offender will fail.

Ogunleye avers that Aftercare as a system of helping prisoners to re-integrate into society after discharge.³³ He submits further that it plays little part in the Nigerian prison system. Jakande³⁴ said

Nigerian society never forgives a prisoner. Once a citizen has been to prison, he is for the rest of his life a social leper. He is either completely ostracized by his former friends or treated with acute suspicion. He is barred from employment in the country's public services. The private firms will not have him. And his associates or relatives never fail to remind him of his past just when it will hurt him most. One false step taken in a moment of weakness or folly haunts him through life.

Half- way Houses

It is submitted that a vital, core missing link that aids the concept of rehabilitated offender is the Half-way House. It is non- existent in Nigerian penal system. This is a residential quarter usually run by private initiative or State. It provides ex-convicts who have residential challenges where to stay. It can assist also in employment. It is more like a stop gap measure as it were until an offender finds his feet. It affords a place for monitoring of ex-convicts whether by the NCoS or Social Welfare Officer. In as much as this paper

³³ Ogunleye, A.(2007) The Nigerian Prison System, Lagos, pp192-3,195, 200

³⁴ Jakande Lateef, Nigerian Tribune, (1967) 30th April 196 in ibid

pushes for family to take custody of their family members after release, the reality is that a convict's family may not have the needed education, understanding or resources to provide the needed level of support. Some may have but the family may prefer their relative stay in such facility if available, and they liaise with him or her. It is preferred that such institutions are licensed by the Correctional Service but run by private initiatives. Such agencies should provide counseling sessions and link released offenders to practical support from individuals and private firms to set up their businesses or find jobs. This is important to prevent unscrupulous persons taking advantage of newly released offenders including former gang members.

Stigmatization

Stigmatization against ex-convicts is real. It stems from society, significant others and sometimes even from their own family members. They are ostracized or jeered at in family or town settings. How does an ex-convict cope? If society is receptive to ex-prisoners, recidivism can be considerable reduced. Society must change and this is through proper understanding and education. An ex-convict needs to be sympathetically treated not shunned like a man with a malignant malevolent infection. No wonder Paranjape posits that there is greater need for a change in society's outlook towards ex-prisoners via proper understanding and education in order to prevent their returning to world of criminality.³⁵

How does the family give the needed support to enable him get back on his feet? Failure of Government tin governance standards and failure to improve living standards of its populace has reduced

³⁵ Paranjape, N.V, Criminology & Penology, (2010), Allahabad, Central Law Publications, pp223,576.

quality of life of Nigerian citizens. If the law abiding citizens can hardly make ends meet, what hope or structures are available for the ex-convict. He needs acceptance of society to enjoy patronage of whatever business he intends to set up. Some form of financial support is also required for start-up of business for the skills acquired in prison. Local Government Area Councils are closest to the populace. Government can direct that a Unit be set up in each Local Council to assist in business start-up of ex-convicts.

7. Recommendations

1. Community Associations aka Town unions/Associations in Nigeria are very strong, virile and active. Formal linkages should be developed by the NCoS with willing Associations who volunteer towards effective rehabilitation of persons in custody. The NCoS should develop systemic structure with clearly defined guidelines, rules and regulations for this partnership.
2. It is recommended that monitoring and follow up of ex-convicts be transferred to the Social Welfare Departments of each State. This will enable the NCoS concentrate on its core mandate.
3. It is an act of enlightened self-interest for the family/community to be involved in rehabilitation of their relations in Correctional custody. To stand aloof and do nothing is to set the stage for possible re-entry into criminality after release.
4. Traditional Rulers should be brought on board too as they are highly respected by the local populace as custodians of communal ethos and values. Criminality is not an accepted value in any African culture so, they should be invited to join the battle to reduce the menace of criminality in their domain by playing their role in rehabilitating ex-convicts. This is via easier access to land for agricultural, poultry, livestock production.
5. Stigmatization of ex-convicts is an open sore in Nigerian society. Concerted effort should be made by Government agencies led by NCoS, National Orientation Agency (NOA), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) and religious bodies

to change this narrative. Great impact will be made by leading lights in the Nigerian Entertainment industry from the major ethnic conclaves. Sport legends should lead a media campaign against stigmatization of ex-convicts.

6. Half way houses are needed in the Nigerian criminal justice system to assist ex- convicts in residential placement and as a place to ‘desensitize’ prison mentality. It is recommended that they should be established by private organisations. This should be modeled on a template provided by the NCoS and these should be monitored regularly.

8 Conclusion

For effective corrections that delivers on turnaround from criminality to becoming a law abiding and productive citizen, corrections must be assisted to deliver on a viable template for full rehabilitation of a convict. NCoS should consider bold and innovative partnerships with local, religious, voluntary associations and community groups and Local Government Authorities to deliver its mandate in Nigerian criminal justice system.