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Decongestion and Reformation: A Proposed Design for a Correctional Centre in Emohua, Rivers State

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ABSTRACT
Nigeria's correctional facilities currently operate at intolerable levels of congestion, leading to worsened quality of life and frequent human rights violations for incarcerated individuals. This research investigates the relationship between architecture and correctional ideologies, specifically seeking to minimize the harmful effects of incarceration through quality design. The study proposes a functional correctional centre in Emohua, Rivers State, designed to facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration. By providing secure, long-term housing alongside vocational and academic training units, the design aims to shift the focus from punitive isolation to personal growth and reformation.
Keywords: Jail, Law Court, Rehabilitation, Prison, Convict, Incarceration

1. INTRODUCTION

The fundamental existence of prisons stems from society's desire to isolate individuals who violate established legislation. Traditionally, these institutions have been punitive, characterized by heavy walls, watchtowers, and a culture of mutual fear between inmates and staff. However, modern public opinion is shifting toward the principles of reform and rehabilitation.

In Nigeria, a significant portion of the prison population consists of unconvicted individuals awaiting trial. This highlights a critical need for a constructed environment that respects human dignity. This study argues that the physical setting must move away from soul-degrading atmospheres toward spaces that allow for self-analysis and the preservation of self-confidence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of crime has evolved from early religious interpretations of "wicked deeds" to modern sociological definitions. Today, crime is generally viewed as an illegal activity detrimental to society and punishable by law. While the necessity of separating certain individuals from society remains, the architecture of that separation is undergoing a paradigm shift.

Architectural design plays a pivotal role in the mental and physical health of detainees. The goal of the architect is to balance the primary demand of security with the secondary demand of human dignity. This research explores how international standards, such as the United Nations (UN) minimal requirements, can be integrated into the Nigerian penal landscape to replace medieval-style dungeons with modern, humane facilities.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection:

- **Primary Data:** Oral interviews were conducted with high-ranking officers and inmates across selected Nigerian prisons to assess the status of rehabilitative services and existing design flaws.
- **Secondary Data:** Extensive case studies were performed on both local and international facilities to compare old versus new prison architecture.

Case Study Locations:

- **Local:** Port Harcourt Prison, Prison Farm Centre (Elele), Kuje Prisons (Abuja), and Enugu Prisons.
- **International:** SCORE Correctional Facility (USA) and Halden Prison (Norway), the latter recognized by the UN as the world's most compassionate jail.

4. PROPOSED DESIGN AND RESULTS

The proposed Emohua Correctional Centre is conceptualized as an icon for 21st-century penal architecture. The design prioritizes the following parameters:

4.1 Architectural Initiatives

- **Decongestion:** Replacing large dormitories with cells accommodating a maximum of three convicts.
- **Safety and Security:** Utilizing monitoring stations at cell block entrances, strategic guard towers, and floodlighting.
- **Humanism:** Enhancing ventilation through wider windows and increased headroom without compromising security.

4.2 Functional Units

The facility comprises several specialized sub-units to support a holistic reformatory environment:

- Administrative and Inmate Arrival Units.
- Medical, Catering, and Residential Divisions.
- Educational/Vocational units and dedicated Women's Facilities.
- Recreational areas to encourage time spent outside of cells.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following actions are recommended for the Nigerian prison system:

1. **Judicial Integration:** Establish a District Court within the facility to expedite the prosecution process and reduce the population of awaiting-trial inmates.
2. **Strict Segregation:** Adhere to Rule 11 of the Mandela Rules, ensuring complete visual and acoustic isolation between men and women, adults and juveniles, and convicted versus untried inmates.
3. **Architectural Inclusion:** Involve architects in the initial planning stages of all new or rehabilitated correctional institutions to ensure they meet international standards.
4. **Sustainability:** Design facilities that are low-maintenance and capable of generating revenue through production facilities.

6. CONCLUSION

The proposed Emohua Correctional Centre seeks to bridge the gap between justice, human behaviour, and architecture. By moving away from dehumanized environments toward spaces that foster vocational training and religious activities, the facility aims to transform inmates into reformed individuals ready for reintegration. This design serves as a vital contribution to solving Nigeria's overcrowding crisis and the broader "crime wave" through empathetic and functional penological building progress.

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