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**Analysis of Temporary Structures (Containers) in Uyo Urban, Akwa Ibom State**

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**ASBTRACT**

*Developing countries are faced with a myriad of environmental problems; one of such is the proliferation of temporary and illegal structures in many towns and cities of developing countries. In some of these countries, it has been increasing difficult to deal with this situation. Planning authorities on the other hand have been handicapped in tackling the problems associated with temporary structures due to inadequate funding and staffing of qualified personnel. The paper identified and examined the number of temporary structures (containers) in Uyo Urban, Akwa Ibom State. Field survey was undertaken in the study area in order to gather data for the study. Uyo urban which has 8 sectors and these sectors were being handled differently. The major roads and minor roads in the sectors were used to ascertain the number of temporary structures. Based on the findings from the study, it was recommended that routine monitoring should be embarked on by the Planning Authority in order to curb the rate at which these temporary structures are developed.*

**KEYWORDS: Temporary Structure/Container, cities, planning and development.**

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**Introduction**

In recent times, due to the increasing rate of urbanization in developing countries, illegal structures as a form of shelter or business are common place and this has resulted to the development of slums in these countries (Attenkah, 2001). According to Weiner (2003), millions of people in third world cities lived in slum and it has also been predicted that by 2030, the number of slums will double if the current situation persists. This is the reason for the outburst exercise of demolition of temporary/illegal structures all over the world. There have been many publications on the demolition of illegal structures in different parts of the world. For example, Will (1991), explained that a city had to pay a company thousands of dollars to tear down and haul away an illegally built second-story addition to a residence in United States of America. Wan, Lo, and Young (1994) stated that in China the government's planning department announced a policy to clear all illegal squatters from hill sides and rooftops, which made demonstrators block rush-hour traffic for an hour in protest of the government decision.

In Nigeria, many publications have addressed the issue of demolition of illegal structures for example section 61-63 of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Decree 88 of 1992 now the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law CAP 138, LFN 2004. Hence, in all states in the country, planning authorities embark on development control exercise such as

demolition and evacuation exercise of illegal structures so as to sanitize the city from developments that are not accepted such as temporary structures. Part two of The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law specifically deals with development control issues. Ogwuda (2013) reported that the Delta State governor ordered the demolition of illegal structures in Asaba especially those structure blocking natural waterways and drainage. Odogwu (2013) also reported that there was tension in Onitsha, Anambra State when the state governor ordered the recovery of roads and streets encroached upon by illegal structures in. These developments have brought about the need to assess the situation in growing Nigerian cities such as Uyo. It is in the light of this that this study was necessitated and embarked upon. The scope of the study was confined to Uyo urban which has 8 sectors and these sectors were being studied differently.

### **Statement of Problem**

In Uyo urban, due to the rapid rate of urbanization, there has been a corresponding increase in the number of temporary structures. These temporary structures are popularly referred to as 'containers'. According to Oyesiku (2002), urbanisation in Nigeria has a long history of growth and development. Immigration of people from the rural areas to the urban areas has also contributed to the development of the urban area in terms of man power, but, this has dealt a negative blow on the infrastructure around in that the facilities become over used due to increase in population and eventually break-down. The problem of immigration to Uyo urban or urban areas in general has been welcomed with mixed feelings, the negative in that the immigrants sometimes do not have the funds to acquire decent apartment for living, good stores for business and this often results in the use and development of temporary structures in the area there by defacing the beauty of the area. Uyo urban, the study area lies in the heart of Uyo which is the capital of Akwa Ibom State which by extension is the business hub of the State.

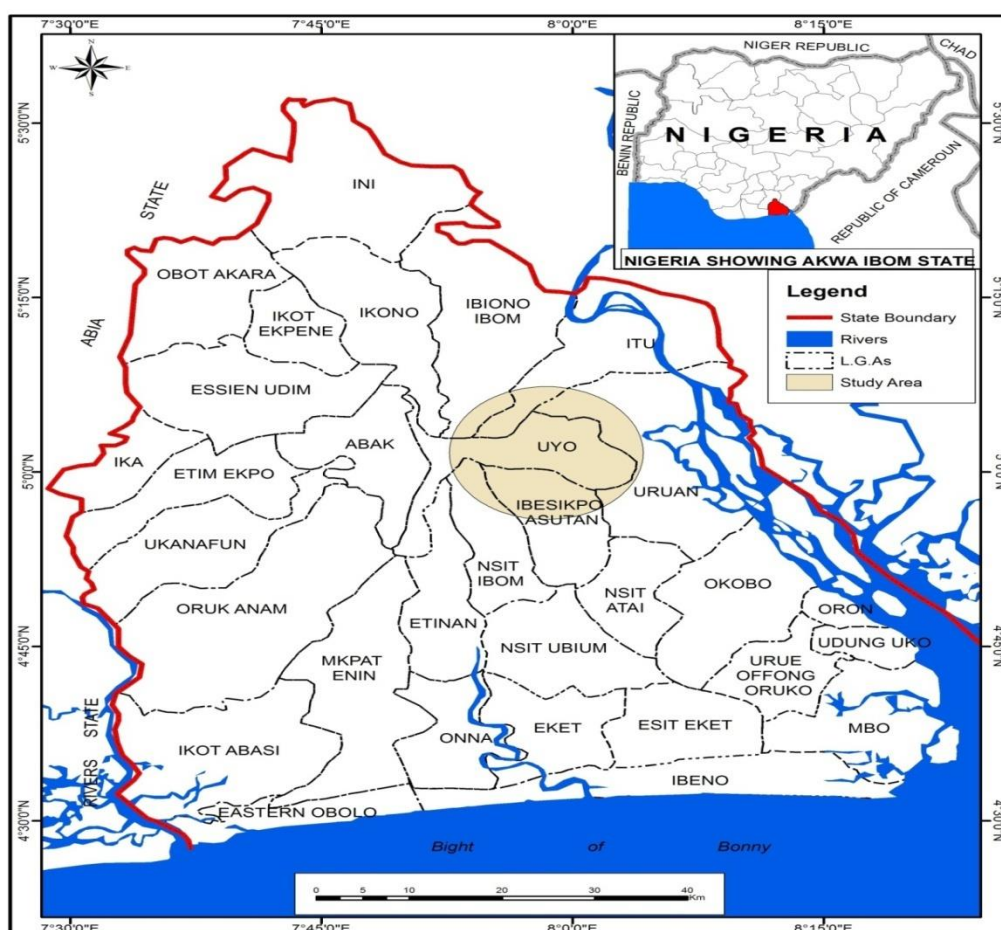
Uyo receives immigrants and some of these immigrants do not have the wherewithal to build permanent structures for their businesses and so it is common to see them erect or develop temporary structures along the roads for their businesses. The present condition concerning the temporary structures in Uyo Urban is that it is primarily located along the major roads and major corners around the state capital which serve as a window to the state capital. This by extension decreases the aesthetic value of the state capital by the onlookers which sometimes are first-timers in the state capital.

### **Study Area**

The study area which is Uyo urban is in Uyo Local Government Area and engulfs other parts of the neighbouring local governments. It lies in the central portion of Akwa Ibom State(Figure 1). Uyo is the Headquarters of Uyo Local Government Area. It also doubles as the capital of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Due to its strategic location at the central part of Akwa Ibom State, it is accessible virtually from any local government headquarters in AkwaIbom State. It is highly urbanized, virtually all parts of Uyo lie within the Capital City Development Area (UCCDA) except Ikono clan. Uyo Local Government Area is bordered to the North by Itu, Ikono and Ibiono Ibom Local Government Areas, to the South, by Etinan, NsitIbom and Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Areas, to the East by Uruan which stretches from North – East around Ibiaku Uruan to Ndon Uruan in South Eastern corner. It is located between latitudes  $4^{\circ} 53'$  and  $5^{\circ} 04'$  north of the equator and longitudes  $7^{\circ} 48'$  and  $8^{\circ} 02'$  east of the Greenwich Meridian (Figure 1).

Although, ecological problems cannot be directly linked to population pressure, steep marginal lands around Uyo Urban which should otherwise be conserved, are developed due to increased need for sites for housing and other architectural developments apart from cultivation. Population is a key factor that determines most of the activities on earth including of provision of utilities, housing and other facilities. According to the 1991 population census, Uyo was 244,762 while in 2006 it rose to 305,961 (National Population Commission, Nigeria, 1991 and 2006).

In terms of physical setting, Uyo urban lie within the tropics and so enjoys a humid tropical type of climate with heavy rainfall. The area is characterized by two main seasons, the wet and the dry seasons. The wet or rainy season usually begins in March and last till early November. The dry season lasts from late November to February. In recent times, there has been proliferation of temporary structures in the study area and increase in population of human beings, vehicles and buildings/structures, these increases are associated or connected with attendant challenges in the environment which needs to be addressed.



**Figure 1:** Location of the Study Area on the Map of Akwa Ibom State

Source: GIS Laboratory, Uniuoyo

### Literature Review

In the context of this paper, temporary structures are referred to as ‘containers’. Some prefer to term it as container housing or houses, shipping containers. Temporary structures are structures which are erected to fill temporary needs or demands, some of them could last up to two decades or more. According to Dictionary of International Trade (2017), a shipping container is a container with strength suitable to withstand shipment, storage, and handling.

Shipping containers range from large reusable steel boxes used for intermodal shipments to the ubiquitous corrugated boxes. In the context of international shipping trade, "container" or "shipping container" is virtually synonymous with "intermodal freight container," a container designed to be moved from one mode of transport to another without unloading and reloading. Some of the most commonly used types of shipping containers come in different sizes such as 20ft, 30ft, 40ft. Virtually, all shipping containers are made from steel and have closed-top with hinged doors. They have corrugated walls on the top and bottom sides and are welded to the rails and end frames.

However, it is common to see people convert the container into a home, office or business laces/shops and warehouses, this they do by cutting away metal and change the structure of the container, which invariably lessen its security value. Kontekture (2017) noted that container housing is on the rise in Nigeria. In recent times, the increase in cost of concrete based construction materials has increased the demand for alternative construction processes of which container housing solves the cost and time problem effectively. Shipping container or container housing has also been adopted by people who want cheap and fast housing solutions beyond the architectural masterpieces carved out of concrete and hollow blocks. As towns and cities witness rapid development with land becoming more expensive, developers tend to resort to the development of temporary/illegal structures to meet the needs and demands for housing. It is obvious in most towns and cities of developing countries to identify containers as shops or business premises (Figures 4, 5 and 6). Most people intend to build but they cannot build according to the stipulated minimum building laws because there is a yawning gap between their resources and the amount required to build a standard house. Consequently, some of these people continue to develop according to their resources and often in defiance of the existing building regulations.

In terms of building regulations regarding, most States in Nigeria do not yet have regulations for container housing. Some consider it to be temporary structures not requiring permits e.g. in Uyo, Uyo Capital City Development Authority (UCCDA) the Planning Authority usually marks containers as illegal development. Most shops in the study area are container housing, a development which the planning authority frowns at. The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law (2004), defines "development" as the carrying out of any building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under any land, or the making of any environmentally significant change in the use of any land or demolition of buildings including the felling of trees and the placing of free-standing erections used for the display of advertisements on the land. From this definition, every activity on land including the placement or mounting of containers on land constitutes development. This type of development is not accepted or welcomed in most cities because they are not sustainable.

Temporary structures are also part of informal settlements. The World Bank Report (2006) stated that over two-thirds of the population of Lagos lives in the informal settlements or slums that are scattered around the city. Furthermore, Agbola and Agunbiade (2009) reported that in some selected informal settlements in Lagos metropolis that the process of obtaining legal title is expensive and labourious that is actually out of the reach of the poor majority. As a result of this, the poor resort to make use of temporary structures/containers in order to meet their land and housing needs.

In the developing nations, ravaged by poverty and helmed in by bad governance, majority of human settlements are of the informal types that hardly meets the requisite building standards of their respective countries. These housing units in unwholesome environments are deemed substandard and therefore unfit to live by humans. They are thus declared illegal by housing

and governmental authorities. Yet, this is where between 50% and 80% of residents in many developing nations' cities live. Since they are illegal, they are often targets of demolition (Agbola, 1987).

### Methodology

The survey research design approach was adopted for the study. This design was chosen because survey studies are mainly used to document the nature, scope, dimension and direction of events, behaviour and attitudes about persons or things. Since this study requires collecting data in the study area, this design is very justifiable. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in this study. Primary data were obtained during the field survey by direct observation, photographs were also taken. Secondary sources were obtained through maps, relevant and related materials, textbooks and publications. Units of data required for this study included number of temporary structures in each sector in the study area

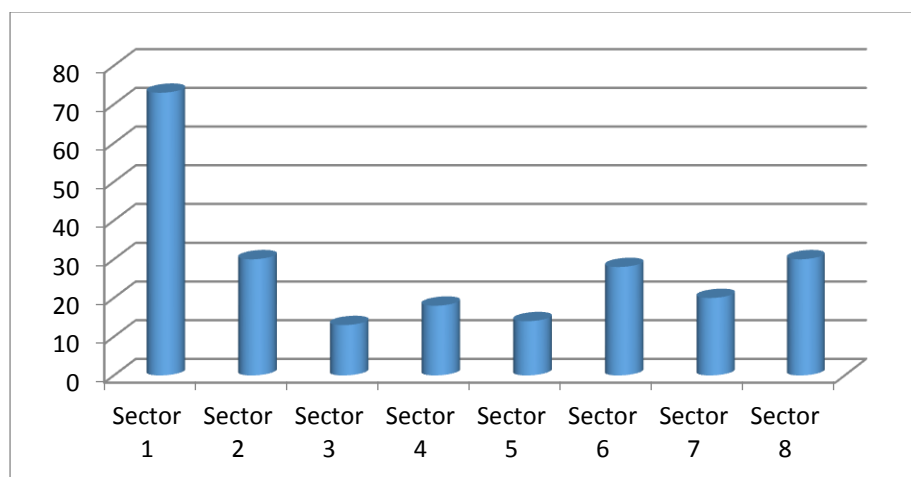
### Data Analysis and Presentation

Data gather during the field survey are presented using table, charts and maps. According to Table 1, total number of temporary structures (Containers) is 226.

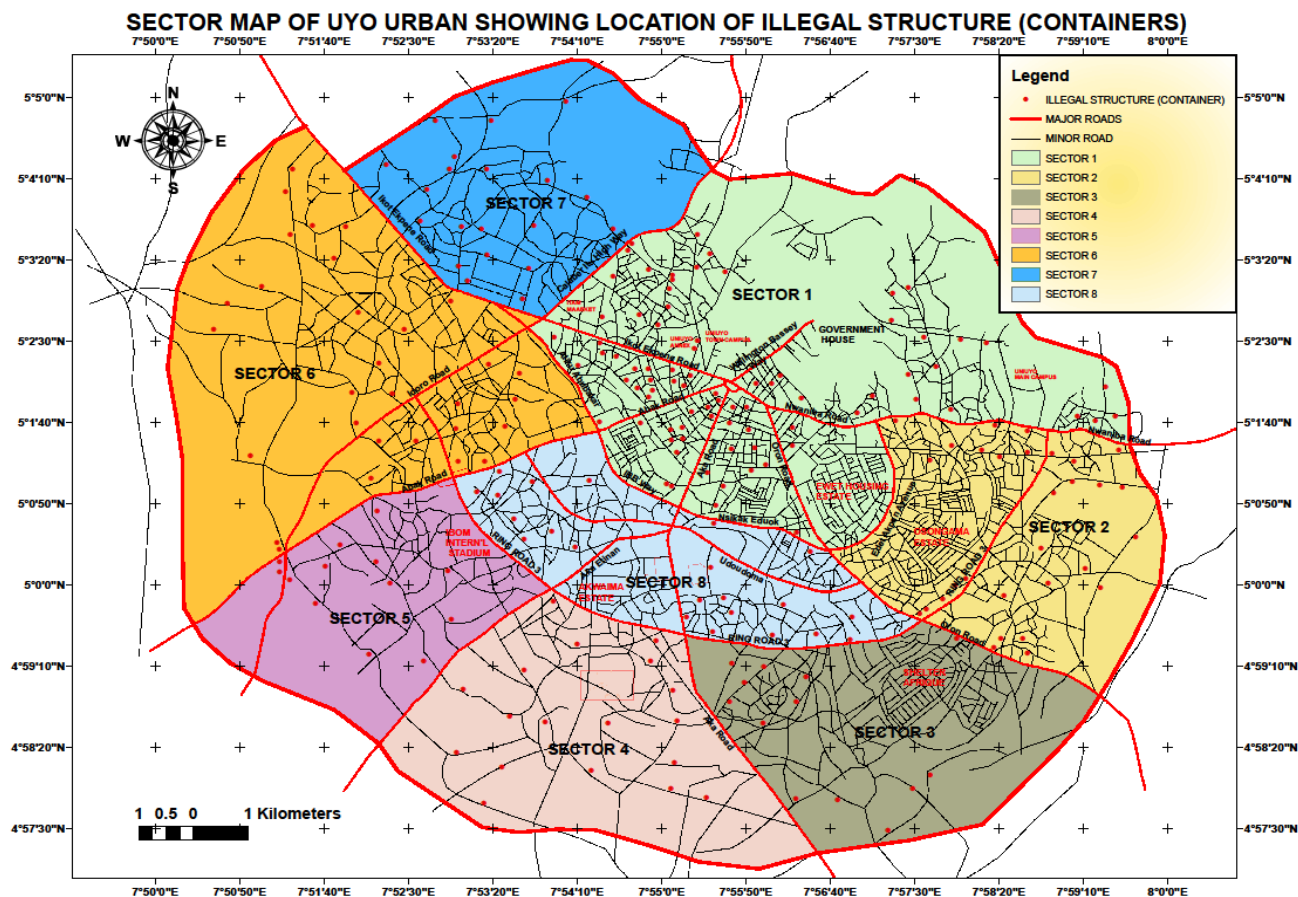
**Table 1: Number of Temporary Structures in the Study Area**

SECTORS		NUMBER
Sector	1	73
Sector	2	30
Sector	3	13
Sector	4	18
Sector	5	14
Sector	6	28
Sector	7	20
Sector	8	30
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>226</b>

Source: Field Survey (2017)



**Figure 2:** Bar Chart depicting Temporary Structures (Containers) in Uyo urban



**Figure 3:** Temporary Structures/Containers on the Map of the Study Area

**Source:** GIS – modified from Google Earth

### Findings

The map of the study area (Figure 3) shows the different sectors represented with different colours with each sector depicting the locations of temporary structures in the study area. The data on Table 1 and Figure 2 reveals that there are more numbers of temporary structures in Sector 1 followed by sector 2 and 8 then sector 6, sector 7, 4,5 and 3. Sector 1 has a larger population of people in the area, greater number of people live there and as a result of this, there is increase in the business activities in the area leading to the increase in the number of temporary structures (containers) being located so as to meet the demand of the people and their daily needs in the area. In some sectors, there are fewer numbers of temporary structures this is not because there are few people, but this is due to the fact that these areas are residential estates and there is much control by the Planning Authority in those areas. Also, it is obvious that government reserved areas in study area also have fewer numbers of temporary structures.





**Figure 4:** Temporary Structures/Containers in the Study Area located too close to the Road



**Figure 5:** Temporary Structures/Containers in the Study Area located too close to Utility lines



**Figure 6:** Temporary Structures/Containers located in close proximity to each other

## Conclusion

The poor economic situation of the country has compelled many people to make use of containers in order to make both ends meet and survive the unfriendly economy. In this way many temporary/illegal structures are erected in the city and such developments are not sustainable. Therefore, in order to ensure the sustainable development of our cities, it will require a transition in our cultural, behavioural and socio-economic values. Developers should place value on developing permanent structures and be more concern about comfort, aesthetics, safety and convenience rather than trying to minimise cost by resorting to temporary developments.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested:

- i. It is recommended that the development authority should make public the decrees and edits of the land use development. Some of the people who resort to use containers or temporary structures are not well informed that the Planning Authority does not accept such developments. Hence, there is need to sensitise them against developing temporary structures.
- ii. The development agency should carry out development control exercise from time-to- time in the study area to monitor the activities of developers.
- iii. Low cost houses, shops and offices should be developed and leased at an affordable rate to the poor.
- iv. The there is need to improve the poor economic condition of the country through creation of more job opportunities.



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