

## THE IMPACTS OF METHODIST SOCIAL WORK ON THE SOCIO ECONOMIC LIFE OF UZUAKOLI INHABITANTS AND BEYOND

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### **Abstract**

*Historically, there may not have been a movement or church known as Methodist church in Nigeria had Rev John Wesley not kicked off a movement that has become a global movement for the restoration of the godliness in the affairs of mankind. Born on 17th June, 1703 at Epworth, Lincolnshire, England as the fifteenth and second surviving son of Revd Samuel and Susanna Wesley, he fought all through his life against suppressions, oppression, poor prison condition, poverty, unemployment and social injustice just to ensure the spiritual development of man. The spirit and zeal with which he founded the movement has largely remained the focal point of many individuals after him. Arguably, without this continuity, many people and their environments may have been in dire straits. Therefore, this is an unbiased investigation into the movement, its continuity and impacts on human existence.*

**Keywords:** Methodist, Social Work, Social, Economic, Uzuakoli

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is no doubt a very religious country. Even with the global pandemic of corona virus that has kept many people inside their houses through various governments' lockdown policy for a long period of time, many Nigerians especially those living in the rural areas have not failed to attend their churches and Jumat services. Even at the federal capital territory, many religious leaders were arrested for holding religious services. Most times many people have criticized the religious organizations and their leaders for taking too much from the people and doing little or nothing about their welfare. Of course, while the work is not to defend the truth or otherwise about these criticisms, the fact remains that Nigerians are better off with religion especially Christianity. This is because many of the mainline churches such as Catholic, Anglican, Baptist and Methodist churches are not dramatizing and publicizing their social interventions like the Nigerian politicians. Hence, this work seeks to analyze the

roles and impacts of the social ventures and works done by the Methodist church in Uzuakoli in Bende L.G.A and beyond.

### **Clarification of Terms**

**Impacts:** It is the plural of term “impact” which means having a direct effect on, impinging on or striking forcefully on something or somebody. It also means a forceful response that occurs when one thing hits another or when two objects collide. We will come back to this definition later in the study.

**Social Work:** According to the Webster Dictionary (2004), Social work is defined as any service or activity designed to promote the welfare of the community or the individual through counseling services, health clinics, recreation halls and playgrounds, or aid for the needy, the aged, the physically handicapped. David (2011) describes Social work as a profession concerned with helping individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance their individual and collective well-being. This definition is adopted because it carries more ideas relevant to this work.

**Socio-Economics:** This is a combination of two term “social and economics” that relates to the social and economic condition of the people. It entails or pertains to how the social and economic lives of a certain people are discussed.

**Inhabitants:** This is the plural form of the term “inhabitant” meaning a person or an animal that lives in a particular area. Inhabitants imply a set of people living in a particular area and environment.

Contextually, the impacts of the Methodist social work on the socio economic of the inhabitants of Uzuakoli and beyond implies the effects, results and values of service or activity which Methodist church Nigeria established in order to promote the welfare of the community or the individuals living in Uzuakoli and beyond.

### **Theoretical Framework: Psychodynamic Theory**

To make the work directly relevant and educating, the researcher adopts the Psychodynamic Theory. This theory was propounded by Sigmund Freud between 1856 and 1991. Payne (1991) notes that the perspectives in social work called psychodynamic, all have an origin which leads back to Sigmund Freud

(1856–1991). Freud was an educated physician, worked for many years and worked as a researcher within the area of neurology before he developed a theory about the personality construction, children's development, mental illness and treatment. Payne further observes that psychodynamic theory was made by the work of Freud and his follower Roazen. This theory states that behaviour comes from movements and interaction from people's minds because it emphasizes the way in which the mind stimulates behaviour. Both mind and behavioral influence are influenced by the person's social environment.

Lowenstein (1985) argues that modern psychodynamic theory has moved away from the idea of drives as the basic influence on behavior, and is more concerned with helping individuals, interact with their social world: it has become more social than biological. Pearson (1988) maintains that a recent appraisal of the role of psychoanalysis in social work shows that there is a wide range of development in different countries, and various streams of thoughts. This theory as good as it may sound concerning its relevance to this work did not convey all that Methodist church social mission stand for. While one agrees that human behaviour comes from interaction between the mind and the relationship with the social environment, the theory does convey what needed to be done to get a victim of social environment out of his dilapidated situation, hence this theory is very relevant to this study.

### **The Characteristic Features of Social Work**

Nwakamma (2020) argues that social work aims at helping people develop their skills and their ability to use their own resource and those of the community to resolve problems. Social work is a profession concerned with helping individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance their individual and collective well-being. It aims to help people develop their skills and the ability to use their own resources and those of the community to resolve problems. Social work is concerned with individual and personal problems but also with broader social issues such as poverty, unemployment, and domestic violence. Social work could be viewed as an interrelated system of values, theory and practices. Serving clients include counseling, therapy, education, and connecting them to resources.

### **Brief History of Methodism in Nigeria**

Methodism was established in Nigeria with the arrival in 1842 of a Wesleyan Methodist Missionary called Thomas Birch Freeman. There are two brands of Methodism that came to Nigeria, the Wesleyan Methodist in the West and Primitive Methodist in the East. The abolition of slave trade in 1807 in England gave Africans who were sold into slavery the opportunity to regain their freedom. Babalola (1988) maintains that the colony of Sierra Leone was founded as a settlement for the freed slaves. The colony therefore became the first area in which the church missionary society used as opportunity to spread her own brand of Christianity to other parts of West Africa. The church Missionary Society succeeded in introducing Christianity among the African ex-slaves because the settlers were interested in Christianity. Babalola (1988) further notes that:

Because the European missionaries died of malaria, Africans were trained as clergy and a measure of autonomy was accorded the Diocese of Sierra Leone. Thus African needed not to go to London for ordination rather the clergy and laymen had to control the church administration. The task of spreading Christianity to the Coast and interior of West Africa fell on the ex-slaves who returned to their homeland or travelled to parts of West Africa. To their new settlements or homes they invited missionaries from Sierra Leone for the purpose of consolidating missionary activities. (p.56)

On this note, some of the ex-slaves later returned to Badagry in today's Lagos state among whom was James Ferguson. Being in the light, he appealed to Reverend Thomas Dove, a Methodist minister in Freetown for assistance. He wrote a letter dated 2nd March, 1841 to Reverend Thomas Dove requesting that a missionary for the purpose of leading the people to the saving grace in Jesus. Therefore, James Ferguson cited in Methodist Church Nigeria, Diocese of Onitsha (MCN Onitsha Diocese 2012), wrote that:

I am now in a place of darkness where no light is. I know that I was once under light and now I am in darkness. It is to bring our fellow citizens into the way which is right, and to tell them the goodness of Jehovah, what he had done for us... and as I know better than them... into the way which is right... so I humbly beg of you that be good and kind, and take pity on us, and send us one servant of Christ to instruct us. Sir, the Governor of Badagry send compliment to you and he is very glad to hear the word of God... please let nothing delay you except sickness. (p.32)

The letter of James Ferguson received positive response and as a result, Thomas Birch Freeman was sent to Nigeria. Buttressing one of such letters Fleck (2013) stated:

For Christ sake come quick, let nothing but sickness prevent you... Come and see God convert the heathen. God has come to my house and is at work in my family. Do not stop, and salute no man by the way... do, do, for God's sake, start, start at this moment: do not neglect me with all this burden; it is more than I can bear! (p.44).

Dove sent the letters to the missionary committee at home as he could do little from Sierra Leone about the matter. The General Secretary, Dr. John Beecham directed that Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, who by then was the superintendent of the Methodist Mission at Cape Coast be given the task of answering these urgent appeals.

On Saturday, September 24, 1842, Freeman landed at Badagry from the Ship which has brought him from Cape Coast. He came with two devoted African Helpers-William De Graft and his wife. They came with some materials for constructing a house and a number of local workmen under Freeman's supervision. Freeman and his helpers had a warm welcome at Badagry. The initial problem the missionaries encountered was accommodation. This was solved as Freeman decided to live in his compact travelling tent temporarily while the De-Grafts squeezed themselves into bamboo store of Captain Parson of Gold Coast (now Ghana), a trader in Badagry. Methodist Church Nigeria Onitsha Diocese (2012) further maintains that the next day was Sunday, there was no convenient place to hold service, but a handful of "English" Africans gathered around the missionaries and they managed to have a fellowship in Freeman's tent. God made the ministry of Freeman to bear fruit as He continued to add to the numbers of believers, to the extent that Freeman's tent did not contain the members. The increase in number of worshippers made the members to build a bamboo cottage. Familusi (2012) avers that this became the first Church in Nigeria (p.132).

Just as Methodism came to the Western part of Nigeria through Badagry by a letter of appeal, likewise Methodism entered the Eastern part of Nigeria through another letter of appeal. According to Familusi (2012), in August, 1869 an English ship "The Elgiva" anchored in the harbor of Santa Isabel, the port at Fernando

Po. The captain of the ship was Williams Robinson. He had with him James Hands, a carpenter. Both of them were devoted primitive Methodists attached to the church at Boundary street in Liverpool, Britain.

In obedience to the command of the Great Commission, they witnessed Christ to a small group that gathered at Mama Job's house. They were converts of the Baptist Mission, whom the government policy expelled out of Fernanda-Po in 1858. These Baptist converts were greatly impressed by the preaching of Williams and his carpenter. When the ship was returning to England the little flock wrote a letter to the Primitive Methodist missionary society asking that a minister be sent to them. Femilusi (2012) citing that letter dated 20th August, 1869 stated thus: Sir,

The object of addressing you now is to crave your help and sympathy on behalf of the inhabitants of this Island. And this place was once occupied by the Baptist missionary society, but they were expelled after the arrival of the Romish Church on the Island, in 1858. Happy to state that the laws of Spain have granted liberty of worshiping God according to the Protestant creed to every one of her subjects in all her colonies, and the people here have the same liberty given to them, and may invite a minister of any denomination to come and settle with them. For some reasons, of which I am not aware, the inhabitants do not wish to recall the Baptist missionaries amongst them anymore. (p.63)

In response to the "Macedonian Call", the General Missionary Committee of the Primitive Methodist connection sent Reverend R.W. Burnett and Henry Rose to Fernando Po. In 1890, the Primitive Methodist missionary committee resolved to extend their proselytizing mission beyond Santa Isabel. In a bid to implement this decision, the Reverend R. Fairley, the minister-in-charge of the missionary operations in Santa Isabel, carried explorations to a number of estuaries and creeks located east of the Island, in search of a suitable place for the establishment of a mission. Archibong Town in the land of the Efik became the first primitive mission station in Nigeria. The Reverend J. Marcus and Mr. and Mrs. Knox, were sent out from Fernando Po in December 1893 they found a mission station at Archibong Town. These two brands of Methodism amalgamated in Great Britain in 1932, giving rise to two separate Districts that operated as western and eastern District under the care of the British conference.

This step towards what we now know as Methodist church Nigeria was taken in 1961. The Western District (Wesleyan Methodism) and Eastern District (Primitive Methodism) jointly wrote to the Methodist church Britain to grant the church in Nigeria full autonomy.

The request was granted and Methodist church of Nigeria merged on 28th September, 1962 and became autonomous with the deed of Foundation of Conference signed in the old building of Methodist Church of the Trinity, Tinubu in Lagos. The first principal officers appointed under the 1962 constitution were Reverend J.O. Soremekun as president of the conference, Dr. E.U. Eyo Moma, as the vice president of the conference and the Reverend Egemba Igwe as secretary of conference.

Methodist Church Nigeria adopted Episcopal system of church government in 1976 with a constitution signed into law. The new system brought in some changes in the administrative style of the church. The nomenclature of the spiritual head of the church changed from President to Patriarch, while District heads ceased to be called chairman but Bishops and Superintendents were changed to Presbyters in charge of circuits. The vice president of conference became lay president and this also applies at the Diocesan levels.

On the spiritual side, genuine efforts were made to develop indigenous liturgies that would cater for all ethnic groups for the spiritual growth of the members. These efforts contributed towards the indigenous songs which are rich in African idioms, forms, philosophy and theology came into being and young members were encouraged to become Ordained Ministers in efforts to cope with the growing membership.

The church began the ordination of women as Deaconesses in 1981 and as Priests in 2005, in appreciation of gender sensitivity in the vine yard of God. These administrative changes brought internal crises into the church that lasted till 1990 when the issues were resolved. It is pertinent to note that under the leadership of Reverend Professor Bolaji Idowu, some new administrative ideas were introduced into the constitution for Methodist Church Nigeria and the drafting constitution committee members were all Westerners and none of the Easterners were included in the constitution drafting committee. Ekebuisi (2010) notes that all the members of this drafting committee were from the west which included

Honourable Olu Ayoola, Reverend Dr. T.T. Solaru, Reverend Dr. E. Adegbola, Mr. D.A. Adeyi, Honourable Justice S.O. Sogbetun, Dr. S. O. Fasokun and Honourable Justice Duro Adebisi. He further maintains that a new title for the president of Methodist church Nigeria as introduced by Reverend Professor Bolaji Idowu was the main point of conflict.

The Head of the Methodist Church Nigeria was changed to "Patriarch" and be referred to as "His Pre-Eminence" instead of the "President." These administrative changes and the new constitution of the church introduced by Reverend Professor Bolaji Idowu led to the crises and division in Methodist Church Nigeria. A faction maintained the 1962 constitution that led the foundation for the autonomy of Methodist Church Nigeria from Britain. The other faction followed the administrative changes and the new constitution introduced by Reverend Professor Bolaji Idowu. It is worthy to note that these factions were reunited on May 24th, 1990. Another constitution came into being with changes on the title of the head of Methodist church Nigeria. The patriarch was changed to prelate and the style of addressing him change from pre-eminence to His Eminence. Although there are some groups within the presidential faction who refused to join in the reconciliation and still hold on to the 1962 constitution. This remaining faction fused with the church on 24th May, 2011 at a well-attended service at Umuahia Abia State, in the Eastern part of Nigeria. Methodist Church Nigeria has been at the forefront of spiritual and social transformation, through spreading of scriptural holiness and investing in medical-health services and social economic welfare of the people.

### **History of Uzuakoli**

Ogbuaku (2008) argues that history deals with the study of past events and developments. It is not only learned from the myriads of books on the discipline of history but also transmitted orally from one person to another and from generation to generation with errors and distortions such as method entails. Compression of history therefore is a useful and commendable means of passing on information of more than common interest and a systemic account of the past people, the modes and consequences of their pattern of life, their mistakes and achievements (p.5). Uzuakoli is one of the communities found in Igbo land. The Igbo people as stated by Nzomiwu (1999) live in the tropical region of Africa. Igbo people are mostly found in Anambra, Abia, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi state. Some others are found in parts of Delta and River States. Igbo land lies between



latitude 5° and 7° north and longitude 6° and 8° east of Greenwich line. Igbo land is bounded on the north by the Igala and Tiv people, on the east by the Ekoi, on the south by the Ibibio and on the west by Bini and Isoko (p.1). Amanambu (2019) believes that the study of history of people do not only provide data but serves as a guide for planning, improving on accomplishments and modifying other misjudgments so as to make the world better place for human habitation.

Uzuakoli is the combination of two names belonging to the ancient figures who founded the community-Uzu and Akoli. Akoli was the father of a man called Ozo. Akoli was reputed to have descended from Ezere in the ancient Imenyi kingdom from Isuikwuato. Kanu (personal communication 12/03/2020) states that Akoli left Ezere and sojourned at the present day Akoli-about ten kilometers away from Isuikwuato. He had a son named Ozo and Ozo in turn had five other brave sons whose names were Oma-the father of Eluoma, Nkwo-the father of Amankwo, Mba became the founder of Amamba and Ugwuanyim gave birth to Ngwu. As they grew up, they left their father's environment and built their houses further away from him. They later made use of their father's house as a meeting point. A meeting point in Igbo language is "Ozuzu". Ozuzu Akoli meaning the meeting point where the descendants of Akoli converged. From these five sons the current Uzuakoli chieftdom developed. According to oral tradition, it is believed that Ozu the founder of the present day Uzuakoli was said to have sojourned at Akoli before moving on. Ogbonna (2018) said that it has a total landscape of 28.8 square kilometers, bounded in the north by Lohum, east by Ozuitem and south by Lodu Imenyi. It falls between 7.32 and 8.36 east of the equator. Its climate is not different from the rest of the rain forest belt of the eastern Nigeria. The community enjoys a warm tropical climate with well-defined wet and dry season.

Akidi (personal communication 12/03/2020) avers that instead of Ozuzu Akoli, the railway workers and the Europeans shortened and mispronounced it as "Uzuakoli"-a name with which it is called till date. Uzuakoli is an agrarian society cultivating majorly yam and cocoyam.

After the colonial conquest of Bende in 1896, Uzuakoli was notorious for slave trade with many middle men from Awka, Aro, Bende and other surrounding villages. The Eke-Oba and Eke-Ukwu that made up the popular Abangwu slave market served as a route through which slaves were transported via Ozuitem to

Cross River then finally to overseas. It is an ancient chiefdom in Bende Local Government Area of Abia State.

### **Methodist Church Nigeria in Uzuakoli**

Methodist church Nigeria has a diocese in Uzuakoli which means that she has a bishop-an ecclesiastical tile for senior priests in the church. The diocese was carved out from Umuahia Diocese and was approved by Methodist Conference in 1994. On the 12th of February, 1995 the diocese was initially inaugurated as Uzuakoli and Item diocese with the Rt. Rev. Nelson Onyebuchi Eke as her pioneer bishop. At its creation and inauguration, the diocese was made up of five circuits namely Uzuakoli, Item, Alayi, Ozuitem and Nkpa Circuits while Ugwueke, Umuimenyi, Okoko, Umunnato and Akanu were sections. A section is a term within Methodist church that indicates a church or group of churches preparing to be inaugurated or upgraded into a circuit.

Diocese of Item was thereafter created out of Uzuakoli and was inaugurated in 1997. The then Rt. Rev. Barr. C.N. Edeh took over from Rt. Rev. N.O. Eke in 1999 as the bishop of Uzuakoli diocese. He handed over to Rt. Rev. Foster Ekeleme in 2007, who subsequently handed over to the present bishop Rt. Rev. O.C. Chiemeka in 2013. Uzuakoli Diocese is made up of nine Circuits, thirty-five local churches and six preaching stations. At the present, the circuits are Cathedral circuit with Very Rev. T. Okerie Solomonas the presbyter, Alayi circuit with Very Rev. Barnabas Oguamanam as the presbyter, Ozuitem Circuit with Very Rev. Charles Wesley Eze as the presbyter, Nkpa circuit having Very Rev. Innocent C. Ebo as the presbyter, Umuimenyi circuit with Very Rev. E. O. C Madu as the presbyter, Ugwueke Circuit with Very Rev. Chukwuemeka Nwoko as the presbyter, Bende Circuit with Very Rev. T.A. Ogbonnya as the presbyter, Umuhu Ezechi Circuit with Very Rev. Paul Ugwuoji as the Presbyter and Arochukwu Circuit with Very Rev. Ukonu Johnson Okocha as the Presbyter.

The Diocese of Uzuakoli has the ministerial strength of forty-three ministers, the Bishop, fourteen Presbyters, nineteen priests, three Deaconesses and five Evangelist. Outside the mentioned, there are other staffers who are involved in the administration of the Diocesan affairs. The diocese of Uzuakoli is situated in Abia North. It covers such areas as the whole of Bende local government area of Abia state with the exception of Item, Nkporo and Igbere. It also caught across areas like Abiriba, Edda, Ohafia, Amannagwu and Amuvi in Arochukwu. The

map in fig. 1 shows more of the areas covered by the diocese. The diocese of Uzuakoli is generally situated in the rural area and the Methodist mission seems to dominate the entire area covered by the diocese with the exception of places such as Abiriba, Ohafia and Arochukwu where Assemblies of God and Presbyterian churches dominate. Similar to her mission, the diocese named after Uzuakoli does not mean that its composition is not limited to Uzuakoli rather like its social works, it cuts across places like Arochukwu Local Government Area.

### **Methodist Church Social Works in Uzuakoli and Beyond**

The church being a caring community has demonstrated it by affecting the lives of her members and non-members in Uzuakoli and beyond. The brain behind this is just the fact that every person in the diocese especially the unquantifiable impact of social worker, Dame Rosalind Colwil. These social work institutions include the Methodist motherless babies home, the Methodist Leprosy center, Rosalind Colwill Methodist hospital, the Methodist project RENEW, the Amudo Itumbauzo Center for mentally ill destitute, Methodist Royal cross hospital Ugwueke, Ozuzuoke Center for spiritual development, Methodist college Uzuakoli, St Christopher Seminary Uzuakoli etc. By way of explanations, some of these institutions shall be briefly highlighted.

### **The Methodist Royal Hospitals at Ugwueke and Colony Uzuakoli**

According to Akidi (2011), the dreams for the birth of these hospitals were nursed under the leadership of the pioneer bishop of the diocese, Rt Rev Nelson Onyebuchi Eke in conjunction with Dame Rosalind Colwill and the Wesley Guild in the 1990s (p.48). The current Archbishop of Enugu Most Rev Barr C.N Ede completed those projects. Today, these hospitals render unquantifiable help and assistance to the people in Uzuakoli and beyond. It has also given birth to another reputable hospital named Methodist Hospital Colony Uzuakoli so as to ease off the sufferings of crowd of people thronging to Ugwueke on daily basis.

### **The Leprosy Settlement at Uzuakoli**

Emmanuel (2013) opines that the Uzuakoli Leprosy Settlement was founded by the Methodist Missionary Society and the Local Authorities of Owerri Province in the then Imo State. It was opened as a provincial Leprosy Settlement in August 5, 1932 with Dr. J A Kinneer Brown as its first superintendent. Under his leadership, between 1932 and 1936, the Settlement grew into an institution catering for over eight hundred (800) patients. He further states that in 1936, Dr.

T.F Davey who picked up the challenge to come to Nigeria when his father in England come back from a Conference and narrated to him how Dr. Brown would be coming back from Nigeria without any replacement for the job in Nigeria. Under the leadership of Dr. Davey, the name was changed from Leper Colony to Leper Settlement because for him the former name was derogatory to the patients. The Settlement grew so rapidly under him that out-patients' clinics were built in several communities in what was known as segregation settlements near the homes of sufferers. The idea was for them to be in close touch with their homes and wives because their people regard them as dead. With this, they would appropriate their homes, wives and properties. Dr. Davey raised a lot of money for the settlement both from within Nigeria and outside the country. He built a primary School in the Centre where the Children of both the Leprosy patients and Staff of the Centre attended. Some trained lepers and cured ones became teachers. They were assisted by wives of expatriate staff who volunteered to teach.

Emmanuel goes on to state that by April 1, 1945 which was the beginning of the financial year of the then government, the government took over the center. This was after the official visit of the then Governor of Nigeria in 1944. Following that visit, the Nigerian government took active interest in missionary activities to eradicate leprosy in Nigeria. The settlement became then part of the Nigerian Medical Service and the government assuming responsibility for the medical aspect of the work. Dr. Davey knowing that ex-patients, especially those with obvious deformities would be handicapped to help themselves and may be rejected by their own people; persuaded the Methodist Mission to take over the after discharge matters of the ex-patients. Hence the creation of the Welfare Department which still exist till today. With funds he raised through his German friends, Dr. Davey built a Motherless Babies Home in the same Community where the Leprosy Settlement is situated in 1958. He left Nigeria in 1959, however before leaving he raised a Church building which was damaged during the Nigerian Civil war and rebuilt again by Rosalind Colwill with the money Dr. Davey raised and sent from England. Orji (2013) state that:

Dr. Thomas Frank Davey died in 1983. In his will, he requested that his body be cremated, that no wreaths be laid on his coffin or grave and that any amount given by people during condolence visits to his family be sent to Uzuakoli and used to maintain the church he built there (p.10).

He further says that Dr. Stanley Browne took over from Dr. Davey. However, it is worthy to note that the life and work of Dr. T.F. Davey reflected more on the services and passion with which Rosalind Colwill came into Uzuakoli Leper settlement in 1981 and what she was able to make out of the center with a decade she sojourned there.

### **The Birth of Amaudo Itumbauzo Centre for Mentally ill Destitute**

This was another brain child of Rosaline in her passion for the challenged persons. The center is located at Itumbuzo in Bende Local Government Area of Abia State. With the amount of sacrificial and dogged work Rosalind had done at Uzuakoli Leprosy Center or settlement and Motherless Babies Home. Rosalind states that driving along the streets of Nigeria and South East in particular after spending almost ten years in Uzuakoli with the sights of mentally retarded roaming the streets hopelessly became another big concern for her. Their presence made her take her mind back to the social work she did in London and Zambia in which she worked with single homeless and the mentally ill.

This disturbing cogitation about what to do to ameliorate this problem intensified as the time ticked and subsequent years passed. It worsened, with her passing sleepless nights over their predicament when she observed that the number of these mentally ill increased by the day in the towns and villages she visited. The more the number she saw the worse she felt the scourge that afflicted these helpless citizens and the more she saw the task of devising a way of nursing them through their plight a challenge to be faced and addressed. According to Agwu (1999) "what was certain was that she had resolved to work for the mentally ill destitute (p.66).

Parratt (1997) further argues that:

The church has the obligation to fight for a society which will enable every man and woman to live with dignity and well-being, and to work for the eradication of exploitation and for the sharing of wealth.... At a given and decisive point in history men decide to act against those conditions which restrict their freedom as men. ... unless we participate actively in the rebellion against those social structures and economic organizations which condemn men to poverty, humiliation, and degradation, then the church will become irrelevant to man and the Christian religion will degenerate into a set of superstitions accepted by the fearful. (pp.109-111)

This kind of thought and understanding must have been what was the drive and motivation behind the actions of Rosalind, when she ventured into the hinterland of Itumbuzo in Bende Local Government Area of Abia State, did negotiation for a large portion of land in a thick forest and sourced for fund overseas and started building. Rosalind was building a home where she would accommodate, care for, treat and live with the mentally ill whom she would soon start picking from the streets. This as it were never deterred her for she had her mind made up for what she was determined to pursue and there was no going back.

Within a space of five years Rosaline had completed the building project, mentally ill destitute were picked by Rosaline herself on daily bases from the streets of the entire States of South East. With all her knowledge in social work, passion for the downtrodden and application by implication of transpersonal psychotherapy theory Rosalind was able to get several mentally ill destitute off the street. They were rehabilitated and repatriated back to their homes with a trade or skill of their choice.

### **The Impact of Methodist Church Social Work on Uzuakoli Inhabitants and Beyond**

Methodist College Uzuakoli and St Christopher Seminary Uzuakoli have produced timbers and calibers in the Nigerian society. Through scholarships and other moral driven training, these institutions are revered across the east. Today, Amaudo Itumbauzo Methodist Home for Destitute has grown into a big institute with various arms and departments. The vision is to have a world in which mental illness and Children with physical and learning disabilities are accepted, supported and have their human rights upheld by their families, communities and society. The church strives to implement programmes which support, inform and rehabilitate people with mental illness and children with physical and learning disabilities. The center challenges human rights abuses, advocates for equal opportunities and is committed to ensuring that mental health issues make it onto the health agenda and policy makers. At the completion of the rehabilitations, the mentally ill individuals are equipped with both skills and resources to start a life after the rehabilitation. This programme has empowered so many youths both in Uzuakoli and beyond.

The medical institutions in Uzuakoli have been second to none in the care of the people not minding the financial requirements. For example, the researcher in personal communication with Rueben God's will whose wife put to bed in the hospital courtesy of the expertise and near free of charge service of Sir Dr. Corpus. He like hundreds of others interviewed cannot but appreciate God and the church for services rendered by the church. The uncontrollable crowds at the hospitals would suffice the assertion.

Apart from the above, these institutions have provided all manner of jobs for the teeming population. Many of the youths are working at the various cadre of these institutions. The petty traders, local transporters and food sellers are not left out. The mini markets at these institutions have brought strong economic activities to Uzuakoli inhabitants and beyond.



Entrance of Amaudo Itumbauzo Centre for mentally ill destitute

**Source:**Amaudo Itumbauzo archive

**Date:** 17/07/2017





**Figure 11:**Rt. Rev. O. C. Chiemeka, the Bishop Diocese of Uzuakoli presenting a certificate to a healed and discharged mentally ill destitute.

Source:Amaudo Itumbauzo Archive. Date: 17/07/2017

### **Conclusion**

The study so far has highlighted the impact of Methodist church social works on the inhabitants of Uzuakoli and beyond. Like Amanambu (2020) argues, no church can prove her relevance without changing the lots of the people and society where she finds herself. The social works of Methodist church in Uzuakoli work through their medical, rehabilitation, empowerment and counseling services, destitute homes, motherless babies, health clinics, recreation halls, aids for the needy, the aged, the physically handicapped has and is impacting on the inhabitants of Uzuakoli and beyond. It is not aimed at blowing their trumpets or presenting them as the only religious organization improving the lots of humanity rather it is to encourage them to fire from all cylinders in the service of humanity. Any religion without social impact will soon lose its value and essence. Any religiosity without human development is nothing but a charade.



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**LIST OF INTERVIEWS:**

S/N O	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATIO N	DATE OF INTERVIE W	ADDRES S
1.	Very Revd S. Akidi	Adu lt	Clergy	09/04/202 0	Akoli
2.	Elder High Chief Nwadinobi Ndukwe	Adu lt	Business man	10/04/202 0	Amiyi
3.	Mr Kanu Ikea	Adu lt	Farmer	10/04/202 0	Uzuakoli