

NARRATIVES OF MBIABET IKOT UDO WOMEN ON THE  
SOCIO-CULTURAL AND SANITARY IMPACT OF POOR  
ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION

PRESENTED BY

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AT

SPECIAL SESSION

OF

XV111 WORLD WATER CONGRESS (BEIJING-CHINA)

# BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

- Significant developmental challenges in low-resource settings limit access to sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).
- Gendered WASH inequities can increase disease burden among women and girls.
- Socio cultural differences among gender as it is the case in Mbiabet Ikot Udo can also increase the burden associated with poor accessibility to water among women.
- In this systematic study, a range of challenges experienced by women of Mbiabet Ikot Udo, relating to inadequate WASH resources and socio cultural hindrances would be described and their intersection explored.

# OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To conduct an observational studies on the socio cultural and sanitary impact of poor accessibility of Mbiabet Ikot Udo women to WASH
- To identify the range of WASH challenges experienced by women in Mbiabet Ikot Udo
- To identify major health burdens associated with lacking WASH provisions among Mbiabet Ikot Udo Women
- How does traditional beliefs affects women and twins mothers in accessing WASH
- Communicating the result of the studies to relevant authorities.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does being a man or woman shapes access to water in this community?
- Do WASH based deficiencies disproportionately burden women of Mbiabet Ikot Udo?
- Do traditional beliefs impact negatively on WASH among women of the study area?
- How does poor access to WASH affects them?

# STUDY DESIGN / PARTICIPANTS

- Forty (Men and women) respondents were purposively selected from Mbiabet Ikot Community to assess their water accessibility and the impact of socio cultural belief
- The population was further reduced to specifically female population. Data collection was made using questionnaire, interview, and focus group discussion

# MBIABET IKOT UDO AT A GLANCE

- Mbiabet Ikot Udo is a member of Mbiabet Ikpe group of villages cassetted under Ikpe Clan in Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
- It has a population of 1300 people
- It is rich in arable land and swamp of over 10,000 hectares suitable for rice cultivation.
- This has made the citizens of this community to take to farming as their main occupation.
- The community is bounded by Idim Ntoho (East), Idim Nsok (South), Reservoir (West) and the rice farm (North). The Idim nsok leads to Eniong creek which emptied into the Atlantic ocean.



Plate 1: Nsok Stream (South)



Fig 2 : Idim Ntoho (East)





Fig 3 Reservoir (West)



Fig 4. Rice Farm (North)

# RESULT AND DISCUSSION

- Like most areas of life, access to potable, safe water is political, and it is about power. The rich have unhindered access to this commodity because even when governments do not provide safe public water, they have the means and the power to fund professionally dug boreholes.
- In places like Nigeria, where according to the 2019 WASH-NORM report, “Only 9 per cent of the populations have access to complete basic WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) services.
- Those living in rural areas are two times more disadvantaged than those in urban areas” (National Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF), the stakes are much steeper for the poor.
- This is a typical replicate of Mbiabet Ikot Udo situation as would be discussed below.

**Table 1    Age Ranges and Respondents**

Ages	Male Respondents	Female Respondents	Total Respondents
25-35	2	3	5
36-45	5	10	15
46-55	2	5	7
56-65	3	6	9
66-75	1	3	4
Total	13 (22.5%)	27(67.5%)	40(32.5%)

- As indicated in table 1 above, forty individuals were interviewed in the course of our studies at Mbiabet Ikot Udo community. Among this, 67.5 % of the interviewed populations were female while 32.5 % were male.
- The disparity in the gender of the respondents is due to the fact that the research was focused mainly on women.
- From table 2, forty (40) households were interrogated in the cause of the research. A total of one hundred and eighty (180) persons were found in the forty households out of which 58.1 % (108) were female leaving male with 41.94 % (78).
- This result shows that female indigenes of Mbiabet Ikot Udo community were higher than their male counterpart.
- This imply that the socio cultural impact of poor accessibility to water and sanitation among the female folk would continue to be a trans generational challenge if government and interventionist agencies would not take a drastic measures to ameliorate this sad situation.

# Table 2 :Household Population

Respondents	Male (s)	Female(s)	Total
1	2	2	4
2	1	1	2
3	1	1	2
4	3	4	7
5	3	2	5
6	1	1	2
7	1	1	2
8	1	1	2
9	2	2	4
10	1	4	5
11	1	2	3
12	1	1	2
13	2	1	3
14	1	3	4
15	2	2	4
16	2	4	6
17	2	5	7
18	0	1	1
19	0	2	2
20	2	1	3

21	3	1	4
22	2	4	6
23	3	4	7
24	3	5	8
25	4	5	9
26	3	4	7
27	1	3	4
28	3	2	5
29	3	4	7
30	1	3	4
31	2	1	3
32	2	3	5
33	2	4	6
34	2	5	7
35	3	1	4
36	3	3	6
37	2	3	5
38	2	1	3
39	3	4	7
40	2	5	7
Total	78 (41.9 %)	108 (58.1 %)	180

## Respondents Perception to water Quality and Usage

- Mbiabet Ikot Udo as noted in the result is an agrarian settlement whose major occupation is farming.
- The result from this current study proved this fact as 77.5 % of the population interviewed were farmers (Table 3). Fifteen percent of the populations were involve in trading while 7.5 % were civil servant.
- This result showed the poor state and neglected level of members of this community which is naturally rich with arable land for both upland and wetland farming with over 10,000 hectares of swamp for rice cultivation
- The respondents were further asked if the colour and taste (odour) of the “Idim Afia” is acceptable to them.
- 100 % and 82.5 % of the respondent showed their general displeasure to the colour and taste of their only source of drinking water, respectively



- One of the respondent said *“I am always very sad each time I looked at the color of this water, but this is what I have been drinking since there is no alternative”*.
- Our findings showed that this is due to the blockage of the water channel occasioned by wetland farming and other farming activities around it which has almost destroyed the thick forest around it which hitherto served as a protection from erosion and run off from rain
- The stream which was earlier slow flowing is now stagnant, giving rise to the growth of algae and builds up of debris which negatively affects the water body (Fig . 5)
- Still, “Idim Afia” still form part of their daily survival as they have no other available option (Table 3).



Fig. 5 :Idim Afia



- Though the community is bounded by several streams, it is only “Idim Afia” that is good for household services. This includes; Drinking, washing, laundry and bathing.
- 77.5 % of the respondent consented to the above fact; however, 22.5 % claimed that they at times managed the other water sources like Idim ntoho, Nsok and Reservoir ( fig 1-3) for some household services aside from drinking (Table 3).
- However, the pressure on “Idim Afia” is quite enormous *“I am in-charge of the stream maintenance because I am the Youth President... we built small structure in the stream to create a place our people could fetch water... People in all the seven communities in Mbiabet Ikpe come to fetch water here. We do not have borehole here”*
- The respondent claimed that the “Idim Afia” is affected by both the dry and rainy seasons

- The rainy season causes the pollution of the water base by rain run offs and sliding of the surrounding spaces by erosion.
- The dry season comes with much pressure on the water body as people from the neighboring villages of Ikot Efa, Ikot Otok and Otung depends on this once pride of the community as their drinking water source.

# Table 3: Water Quality and Usage

Respondent	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	F	No	No	All	A	W	F	Yes
2	F	No	No	All	A	W	F	Yes
3	F	No	Yes	All	A	W	M	Yes
4	F	No	No	All	A	W	F	Yes
5	F	No	No	All	A	W	F	Yes
6	F	No	No	All	A	W	F	Yes
7	T	No	Yes	All	A	W	M	Yes
8	C.S	No	No	C & H	A	W	F	Yes
9	F	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
10	F	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
11	F	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
12	F	No	Yes	All	A	W	M	Yes
13	F	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
14	F	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
15	F	No	No	All	A	W	F	Yes

16	F	No	Yes	C & H	A	W	F	Yes
17	C.S	No	No	All	A	W	F	Yes
18	T	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
19	T	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
20	T	No	Yes	All	D	W	M	Yes
21	T	No	No	C & H	D	W	B	Yes
22	F	No	No	All	A	M	B	Yes
23	F	No	Yes	All	A	M	B	Yes
24	F	No	No	All	D	M	B	Yes
25	F	No	No	All	A	M	M	Yes
26	F	No	Yes	All	D	W	B	Yes
27	F	No	No	All	A	W	B	Yes
28	F	No	No	H & N	D & B	W	B	Yes
29	F	No	No	All	A	M	M	Yes
30	C.S	No	No	All	D	M	B	Yes
31	F	No	No	All	A	M	B	Yes
32	F	No	No	C & H	D	W	B	Yes
33	F	No	No	All	A	M	M	Yes

34	F	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
35	F	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
36	F	No	No	All	A	M	M	Yes
37	F	No	No	H & N	D & B	W	B	Yes
38	T	No	No	All	A	W	M	Yes
39	F	No	No	C & H	A	W	B	Yes
40	F	No	No	H & N	D & B	W	B	Yes
	F-77.5%, T-15% , cs- 7.5%	100%	82.5%	77.5%	77.5%	72.5%	45% M, 22% F, 32.5% Both	100%

*Key : A-Occupation (Farming, Trading and Civil servant); B- Odour of the water (Yes or no); C-Taste of the water (Yes or No); D- Who fetches water (All, Children & Husband); E- Main uses of Idim Afia ( Laundry, washing, drinking, bathing, All of the above); F- Who uses water most (Men , Women); G- Who takes care of the children hygiene (Mothers , Fathers , Both Parent); H- Does season affect Idim Afia (Yes , No)*



## Workload Balances: Water Usages and Children Hygiene

- There was workload imbalances in who handle most of the activities in the house that requires water usage as showed in table 3. Washing of dishes, cooking and laundry entails large volume of water usage
- In table 3, 72.5 % (29) of the respondents willingly opined that it is the mothers (women) who use more water in the household. By inference, they are the once who attains to most of the household services requiring high volume of water usage
- In the same vein, 45 % (18) of the mothers were solely involved in the hygiene of their children while 22.5 % of fathers were solely involved
- 32.5 % (13) of those interviewed opined that the responsibility of looking after the children's hygiene is shared by both parent (Table 3). This result still adds more credence to the assertion that the burden of inadequate availability of water is more on women.
- Though there was no gender bias on who fetches water, the prohibition of twin mothers, women in menstrual period and stoppage of women on Edet market day posses a serious gender inequity

## EFFECT ON MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

- From table 4, 40.74 % of the respondent indicated their use of cloth to pack themselves during menstruation, 37.04 % uses tissue paper while only 22.2% made use of sanitary pad.
- This shows the level of ignorance and poverty that exist in this community.
- 100% of the respondents agreed to the need for large volume of water for proper menstrual hygiene, hence the sad impact of tradition.
- Though 74.07 % of the respondent expressed their displeasure to this norm, 25.9 % of the women interviewed approved of the tradition
- One of the respondent said *“Sir I know the discomfort I usually experienced in my private part each time my menstrual period arrives because of using rack to hold the flow and lack of water to bath regularly”*
- “. Improper use of MHM material and lack of access to good source of water for proper menstrual hygiene could lead to urinary tract infections (UTI's) ([Sommer et al., 2016](#)).

# Table 4 : Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)

Respondent	Material Used	Does H <sub>2</sub> O Affect MHM	Are you Pleased with Edet market Day
1	P	Yes	Yes
2	T	Yes	Yes
3	T	Yes	No
4	P	Yes	Yes
5	T	Yes	No
6	P	Yes	No
7	T	Yes	No
8	T	Yes	No
9	P	Yes	No
10	C	Yes	No
11	P	Yes	No
12	T	Yes	No
13	P	Yes	No
14	C	Yes	No

15	T	Yes	No
16	C	Yes	No
17	T	Yes	No
18	C	Yes	No
19	T	Yes	No
20	C	Yes	No
21	T	Yes	Yes
22	C	Yes	Yes
23	C	Yes	Yes
24	C	Yes	Yes
25	C	Yes	No
26	C	Yes	No
27	C	Yes	No
	40.7% C, 37.0% T, 22.2% P	100%	74%

*P- Pad; C- Cloth ; T- Toilet tissue*

# Impact of Traditional Belief on Twin Mothers over their Prohibition from “Idim Afia”

- Eight twin mothers were selected and interviewed in the course of our data capturing exercise in Mbiabet Ikot Udo. They were all assured of their privacy and the secrecy of their identity when reporting the findings.
- All of them expressed their displeasure over the ancestral tradition of Mbiabet Ikot Udo which prohibited twin mothers from accessing “Idim Afia”
- However, they were not able to help themselves neither were they able to stand up against this level of injustice and exclusion
- 100 % of them abide religiously and had at no time attempted to break the age long tradition (Table 5).
- *“Sir I donot want to die like one woman who died some years back neither do I have the money to pay for the rituals. Hmmm no money to buy sanitary pad”*
- From our assessment, their compliance is because of the morbid fear instilled in them. The women are told that they will have instant bleeding which may lead to their death except the Gods are appeased through a sacrifice which must be sponsored by them

# Table 5: Impact on Twin Mothers

Respondent	Breaking the rule	Comfortable with the rule	Impact of the rule	Who fetches water?
1	No	No	5	Paid
2	No	No	5	Paid
3	No	No	5	Paid
4	No	No	5	Children
5	No	No	5	Husband
6	No	No	2	Husband
7	No	No	2	Children
8	No	No	5	Husband

Strongly affected—5 ;Affected—4 ;Indifference—3 ;Unaffected—2 ;Strongly unaffected---- 1

## Health Impact of Drinking from “Idim Afia”

- Access to safe drinking water reduces the burden of infection disease outbreak and increases life expectancy (American Water Works Association 1953).
- Drinking stagnant and dirty water flooded with infective microorganisms always leads to disease conditions such as cholera, typhoid, malaria, worm infestation and skin infection (Akeza and Taffere, 2014).
- *“I have been experiencing running stomach ever since i was married to this village, taking tetracycline has become part of us”*. The 27 women interviewed visited the nearby health center and chemist shop in every one to two months with medical conditions relating to water borne diseases.
- 66.7 % of the respondent visited the healthcare facility in the locality to seek medical care for themselves or their children. It was observed that their health complain were predominantly cholera, typhoid and skin infection (Table 6).
- The finding agrees with the report of WHO (2014a, b) which states that 88 % of diarrhea, typhoid, giardia and other water bone diseases were attributed to unsafe drinking water, safe water accessibility, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.

# Impact of Water Availability on Toilet Hygiene

- One hundred percent of the indigene of Mbiabet Ikot Udo uses pit toilet at home (Table 6)
- The sight of their toilets facilities is a cause for concern (Fig 6). The facility is located close to the house due to lack of space and safety concerns.
- This proximity poses hygiene and sanitation challenge as flies and rodents operating in the toilets environment can also access the residential house transmitting germs which causes diseases.





Fig . Toilet Facilities in Mbiabet Ikot Udo

# Table 6. Health Impact/ Toilet Hygiene Responses

Respondent	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	P	M	YES	YES	YES	YES	C, T, M
2	P	M	NO	NO	YES	YES	SD,T
3	P	M	NO	YES	YES	YES	C,SD,T
4	P	M	NO	NO	YES	YES	M,T,SD
5	P	M	NO	YES	YES	YES	C, T, M
6	P	M	NO	NO	YES	YES	SD,T
7	P	M	NO	YES	YES	YES	C,SD,T
8	P	M	YES	NO	YES	YES	M,T,SD
9	P	M	NO	YES	YES	YES	C, T, M
10	P	C	NO	YES	YES	YES	SD,T
11	P	C	NO	NO	YES	YES	C,SD,T
12	P	C	NO	YES	YES	NO	M,T,SD
13	P	C	YES	YES	YES	YES	C, T, M

14	P	M	NO	YES	YES	YES	SD,T
15	P	C	NO	NO	YES	YES	C,SD,T
16	P	M	NO	YES	YES	NO	M,T,SD
17	P	M	YES	YES	YES	NO	C, T, M
18	P	C	NO	YES	YES	NO	SD,T
19	P	M	NO	NO	YES	YES	C,SD,T
20	P	C	NO	YES	YES	YES	M,T,SD
21	P	M	NO	YES	YES	YES	C, T, M
22	P	C	NO	YES	YES	NO	SD,T
23	P	M	NO	NO	YES	YES	C,SD,T
24	P	M	YES	YES	YES	YES	M,T,SD
25	P	M	YES	NO	YES	YES	C, T, M
26	P	M	YES	YES	YES	YES	SD,T
27	P	M	YES	YES	YES	NO	C,SD,T
	100%	M=66.7%; C=33.3%	No=70%	Yes=66.7%	Yes=100%	Yes=70%	

A=Kind of toilet facility used (Pit, water system); B=who takes care of the toilet (Mothers, children, father); C=do you wash your hands after using the laevotory (yes, no); D= does water availability affects compliance to C (yes, no) ;E=do you need intervention (yes, no); F=do you visit the health center (yes, no); G= what health condition usually prompted your visit (cholera, typhoid, skin rashes, malaria)

- Through individual discussion sessions, it was discovered that it is predominantly the duty of the women to maintain the hygienic condition of the toilet while men dogged and constructed it
- Empirical data from table (6) indicated that 66.5 % (18) of the respondent opined that it is the women who maintain the hygiene of the toilet, perhaps due to their being prone to toilet infections
- 33.3 % accepted that their female children sometimes assisted them in carrying out this assignment
- None of the respondents link their husbands to this aspect of household activity. This demonstrated power play and gender inequality and could equally be due to shared responsibilities because it's the men who constructed the toilets.
- About 70 % of the respondents honestly accepted that they do not wash their hands often after visiting the lavatory. 66.7 % of the interviewed population attributed poor access to water as the reason for lack of compliance (Table 6).

- The people of Mbiabet Ikot Udo at all fora of engagements eagerly anticipated government or any agencies assistance in ameliorating their present deplorable WASH condition.

## **The issues explained And Way Forward**

- **Women and girls are affected by traditional rules and beliefs relating to access to water.** This is dangerous, traumatizing and inhuman. This norm can leave women and girls vulnerable to attack and often precludes them from other access.
- **For women and girls, sanitation is about personal safety.** Having to go to the toilet outside or sharing facilities with men and boys puts women and girls at increased risk of abuse and assault
- **Women and girls have specific hygiene needs.** A clean, functional, lockable, gender-segregated space is needed, with access to sanitary products and disposal systems, for women and girls to manage menstrual hygiene and pregnancy.

- **Gender-responsive WASH is critical for the 2030 Agenda.** Embedding gender equity into policy at all levels will be crucial to achieving water and sanitation for all, which in turn will help advance many other parts of the SDG agenda, particularly poverty reduction
- **WASH is critical to eliminating violence against women and girls.** Female safety and dignity must be paramount in WASH service design. Plus, rectifying gender imbalances in WASH governance and management, at all levels, will ensure the suitability of services and raise the status of women in society.

# Publicity / Impact of the Study

- We have had press conference with several media houses in attendance
- We have equally granted live interviews on radio stations such as Tang Sio Fm
- The populace have come to know that such conditions still exist in this 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Our publicity had attracted Mary Slessor-Akan Glo Foundation to visit twin mothers in Mbiabet Ikot udo .



MARY SLESSOR - AKAN GLO  
FOUNDATION

Organizes

a One Day Sensitization Programme

Theme:

**MULTIPLE BIRTH PARENTS &  
CHILDREN HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS**

**Venue:** Village Square, Mbiabet Ikot Udo, Ini L.G.A.

**Date:** Tuesday, 8th August, 2023 **Time:** 12noon









# Conclusion

- Mbiabet Ikot Udo women especially the twin mothers inherited a custom and tradition that they have no control over. Moreover, this tradition is still in effect and judiciously adhered to because there is no other alternative to Idim Afia.
- As long as this condition remained, the innocence women of this community would still be condemned to this bondage with all its consequences
- If government and other interventionist agencies could graciously construct good portable water sources in this community, the age long belief that had subjected our women into this morbid fear and outright exclusion would naturally die off.



Village views of Mbiabet Ikot Udo





**Women of Mbiabet Ikot Udo**



**The team Leader Addressing Mbiabet Ikot Udo Village Council**



The pro





**Cross section of Mbiabet Ikot Udo People posing with the IHE-DELFT WASH Team**

The IHE-Delft Water and Development Partnership Programmes,  
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