

## Using Sanitation Day in Ibadan

John Manton<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, UK

john.manton@lshtm.ac.uk

The institution of environmental sanitation day across Nigeria on the last Saturday of every month is a measure associated with historical and folk memory of the authoritarian and ostensibly anti-corruption military regime of 1983-5 led by Gens. Mohammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon. Conceived as part of the regime's War Against Indiscipline, Sanitation Day has been a monthly recurrence in Nigerian cities and towns throughout the last quarter century, despite the short tenure of the regime which imposed the measure. It is an institution which seeks to transform the Nigerian citizen into the guardian and producer of personal and community health and welfare, into a proud urban custodian, and into a health worker at street level.

It is policed sometimes arbitrarily and often in draconian fashion, contested by traders, householders and travelling urban workers, neglected in favour of rest and respite from the onerous conditions of Nigerian city life, and often only honoured in the breach by both state and citizens. Nevertheless, Sanitation Day remains a powerful metonym for urban pride and urban failure in Nigeria. It has also served as the occasion for public health outreach in conjunction with major vaccination programmes against illnesses such as cholera and polio, both much to the fore in discussions of rights and responsibilities in public health in contemporary Nigeria.

This paper profiles attitudes to Sanitation Day in Ibadan, Oyo State among community health workers, police, and traders, representing the uses and misuse of this unique occasion for civic control in contemporary urban Nigeria. It investigates how the citizens of Ibadan are transformed into urban health workers on this day, taking or resisting responsibility for the order and cleanliness of compounds, streetscapes, and premises, and reflecting on communal sanitary achievements and failures at personal, local and state levels. Finally, it examines the impact of topography, drainage, and population density – longstanding markers of difference across the urban fabric of Ibadan – on the popular experience, contested meanings, and micropolitics of urban and environmental sanitation and policy making as these factors relate to Sanitation Day and its powerful imaginaries.