

**Burial of Human Corpses in Homes and Residential Houses in
Ebonyi State:
A Case of Legislation Begging for Enforcement**

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Abstract

Methods of burial of human corpses vary from place to place, and is often determined by status, custom, traditional beliefs, financial status and circumstance of death. In several places in Africa, encomiums are rather poured on human corpse as though it is sacred. As a result, corpses are buried where the relatives and loved ones would often conduct prayers and sacrifices. Bereaved families and or neighbors spend fortunes not only in entertaining guests at burials, but also in procuring expensive burial items, erecting or renovating burial houses, including procuring expensive coffins. In most parts of Ebonyi State, human corpses are either buried inside residential building/rooms or within residential compounds. In fact, this practice cuts across almost all the communities in Ebonyi State. Such practices constitute brazen infraction of the Births, Deaths and Burials Law of Ebonyi State, 2004 among other instruments. The question begging for answer is why our laws despite prohibiting these practices are still silent over this practice. Studies have shown that no one has been prosecuted for violating the provisions of the law prohibiting home burial of human corpses in Ebonyi State. This paper, therefore, examines the rationale behind the poor/non-enforcement of laws prohibiting burials in homes and residential houses in Ebonyi State among others. This paper adopted mix methods of data collection, thus utilizing doctrinal methods and observation. Our research revealed that home burial aside its public health hazards and dangers to the environment, is however categorically prohibited by law in Ebonyi State. This study, therefore, recommends amongst other things, that government should provide/map out adequate lands as public burial-grounds

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in Ebonyi State while human corpses should be recognized and treated as hazardous waste/substances requiring proper disposal mechanism to curb the spread of diseases.

Keywords: Human corpse, Home burial, Hazardous waste, Pathological waste, Burial.

1. Introduction.

Several methods for disposal of human corpses are practiced by different people depending on cultural practices, religious beliefs and financial capabilities. Corpse may be cremated, mummified, or buried/interred. By cremation, the corpse is set up and burnt to ashes after which ashes are either collected and thrown away in the bin or into the river or put in bottle or container and kept for other ritual purposes. On the other hand, mummification involves keeping of the corpse and embalming the body with preservative chemicals. When properly mummified, the body can stay in that state without decomposing for as long as possible.

In Ebonyi State, the common practice is burying or interment as the case maybe. Burial involves interring of human corpse in the grave. Grave on the other hand is an excavation/pit dug into the earth for the purposes of burial. Grave can also mean any place of interment and could include a tomb, or a sepulcher. In the ancient time, human corpses were buried or interred in tombs and caves. Burying involves interment of infectious waste/body in a pit or an approved landfill site or cemetery. It is the most convenient waste disposal technique worldwide and is cheap and involves most affordable technology.

Under the Second Schedule to Births, Deaths and Burials law of Ebonyi State,² the position of all grave space shall be delineated and plotted on a plan prepared by a government or licensed surveyor and kept in the office of the officer in charge of the cemetery. Each space shall be numbered and a register kept recording the date of grant, name of grantee and name of person buried. Also, the size of a grave shall be 2.7 meters by 1.13 meters.³ A standardized grave yard/burial ground involves a carefully selected location

²Section 7, second schedule to Births, Deaths and Burials Law, Cap.20 of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, 2004

³ Section 8, *ibid*

usually constructed and maintained using engineering techniques, ensuring minimized pollution of air, water, and soil and risks to man and animals. It involves placing the corpse in a line-up pit/grave or a mound with appropriate means of leachate and landfill gas control. The Births, Deaths and Burials Law of Ebonyi State⁴ provides that except with the consent of a medical officer, no corpse shall be buried at less than four feet from the surface of the ground.

It is a belief in Africa generally, that the dead do not rest because even in death, they still stay around and watch over the living. This reveals how Africans place high premium on human corpse. That accounts for why, though ignorantly, human corpses are buried in residential areas and in most places; living rooms and residential houses in Ebonyi State. In some places, corpses are buried at the back yard of residential houses or very close to residences of deceased's loved ones. Cultural practices, beliefs, religious sentiments, financial costs etc as noted earlier have been identified as factors responsible for this practice.

However, having regard to the law, the practice of burying corpse in residential houses/rooms is illegal and a criminal offense. It is an offence punishable under our laws. The rationale behind the criminalization of this practice is that human corpse has proven to be a source of great risk to human health and environment. As noted by a writer⁵, a corpse is a dead body of a human being. Observation has revealed that the practice of burial in houses and or residential buildings/areas are predominant in most parts of Ebonyi State. The considerable health risk posed by this practice may be appreciated when we begin to consider that there is hardly any major public yard without borehole drilled to supply water to people living around the area. The liquids emanating from these dead bodies when it decomposes are no doubt sipped right into the earth which collects it. The question begging for answers is whether it is possible that waters from such boreholes are not affected? This paper therefore examines the provisions of the laws relating to treatment and disposal of human corpse, including the rationale for

⁴s40 Births, Deaths and Burials Law of Ebonyi state, 2004.

⁵ S. Chukwu, *Burying of Corpse in Dwelling Houses and Residential Areas; What Does the Law say*, (October, 12, 2018). Accessed online at www.barristerng.com. On 9^h February, 2024 at 10: 02 am

prohibitions of home burial and some unscrupulous ways of dealing with human corpse in Ebonyi State. At the end, this work made a strong case for proper and effective enforcement of the relevant laws that prohibit home burial or burial in residential houses.

2. Is Human Corpse Waste or Jewel?

A corpse is a dead human body that is due for disposal. It is an expired human being that has lost life. A corpse is a lifeless human body. Waste on the other hand is a difficult term to define because what may not be useful to one person and therefore waste to him may very well have value to another person and therefore not waste to him.⁶ A study is of the view that ‘waste’ is “substance or objects discarded as worthless or unwanted, defective or of no further value, or remnants of food item and hence deemed fit for disposal”.⁷ For Okonkwo,⁸ waste is any inanimate object, whether in solid or liquid form that is no longer required or is regarded as useless for use in any material particular and which is incapable of adding value to human being, thereby qualified to be thrown away in sound environmentally sustainable manner. From a legal point of view, wastes are substances or objects, which are disposed of or are intended to be disposed of, or are required to be disposed of by the provisions of municipal or national laws.⁹

On an extended view, medical waste includes all the wastes generated in the diagnosis, treatment, surgeries, autopsies, or other medical procedures from all types of healthcare institutions, including hospitals, clinics, doctors (dental and veterinary) offices, medical laboratories and research centres related to medical procedures.¹⁰ Research¹¹ shows that medical waste are generally infectious, hazardous, and are generated from health care

⁶ K U Adamu, *Environmental Protection Law and Practice*, 1st Ed. (Ibadan: Ababa Press Ltd., 2012) p.34

⁷ J. U. Achor, *Improving the Living Environment in Slum Settlement*, (Lagos, Bedan Company Ltd, 1998) P. 109

⁸ T Okonkwo *The Law of Environmental Liability*, (Lagos: Fine Finishing Limited, Afrique Environmental and Education (AEDE) 2010) p. 753.

⁹ C A Omaka, *Municipal and International Environmental Law* (Enugu, Kingdom Age Publications) p.155. See also, Basel Convention on the control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

¹⁰ E H Nyekwere, “Legal Assessment of the Impact of the Improper Disposal of Medical waste in Nigeria” *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence*, 2012, vol 1, p.25.

¹¹ M S Zarook, “Medical waste management and Control”, *Journal of Environmental Studies*, January, 2012, American University of Sharjah, UEA, Vol. 3, pp. 1625 – 1628, accessed online on 9th February, 2024

institutions, such as hospitals, clinics, dental offices, and medical laboratories¹². Medical waste is seen as any waste generated in the diagnosis, treatment, or immunization of human beings or animals, in related research, production or testing of biologicals from all types of healthcare institutions, including hospitals, clinics, doctor (dental and veterinary) offices, and medical laboratories.¹³

The National Environmental (Healthcare Waste Control) Regulation, 2021¹⁴ categorized medical waste into two broad categories to wit: Non-hazardous health waste (General solid waste) and hazardous healthcare waste (infectious waste). Another study¹⁵ classified medical waste into the following major groups: sharp waste, infectious waste, pathological waste, pharmaceutical waste, cytotoxic waste, chemical waste, radioactive waste, and non-hazardous or general waste. As observed, while some medical wastes are highly hazardous in character, some are mild or generally non-hazardous. Human corpse falls within the category of infectious, pathological and anatomical medical waste.

Pathological waste means human tissue or fluids generated as waste in the course of diagnosis, treatment or prevention of disease within the health setting.¹⁶ Pathological waste consists of human and animal tissues or fluids, body parts, blood and other body fluids, fetuses, animal carcasses, etc.¹⁷ Nyekwere noted that pathological waste could be regarded as a subcategory of infectious waste but is frequently classified separately-especially when unique methods of handling, treatment, and disposal are used. Pathological waste consists of human tissues, organ or fluids and body parts. Pathological

¹² See also, US Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, "Issues in Medical Waste Management-Background Paper," US Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1988.

¹³ E O Longe and A. Williams, "A Preliminary Study of Medical Waste Management in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria", *Iran Journal of Environmental Health Sciences and Engineering*, 2006, Lagos, Vol. 3, No. 2 Pp.133-139. Accessed online on 8th February, 2024.

¹⁴ First Schedule, National Environmental (Healthcare Waste Control) Regulation, 2021

¹⁵ E H Nyekwere, "Legal Assessment of the Impact of the Improper Disposal of Medical Waste in Nigeria" *NnamdiAzikiwe University Awka Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence*, 2012, vol 1, p.28.

¹⁶ Regulation 48, National Environmental (Healthcare Waste Control) Regulation, 2021

¹⁷ First Schedule, National Environmental (Healthcare Waste Control) Regulation, 2021

waste may also include body parts that have been removed during medical procedure or produced during medical research.¹⁸

On the other hand, anatomical wastes are typically distinguished as recognizable human organs, tissues or body parts. Having noted as above, it is without doubt that dead/removed human parts or tissues constitute harmful and infectious waste, thus posing great health and environmental risk. From the definition of pathological waste above, it can be inferred that human corpse or at least dead/removed human parts or tissues fall within the category of medical waste, because they are potentially infectious especially when improperly treated or disposed. What, however, appears uncertain from the definition is whether a complete human corpse as opposed to dead human body parts/tissues can safely on moral grounds be called or specifically in this part of the world categorized as waste and treated as such? To resolve this uncertainty, a look into the aims and objectives of the relevant provisions of the law would help us. To show that corpse is an infectious waste, Section 242 of Criminal Code Law¹⁹ provides that any person who without lawful justification or excuse, the proof of which lies on him neglects to perform any duty imposed on him by law, or undertaken by him, whether for reward or otherwise, touching the burial or other disposition of a human body or human remains; or improperly or indecently interferes with, or offers any indignity to any dead human body or human remains, whether buried or not; eats or receives for the purpose of eating any part of a dead human body; is guilty of a misdemeanor and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for 2years.

Another example that will dispel any argument on this is why abandoned or unidentified corpses are usually treated as infectious waste and inserted in sealed body bag or encapsulation before disposal. Also, people that died of highly infectious diseases such as Corona Virus, Lassa Fever, Ebola Virus etc. are disposed of in strict compliance to prescribed environmental standards. Regulation 48²⁰ defined disposal to mean final destination of

¹⁸ E H Nyekwere, "Legal Assessment of the Impact of the Improper Disposal of Medical waste in Nigeria" *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence*, 2012, vol 1, p.25

¹⁹ Section 242, Criminal Code Law, Cap 33 Laws of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, 2004

²⁰ National Environmental (Healthcare Waste Control) Regulation, 2021

waste and includes put-away, sales, transformation, burial, landfill, etc.; excluding open burning.

Human corpse by law is expected to be buried properly and at a designated point, usually in a cemetery. The common ground of all the authorities cited above is that waste generally are materials/substance that are no longer useful and therefore in a hazardous or potentially hazardous state if improperly managed. On the other hand, medical wastes include human corpse or removed body parts or tissues, carcass or part thereof which are no longer alive or in use or by virtue of their loss of immediate value and therefore hazardous or are potentially hazardous if improperly managed.

3. Criminalization of Home Burial of Human Corpse in Ebonyi State

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended empowers both the Federal and States to make laws that are reasonably justified in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality and public health. It is pursuant to the powers derivable from the 1999 constitution and in the interest of health of the public that laws were made in Ebonyi State making it a crime to bury human corpse in homes and residential areas in the state. Being familiar with the dangers of environmental pollution associated with improper burial of human corpse, Ebonyi State House of Assembly made series of laws to regulate burial/disposal and or management of human corpse in the State. The following laws have prohibited home burial, and by extension acts that degrade the environment. Amongst these laws are the Criminal Code Law²¹ and Births, Deaths and Burials Law.²² We shall now discuss the relevant provisions of these laws.

i. The Criminal Code Law of Ebonyi State, 2004²³

The Criminal Code Law is one of the laws that outlawed home burial of corpse in Ebonyi State. It contains what is generally called Offences Against Public Health²⁴. Section 246 of the law²⁵ out rightly prohibits burial in residential houses in Ebonyi State as follows:

²¹ Cap 33 Laws of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, 2004.

²² Births, Deaths and Burials Law, Cap.20 of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, 2004.

²³ Criminal Code Law, Cap 33 Laws of Ebonyi State, 2004

²⁴ *ibid*, Chapter 3

Any person who without the consent of the Commissioner for Health buries or attempts to bury any corpse in any house, building, premises, yard, garden, compound, or within a hundred yards of any dwelling house, or in any open space situated within a township, is guilty of a misdemeanor, and is liable to imprisonment for six months.²⁶

The use of the word “without the consent of Commissioner for Health” goes to show that the only time corpse may be buried in any house, building, premises, yard, garden, compound, dwelling house or residential area or within hundred yards of any dwelling house in any part of Ebonyi State is when the Commissioner for Health grants permit/consent. Or where the Local Government Chairman²⁷ grants permit or consent. In any other way except as above, such burial is unlawful and all the people who conducted the burial upon conviction are liable to imprisonment for six months. It should be borne in mind that such consent/permit is not granted by mere asking. It is as a matter of law granted upon fulfillment of certain conditions. To apply for such consent/permit, death certificate of the deceased is a condition precedent. The death certificate must show clearly the cause of death, so that, where the cause of death is of highly infectious disease, for example; Ebola, Lassa Fever or Corona Virus, etc., such application ought to be refused as there is likelihood of danger to occupants of such dwelling houses or residence.

ii. **Births, Deaths and Burials Law of Ebonyi State**²⁸

The Births, Deaths and Burials Law of Ebonyi State is another legislation that deals with burial of corpses. For instance, this law provides for burial of corpses, time to bury etc. Regrettably, the law did not describe corpse as waste. However, one should also not lose sight of the fact that when corpse is kept unburied beyond the expected time, it starts decomposing and at that time becomes a threat to human life, and serious source of pollution. Or

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid*, s246

²⁷ Section 38, Births, Deaths and Burials Law, Cap.20 of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, 2004

²⁸ Cap.20 of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, 2004

where corpse is improperly buried, it poses great health risk especially where cause of death is of infectious disease. What then is waste?

The law²⁹ provides that except with the consent of a medical officer, no corpse shall be buried at a distance less than four feet from the surface of the ground. Penalty for going contrary to this provision is a fine of five thousand naira or imprisonment for two months. Section 41³⁰ provides as follows:

- a. A court may on the application of a health officer order that any dwelling-house in which, or within a hundred metres of which, a corpse has been buried to be closed until the same is fit for habitation, and may if necessary authorize any police officer to remove from such house the occupants thereof.
- b. Any person inhabiting a dwelling-house so closed shall be liable to a fine of one thousand naira and a further fine of five hundred Naira for each day that such habitation continues.
- c. No order shall be made under this section if the corpse has been buried in a public burial-ground.

Section 42³¹ also provides that;

1. Upon the information of a health officer or any person authorized by him that a corpse has been buried in any dwelling-house or in any place, not being a public burial ground, within ninety metres from any dwelling-house, a court may issue a warrant, authorizing any member of the police or any officer of the court to search, and if necessary, to dig up any ground in any such dwelling-house, or within one hundred yards from such dwelling-house, for the purpose of ascertaining if any corpse has been buried.
2. Any corpse found in execution of a warrant issued under this section shall be removed and buried by such person or persons as the court may direct, and the costs of such removal shall be paid by the persons by whom such corpse has been buried or caused to be buried in the place from which it has been removed or otherwise as court may direct.

²⁹Ibid, s40

³⁰Births, Deaths and Burials Law, 2004

³¹Ibid

To show how serious the offence of burial in dwelling-house is, Section 43³² further provides that the Commissioner may in writing under his hand order the exhumation of any human body buried in any place within Ebonyi State of Nigeria and may direct that any exhumation shall be carried out in the presence of, and in a manner approved by a medical officer and give such other directions with regard to any such exhumation as he may think fit. Section 48³³ of the law empowers the Commissioner to make regulations for the better carrying into effect of the provisions of this law. The practice of shallow grave burial and burial in dwelling house is an offence. Although this law is observed more in breach in most parts of Ebonyi State, the reality is that corpse being a hazardous waste as such, should be disposed of properly and appropriately. The practice is inimical to human health. It is also a fast means of transmitting disease.

4. Factors Responsible for Continued Burial of Human Corpses in Residential Houses and Homes in Ebonyi State.

As noted earlier, it is a criminal offence to bury human corpse in residential houses and homes in Ebonyi State. It is therefore worrisome why the act prohibited by law is on the increase and no one appears perturbed. The practice is even more pronounced amongst the elites that are conversant with its health implications. Some of the factors responsible for the continued practice include:

i. Lack or Inadequate Public Cemetery/Burial Grounds.

Study revealed that there are very few numbers of functional cemetery/public burial grounds in Ebonyi State presently. The result is that bereaved families are left with the options available; which is to bury their deceased within their available space, most time within the residential home or house. It is the responsibility of the State to provide lands and designate them for burials. Section 36 of the law³⁴ provides that the Commissioner for health may by order;

- a. Declare any burial-ground within Ebonyi State of Nigeria to be a public burial-ground for any area specified in such order;

³²Ibid

³³Ibid

³⁴ Births, Deaths and Burials Law, Cap.20 of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, 2004

- b. Appropriate any public burial-ground within Ebonyi State of Nigeria to persons of any class, nationality or religious denomination mentioned in the order;
- c. Order that any burial-ground within Ebonyi State of Nigeria whether a public burial-ground or not, named in such order shall from a date specified be discontinued either wholly or subject to any exceptions or qualifications mentioned in such order.

By section 37 of the law³⁵ every public burial-ground shall be under the control or management of such person or body of persons as the Commissioner may direct. Section 38 of the law also empowers the Local Government Chairman to also declare an area within the Local Government Area as public burial-ground, and without the consent of the Chairman, no corpse within the Local Government Area shall be buried in any other place except the public burial-ground. Penalty for default is five thousand Naira.³⁶

According to Taiwo,³⁷

Abakaliki, unlike most state capitals in the country, cannot boast of a decent cemetery where people can bury their loved ones. In fact, in the city, there is no rest for the dead as space provided to give them befitting burial is in short supply-almost unavailable. ...The only burial ground in Abakaliki, built during the colonial era, has been stretched beyond its limits, leaving residents in a state of confusion whenever the need to bury their dead arises.... The entire place is filled up. Although, investigation shows that there existed public burial-grounds at least one in each of the local government areas in Ebonyi State, further search revealed that most of these sites are no longer functional as most of them have been encroached on or

³⁵ *ibid*

³⁶ *Ibid*, section 37

³⁷ O Taiwo, 'At Abakaliki Cemetery, there is no Rest for the Dead', *The Punch Newspaper*, 22nd December, 2018

acquired by private and government agencies and
converted to other uses.

ii. **Inadequate Sanctions**

A close perusal of both the Criminal Code Law of Ebonyi State and Births and Deaths and Burials Law,³⁸ shows clearly that various sanctions provided therein are ridiculously low. The result is that residents would prefer to pay the prescribed fine or serve the short terms of imprisonment than comply with the statutory provisions. For instance, under section 38³⁹, the penalty/fine for burial in a place other than a public burial-ground under the control of Local Government is five thousand Naira. Under Criminal Code Law,⁴⁰ any person who without the consent of the Commissioner for Health buries or attempts to bury any corpse in any house, building, premises, yard, garden, compound, or within a hundred yards of any dwelling house, or in any open space situated within a township, is guilty of a misdemeanor, and is liable to imprisonment for six months. It is submitted that these sanctions are inadequate, and helps in fueling the recourse of offenders in violating the provisions of the law, hence the continued increase in the practice of home burial.

iii. **Lack of Political Will to Enforce Laws**

It is not in doubt that the rise in the practice of home burial in all parts of Ebonyi State is as a result of government's lack of political will to enforce the law. To put it bluntly, Ebonyi State Ministry of Health and its Environment counterpart has shown great apathy in curbing the practice of home burial in Ebonyi State. The result is that people no longer register deaths, and or seek requisite consent and approvals before burying corpses at home. Public burial-grounds are also not available, and where available, the conditions of such burial grounds are a complete health disaster. The government through relevant agencies should sit up and enforce the law to avert disease outbreak.

iv. **Show of Affluence**

Burials in recent times have become avenues of exposition of financial prowess by people. In most places, it has become a practice to see new

³⁸ Cap.20 of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, 2004

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ Criminal Code Law, Cap 33 Laws of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, 2004

houses springing up and old ones renovated by deceased families all in a bid to show that the deceased is accorded a befitting burial. Burials in Ebonyi State just as in many other parts of the country have become a competition where people compete for whose ceremony or burial house or home will be more fanciful and talk of the town. Unfortunately, even amongst poor citizens, this show of affluence has enveloped everyone such that it is now seen as exhibition of poverty to bury deceased outside his house or residential compound. And until people understand that corpse is not jewel, but waste, this practice may continue with its attendant health challenges.

v. Beliefs and Cultural Practices.

In most parts of Ebonyi State, there is a belief that only people that died without heirs are buried in cemetery or otherwise, evil forest or bushes. Or that certain categories of people must be buried in residential houses or home. It is thus seen as taboo and abomination to bury some corpses outside the house or residence. In some other places like Izzi, Ezza, Ikwo, Ngbo, Ohaozara etc., wealthy, influential, traditional chiefs and titled people are buried in their living houses or within their family compound according to their custom. In other places, deceased corpses are buried in residential houses or compound for security reasons, and to prevent people from coming to exhume the corpse or take away sands from the burial ground for ritual purposes. In all these, the deceased family would not seek relevant consents.

There are other factors such lack of fund to pay processing of necessary burial permit from relevant bodies, lack of lands outside residential places, ignorance of the existence of the law prohibiting home burial by residents etc.

5. Conclusion

This paper has revealed that virtually in all parts of Ebonyi State, the practice of home burial without consent and or authorization of either the Commissioner for Health, or Local Government Chairman is prevalent. The practice is no doubt an affront to extant statutory provisions outrightly prohibiting the practice. Aside the statutory prohibitions, the health challenges associated with such burials are enormous. As noted earlier, the fluids from such corpses most often are sipped into nearby wells or

boreholes. The result is disease. Our Research revealed that human corpse falls within the categories of infectious, hazardous, pathological and anatomical medical waste that should be appropriately disposed of/managed. This study has shown that several factors including cultural practices, religious sentiments, financial costs, beliefs, inadequate public burial grounds etc. are responsible for continuous burials in residential houses, rooms and residential areas. Although government has banned this practice now referred to as home burial, observation revealed that the practice of home burial is still rampant. When laws are made without enforcement, such laws are simply beautiful nonsense. This is because the law is rarely enforced by anybody despite the dangers that it set out to mitigate. As observed, the government has shown indifference in the enforcement of these laws prohibiting and criminalizing home burials in Ebonyi State. This paper therefore put forward the following recommendations as a way to curbing the dangers associated with home burials in Ebonyi state.

- a. The government, both state and local should allocate more lands as public burial-grounds or cemetery. This will enable those whose reasons for embarking on home burial is as a result of lack of land or space to have alternatives. By this, such people will have a place to bury their loved ones.
- b. The laws should be amended to introduce heavy and strict sanctions for defaulters. And government agencies saddled with the responsibilities of enforcing the law should wake up from their slumber.
- c. The government should make access to public burial grounds in Ebonyi State free, and the bottlenecks associated with obtaining relevant permits to bury corpse in public burial grounds in the state removed.
- d. Law should be made mandating every corpse to be chemically treated and inserted in scientifically certified safe body-bag before interment while the “not less than four feet deep” grave specification by the Births, Deaths and Burials Law of Ebonyi State should be adhered to strictly and appropriately enforced by relevant government agencies and communities.

- e. Government in collaboration with traditional rulers and village heads should create/establish anti-home burial monitoring committees or taskforces to ensure total compliance to the letters of the law.
- f. Human corpse should at all times be treated as medical waste that must be disposed strictly as hazardous substance.
- g. Every death must be registered and certificate of death clearly indicating cause of death be issued before any corpse is buried in Ebonyi State.
- h. There is also need to sensitize the populace especially on the need to stop this practice of home burial as same is inimical to public health.

It is believed that if the recommendations put forward by this paper are strictly implemented, this practice of home burial will be eradicated. The law has slept long enough. It is time its provisions are strictly enforced in the interest of public health.