



# **Housing Challenge and Urban Infrastructure Development in Rivers State**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The paper dwelled on housing challenge and urban infrastructural development in Rivers state. Housing was defined to include building or structure that a person, family lives that meet certain specification and regulation. The paper identified a number of challenges militating against housing in the urban cities. Some of the most difficult challenges are: bribery and corruption; cost of building materials, lack of product driven research and poor infrastructural maintenance The writer suggested that if the housing problem in Rivers state must be ameliorated there is need for government to ensure speedy completion of all projects with the life span of the work. Professional bodies should not trade on standard to avoid incidence of collapsed building.

**Keywords:** Housing Infrastructure, development goal, Sustainability.

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is no doubt that one major consequence of growth in population as observed by Oramah (2016) is increased demand for housing and other infrastructures. According to Todaro and Smith (2011) the supply of housing is in greater disproportion compare to the demand for habitable housing, this has been blamed on the difficulties encountered putting up residential building in the urban cities. Aanlekoko (2001) observed that influx of people into the cities has a number of consequences such as development of squalors, squatter settlements filled and over running drainage to the road, houses infested by mosquito and rodents, and houseflies, rats and cockroaches; the case is more severer among swamp dwellers. Aanlekoko noted that the growth of slums and squatter settlement will be developed by unlawful urban poor who cannot afford the high cost of rent in the cities. The effect of poor housing can be devastating on the environment and water supply untreated sewage may cause environmental pollution.

The importance of housing cannot be over emphasized especially considering the fact that it is a critical component in the measure of national welfare. Any discussion on social economic advances of the people cannot be complete with mention being made about the extent of housing adequacy in the country (Amao and Ilesanmi, 2013). Housing is an important measure of family standard of living or were the family belong to in the society (Venkatarama,2003)

The demand and supply of housing in Port Harcourt is inadequate because of incessant rise in the price of building materials, rise in cost of production coupled with volatile exchange rate which has made importation costly (Fasakin and Ogunseni (2003). It is against this trend that Ajibola(2010) asserted that government either at federal or state cannot provide adequate accommodation for the people.

## **Evolution of housing and urban infrastructure in Nigeria**

The major difference between urban and rural area is in terms of adequacy of system of infrastructure made up of transport infrastructure, good motorable road, supply of hygienic water, steady power supply, functional hospitals, standard and well-furnished schools, good hospitality industry existence of

employment opportunities and residential houses that permit expansion and accommodation of number of people whereby they share facilities optimally (Macomber, 2013). Urbanization can be achieved through expansion into underdeveloped areas as well as renewal of dilapidated urban areas (Agence Francaise de D'veloppement (2009). Housing is defined to include building or structure that a person, families live that meet certain specification and regulations. Urban growth is defined to include existing settlement and emerging new areas accommodating high urban population densities.

#### **Challenges to housing urban development in Rivers state**

A number of reasons or factors have been identified as militating against housing and urban development in Rivers state, they include among others: poor infrastructure maintenance; bribery and corruption, lack of purpose driven research work; in appropriate policy formulation; high cost of building materials, little or no compliance to regulations and standards, poor budgeting and budgeting implementation; inability to access research findings; poor funding mechanism and finally lack of skilled manpower.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The rely on by basic needs theory by Wisner,(1988) the theory stated that basic need is any need that gives priority to peoples basic need like shelter, quality environment. The theory was further expanded by the International Labour Organization to include the need to earn and contribute to the gross national product. Jhigan (2007) viewed it from the perspective of food, health, education, water and shelter. The idea expressed in the theory was that satisfying basic needs will ultimately lead to growth. The approach has three objectives. First, it aims at raising the productivity and incomes of the rural and urban poor. Second, it emphasizes the need for poverty alleviation through the provision of such services as education, drinking water and healthcare. Third, it highlights the need for such services to be financed by the government. There is a problem, however, with assigning weights to the various needs which in the end may depend on the social, economic and political set up of each country.

#### **Conceptual Clarification**

##### **Development**

Development is an elusive, amorphous or inexact concept (Rai and Kumar 2002). In the words of Professor Caiden (cited in Rai and Kumar):

Nobody really knows what the word development really stands for, consequently, different discipline approach it from their own peculiar perspective. For instant, economists identify it with economic productivity, sociologists with social change... political scientists with democratization, political capacity or expanded government.

In the same vein, Kalagbor (2004) asserts that the concept of development is nebulous. Tamuno (2009:3-6) views it as a broad, loaded and abstract concept, adding that there is still no consensus about its meaning. Each scholar has thus tended to define development in his or her own way, relying largely on his or her orientation or world view. Recognizing the problem, S. Onyeiwu (1988) (cited in Kalagbor, 2004) identifies eight categories of scholars working on the meaning of development.

They include:

1. A large number of economists who distinguish between growth and development depending on the degree of structural change involved. Most definitions here stress that structural change involves social, political and economic elements while others insist that development is structural change plus increases in output.
2. Another view of development stipulates that it is not merely a process of creating more and more output but also a process of distributing it more evenly.
3. A third group of scholars consists of those focusing on the range of available economic choice as an index of growth and development. Some of the scholars argue that it is growth which gives a wider range of alternatives to people while others see development as offering more choice.
4. Those who have not even bothered about definitions, preferring instead to discuss the goals of development, approaches to its study, and what underdeveloped countries look like.

5. Those who define both growth and development in terms of increases in total per capita income or output, seeing both processes as identical.

6. A different group of scholars focuses on the origin of the process – on whether the primary stimulus is endogenous or exogenous.

7. Another group of scholars views growth and development in terms of the expansion of productive potentials, with part of the group seeing this as growth and the other as development. Both sides tend to agree that the two aspects complement each other.

8. The last group of scholars takes growth and development as alternating processes, with some arguing that growth rates must reach certain levels before economic development can occur and others contending that economic development must pass from slow to fast growth rates.

Despite these various conflicting perspectives, a number of definitions of development have been offered as a guide. Meier (1976) (cited in Tamuno, 2009) defines economic development as “the process whereby the real per capita income of a country increases over a long period of time”.

Ake C. (cited in Tamuno, 2009) defines development as “a systematic (and continuous) increase of man's capabilities for mastering his environment, satisfying basic human needs, and for realizing his potentials. Articulating a related view, Rodney (1972) asserts that as a multicentric process, development at the individual level underpins increased skill, capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline and responsibility and material well-being; and at the societal level increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. Todaro (1992) similarly defines it as “a multidimensional process involving change in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty”. Still along this line, Seers (1969) contends that it is a misnomer to talk of development if poverty unemployment and inequality have worsened in a given society over a given period even if income per head doubled in the period. This tallies with Jhingan's (1996) idea that development is all about increasing improvement in the welfare of people. The underlying basis of the foregoing indicates that development is a multifaceted process combining increasing economic growth and welfare, and social change.

### **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development revolves around the idea of sustainability (Domfeh nd). Sustainability involves operating in a way that takes full account of the impact of human activities on the planet, its people and the future. Accordingly, something is said to be sustainable if it is enduring and lasting or can continue or be nurtured for a long time. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources explains that “for development to be sustainable it must take account of social and ecological factors, as well as economic ones; of the living and nonliving resources and of the long term as well as the short term advantages and disadvantages of alternative actions (Domfeh nd).

The sustainable development concept reflects this critical need. The definition of the concept most often quoted emerged from the report of the United Nations-sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development, titled (WCED) published in 1987 (Domfeh nd). It refers to sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The idea is that development entails actions taken to enhance the ability of the environment to support human populations. WCED's call for sustainable development had an influence on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June, 1992. Agenda 21, the principal international agreement that emerged from the conference, deals with several relevant issues, including social economic processes to advance sustainability and the conservation and management of resources for sustainable development. The World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002 also reaffirmed sustainable development as a central element of the international agenda and gave new impetus to global action to fight poverty and protect the environment. It broadened and strengthened the understanding of sustainable development, particularly with respect to the important linkages between poverty, the environment and

the use of natural resources. Energy and sanitation issues accordingly became critical elements of negotiations and outcomes during the summit to a greater degree than in previous international meetings on sustainable development. Although some have questioned the value of these initiatives, dismissing sustainable development as a catch phrase that will eventually wither as did the term “appropriate technology”, the influence of the concept has increased significantly in national and international policy development. This has made it a key element of policy documents of governments, international agencies and business groups (Domfeh nd).

Sustainable development deals with issues of environmental sustainability and the social problems of human survival. It was to address such problems that the Rivers State Government (RSG) established RSSDA under the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency Act of 2007 as amended in 2008. RSSDA replaced the Rivers State Sustainable Development Programme (RSSDP) which was set up to develop quick gestation projects and to fill gaps in infrastructure. RSSDA was established to serve as a focal point of sustainable development in the state. It is designed to combat poverty and to transform the state's rural and urban economies in such a way that they would become self-sufficient (RSG, 2010). Its specific mandate is to:

1. Evaluate and assess existing and future intervention programmes in the sustainable development sector through the acquisition, warehousing and analysis of development and socioeconomic data.
2. Formulate and implement plans, initiatives, strategies, intervention modes and specific measures to achieve sustainable development, capacity-building, skill acquisition, alternative sources of livelihood in an environmentally sustainable manner.
3. Collaborate with the government, including local government councils, communities, international development agencies and the private sector with the aim at entrenching a sustainable development agenda for the state.

The agency is headed by an Executive Director who oversees nine zonal offices manned by resident zonal co-ordinators. Under each resident zonal coordinator is a local government area community interface officer in charge of monitoring projects and coordinating relations between the agency and segments of the local populace. The agency also has a board with representatives from oil companies, the Niger Delta Development Commission, donor agencies, civil society groups and the Federal Government. Operationally, its functions overlap with those of a number of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). It is therefore possible to situate its social development interventions within the framework of the state's social policy and development regime comprising the Ministries of Education, Health, Employment Generation and Empowerment, Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, Women Affairs and Youth Development; as well as departments or agencies like the Office of the Special Assistant, Skill Acquisition; Office of Millennium Development Goals, and RSSDA

## **Challenges of Housing development in Port Harcourt**

### **(i) Bribery and corruption**

The act of exploiting public position, resources and power for personal gain is termed corruption (Ogundiya, 2009). According to Gandy (2005) despite the huge amount expended on housing sector at both federal and state level very little has being achieved of fulfilling specified housing program of the government. Adeyemo and Amade (2016) said that embezzlement of project fund has caused a number of project to remain uncompleted or abandoned, while Crowe(2011) observed that political corruption has led to uneven distribution of income and high level of poverty among larger proportion of the population in Rivers state. In a revelation made by National Bureau of statistics (2017) 1/3 of Nigeria that transacted one thing or the other with the public official offered one form of bribe or the other, implying that bribery is a key factor in the lives of most Nigerians. The existence of different corruption agency is a clear indication of how corruption has become an integral part of politics in Nigeria.

### **(ii) High cost of building material**

The high cost of building material has made it extremely difficult for an individual to own a house because of high cost of building materials. There is no gain saying that construction work cannot take place without the use of building material. Logically, the higher the cost of building material the less the

number of construction works. Implying that the cost of building materials is inversely related to number of houses built over a period. The average income of a working class citizen in Nigeria ranges from #75000- # 125,000 Babatunde(2008).

A third major problem highlighted by Kalagbor (2004) was the issue of whether the poor are the ones to define their needs or should have them defined by development experts, international development and aid agencies. Two distinct positions address this thorny question. One calls for participatory development or the involvement of the poor, the presumed beneficiaries of development policies, in the development process. This entails the identification of obstacles to development by the people themselves and their involvement in addressing them. It follows that poverty as a great obstacle to development has to be identified and understood in terms of its sources, types, agents and agencies, and eliminated or reduced to the barest minimum. Secondly, people must directly and actively or through representative institutions participate in the preparation of the development agenda

The second or weak or conservative position sees people (the poor) as recipients of development aid, assistance and packages who must receive a bundle of goods and services corresponding to their needs. According to this position, people do not take part in the determination and definition of their development (basic) needs.

Green (cited in Kalagbor, 2004) has distinguished between the radical and conservative positions on the basic needs approach, arguing that the former deals with human needs while the latter is concerned with basic needs. A number of scholars have also sought to clarify what the needs are. J. Galtung (cited in Kalagbor, 2004) identifies security, welfare, identity and freedom needs. Carr-Hill (cited in Kalagbor 2004), on the other hand, lists health, education,

Individuals, corporate systems (including private institutions), commercial enterprises, and the state all provide housing. The price of houses provided by commercial enterprises may be too high for the poor.

2 Governments may thus intervene to increase the supply of houses in order to mitigate the housing problem. State houses are usually built to a standard plan and, in policy statements at least, the state aims to provide housing at a reasonable cost to every socioeconomic level of society. But state housing is beyond the reach of the poor not only because of cost considerations, but also because planners do not represent the interests of the poor; they adopt models and standards which are irrelevant to Third World urban conditions

State low-cost housing is often monopolized by senior government employees, particularly those employed in the civil and military services.

4 Without access to increased income, conventional housing programmes are largely of illusory benefit to the urban poor, whose real position in relation to the elite remains unchanged.

5 To cope with their housing problem, many of the urban poor resort to squatting. This has led to the development of shanty towns Housing in the shanties consists mainly of structures made of corrugated iron, plywood and sometimes even industrial and commercial crates. Observations in Lima have counteracted the negative stereotypical image of shanty towns and their dwellers. These later gave rise to the theory of urban evolution.

7 These arguments so influenced aid donors that site and service programmes have been widely adopted as a means by which the poor may attain decent housing over time. A decade ago, these conditions were the subject of an international conference; since then the situation has deteriorated, not improved. The ability of self-building to produce adequate housing is determined by the political economy and, by implication, the state which structures the formal housing and land markets." It is the state that eradicates or tolerates squatter settlements, that hounds or acknowledge

## CONCLUSIONS

The inability of the government to properly address the factors blamed for urban infrastructure development at both federal and state level respectively hinders government ability to provide affordable housing and develop infrastructure. To resolve this challenge, there is need to carry out a product driven research that focus on housing and urban development. Secondly, there is the need to encourage increasing participation of the private sector. This can be achieved by increasing the opportunity of

private sector to either access loans or receive subsidies through this, private sector will adequately support government housing production plans.

Agencies whose responsibilities it is to guide and control housing mortgage should be encouraged by empowering them with more financial resources to further improve on performance efficiency in the housing industry. Professional bodies such as COREN, NIOB, NICE, CORBON, NIA, AGIS, SON and NSE concerned with regulating standard must ensure stakeholders comply with building standard in order to prevent the incidence of building collapse. The professional bodies should fashion out way that promote import substitution.

Furthermore, industrial harmony cannot be achieved until there is increasing participation by the indigenes of host community through this; sustainable housing and urban development can be achieved. Last, government should ensure regular research because by so doing government is furnished with necessary data for policy formulation in housing and urban development which in the long run lead to the attainment of health and sustainable environment.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the various findings made in this study we recommend as follows: to overcome the obstacles being encountered in the process of sustainable housing and urban development in Rivers state. To achieve sustainable housing in Rivers state there is need for government to evolve public private participation in establishing satellite towns, condominiums, housing schemes and urban infrastructure and by extension transportation, security, waste management power and water. However this can only be possible if and only if an active and effective institutional framework is activated.

Specifically the following recommendations are made

- (a) Elimination of unbalanced competition among importers of building materials. The present situation makes it difficult for custom to collect right customs duties and tariff. To achieve this organizations in Rivers state have a great role to play.
- (b) Regulatory professional bodies should ensure that stakeholders in housing and urban development comply with standard.
- (c) There is need to bridge the gap between policy formulation and implementation.

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