

Appraisal of the Sufficiency of Habitable Housing to the Urban Poor in Lagos State

D.O Olanrewaju and A.T Adesanya

Department of Building Technology,
Lagos State Polytechnic, Lagos, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: D.O Olanrewaju

Abstract

The importance of decent housing has been well recognized, articulated and elucidated in the literature, yet a great proportion of the urban poor in Nigeria especially in Lagos State still live in substandard and poor houses and in deplorable environments. The need to provide adequate shelter for all as well as the important of human settlement is therefore critical to the achievement of sustainable urban growth and cities development. This paper examines the sufficiency of habitable housing among the urban poor in Lagos State. An overview of strategies towards ensuring adequate housing was also examined. The study was carried out with the aid of well structured questionnaire to elicit required information from the respondents in the study area, building and facility survey using random sampling techniques. Findings from the study revealed the insufficiency of habitable housing among the urban poor. Recommendations were proffered to guide the policy makers towards enhancing the lives of the residents of the area. Some of these include upgrading programme through the provision of urban basic services and improved sanitation strategies for sustainable management of the area, government to realistically estimate the quantitative housing needs of the people and their multi-dimensional nature taken into consideration. This research provides empirical information on housing conditions and infrastructural facilities available to the urban poor in Lagos State with a view to improve their quality of life and better the environment.

Keywords: habitable housing, environment, urban poor, appraisal, sufficiency.

INTRODUCTION

Housing is a basic human need in all societies and fundamental right of every individual. Unlike developing countries, habitable housing is more accessible to all categories of people including the poor and the needy in advanced countries as a result of subsidies from the government. Although studies here shown that the problem of housing is universal, it is however more critical in less developed countries Olotuah and Bodadoye (2009).

The situation is worsened in the urban suburb areas like Lagos suburbs, which has resulted into various categories of societal vices and crimes. In Nigeria, Lagos is obviously the most urbanized city with a registered annual growth of about 15%, the population of Lagos doubles almost every ten years while nationwide the annual urban growth is estimated to be between 6-10% (Taylor, 2000). This may be attributable to the combined effect of natural population increase and that occasioned by the process of rural-urban migration. The consequences of heavy influx of migrants into the cities have had severe effect in such areas as employment, housing, health, transportation and education. The urban poor are those considered poor in all respects, but live in secluded areas of the urban city. These classes of people exist at the outskirts of every city in Nigeria.

At large proportion of them still lives in sub-standard (majorly self-made temporary structures), overcrowded housing and in deplorable and unsanitary residential environment known as slums and squatter settlements Diogu (2002). They lack basic amenities that constitute, elements of an habitable housing.

According to UN (2005) and World Bank (2008) report more than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas, and by the year 2050, 70 percent will be city dwellers with cities and towns in Asia and Africa registering the biggest growth. The present situation in Lagos now is in line with this report. Lagos State rapid urbanization and population growth of all categories have not been matched with increase in housing construction and therefore, there is a colossal quantitative and qualitative shortage of housing units in the state especially for the poor. The effects and problems emanating from these population increases have undoubtedly constitute critical challenges to sustainable housing and urban development.

It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to assess the sufficiency of habitable housing to the poor and discuss innovative mechanisms and processes for affordable decent and livable houses that complement

the actual financial strength of low income people in Lagos metropolis. Assumption of this study is that the urban poor will be able to enjoy better housing and sanitary environment if the provision of that housing is based on their actual affordability and their ability to play a cliental role in the housing market. This will in turn bring about reduction in the societal vices currently facing the society and also improve their meaningful contribution to the National economy in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A survey of literature vividly shows housing supply deficit in Nigeria which as at 2008 was put at over 15 million housing units (Onwuemenyi, 2008 Mukhija, 2004) this clearly shows that many of the public housing programs invited by government failed to meet the targeted number of housing units. The cumulative effect of this failure is that an estimated 75% of Nigeria's 60 million and above urban population live in slums, unsatisfactory and unwholesome environmental conditions, and not less than 700,000 housing units are required annually to improve on this appalling housing situation across the country (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; Olotuah, 2010).

STUDY AREA

The study area for this paper is the metropolis of Lagos with specific reference to the suburbs. Metropolitan Lagos is located in the south western part of Nigeria and lies on lowland with about with about 18,558 hectares of built up area and a population of about 10 million (Akinmoladun and Oduwaye 2004). It has a projected population of about 25 million by the year 2025. It has one of the least land masses amount the states of the federation and with its large population; land scarcity is one of the major problems facing the inhabitants. This compels the residents especially the low income earners to settle for unlivable housing and environment.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INHABITABLE HOUSING

The United Nations Habitat Report (2005) listed the followings as the main features of substandard housing and environment: Overcrowding; "being defined as having more than two people per bedroom", flooding and inadequate drainage of storm water, poor access, for vehicle / inadequate roads, presence of litter and illegal piles of solid waste, inadequate disposal of residential waste water, inadequate open spaces for other land uses, lack of space for open air living between housings, unreliable electricity supply, sanitary problems, inadequate solid waste collection system, poor quality of drinking water, inadequate disposal of human excreta, acute environment, pollution and nuisance from solid waste, air and noise. Clinard (1973) characterized

slum area as overcrowding, congested housing, areas with deficient physical amenities. Therefore, absence of social amenities coupled with inadequate housing unit provision to meet the needs of the yearning population may be regarded as the root of slum and urban blight (Barett and Beardmore 2000). Obudho and Aduwo, (1989) identified slum and squatter settlements as the hub of crime, while congestion is identified as one of the major reasons for criminal behavior (Obudho and Owuor, 1994). However, unabated social problems and misdemeanors spread from one urban geographical to another.

However, many factors account for this situation, such factors include; Poverty, high cost of construction, lack of sufficient low cost building, government policies, low standard in the educational system, poor income distribution, unemployment, poor performance of sustainable use of local materials in construction and bad leadership. As a precondition for a house to be more attractive and conducive for the occupiers, the total physical environment must be considered. Efforts to meet with housing units required must not jeopardize the relevance of housing quality (Fagboun, 2003). A livable housing environment must be adequately drained while waste disposal system must be functional (Fadahunsi, 1985).

Previous Survey Results on Unsafe Water Supply, Toilet Facilities and Electricity Supply in Lagos State

Safe water is constituted by pipe-borne treated, pipe-untreated, borehole / hand pump and well spring protected. On the other hand, unsafe water is constituted by well spring unprotected and rain water, stream, pond or river. National figures showed that in 1995, 0.41 percent of the households in Lagos were said to be using these unsafe sources of water. The figure increased to 5.30 percent in 2005 (NBs 2007). The proportion of households relying on unsafe water was on the increase and shown to be more in the slums areas.

Conventional disposal of liquid waste is constituted by the flush to sewage, flush to septic tank, covered pit latrine and ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrine. The use of bush / dung hill, toilet on water, pail / bucket and uncovered pit latrine constitute unconventional toilet facilities. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2007) many households in Lagos State were still using unconventional toilets. In 1995 about 6.41 percent of the households were affected while the figure rose to 27.70 percent in 2005. From all the indications the situation on the use of unconventional toilet was not significantly improved from 1995 to 2005, so also energy supply which is the bedrock of economic development. In year 2000; 26.0 percent of households (majorly the suburbs) were without electricity (NBs 2007).

In other words it is necessary that we appraise the current situation to know the level of improvements brought about by increase in housing programmes initiated by successive governments.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research methods have been defined as tools to be used for addressing specific questions and for undertaking, solving etc diverse scientific and empirical problems (Blaxter et al, 2006).

The study focused on Lagos metropolis being the undisputed commercial capital of the country and fastest growing city in Nigeria. The respondent representing the urban poor are those considered poor in all respects and live in secluded areas of Lagos State. These seclude area that can be described as slum area characterized by congested district, deteriorating, unsanitary housing environments and noticeably poverty area.

The data for this study was collected through primary and secondary sources. Questionnaire administration constitutes the major instrument used in information collection building and facility surveys supplemented this. Seventy questionnaires were randomly distributed among the respondents in the area. Each questionnaire contains variables which were thoroughly investigated using descriptive statistics to obtain information on the residences social economic characteristics, structural condition of buildings and

the level of infrastructure facilities which form the yardsticks for the appraisal.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Social Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Findings from Table 1 revealed that occupational and income distributions are closely related. The nature of occupation determines their level of income. About 31.4% are into craftsmanship, 32.9% engage in trading while nobody is into farming. Absence of farmers may be due to the fact that arable land have been fully built to cater for regular influx of migrants into the city. Only 2.9% are civil servants, the remaining are either unemployed (25.7%) or apprentices (7.1%). Thus, about 8.6% receives monthly income below N5000, 50% have no stable source of income. Only 5.7% receives above N18,000. The finding revealed that the general income is below the N18,000 minimum wage per month. With this low income, to afford good quality housing might be very difficult, if not impossible. Household size distributed is very high with 50% falls between 3-5 persons per room. This shows that there is overcrowding according to the definition of overcrowding by UN-Habitat (2005).

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

| Character | Frequency | Cumulative Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| <u>Occupational Pattern</u> | | | | |
| Farming | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Craftsmanship | 22 | 22 | 31.4 | 31.4 |
| Trading | 23 | 45 | 32.9 | 64.3 |
| Civil servants | 2 | 47 | 2.9 | 67.2 |
| Unemployed | 18 | 65 | 25.7 | 92.9 |
| Apprentices | 5 | 70 | 7.1 | 100 |
| <u>Income Level</u> | | | | |
| No fixed income | 35 | 35 | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| Below N5000 | 6 | 41 | 8.6 | 58.6 |
| N5000 – 12,000 | 18 | 59 | 25.7 | 84.3 |
| N 12,000 – 18,000 | 7 | 66 | 10.0 | 94.3 |
| Above N18,000 | 4 | 70 | 5.7 | 100 |
| <u>Household size / room</u> | | | | |
| 1-2 persons | 12 | 12 | 17.1 | 17.1 |
| 3-5 persons | 35 | 47 | 50.0 | 67.1 |
| 6-10 persons | 22 | 69 | 31.4 | 98.5 |
| 11-15 persons | 1 | 70 | 1.4 | 100 |
| 16 – 20persons | 0 | 70 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Field Survey, 2013

STRUCTURAL CONDITION OF BUILDING

According to findings in Table 2, the structural condition of building in the study area is in a deplorable state as majorities are constructed with low quality materials and inadequate technology. More than 60% of the structures have spent more than 40 years. Only few percent are buildings of recent construction, which are below 15 year.

This is in line with the work of Fagbohun (2003) which state that buildings erected in more recent times tend to be more habitable than building built much earlier. Hence, a large number of the housing stocks in the area of study have relatively low habitability. About 55.7% of the buildings in the area need major repairs, out of which 27.1% are completely old and dilapidated. Only 17.2% exhibit signs of physical soundness.

Table 2: Structural Condition of Building

| Character | Frequency | Cumulative Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| <u>Material Used for construction</u> | | | | |
| Walling – Mud | 41 | 41 | 58 | 58 |
| - Cement blocks | 29 | 70 | 42 | 100 |
| Roofing -Zinc/corrugated iron | | | | |
| Sheet | 38 | 38 | 54.3 | 54.3 |
| -Asbestos Materials | 25 | 63 | 35.7 | 90 |
| -Aluminum | 7 | 70 | 10 | 100 |
| <u>Condition of Building</u> | | | | |
| Walling- Plastered/ Half plastered | 8 | 8 | 11.4 | 11.4 |
| - Plastered and Painted | 14 | 22 | 20 | 31.4 |
| - Not plastered | 21 | 43 | 30 | 61.4 |
| - Cracked | 27 | 70 | 38.6 | 100 |
| Roofing- Good | 13 | 13 | 18.6 | 18.6 |
| - Leaking | 19 | 32 | 27.1 | 45.7 |
| - Patched | 38 | 70 | 54.3 | 100 |
| Structure-Physically sound | 12 | 12 | 17.2 | 17.2 |
| -Need major repairs | 39 | 51 | 55.7 | 72.9 |
| - Dilapidated and old | 19 | 70 | 27.1 | 100 |
| <u>Age of Building</u> | | | | |
| Below 15 years | 8 | 8 | 11.4 | 11.4 |
| 15-25 years | 4 | 12 | 5.7 | 17.1 |
| 25-40 years | 15 | 27 | 21.4 | 38.5 |
| 40 years and above | 43 | 70 | 61.5 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Level of Infrastructure Facilities

Findings made from the study in Table 3 reveal that there is no provision for sanitary services in most of the buildings. 68.6% of the residents claimed that they used streams and drainages and bucket latrine for their sewage disposal. Only 22.9% used modern day water closet while 8.6% used pit latrine. The condition of bathroom, kitchen and other facilities is very ridiculous and some do not even have at all. The available ones are substandard, inadequate and inconveniently located. The state of waste disposal in the area is absurd in spite of government efforts to curb indiscriminate disposal. Only 15.7% disposes their waste properly as majority disposes theirs at road sides and drainages where nobody cares for them.

Drainages and roads are other important facilities in the area that need serious attention. From the survey only 19% and 15.7% of the respondents indicate that their dwellings have adequate drainage and adequate roads respectively. This shows that government intervention in housing has not significantly improved the housing requirement of the urban poor in the state. The study confirmed the existing studies by Mabogunje (2002) and Aribigbola (2001) which says there is an acute housing problem both in quantitative and qualitative terms in Lagos State.

The situation impacts pessimistically on the environment such as increased insecurity, health hazard, poor academic performance, increased

neighbourhood noise level and mutilated environment.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limitation of the study is that not all the suburbs in Lagos state were examined as Lagos Island was not included in the scope of the study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

There is need to suggest strategies that can be deployed to at least getting nearer to the target of providing sufficient habitable housing to the urban poor if not eventually met. First and foremost Government should base their policies on the real needs of the people and not informed by selfish political reasons. That is the quantitative housing needs of the urban poor have to be realistically estimated and their multi dimensional nature taken into consideration. This is an important component of strategies for policy formulation and decision making. It forms a basis for setting targets for housing development programmes. There is also need for full implementation and monitoring of Nigeria's National Environmental Sanitation Policy (NNESP) of 2005, which is the most recent policy that specifically addresses excreta and sewage management at both the state and local government. One of the targets of NNESP is the extension of water supply and waste service coverage to 80% of the population by 2007, 100% by 2011 and to sustain full coverage beyond 2011. It therefore behooves on not only Lagos State Government but each Local Government Authority to consider infrastructure provisioning beyond political rhetoric, but an

indispensable service that must reach the people for improved living conditions.

Government should also embark on the followings:

- Public enlightenment campaign on regular basis so that the residents will know the importance of good living conditions to their health and economy of the nation.
- Developing appropriate funding schemes for slum improvement and sanitation that could provide incentives so that resources are more effectively used and the program reaches are expanded. In doing so, the program will contribute to poverty alleviation in the poor urban areas, strengthen human capital and increase community participation in planning, delivery and maintenance of public works and services.

In conclusion, findings and strategies emanating from the study have advanced our understanding of the challenges and solutions to housing the urban poor in Nigeria.

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APPENDIX

Table 3: Level of Infrastructure Facilities

| Facilities | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Adequate drainage | 14 | 19 |
| Adequate roads | 11 | 15.7 |
| Sewage disposal | | |
| i. Pit latrine | 6 | 8.6 |
| ii. Water closet | 16 | 22.9 |
| iii. bucket latrine | 6 | 8.6 |
| iv. none – bush and dunghills | 0 | 0 |
| v. streams and drainages | 42 | 60 |
| Adequate open spaces for other land uses | 10 | 14.3 |
| Space for open air living between houses | 4 | 5.7 |
| Adequate supply of electricity | 8 | 11.4 |
| Quality drinking water | | |
| i. pipe borne water | 4 | 5.7 |
| ii. underground well water | 44 | 62.9 |
| iii. surface stream | 0 | 0 |
| iv. borehole | 22 | 31.4 |
| Adequate waste disposal facilities | 11 | 15.7 |
| Absence of pollution and nuisance from solid waste | 5 | 7.1 |
| <u>Kitchen facilities indoor</u> | | |
| Indoor -Self contained | 2 | 2.9 |
| -Shared | 22 | 31.4 |
| Outdoor- open courtyard | 7 | 10 |
| -Not available | 39 | 55.7 |
| <u>Bathroom facilities</u> | | |
| Indoor- self contain | 4 | 5.7 |
| -Shared | 34 | 48.6 |
| Outdoor-open courtyard | 32 | 45.7 |
| Not available | 0 | 0 |
| Source fled survey, 2013 | | |