

Appraising The Challenges Faced By Informal Settlement Settlers In Planned Neighborhood Development Of Eagle Island, Port Harcourt.

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ABSTRACT: Informal settlements are driven by a number of factors; population growth, rural-urban migration, lack of affordable housing, weak government policy, planning and management, economic vulnerability, low paid work, marginalization and forced eviction. Informal settlement can be improved most effectively when planned neighborhood adopts integration approaches that are incremental to build on previous developments. Consequently, Eagle Island neighborhood has been embroiled with forceful eviction and demolitions of informal settlement by government in time past over certain fundamental issues affecting planned development. This study examined the challenges faced by informal settlement settlers in planned neighborhood development of Eagle Island neighborhood in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted a case study approach with primary data sourced through structured and semi-structured questionnaires administered to informal dwellers and experts in urban land use. To achieve the objectives of this study, a detailed literature was reviewed on informal settlements with a mixed method of research, 105 questionnaires were designed and administered with 85 retrieved representing 85% of data collected from informal settlement settlers. And the field survey also comprised of officials of ministries of lands, Urban Development and Lecturers of Urban and Regional Planning in Rivers State University as experts on informal settlement. The data collected was quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed using simple percentages, relative importance index (RII) with observations and thematic analysis. The findings from the study revealed that the challenges faced by informal settlers in a planned neighborhood ranges from environmental, health and safety related issues due to its low quality of houses with an uncontrollable development, forceful eviction and demolition illegal without compensation paid. It is therefore concluded that several challenges are faced by informal settlement settlers in a planned neighborhood, which has impacted negatively on the neighborhood of Eagle Island. Since Eagle Island is a planned neighborhood that require government to: provide basic infrastructure and services, as well as demonstrating the political commitment to incorporate the settlers of informal settlement into formality.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, Informal, Settlement, Integration, Neighborhood, Planned Development.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The spread of informal settlements (Urban Slum) in urban areas with lack of basic amenities and sanitation, lack of access to land, and fear of eviction epitomized a more pervasive exclusion from the mainstream social, economic and civic opportunities of the settlers. The plight of many individual was the intention to provide affordable housing for themselves, but poverty has rendered the good intention impossible (UN-Habitat, 2004). This precarious condition has generated poverty as the informal settlers have no future to invest which mounted pressure on the prospects of collective sustainable urban development. The informal settlement dwellers need safer grounds on which to leverage their future with a set of recognized universal principles. According to UN-Habitat (2011), informal settlements are:

- Residential areas where a group of housing units has been constructed on land to which the occupants have no legal claim, or which that occupy illegally;

- Unplanned settlements, and areas where housing is not in compliance with existing planning and building regulations

Informal settlements are dwellings constructed usually without a formal design and standard specification with regard to legal rules and regulations controlling urban developments in an urban area, and usually temporary structures (Onyekachi, 2014). Informal settlement occurs when land administration and planning fails to address the needs of the people with high land values and basic instinct to survive. In addressing informal settlement issues in a coherent and effective manner, it therefore requires a strategic and judicious mixing of short-term and long-term interventions to both improve the living ability of the informal dwellers and supportive welfare in meeting their needs; while addressing those exclusionary patterns of governance and development that perpetuate and deepen inequality and informality.

The ability of government to intervene into informal settlements in a manner that preserves their functional character, whilst simultaneously improving their outcomes for the most vulnerable, therefore, remains the ultimate test of development and responsive governance. Pro-poor urban management can be defined as the centralized systems for planning, conflict management and land administration that are not delivering secure tenure or serviced land to majority of urban people (UN-Habitat, 2004). Land management and tenure security options have to look at the use of participatory planning methods to ensure that the resources are planned for and made available to informal settlers. The approaches that help to sustain the developments by ensuring consideration for long-term maintenance of infrastructure would be appropriate. However, the spatial and economic exclusion of majority of the informal dwellers in urban centers from formal or legitimized spaces in cities has contributed to the growth and entrenchment of informality as a pervasive feature. The application of integration approaches will re-invigorate informal settlement as an improved way in which the government works with its citizens that represents a set of opportunities for the poor.

Therefore, the phenomenon that exposes the need of the urban informal settlers to safe grounds on which leverage features are in the form of shelters; when these shelters are unguided by planning/zoning laws it exposes the weakness in the land management approach which encourages discrimination against informal settlement. Consequently, the possibility of identifying pro-poor approaches that has all-inclusive urban order is key to unlocking the perceived dichotomy in urban land management by the government in neighborhoods where formal dwellers reside. Therefore, this study tries to assess the challenges associated with informal settlement settlers in neighborhood planned development; such that it becomes efficient and appropriate responses to these settlements, leaving a changed in the patterns of state-planning and decision-making in neighborhoods.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Informal Settlement Situation in Nigeria.

The prevalence of informal settlement practices and poor housing constitution is the manifestation of the challenges faced with the shortage of good housing, infrastructure deficiency, poverty and growing population in Urban Centers (Habitat International Coalition HIC), 2006). According to the International Housing Coalition (IHC) (2009), urban population is rising already, between 75% to 99% of urban residents live in informal settlement of ramshackle housing, creating hardship for urban residents as it appears to have a positive relationship with economic growth (Daniel, Wapwera, Akande, Musa and Aliyu, (2015). Informal settlement situations have become a global concern and one key factor driving such development is rapid urbanization, cities urbanizing ever faster than originally predicted in 1972 by Thomas Malthus (Davis, 2004). The emergence of informal settlement is a consequence of unrealistic regulatory frameworks, ill-conceived policies, inadequate urban planning, and weak institutional capacity (World Bank, 2008). UN-Habitat (2007) stated that rapid rural to urban migration, increasing urban poverty and inequality, insecure tenure, and globalization are other factors responsible for informal settlement emergence. In recent developments in Nigeria the number of people that are affected by informal settlement conditions has been on the rise based on a census conducted in 2006, cities in Nigeria recorded a population above 5 million and 20 million and a population of 3 to 5 million inhabitants (FRN-NPC, 2010). These rising situations of informal settlement due to urbanization in Nigerian cities are coupled with shortage of good housing, worsening the housing conditions of the urban poor (Daniel et al, 2015). The informal settlement conditions are found to rise from failed policies, bad governance, corruption, inappropriate regulation, dysfunctional land markets, unresponsive financial systems, and a fundamental lack of political will in governance (Charge, 2009). The above assertion affirmed the study of Akinbamijo (2012); Ooi and Phua (2007) that there is a high degree of correlation between urbanization and informal settlement formation in most developing countries. This has been squarely indicted as one of the leading critiques of arguments in the primary direction of both national and international interventions that has actually increased urban poverty and informal settlement, with increased exclusion and inequality and weakened urban elites in their efforts to use cities as engines of growth (Davis, 2006).

Consequence of Informality

From a broader perspective, the combined burdens of informal development have been fundamentally harmful to cities, to the overall population and to the residents of informal settlement themselves. Fernandez (2011) averred that the consequences of informality are dangerous and that they manifest in different ways such as the legal, social, environmental, political and economic consequences. While agreeing with the position of Fernandez, it is pertinent to note that the burden of informality x-rays the exclusions, deprivations and persecutions of informal dwellers.

According to Ali and Sulaiman (2006), they posited that it had become very difficult for the government to send social and economic infrastructure/services to informal settlements due to lack of space and accessibility. They further established the fact that with the growth of urban population, housing needs will increase leading to more agricultural lands to be converted into human settlement. They enumerated the effects of informal settlements to include pollution of water services, deforestation, pollution from solid and liquid wastes, flooding encroachment of good agricultural land and accessibility. While I agree with Ali and Sulaiman is that space and accessibility are core issues that initiated negative effects in informal settlements, others include affordability, government interventions etc.

Furthermore, Napier (2006) proposed that the discussion of the environmental impacts on informal settlements is two sided, he looked at the conditions experienced in informal settlements because of both external threats from natural and man-made disasters, and the internal threats deriving from the type of temporary housing and lack of services. Critics of Napier's work are of the opinion that his work only isolated the environmental consequence of informal settlement without giving credence to other conspicuous consequences. However, it should be noted that Fernandez (2011) agreed with the position of Napier (2006) that the environmental impacts of informality has generated fragmented cities and precarious neighborhoods resulting in many forms of health and safety hazards, environmental degradation pollution, food contamination, emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases and above all climate change issues. However, most authors on the effects of informality agree that the combined consequences of informality have been fundamentally harmful to most cities, and to the overall urban population, including residents of informal settlement themselves.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a case study approach of research design. The study area is Eagle Island, a neighborhood in Port Harcourt City Council of Rivers State, Nigeria. The Eagle Island neighborhood is a service and site scheme housing programme carried out by the Rivers State Government: government providing the basic amenities; roads, water and electricity for the residents to build their own type of houses. In order to achieve this objective, population of the study on the challenges associated with informal settlement settlers in neighborhood planned development; they comprised 105 informal settlers and senior officials of Ministries of; Lands and Survey, Urban Development and Lecturers Department of Urban and Regional Planning of Rivers State University. A sample size of 85 informal dwellers representing 85% of the 105 informal housing identified in the study area. Also, 15 respondents of these institutions was purposively drawn out of a population of 20 experts on urban development and informal settlements. The primary data was collected through a pilot survey and semi-structured interview questions administered on the identified institutional experts in the study. The purposive sampling technique was adopted in selection of 15 respondents: Ministry of Lands (4), Ministry of Urban Development (5) and Lecturers (6) representing 75% of the response rate. The study also intended to consolidate secondary data with available documents on studies of successful pro-poor approach intervention and good practices with emphasis on results achieved on informal settlement integration. Data collected was qualitatively analyzed using simple percentages, relative importance index (RII) with thematic analysis.

IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 indicates that increase in illness due to lack of sanitation, portable water, sanitary and electricity, etc. has relative importance index (RII) of 0.75 (1st), followed by forceful eviction with RII of 0.74 (2nd), overcrowding and congestion leading to abuse and assault with RII of 0.69 (3rd), low quality houses with uncontrolled development with RII of 0.67 (4th), generates marginality, exclusion and vulnerability of settlers with RII of 0.72 (5th), and demolition of structures without prior notice of the settler with RII of 0.71 (6th). Table 1 further indicated that the Relative Importance Index (RII) of vulnerable to increase in crime and violence was ranked with 0.64 (7th), poor ventilation rates and risks associated with the use of kerosene firewood and charcoal with RII of 0.60 (8th), loss of lives and properties with RII of 0.52 (9th), creates rancid odors and loss of aesthetic value of the public and open spaces with RII of 0.61 (10th), and generates water, soil and air pollution including waste accumulations as raw sewage and garbage thrown directly on the road and in the gutter with RII of 0.50 (11th). It implies that the problems associated with informal settlement in a planned neighborhood include overcrowding and congestion, insecurity of tenure resulting to forceful eviction and demolition of structure,

deterioration of the structure and the environment and insufficient provision of basic amenities in the planned neighborhood.

Table 1: Challenges Faced by Informal Settlement Settlers (N=85)

Associated Challenges of Informal Settlements	Weighted scores					Sum	RII	Rank
	5	4	3	2	1			
Generates water, air pollution and waste accumulation as raw sewage and garbage are thrown directly on the road or in the gutter.	15	13	30	15	12	259	0.51	11 th
Creates rancid odors and loss of aesthetic value of the public and open spaces	10	9	16	30	19	213	0.61	10 th
Increases in illness due to lack of sanitation, portable water, sanitary and electricity, etc.	25	27	20	9	4	320	0.75	1 st
Generates marginality, exclusion and vulnerability to the settlers	19	19	40	9	7	316	0.74	5 th
Low quality houses and uncontrolled development	21	22	25	8	8	284	0.67	4 th
Poor ventilation rates and risk associated with the use of kerosene, firewood and charcoal	17	17	17	17	17	255	0.60	8 th
Vulnerable to increase crime and violence	17	17	36	9	6	275	0.64	7 th
Overcrowding, congestion and lack of privacy leading to abuse and assault	19	30	16	10	11	294	0.69	3 rd
Forceful eviction of informal settlers	21	21	17	15	11	291	0.68	2 nd
Demolition of structures without prior notice	21	19	25	9	10	305	0.71	6 th
Loss of lives and properties	10	15	17	17	26	225	0.52	9 th

Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2020.

An in-depth interview with Government officials in-charge of land matters reveals that informal settlers exhibits the violation of the prevailing formal legal order governing land use, planning, registration, building and taxation. And because they lack legal recognition to land rights (tenure) and this will impede the provision of infrastructural and basic amenities to the urban residency. Informal settlers are vulnerable as regards to forceful eviction without a proper negotiation for relocation when their informal restructures are demolished without their prior knowledge to the demolition. And because they are vulnerable and being recognized as third class citizens, they don’t have the finance and access to lawyers as to claim fair compensation to be paid to them. This means that the people living in informal settlement have not rights, or that they should be repressed or evicted from their own building construction and community facilities.

One of the key informants who is an informal settler stated that:

“They are often being disenfranchised and excluded from the political process in many ways, difficulty to access and circulate mails, lack of public space for recreational facilities including tagging the area as criminal den with the repressive policies targeting the neighborhood of claims by security agents that they are clearing the area to crime free, and along with their properties been destroyed due to the security agent’s repressive operations”.

Nature of Informal Settlement in Eagle Island



Plate 4.1: Informal Housing on Serviced Land (Catholic Church at 2 Eunice Owihonda Street



Plate 4.2: Informal Settlements with Traditional Tenure at Elder Omunakwe Amadi Street



Plate 4.3: Informal Housing among Formal Housing at 6 Collins Adiele Street



Plate 4.4: Indoor Informal Settlements (Illegal Occupied Building) at Collins Adiele Street



Plate 4.5: Backyard Shacks in Formal Areas at Collins Owihonda Drive



Plate 4.6: Freestanding Informal Settlements at Chief Okwu Thomas Street

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2020.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Faced by Informal Settlement Settlers in a Planned Neighborhood

Several challenges faced by informal settlement settlers in a planned neighborhood of Eagle Island were identified. The findings showed that increase in illness due to lack of sanitation, portable water, sanitary conditions, electricity supply, forceful eviction of informal settlers, overcrowding, congestion and lack of privacy leading to abuse and assault, low quality houses and uncontrolled development, generates marginality, exclusion and vulnerability to the settlers, and demolition of structures without prior notice and compensation were the challenges associated with informal settlement in a planned neighborhood which yields a relative importance index (RII >0.60).

The study also established that the relative importance index (RII >0.60) of vulnerable to increase crime and violence, poor ventilation rates and risk associated with the use of kerosene, firewood and charcoal, loss of lives and properties, creates rancid odors and loss of aesthetic value of the public and open spaces, and generate water, air, soil pollution and waste accumulation as raw sewage and garbage are thrown directly on the road or in the gutter were other problems associated with informal settlements identified.

Sometimes the assumption that informal settlements and poverty are the main contributors to environmental degradation should be held as true because the fringe informal settlements often imply the unplanned extension of the urban area into arable or otherwise environmentally valuable land, the course is detrimental and directly impact on poor indoor air conditions with the volumes of waste generated per capita, which are negligible. Field investigation revealed that the issue of informal settlements in Eagle Island has been aggravated by the nature of its location surrounded by creeks encouraging fishing activities couple with service and site scheme of Eagle Island. Informal settlement occurs in Eagle Island because land administration and planning fails to address the needs of service and sites scheme to provide housing to the poor including the delay in the development process of the area. Informal settlement springs up on the undeveloped land allocated to

allotters. It is evident that decent housing is the major associated problem with informal settlement exposing the residents to wide range of unhealthy living conditions. These observations are in line with the suggestions that overcrowding can contribute to stress, crime, violence and increased problems of drugs and other social related problems.

VI. CONCIUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined the challenges faced by informal settlement settlers in a planned neighborhood of Eagle Island, Port Harcourt. The findings from the study revealed that the challenges faced by informal settlers in a planned neighborhood ranges from environmental, health and safety related issues due to its low quality of houses with an uncontrollable development, forceful eviction and demolition illegal without compensation paid. The implication of this result is that the concentration of more people in urban areas has brought more pressure on the land space for the production of food, infrastructure, housing and industrialization. This movement affects the capacity of the environment to cope because each additional person increases the demand on the infrastructure and the natural system and as a result creating ecological imbalance with adverse environmental penalty in hazards and disaster.

As a result of population growth in this neighborhood with unattended increase in demand for urban services, acute shortage of housing supply to the poor, the government and its agencies has failed to properly manage the growth and expansion of the city. The effects of overcrowding and congestion has led to lack of privacy with abuse and assault within the informal housing given another dimension of environmental threat to residents which makes them vulnerable to crime and other violent personal crimes. Occupants of informal settlements are vulnerable to victimization with the impact of undeveloped land (open spaces) where vegetation is dense presenting the opportunities of violent crimes and the reports and responses to combat crime by state officials become low. It is therefore concluded that several challenges are faced by informal settlement settlers in a planned neighborhood, which has impacted negatively on the neighborhood of Eagle Island. Since Eagle Island is a planned neighborhood; government should provide urban services with water supplied, electricity, good sanitation, and access to good housing. Also, government and its agencies to some extent should demonstrated the political commitment in incorporating the settlers of informal settlements to understand the issues affecting their livelihood as to address the problems of informal settlement.

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