



Urban Growth Issues and Environmental Sustainability in Nigeria

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Abstract: The spontaneous nature of urban growth accompanied by diverse socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues has constituted serious challenge to urban growth and environmental sustainability in Nigeria. The overall aim of this study is to examine the issues of urban growth and environmental sustainability in Nigeria. Causes and consequences and environmental degradation in Nigeria was examined. The target population of the study are the senior members of staff at the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency in Lagos state. Interview was conducted amongst 4 senior cadre staff of the agency, and it was revealed that Non implementation and enforcement of the laws, Obsolete nature of the laws, Inadequate awareness on the availability and existence of some of the laws, Lack of environmental consciousness, Lack of qualified workforce amongst others are issues involved with environmental degradation and sustainable development, while acknowledging the fact that growth in the urban centers is inevitable and considering the current realities of globalization, industrialization and other related growth agents. Based on this premise, this study recommends the use of appropriate policy and strategies that will make sustainable development thrive in other to secure an environment that is adequate and conducive for the well-being of the urban residents in Nigeria.

Keywords: Urban growth, Environmental issues, Sustainability, Globalization.

1.0 Introduction

There have been diverse growth and developmental issues in recent times across the globe. In a Report on "*State of the World Cities*" the United Nations-

Habitat (2007) notes that majority of the world's people now live in cities. The report further indicates that almost a billion people already live in slum conditions around the world and that

slums are growing dramatically within the world's poorest cities, particularly, in Sub-Sahara Africa and Asia. Ogunleye (2005) buttressed this from his own study that between 2001 and 2002, the world's urban population had increased by nearly one and a half percent of the total population. This urban growth explosion occurred majorly in the East Asia and Pacific region. In Sub-Sahara Africa, which is largely rural - with only 32 percent of the population living in the urban areas, there is a very high urban growth rate of up to four percent.

According to UN, (1995) between 1990 and 1992, Africa and Asia recorded urban growth of 4.9% and 4.2%, respectively, whereas, urban growth rate in Europe and North America in this period was only 0.7% and 1.0%, respectively. From this report, United Nations projected that 61% of the world population will be urban by 2030 and over half the population in Africa will be urban by 2020 (UN, 2004; Ajala, 2005; Orimogunje et al, 2009: 53). This phenomenal growth anticipated for the cities has been attributed to the incidence of globalization, industrialization and population explosion (Jiboye, 2005; Osasona et al, 2007).

Increasing population explosions, massive rural-urban migration and urbanization process in the developing countries, global economic integration, increased international trade, capital flows, telecommunication, new waves of technologies, and shifts in the comparative advantage of production continue to play a central role in integrating major urban centers and shaping the spatial organization of the cities (Jiboye, 2005). In this case, most African countries need to be proactive

about this in their urban centres but with the rapid rate of uncontrolled and unplanned urbanization, this has brought about severe environmental problems such as pollution, congestion, squalor, homelessness and a generally poor and degrading situation.

Nigeria, with a current population figure above 180 million people - the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, is also experiencing rapid urbanization (Ajanlekoko, 2001; NPC, 2006). The country has one of the highest urban growth rates in the world, with its cities ranking among the fastest growing in the world. Growing at the rate of around 5.5 percent annually from 1980 to 1993, and more recently, has increased to the rate of 5.8 percent which has resulted in a total urban population of 62.66 million people (or, 43 percent of the national population). By projection, this proportion is expected to increase to more than 60 percent by 2025 (UN, 2007). In as much as one will canvass for economic growth in one's nation, the government should be prepared and plan to absorb the challenges as well. However, it has been established that the degrading condition of the cities' environment in most developing nations affects both economic and national development (Ogunleye, 2005).

In reality, most Nigerian cities have not been able to resolve the problems of urban growth and development. Rather than improving, the urban areas, they continue to experience a more pathetic situation in their physical and environmental conditions Jiboye, (2009). Indeed, going by a UN-Habitat (2006) report, housing related infrastructure has not been given much priority in most developing countries until quite recently. This developmental challenge thus calls for a reappraisal by

all concerned stakeholders. The study aims to identify and evaluate the growth issues in Nigeria by examining the issues of urban growth; causes and consequences of environmental degradation in Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Urban Growth Issues in Nigeria

City centres such as Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Cairo, Johannesburg and Addis Ababa, have grown to become large metropolitan urban areas, this means that urbanisation has been on in Africa too. In Nigeria, available report shows that urban population has been growing at an alarming rate of about 47 percent as at 2003 (UN, 2004; Ajala, 2005). Unfortunately, cities in African countries grow without incorporating element of physical planning. Adediran, (2007) opined that Nigeria did not have regulatory standard to guide planning of building and development. Jiboye (2005) made it known that the forces of urbanization and industrialization have brought about changes in production activities, thus resulting in explosive demographic changes with growth rates ranging between 6% and 12% per annum.

Various theories have been used to explain the spread of urban areas. The three major theories are: Concentric Growth Zone Hypothesis (Burgess, 1925) theorized that there are five concentric zones in a city, which were determined by the spatial competition. They include: Central Business District (CBD); the transition zone consisting of residential buildings with business and light manufacturing; working class zone where labourers in nearby factories reside; high income residential zone (residential districts); and the commuters zone which is the outlying suburban areas. Sector Theory (Hoyt,

1939) is a critique of the concentric hypothesis. Hoyt proposed that spatial competition is not the only source of the city's growth; other factors like prestigious location, social kinship and affinity also play important roles. Thus the cities grow in sectors rather than in concentric zones. Multiple nuclei theory was advanced by Harris and Ullman (1945). It urges that there are distinctive districts where activities are concentrated. While the concentric zone hypothesis proposed that cities grow in zones from the centre outwards, the multiple nuclei theory proposes that these are not necessarily zones, but that similar activities are grouped together in certain districts. However, urban centres do not follow a particular growth theory.

The effect of oil boom in Nigeria in the 70's spurred rapid growth and urbanisation in major cities in the country. Metz (1991) in his study indicated that Nigeria became increasingly urbanised and urban-oriented society after the discovery of oil. This has also led to the urban sprawl; people move from rural areas to urban centres because of the availability of infrastructural facilities in the urban area.

Lagos, Ibadan, Port Harcourt and Calabar grew very rapidly as commercial and administrative centers in Nigeria. However, a dominant urban feature common to them is the degrading state of the physical environment. Lack of well planned growth pattern that comes with urbanisation process is likely one of the factors responsible for the diverse environmental problems in these cities (Jiboye, 2005). There will be too much pressure on the urban facilities and services like housing, education, public

health and a generally decent living environment. Considering the need for sustainable development and the challenges posed by the diverse environmental problems associated with urbanization process in Nigeria, urgent effort is required to control the rate at which urban population and the spread of cities increases; effort is also required to control the decline in the quality of urban infrastructure as well as that of overall standard of living of the people in Nigeria.

2.2 Environmental Degradation: Causes and Consequences

The interaction between human and the environment propelled different types of human related activities and if not properly managed could translate into environmental problems. Omisore and Akande (2003) opined that the fall in the condition and integrity of the environment arising from the mismanagement of human and the environment results in "environmental degradation". It can be inferred from this that the overexploitation of the available resources in the environment could resort to environmental degradation.

This could be as a result of different factors including rapid urbanization due to overpopulation, accelerated industrialization, unplanned and uncoordinated physical development resulting from poor urban management and ineffective control policies, insufficient urban infrastructure such as housing and efficient transportation system to cater for the population upsurge. A World Bank report (1995) also buttressed this by indicating that technological advancement and

economic development are factors which also cause environmental degradation. The effects of this environmental problem exist in different forms such as drought, desertification, deforestation, flood and erosion, pollution, housing congestion leading to slums and unsanitary situation, loss of bio-diversity and all forms of deplorable physical conditions. The resultant effect of these problems has adverse socio-economic, cultural and environmental consequences on the wellbeing of the people and the physical development of any nation (Jiboye, 2003). Omisore and Akande (2003), from their own study, affirmed that environmental degradation also has effect of human health, welfare as well as the overall quality of a community environment.

At the urban level, environmental problems affect the urban poor disproportionately because of poor quality and overcrowded housing and the inadequacies in the provision of water, sanitation, drainage, health care and garbage collection. The urban poor also often live in environmentally unsafe areas, such as polluted sites near solid waste dumps, open drains and sewers, and near industrial sites (see plates 1-3). Though the impacts of climate change on the urban poor have not been fully studied, this is emerging as an area of increasing concern as they may further exacerbate the risks of negative environmental effects for the urban poor through sea level rise, warming temperatures, uncertain effects on ecosystems, and increased variability and volatility in weather patterns (Baker, 2008).



Plate 1: A typical urban slum situation in Ajegunle Lagos, Nigeria.



Plate 2: An unsightly drainage channel used as refuse dumps in the core of Ibadan, Nigeria.
(Source: Laurent Fourchard)

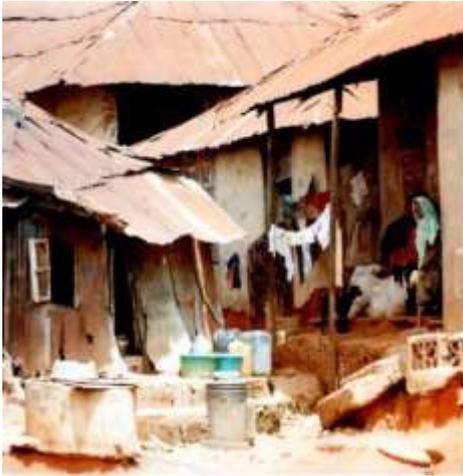


Plate 3: A chaotic urban housing situation in Ibadan, Nigeria
(Source: Laurent Four chard)

2.4 Sustainable Development and Environmental Sustainability

“Sustainable Development” is a concept that has been in existence even before the turn of the century. It came into general usage following publication of the 1987 report of the Brundtland Commission — formally, World Commission on Environment and Development. It is a socio-ecological process characterized by the fulfillment of human needs while maintaining the quality of the natural environment indefinitely. According to Jiboye, (2009) the commission which was set up by the United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising future generations to meet their own needs”.

Since then, several other definitions have been advanced to explain the concept of sustainable development. The National Affordable Housing Agency of Britain (NAHA,2006) defined it as a means of ensuring a better quality life for everyone, now and

for generations to come. It is the process of building our communities so that we can live comfortably without consuming all of our resources. This implies, living in a sustainable way by conserving more of the things we all need to share - this is not just about consuming resources, but includes changing our culture to make conservation a way of life (Mediawiki, 2008).

Environmental sustainability consists of both natural and built environments; in which case, the natural environment serves the purpose of supporting human life and activities, while the built environment provides shelter and security for various human activities and also facilitates the activities - especially in towns and cities (Folarin, 2003).

Issue of sustainable development has been the main theme of deliberations in many Conferences and Summits such as 1992 Rio-de-Janeiro's Conference, 1996 Istanbul Habitat II Summit, 2000, New York MDG Summit and 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg, and several others. The issue of environmental

sustainability and sustainable development became part of major global discussions for the first time in 1992, during the United Nations' Rio-de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development (Olanrewaju, 2003). Also, the 1996 Habitat II in Istanbul brought to the fore the issue of sustainable human settlement and adequate shelter for all (UN-Habitat, 2007). It was at the 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg that member nations further reaffirmed their commitment to the principles and programmes of the Rio conference on sustainable development (Jiboye and Omoniyi, 2010).

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Summit in September 2000 at New York saw the need for sustainable development and the commitment governments need to address key development issues and sets broad goals in order to eradicate poverty by the year 2015. Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, sustainable development has emerged as a new paradigm of development, integrating economic growth, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually supportive elements of long-term development. Sustainable development thus emphasizes a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach to policy making and implementation, mobilizing public and private resources for development and making use of the knowledge, skills and energy of all social groups concerned with the future of the planet and its people (Desai, 2002).

2.5 The Need for Sustainable Urban Environment in Nigeria

While urban growth is rapidly increasing in some places, the urban size is becoming more enlarged and

astonishing in many other parts of the developing world. Between 1950 and 1990, there was a fivefold increase to 1.5 billion in the number of urban residents in developing countries; about 37 percent of the population of the Third World Countries (TWC) now lives in cities. This implies that the world as at today is now a global village and it has effect on every person directly or indirectly. The United Nations has projected a further tripling of the total to 4.4 billion by 2025, during which it is expected that nearly two-thirds of the citizens of the developing world will live in cities. In the aggregate, cities in the developing world are growing by an estimated 160,000 persons per day. The number of cities with at least 1 million inhabitants has gone from 31 in 1950 to 180 in the early 1990s and is expected to rise to more than 300 by the end of the century (Gizewski and Homas-Dixon, 1995).

The effect of this phenomenal growth is that a host of intractable problems often accompanies it. A United Nation's Millennium (2005) project report indicated that about 900 million people are estimated to live in slum-like conditions characterized by insecure tenure, inadequate housing, and a lack of access to water or sanitation. The report also indicated that the highest share of slum dwellers is in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, and this accounted for more than 70 percent of the urban population in many cities. Both West and East Asia (excluding China) have registered a rise in the number of slum dwellers since 1990, but a slight decline in the proportion. The same phenomenon is occurring in landlocked developing countries, small island developing states, and *Least Developed Countries (LDC)*.

Furthermore, the report revealed that all developing regions have experienced substantial environmental degradation over the past decades, which could very well worsen as a result of long-term, man-made global climate change. Many countries are adversely affected because their natural resource base - specifically the forests, fisheries, soil, and water that survival and livelihoods depend on are progressively degraded and subject to rising levels of pollution. Each year, roughly 15 million hectares of forest are cleared in developing countries, resulting in increases in vector-borne diseases, declines in the quantity and quality of water, increased flooding, landslides, and local climate changes. The report concluded that lack of good data and indicators on the environment hides the extent to which most developing regions have suffered extensive environmental degradation over the past decades and are not on track to achieving environmental sustainability (UNDP, 2005).

In Nigeria, the problems of slum formations and urban degeneration are common occurrence in major cities - particularly, in Lagos and Ibadan which are probably among the largest cities in the country (See Plates 1-3). Over the years, these problems have constituted major challenges to sustainable urban development. Official response to the situation through urban renewal, slum upgrading and outright clearance has not achieved any success in stimulating any form of sustainability. For instance, the effect of Maroko slum clearance in Lagos in the early 1990s has led to several untold hardships and consequent homelessness experienced by most of the affected victims (Jiboye and Ogunsakin, (1997) ; Abiodun, 1997). In view of these numerous challenges of

urban growth, the need thus arises for a radical approach, using appropriate policy options towards sustainability of the urban environment in Nigeria.

3.0 Methodology

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) in Nigeria has been saddled with the responsibility of monitoring, analysing and giving report on the environment as necessary. This body was formulated prior to the dumping of toxic waste in Koko Village, in Delta State through decree 58 of 1988 and 5a (amended) of 1992. A law was promulgated following this attack and this necessitated the establishment of this agency. Federal government promulgated the Harmful Waste Decree 42 of 1988. Federal Environmental Protection Agency are to enforce the environmental law, establish environmental plan, education and guidance, proffer strategic environmental assessment, oversee the waste management system. With this, the institutional arrangement or mechanism for environmental protection will be in place.

In order to ascertain the issues and causes involved in environmental degradation interview was conducted amongst the staff of Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA) in Lagos Island office, Nigeria. From the interview conducted it was revealed that generally, our people like to abuse the law, by not respecting other people's right when it come to issues in general and the environment is not an exception in this area on the attitude of the populace on non compliance and enforcement of the law. It was further stated that the problems associated with non-compliance and enforcement of environmental laws are as follows;

- a. Non implementation and enforcement of the laws
- b. Obsolete nature of the laws requiring major reviews.
- c. Inadequate awareness on the availability and existence of some of the laws
- d. Lack of environmental consciousness
- e. Lack of qualified workforce
- f. Corruption among the top hierarchy
- g. Misappropriation of Ecological fund
- h. Lack of Government interest /inadequacy
- i. Lack of database
- j. Poor funding of activities and operations
- k. Economic considerations
- l. Lack of maintenance culture and facilities
- m. Use of internal environmental audits
- n. Dearth of environmental pressure groups
- o. Weak enforcement of existing laws and regulations
- p. Lack of environmental know how and technology
- q. Lack of or inadequate state of the art in-situ instruments for rapid detection of the banned goods and products.

In view of this, all mentioned above are in no small measures affect implementation of environmental policies, programmes and regulations especially African countries which tend to slow the pace of awareness campaign to protect and sustain our environment.

The general cliché that ignorance of the law is not an excuse for non-compliance of the environmental regulation in the world over and the presence of blatant contravention of environmental laws in

Nigeria and other third world countries cannot be over emphasized.

4.0 Suggested Wayout for Environmental Sustainability

Development under the contemporary paradigm refers to a qualitative improvement in the standard of living of human beings rather than a quantitative increase in the economic indices; it is measured in terms relative to the individual's access to economic, social and environmental factors which are necessary to improve his standard of living. Sustainable development thus espouses the intrinsic link between socioeconomic, cultural and environmental development as well as the right of the individual to improved living condition in any given society or nation. For instance, a socially, economically or an environmentally sustainable system should achieve distributional equity; provide adequate social services including health, education, housing as well as functional and livable environment among many others (Jiboye, 2009). Nevertheless, the ultimate challenge of sustainable development strategies is how to integrate all aspects of development - particularly within the socio-economic and environmental framework towards achieving "sustainability".

The need to achieve sustainability of the cities' urban environment is central to the achievement of a virile and sustainable nation. Existing urban realities have shown that a lot of work needs to be done if Nigeria is to achieve any sustainable development. However, it has been argued that commitment to sustainable development both for the present and future generations will be meaningless if collaborative approach is not employed (Oyeshola et, al, 2009).

Poverty is a major threat to urban growth and development in Nigeria. It can jeopardize the political stability, social cohesion and environmental balance of our cities, and until it is tackled decisively, sustainable development will remain a mirage (Olanrewaju, 2003). The need to ensure sustainability in our cities is imperative and this depends largely on the application of the principle of sustainable development advocated by the Commission on Environment and Development - whereby, developmental efforts should not only concentrate on solving present problems but also consider future challenges and needs. As part of its efforts, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) while responding to the complex environmental problems facing the nations also launched the Sustainable Cities Programmes which aimed at providing municipal planning and management capacity (Monghtin, 2003). So far, the impact of such programmes on most cities in the developing nations - particularly in Nigeria is yet to be realized.

5.0 Recommendation

To achieve sustainable growth requires that all stakeholders have to be actively mobilized towards ensuring that the following strategies; some of which have been outlined in the UN Millennium Project (2005), are realizable.

1. For effective governance in cities, most especially in a developing country like Nigeria, there is need to foster a collaborative partnership between local authorities and communities with the support of the national government. Local Authorities are the city planners, financiers, and providers of

infrastructure services. Their performance depends on good governance at city level—involving civil society, including communities living in informal settlements, and working with the urban poor as partners in making cities work, not seeing them as obstacles, as is too often the case today.

2. Government on its part should ensure that adequate funds are disposed for shelter provision for the vulnerable group of the urban population. Housing finance policies should integrate the lower-income group by providing easy access to long-term housing loans with sustainable interest. Disbursement of such loans should be done through recognized Cooperative Unions or community groups in order to encourage self-help housing delivery.
3. Existing policies relating to housing and urban development should be reviewed and reinvigorated. It should be people oriented in order to minimize all possible restrictions on security of tenure, access to land and cost of construction materials. Efficient land market and sustainable land policies are indispensable; therefore, existing land-use decree should be changed to facilitate easy access to land, while the urban and regional planning laws of the country should also be reviewed to allow for effective slum upgrading and urban renewal.
4. Urban renewal scheme should embrace a participatory approach when considering such as the only possible option to slum clearance and rehabilitation. In this regard, the stakeholders should be involved

in decision and implementation processes. The involvement of community groups' leaders is very essential in this regard. Community organizations can provide a voice for the urban poor and ensure that their interests are met in slum upgrading and urban planning. Federations of slum dwellers have access to unique information on informal settlements—information central to successful upgrading. They should be involved as equal partners from the beginning of the planning processes.

5. Lastly, the improvement of rural communities should be integrated into the developmental process. This will help in stemming the rate of rural-urban migration as well as reducing the level of rural poverty. Above all, there is the need for government and its agencies to imbibe the right political will and commitment while formulating and implementing its programmes. Essentially, planning strategy for housing, infrastructural provision and urban management must make the people its focus. To complement the upgrading of individual informal settlements, citywide infrastructure and services need to be extended and upgraded. In addition, effective regulation of industrial water and air pollution must complement an urban development strategy to ensure a safe urban environment. Solid waste disposal using well designed landfills and, in some cases, wastewater and sewage treatment also need to be provided.

6.0 Conclusion

This paper notes that the features and occurrence of globalization, industrialization and population explosion are key factors responsible for spontaneous urban growth rate in major cities of the developing nations. The implications of such growth are degrading environment, congestion, homelessness, slum formation, and poor living conditions among most poor urban residents. The city has been identified as the engine of growth to propel national economic development (Akhmat & Bochum, 2010); however, such growth within the context of urbanization should be guided towards improving the environment rather than harming it (Newman, 2002; Jiboye, 2009).

This growth according to the concept of "sustainable development" must be sustainable in order to take care of the present needs without compromising the ability of future generation to meet its own needs. To achieve this requires collaborative efforts by all those concerned with development. Thus, a participatory, multi-stakeholders' approach to policy-making and implementation is required in this regard (Desai, 2002).

Government on its own part should take a holistic approach by embracing and incorporating the development of rural communities into the sustainable plan agenda in order to reduce the rate of rural-urban migration as well as the poverty and inequality bedeviling the nations socially, culturally, and economically. These strategies if put in place, will inevitably stimulate sustainable growth and secure a qualitative environment that is conducive for the well-being of all.

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