

Urban Poverty and Environment: a Situation Analysis of Some Squatter Settlements in Enugu Metropolitan Area, Southeastern Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper examined through survey and descriptive research, the interconnections and relationships between urban poverty and environment in Enugu Metropolitan Area of Southeastern Nigeria. Three squatter settlements at the fringes of the Metropolis were of purpose chosen for the study. They are Ugbo Odogwu, Njamanze and Ugbo Oghe. The data were analyzed using frequency tables, simple percentages and physical descriptions from direct observations. The results showed that these squatter areas were characterized by low income earners, high number of persons per household, high number of persons for room, poor socio-infrastructure facilities and buildings made of substandard building materials among others. Over 65% of the settlers were migrants from villages. Among the measures suggested for intervention is the deceleration of rural-urban migration through concerted socio-economic development of rural areas and the employment of total planning system approach where the interest of all and sundry are taken into due consideration in provision of housing for the urban poor.

Key words: Urban poverty • Environment • Squatter settlement • Urban sprawl • Rural-urban migration

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a global phenomenon that has militated against the human development of nations. Poverty is as old as the society itself. It transcends all ages. Many definitions of poverty abound in literature. Different definitions have been offered by different authors, each approaching the concept from their own disciplinary perceptions.

Generally, poverty and environmental degradation have been shown to be inextricably linked. Emphasizing the link between poverty and environment, the United Nations World Commission on Environment (WCED) 1987 stated in our common future “poverty pollutes the environment, creating environmental stress in different ways. Those who are poor and hungry will often destroy their immediate environment in order to survive. They will cut down forests, the livestock will overgraze grasslands, they will overuse marginal land and in growing numbers they will crowd into congested cities” stressing this point further, Dowdeswell (1993) [1] notes that wherever extreme poverty is a problem, there you will find the poor sacrificing long-term benefits-what we call sustainability-to the short term need to survive.

Urban poverty is indeed an acute problem in all the major cities of the developing world. The urban poor represent a significant underclass that are condemned to eke out an existence in the marginal areas of the city where there are risks

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from flooding, air and water pollution and the disposal of rubbish and waste [2]. The urban poor include those many inhabitants whose incomes are insufficient to provide their basic needs. They are unable to meet the demands of modern facilities, for example, they live in shanty houses because they cannot afford to pay rents for good houses, with modern facilities [3].

One of the major causes of urban poverty in third world countries is rapid rural to urban migrations. Okoye (2001) [4] has observed that in most countries of Africa, there was enormous growth of urban populations, particularly of the capital cities, mainly by rural-urban migration. In Nigeria, rapid population increases are evident in virtually all the cities and towns in the country. As Nigerian cities have expanded in their population, they have equally done so in respect of their physical expansion [5].

Rural to urban migration is undertaken in the third world with the expectation of escape from a derelict agricultural subsistence to employment in emerging manufacturing and service industries. The urban reality is however, high unemployment or under employment, uncontrolled housing, inadequate disposal of domestic wastes and sewage, atmospheric pollution from industrial effluents and vehicle emissions [6].

In the past, poverty was almost a phenomenon of the rural areas, but today because of rapid rural-urban migration, the poor in the rural areas have moved with their poverty to the urban environment where they create a lot of problems to themselves and to the environment. Urban poverty has increased generally because most of the true migrants are not young professionals and entrepreneurs bringing in skills and wealth but poor families who find it impossible to earn a living in rural country side. With no other choice, they often head straight for the worst kind of urban slum-foul squatter settlements plagued by open sewers, noxious cooking fumes and piles of fermented garbage [7]. A shortage of well-paid jobs is symptomatic of urban poverty which in turn leads to poor housing deficient services, pollution and degraded environment [8]. There is little doubt that increasing urban unemployment is the root of increasing urban poverty which itself breeds other social, economic, administrative infrastructural and environmental problems in most cities of the world.

Mabongunje (2005) [9] has observed that for many developing countries particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, the pervasive nature of urban poverty constitutes an enormous challenge to their development. He stressed that the burgeoning streams of rural-urban migrations arising partly from failure to significantly improve on agricultural productivity and living conditions in rural areas and partly from relative attractions of urban centers have tended to fuel growth and expression of poverty regimes within urban areas. Sarve and Smith (1991) [10], have highlighted a direct correlation between general poverty of urban societies and the poor quality of their physical environments. It has also been asserted that the rapid increase in urban population and the rapid expansion of the physical extents of urban centers in Nigeria have a lot of impacts on the environmental deterioration and degradation of the urban space and the encroachment on rural areas (urban sprawl). For example, the rapid increase in population led to tremendous stresses on urban housing, social infrastructure, social waste generation and disposal [5].

Urban stress on housing has also been recognized by Okoye (2001) [3] to promote massive growth of spontaneous housing, which usually results to uncontrolled settlements (squatter settlements). He also recognized three variants of uncontrolled settlements. First, squatter settlements located on urban peripheral locations or any vacantland. Second, mushrooming settlements resulting from many rural migrants to the city, surging into adjacent rural settlements not subject to urban housing regulations and obtaining land at minimal cost and building their own houses in any form with local or any handy materials, later expanding city finally encroaches on and incorporates these adjacent settlements which constitute peripheral slums.

This study examines some of the squatter settlements on the fringes of Enugu Metropolis, bringing out the relationship between their physical environments and poverty of their inhabitants. The study therefore brings to the purview of the concerned stakeholders – individuals, policy makers, Government agencies and NGOs the dire sensitivity of this scenario and urgent need for necessary steps for amelioration.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Survey research design which involved the use of household questionnaires was adopted. Descriptive method was equally employed in the physical examination and description of infrastructural facilities. Three squatter settlements were of purpose chosen for the study. This is because of the congestion of people in them, their proximity to each other and the diversified characteristics evident in them. The three areas are Ugbo Odogwu, Njamanze and Ugbo Oghe. A total of two hundred respondents between the ages of 25 and 40 years responded to the questionnaires. The distribution of the questionnaires varied in number for the settlements reflecting varying population sizes. The data were analyzed using simple percentages and tables besides physical description of infrastructural facilities.

RESULTS

From Table 1 above, it is seen that on average, 65% of the sampled population of the squatter settlements came from the villages, which means that the squatters are fed or populated by rural-urban migrants. None of the respondents stayed in a conventional house before coming into the squatter area.

On average, from table 2, 70% of the respondents chose the squatter area for habitation on account of low rentage and 30% chose it as a last resort, no one chose it as a matter of choice.

Table 3 shows that about 4.5% of the respondents are civil servants, others traders, artisans and the unemployed.

From table 4 above, on average, a total of 68% of the sampled population earn less than ten thousand naira per month, which implies that most of them who live in squatter settlements are low income earners and low income is one of the identification marks of poverty

Over 70% of the sampled populations pay house rent of between N1000 to N1500, which is very low indeed and thus constitutes a high attraction for such low income earners as already observed.

The highest numbers of respondents live in plastered building – over 50% on average. The concentration of building types varied across the sampled settlements, for example, 56% of respondents in Njamanze live in batcher and 21% on Ugbo Odogwu live on mud houses as depicted in table 6. Generally, the settlements are made up of low quality buildings that are closely packed together. This is typical of slums as revealed in literature.

Socio-infrastructural facilities are generally absent. Only electricity supply was available to a large extent, but its distribution was done with substandard electric poles and cables.

Generally, over 70% of respondents live in 1-3 rooms, while about 22% live in 3-4 room apartments as seen in Table 8.

About 40% of the respondents have 1-3 persons per household while over 50% on average have 4-6 persons per household. All these show high room density which is evidence of slum environments.

The Nature and Structure of the Environment: Physical observation of this environment reveals a lot of environmental neglect and a land that is not under any developmental control and so no evidence of planning. There is a juxta positioning of all the types of houses available – mud, batcher, etc. Also in the area are found muddled up together refuse and savage dumps, livestock depots and slaughter houses, mechanic workshops and many other establishments that not only generate environmental decay but a high level of noise and air pollution.

The buildings perform multiple functions ranging from sheltering the household to commercial store and workshops at the same time. The quality of the building materials are low and the way some of them are constructed equally constitute threats to life, for instance, some of the rooms have patchy hanging windows which are rarely opened for the fear of falling over from mud walls where they are hung. Cross ventilation is defeated resulting in dizziness and heaviness of head especially for the stranger who comes in for the first time as it was experienced during the field work.

Table 1: last residence before settling at the squatter areas

Last Residence	Ugbo Odogwu	%	Ugbo Oghe	%	Njamanze	%
Village	48	64	50	67	32	64
Stayed with a friend	17	23	14	19	10	20
Stayed with a relation	10	13	11	14	8	16
Stayed in a conventional house	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	75	100	75	100	50	200

Table 2: Reasons for choosing the squatter area

Reasons	Ugbo Odogwu	%	Ugbo Oghe	%	Njamanze	%
Low rent	53	71	55	73	33	66
Last resort	22	29	20	27	17	34
Matter of choice	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	75	100	75	100	50	100

Table 3: Economic status

Occupation	Ugbo Odogwu	%	Ugbo Oghe	%	Njamanze	%
Civil servant	35	47	30	40	25	50
Trader	22	29	25	33	15	30
Artisan	15	20	15	20	8	16
Unemployed	3	4	5	7	2	4
Total	75	100	75	100	50	100

Table 4: monthly incomes

Income Level	Ugbo Odogwu	%	Ugbo Oghe	%	Njamanze	%
Below (N) 10,000	57	76	51	68	30	60
10,000-20,000	12	16	15	20	12	24
20,000-30,000	6	8	7	9	5	10
30,000 & above	0	0	2	3	3	6
Total	75	100	75	100	50	100

Table 5: House Rent

House Rent Range (N)	Ugbo Odogwu	%	Ugbo Oghe	%	Njamanze	%
1,000-1,500	71	95	56	75	20	40
1,500-2,000	4	5	15	20	19	38
2,000 & above	0	0	4	5	11	22
Total	75	100	75	100	50	100

Table 6: Nature of Buildings

Structure	Ugbo Odogwu	%	Ugbo Oghe	%	Njamanze	%
Stones/brick	3	4	2	3	0	0
Mud plastered	16	21	10	13	7	14
Batcher	50	67	58	77	15	30
Total	6	8	5	7	28	56
Total	75	100	75	100	50	100

Table 7: Availability of Amenities

Amenities	Ugbo Odogwu	%	Ugbo Oghe	%	Njamanze	%
Pipe borne water	0	0	0	0	0	0
electricity	75	100	75	100	50	100
hospital	0	0	0	0	0	0
Improved housing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good road						
Total	75	100	75	100	50	100

Table 8: Number of Rooms per Household

Number of Rooms	Ugbo Odogwu	%	Ugbo Oghe	%	Njamanze	%
1-3	59	78	53	71	36	72
3-6	14	18	19	25	12	24
6-9	2	4	3	4	2	4
9 & above	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	75	100	75	100	50	100

Table 9: Number of Persons per Household

Number of Persons	Ugbo Odogwu	%	Ugbo Oghe	%	Njamanze	%
1-3	30	40	35	47	16	32
4-6	42	56	38	51	24	48
7 & above	3	4	2	2	10	20
Total	75	100	75	100	50	100

In Ugbo Oghe and Njamanze precisely, almost all the kitchens, toilets and bathrooms were disengaged from the main buildings and the materials for these facilities are mainly four long pegs paddled with zinc sheets. The lavatories are mainly pit systems which generally fuel the spread of communicable diseases.

DISCUSSION

The result of the study as presented show that the caliber of people living in the squatter settlements are low income earners as approximately 70% of them earn less than ten thousand naira monthly which therefore constitute junior civil servants, petty traders, artisans and the unemployed. Majority of them are equally rural-urban migrants. They can therefore be categorized as poor people who would be solely concerned with meeting the basic necessities of life rather than worrying about improved and or quality of their environmental setting.

Corroborating the above described scenario, Mabogunje (2005) [9] observed that for many developing countries particularly those of sub-saharan Africa, the pervasive nature of urban poverty constitutes an enormous challenge to their development. He stressed that the burgeoning streams of rural-urban migrations tend to fuel growth and expression of poverty regimes within urban areas. On his own, Satterwaithe (2001) [8] argued that urban poverty tends to exhibit the following: Inadequate income, inadequate or risky asset base, inadequate shelter, inadequate access to basic services, etc.

The result of the study equally shows that the buildings are substandard – mud, batcher and plastered houses in very close proximity with one another. The condition of the houses is unenviable – small rooms, jam-packed with household materials, patchy hanging windows which are rarely opened for the fear of falling over from the mud walls where they are hung. Cross ventilation is difficult creating room for stuffiness, dizziness and heaviness of head as was experienced during the fieldwork. Generally, over 70% of the respondents live in apartments of between 1-3 of such rooms and about 40% of the respondents have 1-3 persons per household. The environment epitomizes poverty as majority of the inhabitants earn

below ten thousand naira per month and could only therefore afford to live in such an unkempt environment with low house rentage. Their economic status leaves them with no option except eking out a daily sustenance and so straining to improve their physical environment will constitute a threat to their daily bread.

Sarve and Smith [10] as cited by Ibeh (2007) [4] have highlighted a direct correlation between general poverty of urban societies and the poor quality of their physical environments. It has been asserted that the rapid increase in urban population and the rapid expansion of the physical extents of urban centers in Nigeria have a lot of impacts on the environmental deterioration and degradation of the urban space and the encroachment on rural areas.

Reinforcing further the scenario in the fringes of Enugu Metropolis, it is held that the development of slums is one of the manifestations of serious urban degradation and decay. Slums are described as physical eye sores and as captured by Hurley as cited by Ibeh (2007), slums are seen as unsafe, congested, poorly designed street systems, incompatible land uses, obsolete building types, lack of recreational areas, overcrowding, improper location of structure, dilapidated dwellings and lack of any planning. Buildings that are fire hazards and neighbourhoods that are conducive to crime and delinquency are all manifestations of slums where the poor are forced to live. These conditions are symptomatic of the squatter settlements in the fringes of Enugu Metropolis as can be gleaned from the results of the study. They are bereft of most of the amenities which are needed to improve man's standard of living or welfare; houses are haphazardly built without any guidelines or regulations. They have no attractions which those in the city could pay for thereby making life in these areas remain poor and unexciting.

Recommendations: It is clear that urban poverty and environment are interconnected. One of the clarion calls to deal with urban poverty is the call for good urban governance. Good urban governance includes accountability, responsiveness to the public and anticorruption policies. Poor people disproportionately bear the cost of corruption. It does not only cause inefficiencies in utilization of scarce resources but also inequities. Government can take various steps to reduce and alleviate the sufferings of the poor through privatization of provisions and management of services, more transparent rules and public disclosure. For example, there should be privatization of environmental services and waste management [4].

Policies and programmes for development should integrate poverty – environment issues and government should equally improve on poverty environment monitoring and assessment.

On a more general level, there is heightened need to reduce rapid rural to urban migration by making the rural areas livable by providing basic amenities such as roads, water, electricity, recreation facilities and job opportunities especially in agro-based industries and ecotourism. There should also be deliberate policies by federal, state government, corporate bodies and private concerns to embark on aggressive rural industrialization.

Besides, there should be deliberate policies to create new towns and cities to decongest existing ones. This can be done using deliberate policy instruments such as provision of rural electricity, water, roads, cheap and reliable transport, jobs, housing and siting of institutions of learning.

The total system planning approach is equally recommended. This approach upholds the incorporation of interdisciplinary experts towards evaluating the effects of a proposed design on many aspects of the urban system so as to stimulate and analyze the total system where the interest of all and sundry are taken into due consideration in the provision of housing for the urban poor.

CONCLUSION

Urban poverty is a major factor in the degradation, deterioration and subsequent decay of urban environment. The impacts of the poor on urban environment can be easily detected than on rural environment. This is because in rural environment, the poor are widely spaced in vast geographic areas but in urban areas, they are concentrated on limited geographic areas that lack the most basic of social infrastructural facilities. In this limited geographic environment, the urban poor because of deprivation and lack of monetary income, are the least to think about decent housing, efficient disposal of their wastes (especially sewage), adequate drainage which can substantially reduce the likelihood of floods, adequate

water both for food preparation and sanitation. It is thus conclusive that urban poverty impacts on the social and economic lives of the urban population and equally exacerbates the infrastructural and environmental deterioration of the urban space. It is therefore imperative that Government, stake holders and agencies of change should take the necessary measures as suggested to ameliorate the situation of the urban poor and their environment.

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