

Impact of Urban Renewal Projects on the Socio-Economic Groups in Port Harcourt

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Abstract: The study reviewed urban renewal exercises embarked upon by the Rivers State Government from 1988 to 2019 in some parts of Port Harcourt metropolis, namely, Marine Base, Ndoki Water Front; Aggrey Road-end, and Rainbow Town, to ascertain the impact of the renewal schemes on the different socio-economic groups in the city. Primary and secondary sources of data, as well as participant observation techniques were utilized to obtain the data for the study. Our findings revealed that urban renewal exercises have led to the dislocation of social interactions; displacement of original residents, as a large majority of these residents are unable to meet the required initial deposit for occupation since there are no mortgage facilities even when allocation is made to them. A fall-out of the renewal schemes result in the creation of incidental spaces abutting the developments and are taken over by some of the displaced people leading to the situation that called for the renewal. However, in one of the renewal schemes (Rainbow Town), initial occupants are totally displaced due to the types and cost of the housing developments which are of the high socio-economic category. Displaced residents end-up establishing and proliferating further slums and squatter areas. We recommend that government should embark on integrated rural development planning to stem the incidence of rural-urban migration. Second and third-order cities should be created along the lines of rural raw materials. Resettlement of displaced residents should be the primary consideration before any demolition exercise is carried out.

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1. Introduction

The first major slum clearance in Nigeria was the central Lagos slum clearance scheme in 1951. The scheme suffered serious setbacks due to lack of consultation with the occupants, inadequate funding and increase in the number of people to be re-housed, which was far beyond the original projection. In the demolition at Maroko, in Lagos State, embarked upon by Colonel Raji Rasaki (1990 — 1991), almost all the original inhabitants lost out in the reallocation process. This led to the formation and proliferation of new slums. The Rivers State Government embarked on demolition/slum clearance exercises from 1988—1998, aimed at improving the housing conditions of the waterfront residents. In these schemes, the original residents were left worse-off.

A success story to this enigma in Rivers State was the resettlement programme from old Finima to new Finima town in Bonny (1990/1991). The Rainbow Town urban renewal scheme which started in 2008 did not contemplate resettlement of displaced residents. In reviewing waterfront redevelopment exercises in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Obafemi and Odubo (2013) brought to bear the array of challenges bedeviling urban renewal schemes, one of which was the demolition of Nzemanze Waterfront on 28th August, 2009, where between 13,000 and 17,000

inhabitants were evicted without due consultation with the affected residents or provision of alternative accommodation. Residential buildings and structures are indiscriminately demolished, leaving such affected residents with no improved option. The aim of such intervention by government, the world over, is to improve the housing conditions of slum dwellers. Provision of housing does not keep pace with the ever increasing population growth rate of the city.

Demolition of structures without considering the social, economic and health implications on those to be displaced negates the principle and thrust of urban renewal. It is expected that their socio-economic status should be enhanced after the intervention. Those who are affected by demolition exercises are the low income residents, who may find it difficult to secure alternative and better accommodation, in better residential neighborhoods. This research attempts to highlight the challenges associated with urban renewal exercises in Port Harcourt metropolis and make recommendations aimed at addressing the problems.

1.1 Problem Statement

One of the characteristics of urban sustainability include the satisfaction of basic human needs (Jacobs, 1991), which includes shelter. In the developing countries such as Nigeria, families do not live in desirable communities provided with basic social and

physical infrastructure. Majority of the populace live in poor and substandard housing, filthy environments etc. The solution to this anomaly is usually found in urban renewal schemes, aimed at improving the lives of people who lived in degraded, dilapidated and filthy environments. In the case of Port Harcourt, the urban renewal schemes, which have adopted outright demolition approaches, have tended to worsen the lives of people who previously lived in squatter locations.

Undoubtedly, the effect of these demolitions would be the proliferation of further shanty, slum and squatter settlements. In the light of the above, it becomes pertinent to ask the following questions:

1. Do urban renewal exercises contemplate the future well-being of displaced residents?
2. Does the government consult with residents of slum and squatter locations before embarking on demolition exercises?
3. To what extent do urban renewal programmes meet the housing needs of the affected socio-economic groups, and
4. how impactful have the programmes been?

1.2 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study will be:

1. To review urban renewal exercises carried out in some parts of Port Harcourt from 1988 - 2018.
2. To find out if government adequately consult the residents before projects are executed in their neighborhoods.
3. To ascertain if urban renewal programmes meet the housing needs of the residents affected by the scheme.
4. To find out the impact of urban renewal programmes on the various socio- economic groups within the affected neighborhoods.

1.3 Methodology

Primary and secondary sources of data were utilized for the study. Questionnaire instrument was used to obtain data at Marine Base, Ndoki Water Front, and Aggrey Road end, while key informant approach was utilized to obtain data from Rainbow Town. Key information was obtained from Ministry of Housing; some identified property owners from the list of property owners recorded in the Ministry of Housing. A total of fifty (50) questionnaires were administered to obtain primary data, but forty (40) were retrieved. Stratified random sampling technique was utilized for the study.

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Urban Renewal

The definition of urban renewal, from the perception of an affected individual in the demolition exercise at Maroko, Lagos is government attempt to repatriate the poor to the villages, since they cannot

cope with the high urban rents and large business outfits, so that the only option left for the poor was to get back to their various villages and perhaps, join in the rural farming brigade (cited in Kalu and Ezirim, 2001, pp 60—61). Chiuba (2002) defined urban renewal as a comprehensive and an integrated effort programmed as a succession of activities to prevent the premature obsolescence of urban neighborhoods, revitalize dilapidated locations and conserve or restore the intrinsic value of a past heritage, as expressed in ancient urban morphologies. Urban renewal as a strategy for improving and enhancing the quality of life of affected slum residents is in tandem with the idea that slums should be guided in their development, rather than being marked for elimination or demolition.

Urban Renewal, involving wholesale clearance has been the commonest measure at eradicating slums in the recent past, but this method has proved unpopular and counter-productive. Upgrading of these settlements seems much better as it involves the provision of better physical environment by the provision or improvement of sanitary facilities and infrastructure, such as safe drinking water, improved circulatory routes, toilets, school buildings, and waste management facilities, as provided in Ayeye, Mapo, Eleta and Agbeni communities in Ibadan and Ilaje-Bariga in Lagos by UNICEF under the UBS Programme (Wahab, 2001).

2.2 Standard Housing

Standard Housing is housing which has no defects or only slight defects, which could be corrected during the course of normal maintenance. It also has adequate bathroom, toilet and kitchen facilities, running water, as well as refuse disposal system (Ogionwo, 1979). In tracing the historical development of housing, Unaegbu (2004) affirms that housing is a social and cultural unit of space, created to support life, and that conventional housing which has adequate facilities (water, good sewage, good spaced and ventilated bedrooms, living rooms, kitchen, bathroom and a proper solid waste disposal system) provides a conducive environment for good health, whereas inadequate housing or homelessness breeds slums, thereby exposing people to health challenges, which may eventually lead to a shorter life span.

2.3 Slum Housing/Urban Blight

Urban blight is a condition in a part of urban area or the whole of an urban area, which because of premature obsolescence and physical deterioration or other factors, has become undesirable for, or impossible for development or redevelopment to take place (Omole, 2001). Blight features prominently in an urban environment where there are signs of decline in the physical fitness of dwelling units. In blights, the

quality of physical development has deteriorated below acceptable housing standards.

Deterioration may reach a stage where buildings are considered unfit for human habitation. A slum or blighted area refers to neighborhoods characterized by structural obsolescence: dilapidated and decaying structures, and high level of social maladies. Duruzoechi (2009) reasoned that the concept of slum or blighted area is controversial, in that what constitutes a slum or blight to one person, may be considered a good or adequate housing for another.

2.4 Urban Renewal Techniques

Two major techniques are employed in urban renewal. These are:

- i. Redevelopment or slum clearance and
- ii. Rehabilitation

A third approach or technique, which is not extensively in use is "conservation." Redevelopment involves total clearance or demolition of existing structures. The problem with redevelopment is that of providing alternative accommodation to displaced residents, thereby creating financial and social costs on the executors and recipients of the renewal action. Payment of huge compensation is involved in this approach. Furthermore, re-housing and resettlement of displaced residents is a condition sine-qua-non for any urban renewal intervention. More and larger

dwellings are necessary than it was in the old, because overcrowding, an attribute of slum, would be checked in the new area.

2.4.1 Rehabilitation or Renovation

In rehabilitation, only the worst houses are removed, including the repairing and construction of streets and the addition of parks and other public utilities. This is applied where buildings are only slightly or partially deteriorated. Here, demolition is deemphasized.

2.4.2 Conservation

This involves preserving items with historic, cultural, aesthetic and architectural value. It requires maintenance of buildings, preventing overcrowding, enforcing density limitations and zoning regulations.

3. Appraisal of Urban Renewal and Building Demolition Exercises in Port Harcourt.

3.1 Marine Base Water Front Demolition Exercise, 1989

Towards the last quarter of 1989, before the demolition exercise at Marine Base water front, an enumeration of houses and data related to number of households to be affected by the demolition, as well as the population resident at the water front revealed the following (Table 1):

Table 1: Marine Base Water Front Demolition Exercise, 1989

S/No.	Description of Items	Number of Items
1.	Number of Houses	236
2.	Number of Households	859
3.	Average number of persons in household	6
4.	Room occupancy ratio	5
5.	Total number of owner-occupier houses	120
6.	Estimated population to be affected	6,000

236 houses made up of 859 households were identified. Population in the area to be displaced was 6,000. Majority of the residents were one-room

occupants. Only a few occupy two rooms. This is as a result of the very low income background of residents (Dirokweni, 1999) (Table 2).

Table 2: Result of Demolition/Re-housing Scheme

S/No.	Description	Number of Items
1	New units of accommodation built	89
2	Names published as being qualified to be part of the ballot exercise	549

3.2 Analysis of the Reallocation Scheme

The Rivers State government subjected the reallocation scheme to balloting, which was not limited to the displaced residents: All the then existing 14 local governments were asked to fill the forms to qualify them for balloting. Accordingly, 6 persons emerged as winners in each of the then 14 local government areas.

1. Political office holders, top government functionaries and their cohorts were among beneficiaries in the scheme.

2. Application forms were sold to displaced settlers and non - settlers. The result was that, in the final compilation of names to qualify for the ballot exercise, most of the names of the original settlers were removed.

3. Names were assigned according to local government areas of the State.

4. i. No. of houses before demolition
= 236
- ii. No. of houses built after demolition
= 89
- iii. No of households before demolition
= 859
- iv. No. of households that benefitted
= 87

3.3 Ndoki Water Front Demolition Exercise

The Rivers State government embarked upon an urban renewal (squatter settlement redevelopment) programme in 1988, after a fire incident at Ndoki water front squatter settlement. According to the Rivers State Lands and Housing Bureau, the goal of the programme was to provide a social housing service aimed at improving the environment and to enhance the quality of life of the average water front dweller through the provision of infrastructure and services, taking into consideration his low socioeconomic status (Okoko, 1993). Following a systematic evaluation of two of the projects — Ndoki and Aggrey Road, Imbasi (1994) concluded that:

1. The populations' residents at the improved sites were largely of a high socioeconomic status, a situation which was at variance with one of the stated objectives of government to house largely the low income.

2. Residents who were not original water front dwellers were also accommodated at the improved site

and therefore the final principal beneficiaries of the intervention were former squatters at the redeveloped sites, former squatters from other water front settlements, and non squatters.

3. The intervention did not really solve the housing problems of the squatter dwellers, but rather compounded them to intolerable levels, especially with regard to:

- i. Break-up of social relationship.
- ii. Up-setting existing economic systems and opportunities.
- iii. Compounding the congestion in Port 1-larcourt and exerting undue pressure on existing but inadequate infrastructure due to migration of displaced squatters; and
- iv. Expanding and increasing the number of marginal water front squatter settlements, as displaced squatters established new squatter settlements or went to double up with relatives in existing ones.

3.4 Rainbow Town Urban Renewal Scheme

Buildings/structures reached advanced stages of blight, highly dilapidated, decaying and seriously deteriorated, coupled with filthy environment, characterized by overcrowding of structures and individuals. Plywood and zinc houses (squatter) competed with block houses, badly in need of renovation or demolition (slums), owing to old age. The urban renewal technique adopted was a comprehensive and total redevelopment/outright demolition. The exercise did not contemplate resettlement of displaced residents because they were all squatters (Figures 1, 2).



Fig 1: Satellite Imagery of Rainbow Town Layout as at 2005 before demolition



Fig. 2(a): Housing Type and Surroundings as at 2005 (b): Rainbow Town Mammy Market as at 2005



Fig.2 (c): Second Housing Types of Rainbow Town (d): Shanties within the erstwhile Rainbow Town

On Monday 9th May, 2011, the Researchers visited the site (Rainbow Town), where building exercise is currently ongoing. This was to enable us have a first-hand knowledge of the extent of work at

the site. We also interacted with the builders. As at the time of writing this article, progress report (of building) on the ground revealed the following (Table 3):

Table 3: Description of Types of (New) Building Structures at Rainbow Town

S/No.	Types of Structure	Description of Structure	Number Built
1	High-Rise Building (on- going and uncompleted)	Building has reached the 12 th floor	1
2	High-Rise (on-going and uncompleted)	Building has reached the 10 th floor	1
3	High-Rise (on-going and uncompleted)	Building has reached the 7 th floor	1
4	High-Rise on-going	Building has reached the 5 th floor	2
5	Duplexes (terraced buildings) 2 storey of 6 Bed Room flats each	Duplexes completed and 8 already painted	10
6	Duplexes: Bed Room flats down (ground floor) and 4 Bed Room flats on the first floor (top floor)	Already completed and painted	13
7	Large-sized (substantial and gigantic) commercial complex (on-going and uncompleted)	Building already on the 2 nd floor	1

The completed buildings had boy’s quarters attached as appendages to accommodate the existing flats at the main building. Parking spaces to accommodate four (4) vehicles are provided in front of each of the completed duplexes. The buildings were

being built through a private and Public Participatory (PPP) agreement between the Rivers State Government (Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi’s Administration) and First Bank of Nigeria (FBN) (Figures 3, 4).



Fig. 3: Layout of the Rainbow Town Estate
Source: Goggle Earth Satellite imagery 2018



Fig. 4 (a): Five Bedroom Houses (b): Terrace Houses already occupied
Source: estateintel.com

These are the low density one to multifamily developments in the New estate that surround the high rise (Tower Buildings) developments at the center as shown in the imagery (Figure 5).



Fig.5: Multifamily Tower Buildings at the Center of the Estate. Source: estateintel.com

3.5 Finima Resettlement Scheme

As a result of the decision by government to site Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) project in Finima town, Bonny Local Government Area. The Federal Government built a new town, new Finima, to resettle the residents of Finima town (old Finima). The resettlement scheme was concluded in 1990/1 991 before the NLNG project commenced in 1995. The Finima resettlement scheme upholds the tenet of urban renewal.

3.6 Resettlement of Displaced Persons: The Legal Perspective.

The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law (NURPL), Decree No. 88 of 1992 part V section 85 was explicit in its provision for resettlement of

displaced persons in a planning scheme. Section 85 (1) states:

i. Where the authority proposes to make an order or the demolition of a building or part thereof used for human habitation, it shall provide:

a) a person likely to be displaced from his home by the order.

i. Alternative accommodation or site and materials for building an alternative accommodation.

b) Allow the person to move to and settle in the alternative accommodation before effecting demolition

Table 4 shows the public participation in development projects (Table 4).

Table 4: Public Participation in Development Projects

S/No.	Public Participation	Number	Percentage
1.	Yes	9	22.5
2.	No	31	77.5
	Total	40	100

Residents were asked if their opinions were sought before the introduction and execution of projects in their neighborhoods. Only 9 out of 40

respondents affirmed that they were informed. 77.5% responded that they were usually not informed.

Total 5 shows the Occupation of Respondents (Table 5).

Table 5: Occupation of Respondents

S/No.	Public Participation	Number	Percentage
1	Retailing/petty trading	6	15
2	Hawking	2	5
3	Professional	3	7.5
4	Fishing	-	-
5	Farming	4	10
6	Public employment	8	20
7	Private employment	5	12.5
8	Artisan	3	7.5
9	Self employed	5	12.5
10	Unemployed	4	10.0
	Total	40	100

The occupational status of the residents of Ada George Road and Rumuola revealed that majority of the residents do not have meaningful and reliable source of livelihood. Their occupational base is very low.

Table 6 show the annual income of respondent.

Table 6: Annual Income of Respondents

S/N	Annual Income (N)	Number	Percentage
1	Below 90,000	6	15
2	91,000	5	12.5
3	191,000 – 290,000	5	12.5
4	291,000 – 390,000	7	17.5
5	391,000—490,000	6	15
6	491,000—590,000	4	10
7	591,000—690,000	3	7.5
8	691,000—790,000	1	2.5
9	791,000— 890,000	-	-
10	891,000—990,000	1	2.5
11	991,000—1,091,000	2	5.0
12	1,091,000+	-	-
	Total	40	100

About 40% of the respondents earn N471 000 annual income (N39.250 monthly income).

This is not surprising as the occupational base of the respondents is low (Table 7).

Table 7: Access to Mortgage Facilities

S/N	Access to Facilities	Number	Percentage
1	Yes	-	-
2	No	40	100
	Total	40	100

Respondents were asked if they have had access to mortgage facilities. The responses indicated that none has been so privileged (Table 8).

Table 8: Sources of Income for Housing Finance

S/No.	Sources of Income	Number	Percentage
1	Savings from Salary	10	25
2	Savings from Business	7	17.5
3	Family Support	9	22.5
4	Borrowing	4	10
5	Mortgage	0	0
6	Other Sources	10	25
	Total	40	100

The various sources of income for housing finance based on the responses of respondents are as indicated in the table above. Only 42.5% of the respondents were privileged to secure housing through normally acceptable and conducive sources of income

(savings from salary and business). The rest (57.5%) go out of their way and resources to secure funds for housing, while non have access to mortgage facilities.

Table 9 shows the impact of demolition on displaced residents (Table 9).

Table 9: Impact of Demolition on Displaced Residents

S/N	Impact on Residents	Number	Percentage
1.	Very positive impact	2	5
2.	Positive impact	3	7.5
3.	Average impact	3	7.5
4.	Fairly impactful	4	10
5.	Little impact	11	27.5
6.	Negative/Adverse Impact	17	42.5
	Total	40	100

About 70% of the respondents aver that demolition left them worse-off than they had been before the demolition (see SIN 5 and 6 above).

4. Findings and Conclusion

A review of urban renewal projects in some parts of Port Harcourt Metropolis showed that government has not shown enough sincerity in addressing the housing problem in Port Harcourt. In the cases of Aggrey Road-end of Port Harcourt, Marine Base and Ndoki Water Fronts, majority of the displaced residents lost out. Politics marred the reallocation process. The Rainbow Town urban renewal scheme did not contemplate resettlement of displaced residents. Present housing types are apparently for the bourgeois.

They are ‘no-go areas’ for the average citizen. The study also revealed that demolition exercises have not in anyway, solved the housing problem in Port Harcourt. It aggravates it, as displaced residents do not readily secure alternative accommodation. Opinion of slum residents is often not sought before projects are executed. The paper avers that the Finima resettlement programme meets one of the basic requirements of

urban renewal; which is the provision of alternative and better accommodation for residents to be displaced by government urban renewal intervention.

5. Recommendations

We recommend that Government should make deliberate efforts to improve the lives of the rural dwellers through integrated rural development planning. Employment opportunities should be made available to the rural residents: these are the people who come to the city to annex marginal and peripheral lands. Second and third- order cities should be created, with Port Harcourt serving as the first-order city. Government should involve the people who are to be affected by any development project, from the planning to the implementation stage. All residents, should, as a matter of fact, be reallocated before commencement of demolition exercise.

There should be a comprehensive feasibility and viability appraisal, including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study of any project that would have adverse impact on the lives of the masses. Government should build mini satellite housing estates as was the case with Festac Town in Lagos. This

should aim at resettling persons to be displaced by demolition/redevelopment schemes. The Rivers State Government should encourage private-public-partnership (PPP) in housing provision, as done by Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi (Governor of Rivers State) and First Bank of Nigeria in providing the buildings at the Rainbow Town urban renewal scheme, but the schemes should be liberal enough to accommodate the interest of the low-income earners.

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