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Approaches to Informality Integration in Planned Neighbourhoods a Case Study of Eagle Island, Port Harcourt

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Abstract: *Informality can be improved most effectively when neighborhoods adopt approaches that are pivotal to build on unplanned developments. Typically, the Eagle Island neighborhood in Port Harcourt City Council has been embroiled with forceful eviction and demotions of informal settlement by government in time past over certain fundamental issues affecting planned development, noticeable even till date. This study examined the application of existing pro-poor approaches for integrating informal settlements into neighborhood planned development in Eagle Island neighborhood, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted a case study approach with primary data sourced through semi-structured questionnaires administered to 15 senior officials Rivers States Ministries of Lands and Surveys, Urban Development and Lecturers at Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Rivers State University in Port Harcourt representing 75% response rate, while secondary data were mainly from documents from United Nations Human Settlements Programmes. The data collected was qualitatively analyzed using simple percentages with thematic analysis the findings showed that the approaches for integrating informality into formality are locations specific, and not generic for the case of Eagle Island. The approaches includes granting of temporal licenses for settlers to occupy land, removal of anti-informality land laws and politics by government, and provision of laws and policies for integrating informality, government and well-spirited individuals for the intention of providing affordable housing. Therefore, the study concluded that informal settlement should not be considered as an anomaly, but rather incorporating them in the formal system that will necessitate the responses actually needed to address informal settlers, and the needs for the poor to access urban land.*

Keywords: *Informality, Settlement, Approaches, Integration, Neighborhood, Planned Development.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Like in many developing countries, poverty and social exclusion are key drivers of the formation of informality in Nigeria, but while public expenditure for subsidized housing and slum upgrade is spiraling downwards or in some cases non-existent, the situation has degenerated to a point where we have fragmented cities and precarious neighbourhoods which has failed to produce in all inclusive urban order. Basically the concept of informality integration is a divergent ideology that requires the legalization of housing rights that grants legal security of tenure and ensures socio-spatial integration of people and communities and also ensures the right of people to stay in places after the transformation process. There is generally no “one size all” solution to addressing the problems of informality consequently the approaches to solving the problems of informality differ from location to location.

According to [13], informal settlements are:

- 1) 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;
- 2) Unplanned settlements, and areas where housing is not in compliance with existing planning and building regulations

Onyekachi [9] defined informal settlement as a dwelling constructed usually without a formal design and standard specification without regard to legal rules and regulations controlling urban developments in an urban areas, and usually temporary structures. 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. Informal settlement are characterized by informal land tenure, inadequate access to basic services, lack of secure tenure, housing that contradicts the city bye laws, lack of inadequate access to public services, inadequate building structure, illegal subdivision of buildings, poverty, criminality and social exclusion, unhealthy living conditions etc.

Therefore 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 [11]. Pro-poor 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. These approaches will help to sustain the developments by ensuring consideration for their long-term maintenance of infrastructure. However, the spatial and economic exclusion of the majority of the informal dwellers in urban centers from formal or legitimized spaces in cities has seen the growth and entrenchment of informality as a pervasive feature. The application of pro-poor approaches will re-invigorate informal settlement as to improve the way in which the government works with its citizens that represents set of opportunities.

Therefore the phenomenon of “pro-poor” exposes the need of the urban informal settlers to find safe grounds on which to leverage a future in the form of shelters and 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 approaches that has an all-inclusive urban order is key to unlocking the perceived dichotomy in urban land management by the government in neighborhoods where formal dwellers resides. Therefore, this study tries to identify the approaches for integrating informal settlement into planned development such that they become efficient and appropriate responses to these settlements, leaving a change in the patterns of state-planning and decision-making in neighborhoods.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Informal Settlement Situation in Nigeria.*

The prevalence of informal settlement practices and poor housing condition are manifestation of the challenges faced with the shortage of good housing, infrastructure deficiency, poverty and growing population [7]. According to [8], 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 [5]. Informal settlement situations have become a global concern and one key factor driving such development is rapid urbanization, cities urbanizing even faster than originally predicted in 1972 by [4]. The emergence of informal settlement is a consequence of unrealistic regulatory frameworks, ill-conceived policies, inadequate urban planning, and weak institutional capacity [14]. UN-Habitat [12] 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 [6]. 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 [5]. The informal settlement conditions are found to rise from failed policies, bad governance, corruption, in appropriate regulation, dysfunctional land markets, unresponsive financial systems, and a fundamental lack of political will in governance [2]. The above assertion affirmed the study of [1]; [10] that there is a high degree of correlation urbanization and informal settlement formation in most developing countries. This has been squarely indicted as one of the leading critiques of arguments in 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 [4].

B. *Existing Approach to Informal Settlement Eradication*

International agencies (the European Union, UN-Habitat, the Cities Alliance, and the World Bank) have formed a synergy with local and national governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to fast track informal settlement improvement programmes around the world [5]. Recognizing the approach of informal settlements eradication in developing societies would be through undertaken partnership programmes [5].

According to [3], successful informal settlements approach should embrace a number of principles. And the principles are:

- 1) Acceptance and acknowledgment informal settlement and their importance by government.
- 2) Assuming that political will and good leadership would make informal settlement improvement possible.
- 3) Government including informal settlement in city's planning, mobilizing partnership and providing security of tenure.
- 4) Relevant agencies planning with, and not for the informal dwellers for informal settlement improvement
- 5) Expect government to ensure continuity efforts over time with institutionalized approaches

- 6) Expecting government to allocate budget design subsidies, including mobilization of public and non-public resources
- 7) Providing alternatives to formation of new informal settlement that requires improvement and preventing formation of new ones.
- 8) Expecting government to invest in infrastructural facilities.

Countries around the world have devised strategies for the improvement of informal settlements. According [5], one of such strategies involves the use of a bottom-up approach as opposed to top-down; which also involves the empowering of informal settlers and agencies to implement informal settlement improvement programmes.

C. Innovative Approaches for Integrating Informal Settlement

The rights such as freehold and registered leasehold, and the conventional cadastral and land registration systems, and the way they are presently structured cannot supply security of tenure to the vast majority of the low income groups and/or deal quickly enough with the scale of urban problems [11]. Innovative approaches need to be developed for the poor to benefit as it has been found that public land needs to be included in the readjustment programme. Land readjustment can effectively bring in a range of new partners, complement regularization and zooming for low income groups, bring tenure security and services [11]. The fact that people believe the land you occupy and use is the land that you are allowed to live on and use. Adopting better ideas of a continuum of land rights, makes functional adaptations for specific contexts and in accordance with needs possible allowing for a step –by- step approach to securing tenure, rather than trying to effect wholesale changes in forms of tenure leaving the no recognition of informal settlers.

According to [11], the pro-poor approaches should include consultation with stakeholders and the use of participatory planning methods. These approaches include land re-adjustment, legalization or regularization of tenure and provision of services. To achieve this innovation, the steps are:

- 1) Gathering and creation of stakeholders' forum in necessary to ensure that the pro-poor approach used is sustainable meeting the needs of the poor.
- 2) Designating and creating of special zones around informal settlements areas that allows providing preliminary spatial information that is necessary for planning infrastructural development and service delivery
- 3) Regularizing and adjusting the land inside the zones in the areas of government passing anti-eviction laws, expropriate land with compensation and use of land taxes to force sales or development.
- 4) Integrating an infrastructural plan for the whole neighborhood including options for diverse affordable standards to the informal dwellers. This incremental approach allows government and the informal settlers build technical and administrative procedures over time and within own resource capacity. This will help to ensure the institutionalization of the new pro-poor approaches.

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 the government provided the basic amenities; roads, water and electricity for the residents to build their own type of houses.

In order achieve this objective, population of the study on the approaches to informality integration in planned neighborhood, comprised of 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 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 with thematic analysis.

IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULTS

The collected data are presented and analyzed as thus:

A. Existing Approach to Informal Settlement Eradication in Planned Neighborhood

An in-depth interview reveals that Eagle Island neighborhood development was a service and site scheme housing estate undertaken by Rivers State Government which has experienced a number of challenges with the development of informal settlements in this planned neighborhood. The situation in Eagle Island neighborhood is different in the sense that informal settlers with the Eagle Island neighbourhood did not acquire their land legally either from the native owners or government, but illegally occupied same without any form consequently the government is unapologetic in decisively daily with them through forceful evictions destruction and clearance of informal settlements which are perceived offensive and unwanted.

B. Applicable Innovative Approaches for Integrating Informality into Formality

Table 1 indicates the pro-poor approaches to be utilized as to incorporate informality into formality in Eagle Island neighborhood. The intention of providing affordable housing representing 80% of the responses was one of the identified approaches, while granting of temporal licenses for settlers to occupy land representing 73.3% was another. Other pro-poor approaches identified are removal of anti-informality land laws and policies by government (86.7%), and provision of laws and policies for integrating informality (80%). Table 2 shows in summary that 80% of the respondents agreed that government and well-spirited individuals should provide affordable housing, granting of temporal licenses to occupy land, removal of anti-informality land policies by government and provision of laws and policies for integrating informality. This implies that all these pro-poor approaches will enhance the incorporation of informality into formality to better the lives of informal settlers.

Table 1: Applicable Innovative Approaches for Integrating Informality into Formality

Pro-Poor Approaches	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Intention for affordable housing	12	80.0	3	20.0	15	100.0
Granting of temporal licenses to occupy land	11	73.0	4	26.7	15	100.0
Removal of anti-informality land policies by government	13	86.7	2	13.3	15	100.0
Provision of laws and policies for integrating informality	12	80.0	3	20.0	15	100.0
Total (Average)	12	80.0	3	20.0	15	100.0

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2019

C. Key Interview Responses

1) *Intention of Providing Affordable Housing as to Reduce Informality:* An in-depth interview reveals that following pro-poor policies on informal settlements will result in the sole intention of making housing affordable to the urban poor which will reduce informality in urban centers. This is because government intervention in the informal type of housing will preserve the functionality of the neighborhood, whilst simultaneously improving the outcomes for most the vulnerable. This will therefore remain the ultimate test of developmental and responsive governance, there interventions will both improve livability for the urban poor, and support government agency in meeting the immediate needs of the informal settlers addressing those exclusionary policies of governance and development that perpetuate and deepen inequality and informality.

2) Granting of Temporal License to Informal Settlers to Occupy Land

One of the key informants stated that: *'The re-invigoration of the informal settlement upgrading agenda will set target for national housing delivery which represents a concrete set of opportunities to improve the way in which the government works for its citizens. So, the possession of temporary title over lands they occupy can make the urban poor be visible and recognized by government'.*

- 3) *Anti-Informality Land Policies of Government:* Most of the respondents interviewed stated that despite different land policy documents, government has been able to produce legislation on informality with comprehensive list of informal settlements detailing their size and composition, priority, needs and potential for incremental upgrade that will address the different aspects of housing delivery in a comprehensive way (rental housing stock, land leases to interior servicing and sitting informal housing on formal land tenure). It will be instrumental in ensuring that the relevant and appropriate laws of government are embedded in land policies for planning therefore influencing the delivery of infrastructure by given direction to specific flows of funding, for the urban poor.
- 4) *Laws and Policies of Integrating Informality into Planned Neighborhood:* Most of the participant interviewed stated that the laws or policies that would be favorable in integrating informality into planned neighborhood can be brought about when government considers the urban poor in urban planning and implementation by establishing lands for development or provide houses for the urban poor side-by-side with planned new town. This is important because what causes informality in formality is the services of domestic servant provided by the urban poor to the urban rich, which the urban rich cannot do without. Such domestic services include security, drivers, cooks, steward, house mate, artisan works, etc. This class of low income earners needs accommodation as to sustain livelihood through the services they provided.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The intention of providing affordable housing as to reduce informality is a pro-poor approach to the urban poor. The findings show that the expert responses agree that creating pro-poor approaches in housing delivery through affordable houses reduces informality, with its intent of solving informality. This is due to the fact that supply system for land and housing is ineffective and inefficient depriving the poor which land could have been provided for development. Government intervention in informal settlements in this manner will preserve the functionality of the neighborhood, which simultaneously improve the outcome for most vulnerable residents serving as the ultimate test of developmental and responsive governance. The study reveals that most land policies are incompatible with the urban poor and have resulted in complex land management and administration systems. The anti-informality policies has also provided the formations of functions and responsibilities with the provision of building permits for new buildings, issuing permits for maintenance, conducting audits and monitoring progress of construction and issue legal notice on illegal construction that does not follow procedures. All these are anti-informality provisions that urban poor cannot afford and contend with in the process of formality. Laws and policies to integrate informality into planned neighborhood; should provide and control necessitated collaboration on planning approach, laying emphasis on an enabling pro-poor approach with a wide range of public, private and community partnership in pursuant of sustainable development. The study reveals that presently there is no law/policies seeking to integrate informality. It is required of government to draft policies to integrate informality into developed neighborhood focusing on decentralization, public-private partnership, commercialization, and stakeholder participation in land management and administration. According to experts interviewed, their policies should involve community participation that includes; social needs identification, project designing, and consultations in planning and management in the process of development.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was set out to examine applicable existed approaches for integration of informal settlement into planned neighborhood development of Eagle Island, Port Harcourt, and Rivers State. The data collected and examined affirms that Eagle Island neighborhood development was a service and site housing estate undertaken by Rivers State Government which has experienced a number of challenges with the development of informal settlements in this planned neighborhood. The situation in Eagle Island neighborhood is different in the sense that residents of the squatter settlement do not acquire their land legally either from the native owners or government, but illegally occupied settlement. The information collected and examined in regard to the existing pro-poor approaches applicable for integration suggests that the mode/method of informal settlements incorporated into the formal or planned neighborhood includes;

- 1) Poverty reduction strategies.
- 2) Sites and services housing schemes
- 3) Land regularization that guarantees security of tenure.
- 4) Public rental housing.
- 5) Comprehensive housing scheme.
- 6) Sectorial intervention.
- 7) Preparation of detailed infrastructural network plan.
- 8) Provision of array basic facilities.

The integration of informal settlements into the planned neighbourhoods cannot be said to be successful in places where people living in informal settlement have no urban services with water supplied, electricity, good sanitation, and access to good housing and difficulties in locating street addresses. The implications of this result is that Government and its agencies to a large extent has not demonstrated the political will in incorporating the settlers of informal settlements and to understanding the issues that affecting their livelihood; when adopting an approach that is against a clear contravention of the convention which advocates an all inclusive urban order. Therefore the use of proper approaches is key to housing the beauty and inclusiveness in planned neighbourhood. Conclusively, informal settlement should not be considered as an anomaly, but rather incorporating them into the formal system, will be highly important to address the perceived menace they represent in terms of the desires and the needs of the urban poor to access urban land for housing amidst the underlying issues of poverty, housing shortages and inequality.

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