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RESTORING RESIDENTIAL SLUMS INTO HABITABLE DISTRICTS: A STUDY OF ODO-IKOYI - ISOLO QUARTERS OF AKURE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examines the living condition of the people in Odo-Ikoyi and Isolo quarters area of Akure, Nigeria. The study employed the use of questionnaire to gather information on the condition of buildings and socio-economic variables. This is backed up by site investigation survey to identify the types and nature of the environmental activities in the areas. Simple table, percentages and explanatory paragraph were used for the analysis. A lot of problems bedeviled Odo-Ikoyi and Isolo quarters, ranging from; old age, poor housing condition, missing environmental amenities, poverty and lack of attention from both the residents and the government. These conditions have affected and deteriorated the area into slum and squalid environment. The study notes that there is hope in restoring the slum into a good and habitable environment and therefore recommends that government should wake up to her responsibility by providing decent living environment to her citizenry. It is also recommended that the residents of the area be empowered by government through its poverty alleviation and skill acquisition programmes. Other recommendations include educating and enlightenment campaign to re awaken the minds of the residents about the needs to develop their environment. The NGOs and the multinational organization are also recommended to be brought in to the redevelopment, rehabilitation and renovation of the areas.

Key words: *Slum, Habitable district, Transformation, Akure, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Interest in the redevelopment of blighted areas of towns and cities is borne out of the fact that a combination of market forces and social trends are motivating the urban dwellers to seek ways of improving urban life; thereby improving the over-all urban image. According to Christopher (2002), there has been a growing interest in the developed nations to renew degenerating and degenerated urban areas for the purpose of improving the quality of life in the city. However, in the developing nations, the financial and the social implications of such renewal have made it difficult for many governments to embark on renewal exercise, though they knew it is necessary.

Omole (2000) likens the city to a living organism, which goes through the process of birth, growth, decay and death. But unlike many living things, a city or any part of a city that is "dead" can be restored to life. Slum describes a process in the life of a city or part of it when decay or death sets in. At this stage, the area is characterized by advanced blight condition which usually requires total clearance or rebuilding as the most effective corrective action (Omole, 1995). The problems of slum development and its attendant effects are peculiar to urban centres and are of particular interest to this study.

Urban slum can occur in the core or at the fringe of the city. Slums are areas of predominant poor access roads, formless physical development, poor housing quality and condition, high occupancy ratio, high social crimes and poor environmental condition (Omole 2000) Studies have shown that unplanned and spontaneous transition of the old cities from the traditional setting to modern setting has had negative impact on the quality of the residential areas. The results of this transition are overcrowding, social and

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physical deterioration, unsanitary condition and inadequate facilities and amenities like potable water, drainage system and health facilities. All these, in effect endanger the health, safety and morale of the residents. The interaction of socio-cultural, physical, environmental as well as psychological forces in slum areas give rise to devalued physical and social images of these areas by the larger community (Olukotun, 1992; Agbola, 1997; Omole, 2000)

The act of correcting such negative image is generally termed Urban Renewal (US Housing Acts 1954). Studies have also shown that many slum areas have been converted to habitable areas successfully in many countries such as the Philippines (David 1987; UNCHS-HABITAT, 1987), Indonesia and India (Agung, 2009), Pakistan (Vander, 1985) and Nigeria (Ola, 1984; Agbola 1997; Olukotun, 1992 ; Lawal, 1997; Omole, 2000).

Christopher (2002) identifies some of the benefits of slum clearance schemes to include the expansion of municipal tax-base, cleaning of contaminated lands, job creation and promotion of revitalized and positive image of the urban life. Scholars over the years seem to have agreed on five major approaches to restore life in "dead" settlements. The approaches are; Redevelopment, Rehabilitation, Renovation, Conservation and Preservation as well as Economic Revitalization (Lawal, 1997; Omole, 2000).

Redevelopment or Total Clearance approach involves a comprehensive demolition and the complete redesigning and rebuilding of the whole area. High cost of implementation and the resultant breakdown of social ties and economic ties are the main criticisms against this age long approach. In the case of the rehabilitation approach, structures, amenities and facilities are repaired and upgraded in order to extend their life-spans. Minor clearance to bring in necessary facilities may be involved. Conservation and preservation approach involves campaigning, educating and enlightening of the residents on how to keep their environment clean and maintain their properties. Renovation approach involves light exercise of repairs, repainting, re-plastering, replacement and amendments of fittings in the structure and may include inadequate facilities and amenities like modification of the external appearance of the structure.

Economic Revitalization approach is the newest of these approaches. It is sociologically inclined, because it believes that if people are economically empowered, they will very likely act well, think well, and reason that they need to live in good and decent environment to prolong their lives (Lawal, 1997; Omole, 2000). However, the level of slum formation, the level of deterioration, the will and the financial ability of government and of course, the supports of the inhabitants determine which of the approaches or combination of approaches to be employed. These, of course determine the success or otherwise of urban renewal exercise. Along this line, this work is aimed at examining the housing and environmental condition of the slum area and make useful suggestions on the approaches to be adopted in enhancing the development and habitability of the area.

The Study Area

Odo -Ikoyi – Isolo Quarters is located in the core area of Akure, the capital of Ondo State in Nigeria. Akure has developed from a rural town to a medium sized Nigeria town within the last quarter of a decade. The transformation of the town to a political headquarters of an emerging geo-political entity has increased the level of economic activities in the town.

As a typical Yoruba town, Akure's economic activities revolve around the centre of the town where the main market (Oja oba) is situated. Also the town centre harbours the oldest buildings in the town. The poorest of the community reside here at Odo-Ikoyi-Isolo quarters which are made up of Odo-Isolo, Ikoyi, Oja Oshodi, Araromi and Isolo areas. These areas are the indigenous parts of Akure.

The study area covers a land area of about 31.0581 hectares with a projected population of about thirteen thousand, one hundred and eighty-two (13,182) as at 2004. The area falls within the jurisdiction of Akure South Local Government area, one of the eighteen Local Government Areas of Ondo State, Nigeria. Figure 1 below shows the study area.

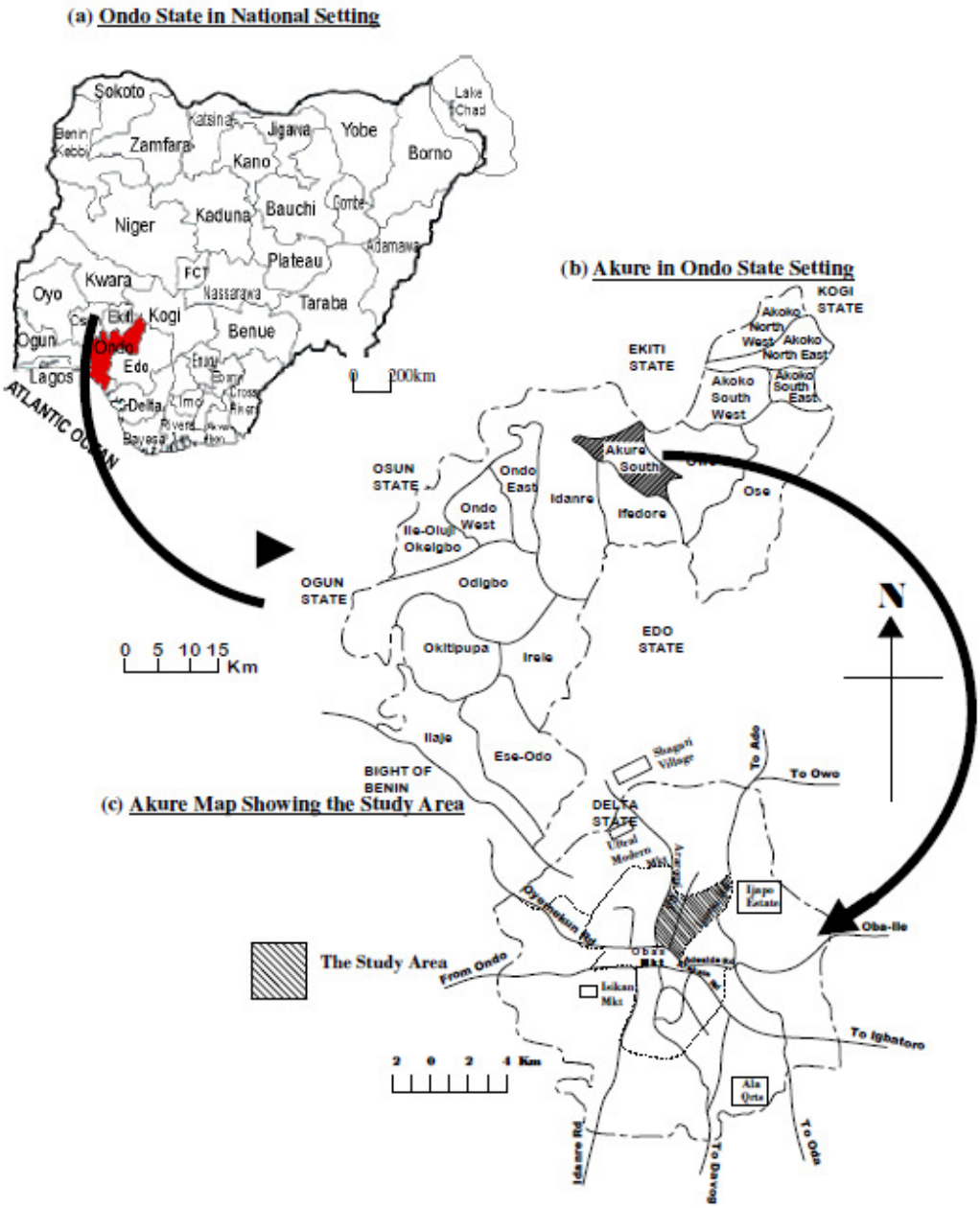

Figure 1 showing map of study area

Methodology

The primary source of data for this research is questionnaire, administered randomly on selected buildings in the study areas. The study areas were divided into four district areas, namely; Araromi, Oja-Osodi, Odo-Ikoyi and Isolo quarters. The study areas have a total number of 1,306 buildings, and a total of 1,280 questionnaires were administered, 320 in each of the districts, with the use of stratified sampling method. Out of these, a total of 1,113 were well answered, returned and subsequently analysed for the study. This represents about 85% sample. This particular set of questionnaire was mainly for the condition of buildings.

Apart from the housing condition survey, 520 questionnaires drawn from the projected population of the areas were administered for

socio-economic survey. These represent 25% sample. The breakdown of 130 questionnaires went to head of households in each of the districts. In addition, an inventory survey of the environment and community facilities was carried out to determine the adequacy or otherwise of the facilities in the study area. Quarters such as Ijala - Kekere road, Isolo lane, Ajonbolo lane, Mayegun, and Akosile were among the areas of the study duly covered by the inventory.

Result and Discussion

Weak policy guideline, inadequate funds, negligence on part of the government and residents were some of the major problems militating against the renewal of the study area. Other problems discovered are discussed below.

Housing and Land Use

Result from the survey shows that ownership of houses is of two main; owner-occupier 44.1%, and rental arrangement 55.9%. 40.9% of the sampled buildings were bungalows, while the remaining 59.1% were multi-store buildings.

The survey further shows that 77.3% of the buildings are over sixty years of age. The type of wall materials include mud blocks 34.1%, Timber 25%, Brick walling 18.2% and cemented blocks 22.7%. In general, our findings show that only 10.33% of the buildings were 'good', 42.50% fall into category of 'fair' and 47.17% in dilapidated and derelict poor condition (Table 1).

It can be inferred from the findings that almost half of the buildings needed attention, while 42.5% (fair buildings) need renovation.

The study area is predominately residential (59.20% residential). The proximity of the area to the Central Business District explains the presence of about 26.60% of the buildings as being used for commercial purposes and 11.50% being used for mixed uses as residential cum commercial. Public uses account for only 2.16%. This shows a dearth of public institution in the area. There is almost a total absence of industrial establishment (0.54%), while there is total absence of recreational land use (Table 2)

Our survey reveals that the residents of the study area need to be economically empowered. For instance, of the 520 Household heads interviewed, 64% of them earn less than ₦24, 000 per year. 19% have an income of between ₦24, 000 and ₦120, 000 per annum, only about 17% earn above ₦120, 000 yearly. This shows a poor economic standing of an average resident of the study area (Table 3).

Roads and Environmental Condition

Apart from the major collector roads, there is a glaring absence of accessible roads, to most buildings. As shown by our survey, only 20.5% of the roads have been tarred, 56.8% ungraded, 9.1% surfaced and 13.6% were footpaths. Poor drainage system and indiscriminate waste disposal into the drains cause drainage blockage. As a result of this, the entire area gets flooded during raining seasons thereby forcing Ala River to over flow its bank and tearing away the wall of many houses, particularly those very close to the bank of the river. To worsen the environmental condition of the study area, is the persistent and regular blockage of drains with refuse by the residents on the pretence that government has not provided waste collection and disposal centres for them. Adjoining streets like Oluyide Lane, one side of Ijomu Street and many others are without drains. At the extreme end of Isolo Street (beside the canal) is liable to flood, and swampy both in dry and raining seasons. This is not unconnected with the topography of the area and the vulnerability of the area to flooding being at the bank of Ala River. The situation in Odo-Ikoyi, Oja Oshodi and Araromi streets is not so different from the one above, in that people in these areas also dump their refuse into drains and canal indiscriminately and without control.

It was also discovered that pot-holes and cross-junctions dotted the entire road network in this area. For instance, streets like Ajeloro Street in Odo Ikoyi, Oluyide Lane, Aderemi Street, Abibiriti lane, Ajaye Street among others were all dotted by pot-holes, while some other roads remain unattended to for years. The rocky condition of Ajeloro Street makes transportation system a problem in the area. Another pathetic finding is the absence of parking space in the area. This creates situations where vehicles are parked on the major roads in the study area, thereby creating vehicular and human conflict

The study also reveals that there is virtually absence of organized recreation facilities. The absence of open space for relaxation and sporting

activities after the day's work according to our findings makes life uninteresting, particularly for the youths in the area.

Inadequate Facilities and Infrastructures

This study discovers quite a lot of inadequate facilities in the study areas, which ought to have contributed to the levels of habitability of the residents of these areas. Among these facilities are; waste collection points, police post, organized open spaces for relaxation, children playing ground, Health centres, community hall among others. The worst scenario is the absence of portable water to the study areas. Our finding shows that the major source of water supply in the area is through well, majority of which dry up during the dry season. Table 5 shows that "well" as a source of water supply accounts for 72.7%, followed by the streams 11.4%. The erratic water supply through public pipe accounts for 9.1%, buying from Tankers 4.5%, and sachet water 2.3%.

Past Government Efforts in the Study Area

Our investigation reveals that many attempts have been made to alleviate the suffering of the people in the study areas in the past. All these efforts have always ended at the proposal level. There are existing proposal on housing, waste management, road upgrading and surfacing, provision of portable water among others, which never witness physical manifestation.. According to our findings, successive governments have not been able to release funds for the execution of these projects. However, as at the time of this survey, there was a channelization of Ala River by the Ondo State Government. This was made possible in the opinion of the residents as a result of the outcry of the people of the areas and also, because of the interest of the new administration on physical planning and developmental matters.

Policy Recommendations

Our findings reveal that Odo-Ikoyi- Isolo quarter of Akure, is fast deteriorating. However, the level of slum in the area does not call for total redevelopment approach. Rehabilitation and renovation approaches are therefore appropriate as the solutions to the environmental problems in the area.

The low level of income or the poor economic power of the residents of the study area calls for the application of economic revitalization approach along with the current state government's poverty alleviation and skill acquisition programme.

Many of the buildings in the study area are found to be inaccessible by motorable roads. This necessitates the demolition of identified 130 buildings and eventual displacement of 1,613 people to pave way for road openings.

It is also recommended that more public facilities should be provided. Of primary importance is the provision of potable water, waste collection and disposal system, organized, open space, children playing ground, community hall among others.

The assistance of NGOs and the state government should be sought to make this proposal feasible. All the buildings classified as 'fair', 'poor', dilapidated and derelict need one form of renewal or the other. Those with major repairs and minor repairs as indicated in Table 4 should be given priority. Redevelopment may not be needed here, except for areas where the level of deterioration is too high. The flood plain of Ala River should be cleared of all buildings and should be made into green areas to make it more aesthetically appealing.

Proper and sustained maintenance of all the renovated works must be put in place. Necessary measures that will ensure that the residents have the financial capabilities to maintain the expected new structures must be worked out through the government poverty alleviation programmes.

The residents should be encouraged to organize themselves into cooperative and thrift societies along various developmental lines. For instance, there could be co-operative society for building maintenance for example, with backing of government in term of technical supports and financial aids.

Also, Community Development Associations (CDA s) should be put in place for the whole area. The duties of these associations should include educating and encouraging the residents on the need to maintain a healthy living environment and increase the income generating activities of the residents.

The National Directorate for Employment (NDE) should introduce her various employment schemes to the residents and encourage them to

participate in the various activities. The Ondo State Skill Acquisition Scheme and poverty alleviation programme should also be introduced to the residents of these areas. So that when the residents are gainfully employed, they will eat well, think well and be able to take care of their environment.

Implementation Strategies

Poor implementation is the bane of many urban renewal schemes in developing nations. For the Odo-Ikoyi-Isolo urban renewal scheme not to follow the same pattern, a phased implementation strategy should be embarked upon.

The first phase should be a two flanked plans. The first flank is the economic empowerment of the residents. This involves the organization of the residents into co-operative societies, through which loans are accessed by the residents to engage in Informal Economic Sector (IES) in the study areas. This is to economically empower the people. A revolving loan of ₦50 million could be made available to community banks in Akure metropolis which could be accessed by the cooperative societies. Both the state and local government should be the guarantors. The second flank should be the designing and opening of access roads in the areas. This will involve demolition of some buildings and subsequent displacement of some residents. The combined financial and administrative input of both Ondo State Government and Akure South Local Government area can handle this first phase. Payment of compensation to displaced persons is very paramount and crucial in this phase.

Phase two should focus on the provision of services, utilities and facilities within the areas. The State Government and Akure South Local Government should be responsible for this.

The renovation and rehabilitation of the buildings in the areas form the last phase, it is expected that the cooperative societies already formed by the residents should be used as a means of providing funds for this. Akure South Area Planning Office should be saddled with the responsibility of monitoring the implementation.

Conclusion

The level of slum formation in Odo- Ikoyi-Isolo Quarters of Akure, Nigeria is not yet beyond remedy. In fact, the solution is still at manageable cost level. An action on time will definitely forestalls further deterioration and destruction in these areas.

A lot of educational programmes should be put in place to enlighten the residents, as far as environmental deterioration is concerned. Ondo State government should see it as part of her responsibilities to revitalize the areas. This is not to say that the development of these areas should be left alone in the hands of government. It should be the responsibility of all the residents, government and the good people of the state.

Table 1: Summary of Condition of Buildings in Odo-Ikoyi- Isolo Quarters of Akure, Nigeria

Building Condition	No of Buildings	Percentages
Good	115	10.33
Fair	473	42.50
Poor (Dilapidated Derelict)	525	47.17
Total	1113	100%

Table 2: Building Uses In Odo-Ikoyi-Isolo Quarters of Akure, Nigeria

Use	No of Buildings	Percentage
Residential	659	59.20
Commercial	296	26.10
Mixed (Residential/ commercial)	128	11.50
Public/Semi public	24	2.16
Industrial	6	0.54
Recreational	0	0.00
Total	1,113	100.00

Table 3: Income Levels of the Residents of Odo-Ikoyi-Isolo Quarters of Akure, Nigeria

Income Per Annum	No of People	Percentage
Below ₦24, 000	333	64.04
₦24, 000 – N120, 000	100	19.23
Above ₦120, 000	87	16.73
Total	520	100.00

Table 4: Renovation Analysis of Buildings in Odo-Ikoyi-Isolo area of Akure, Nigeria

Types of Renovation	No of Buildings	Percentage
Major Repair	525	52.60
Minor Repair	473	47.40
Total	998	100%

Table 5: Sources of water supply in Odo-Ikoyi-Isolo Quarters, Akure

Types of Sources	Frequency	Percentage
Public pipe	4	9.1
Well	32	72.7
Stream	5	11.4
Buying from Tankers	2	4.5
Sachet water	1	2.3
Total	44	100%

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