

SLUM CHARACTERISTICS OF A DEPLORABLE RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT OF AKURE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The reality of the inner core of cities becoming slums generally tended to follow the theoretical path established by Burgess. Adapting the tenets of his classical planning model to describe the spatial distribution of land-use in Akure, this study attempts to investigate the factors responsible for the formation of slums and how the city's centre become degraded. Method of investigation is essentially both descriptive and analytical based on field survey. The study examined the existing situation in the study area in terms of its housing system and the condition of infrastructure facilities available in the neighbourhood. It also examined the socio-economic status of respondents, their perception of the living environments and problems experienced. Questionnaires, observation, housing demographic and facility survey are major research instruments used to gather relevant information for the study. The empirical survey carried out in the area revealed the high degree of deplorable conditions of the living environments and the inadequacy of essential facilities for comfortable living. The area is crowded with derelict buildings that lack basic household services. For these reasons, extensive development and upgrading renewal efforts were recommended, which should be supported with improved sanitation strategy for sustainable management of the area.

Keywords: Deplorable condition, Degradation, Poverty level, Proliferation of slums, Re-development and Urban management.

Introduction

The deplorable condition of our cities in Nigeria is something worthy of serious attention. The uncontrolled growth in residential environment, inadequate urban management and control policies, high rate of poverty level of urban dwellers and lack of political will on the part of policy makers have contributed in no small measure to urban degradation and reduction in the quality of our environments. According to Jiboye (2003), this situation manifests itself in various forms such as congestion and overcrowding, emergence of unsanitary housing, failure of infrastructure amenities and the general deterioration in the quality of environments leading to the proliferation of slums.

The issue of slum development is a global affair which is not restricted to either developed, developing or less developed nations. United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UNHSP) (2003) reported that 923,986,000 people or 31.6% of the world's population lived in slums in 2001, that 43.0% of the urban population of all developing regions combined lived in slums, in comparison to 60.0% in developed world and 78.2% in the least developed countries. Among these, however, the sub-Saharan Africa was reported to have the largest proportion of urban slum dwellers of about 71.9%. In its projection, it was estimated that in the next thirty years, the global number of slum dwellers would have increased to about two billion.

Third world cities are known to have two types of environmentally degraded areas. The first is the squatter settlement which comprises uncontrolled or temporary dwellings largely inhabited by migrants from outside of the city concerned. Often, such areas are occupied

illegally since building plans are not approved before being built. The second type is the slum proper which can be defined as legal, permanent dwellings which have become substandard through age, neglect and/or sub-division into micro-occupational units such as rooms, cubicles or cocklofts (Onokerhoraye, 1995). Omole (2000) attempted a summary of the various definitions of the 'term urban renewal', as a process by which old, outdated structures, and environment or area designated as slum or blight or squalor are altered and replaced with the basic aim of creating a new lease of life. This definition encapsulates the essential characteristics of slum to be high densities and low standard of housing (structure and services) and squalor. Dwelling in such settlements vary from simple shacks to more permanent structures, and access to basic services and infrastructures tend to be limited or never available. UNHSP (2003) clearly expressed slum to include the vast informal settlements that are quickly becoming the most visible expression of urban poverty in developing cities, such as squatter settlements and illegal subdivisions. In such settlements, access to water, electricity, sanitation and other basic services and infrastructures is usually limited.

The residential cores of Akure exhibit such deplorable conditions where substandard houses are prevalent in unkempt environments. This paper aims at investigating the condition of housing, the state of infrastructure facilities, the socio-economic characteristics and cultural lifestyle of the residents of the study area with a view to determine the factors responsible for the formation of slums in this area.

Research Setting, Material and Methods

This research was carried out in Akure, the capital city of Ondo State. Akure is an ancient city that date back to the seventeenth century. It is geographically located on latitudes $7^{\circ} 13'$ and $7^{\circ} 15'$ North of the Equator and longitude $5^{\circ} 10'$ and $5^{\circ} 12'$ East of the Greenwich Meridian. A specific area in the cores of the city was chosen for the study, which comprise of Araromi, Ojaoshodi, Odokoyi, Isolo and Ijomu areas. The study area is an epitome of slum formation as described in different literature (see Figures 1 and 2). This area has a land expanse of about 3.6km^2 with a population figure of 33,303 inhabitants. The land-use is largely residential with a few commercial activities around the city central business district.

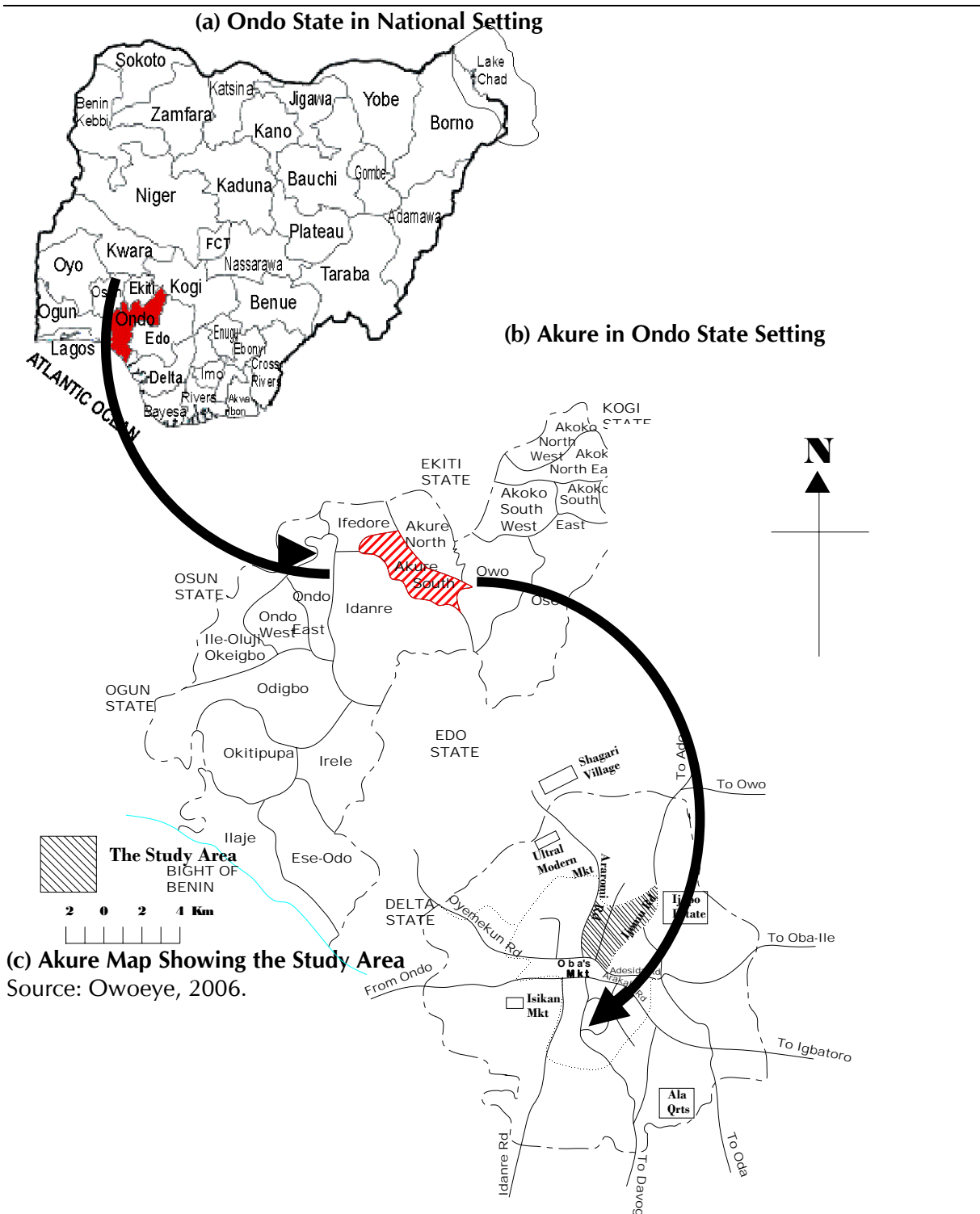


Fig. 2: Concentric Zone Theory adapted for Akure Land-use pattern
 Source: Field Survey, 2010.

The materials used for data collection mainly include direct observation, questionnaires building demographic and facility survey. Secondary data on health records, available base map of the study area and records from the environmental managers were sourced from the various institutions, ministries and establishments. Population data were obtained from the

National Population Commission, Akure. About 1306 buildings existed in the area, out of which 48 were non-residential, leaving 1258 as target population for the study. From this, a sample of 20% amounting to 252 was selected randomly for questionnaire administration. In selecting the respondents, every 5th house in the five streets involved was taken for interview, usually a household-head per building.

Conceptual Clarification

This research adapts Burgess' concentric zone theory to describe the spatial distribution of land-use pattern of Akure. Generally, the theory assumed five concentric zones to be found in the cities. The first is the centre of the city called the Central Business District (CBD), which he referred to as the focus of commercial, social and civic lives. This include area like Town hall, Oba's palace, Erekesan market, and the General Post Office area. This area is surrounded by Zone 2, the zone of transitional land-use containing light industrial premises, obsolete housing and slum property occupied by lower social groups and a high proportion of immigrants. This covers areas like Araromi, Ojaosodi, Odopetu, Irowo and Arakale. This is followed by the third zone of a belt of working class (low-income) housing, occupied by families that have migrated out of zone 2, but still require living closer to their places of work. Farther away from the city centre is zone 4, which is a belt of single-family dwellings occupied by middle-class groups and interspersed with exclusive residences and high-class apartment buildings. Such include area like Osinle quarters, Vinning Christian College, Don Bosco/Sacred Heart Cathedral, and Bishop Court along Ondo road. Finally, at the fringe of the urban area is zone 5, which is the commuter zone. This may be separated from the continuously built-up area of the city by a green belt. This cover area like Alagbaka quarters, Federal Secretariat, Odopo layout, Ogunlusi layout, and Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA).

The adaptability of the principle of this theory to explain the pattern of land-uses in Akure presupposes that increase in distance from the city centre reduces the rate of accessibility, rents, poverty levels and rate of diseases. But as the CBD expands, the locational advantages of the central place might reduce while the transitional zone (i.e. zone 2) becomes more and more twilight area, awaiting redevelopment. This is represented in Figure 2. Accordingly, zone 1 is considered as the CBD, having the maximum overall accessibility to most parts of the city. It is the focus of intra-city transport routes and the highest concentration of commercial activities. However, competitions for sites among the commercial users have raised the value of land and the intensity of development to a peak. The economic growth and population concentration in the area have increased densities within the CBD. Zone 2 represents the wholesaling, light-manufacturing and derelict housing belt of the city. It serves as the commercial activities of the central business area, interspersed with transport facilities and residential lands. Next to this are the residential areas of zones 3, 4 and 5 which are classified as low, middle and high-class residential quarters respectively. The relevance of this model to the study is seen in its ability to identify zones 2 and 3 (the study area) as the belt of substandard housing vis-à-vis wholesale activities and low-class residential area respectively.

The concept of vicious circle of poverty is equally relevant in determining the causes and processes of slum formation in urban area. Many researchers established strong linkages between poverty and slum formation. For examples, Abumere (1987), Osatuyi (2004), Olanrewaju (2004), and Owoeye (2006) argued extensively that poverty is an important factor responsible for urban decay, using nutritional absolute, relative income, and social well-being approaches to measure the level of deprivation in Nigeria, Olanrewaju (2004) established that population earning below minimum amount needed for an average family to survive is to be regarded as poor. Rein (1970) conceptualized poverty as a state of having lack of needs or desire and the inability to make such needs available due to financial incapability occasioned by low or poor level of income. In like manner, Galbraith (1989) argued that people living in crowded houses and dirty shelters are noted as people living painful and comparatively grief lives. Omole (2000) observed that inaccessibility to basic facilities like pipe-bore water,

electricity, schools, and health facilities as clear indicator of the presence of poverty, which often retards comfort and satisfaction. Figure 3 shows a graphical representation of circular effects of poverty on slum formation.

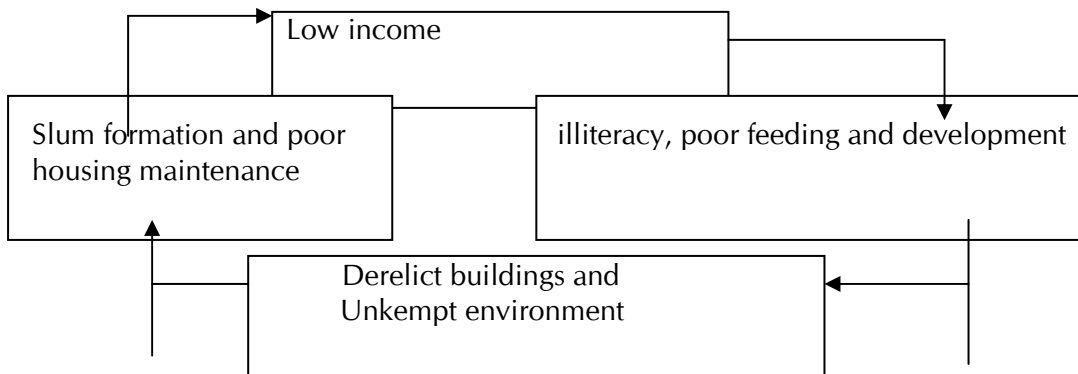


Figure 3: Circular Effects of Poverty in Slum Formation

Source: Owoeye, 2006

This assertion is clarified in the work of George (1999) who observed that the poor financial condition of slum residents is responsible for the reason why six to ten people live in a room. She equally submitted that the dirty living habits of slum dwellers and the neglect of building maintenance due to financial incapability breeds slum conditions while the physical deterioration of the area encourages slum habits in the dwellers.

DISCUSSION OF EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Research findings are presented in two perspectives with a view to establish the relationship of housing-facility condition and socio-economic status of residents with slum formation in the study area. Meanwhile, only 230 of the 250 questionnaires administered were retrieved. These were used for the data analysis, representing 92% of the expected responses.

The Existing Situation in the Study Area

This comprises of the socio-economic status of respondents, building characteristics and the state of infrastructure facilities available in the area.

(a) Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables considered here as shown in Table 1 reveals that a larger percentage of the sampled respondents have no formal education as indicated by over 55.0% of the respondents. Only 7.8% have tertiary education while 12.6% respondents attained secondary education. Their major occupations, therefore, include trading (30.9%), craftsmanship (19.1%), and farming 13.5%). Only 8.3% of the respondents were civil servants while 28.2% were unemployed and apprentices. This affects their level of income as only 27.0% respondents received above N10,000 monthly while as much as 70.0% receive less; 19.1% have no fixed source of income. The possible implication of this is that people who do not have enough financial resources would not have enough to spend on the improvement of their dwellings as well as on feeding. Average household size of 5 to 6 persons is predominant with an average of 14 persons per building. This kind of household distribution has significant impact on the level of environmental sanitation in an urban setting. It suggests a high level of pressure that will be mounted on household facilities, and consequently on the environment in general.

(b) Building Characteristics

The quality of housing in the study area as shown in Table 2 is very low due to poor quality of building materials used for construction, the inadequate technology, and poor planning standard in handling the building components. A large proportion of housing stocks in the area were aged. For instance, over 80.0% of the sampled buildings have spent 30 years and above.

Only 10.5% of the buildings were recently constructed, which are houses below 20 years. Comparing between relative habitability of housing and age, it was affirmed that buildings erected in more recent time tend to be more habitable than those built much earlier. Thus, a large number of the housing stock in the area have low relative habitability which have consequent effects on the state of health, socio-economic well-being and emotional stability of the residents. From the responses gathered, 97.8% of sampled housing units have zinc roofing material while only 2.2% have asbestos materials. About 79.1% were made with mud walling materials, while about 21.0% have sandcrete blocks. This shows that the level of technology of building construction in the area is rudimentary. The assessment of maintenance level reveals that over 80.0% buildings needed either minor or major repairs, out of which 18.3% were completely old and dilapidated. Only 15.2% exhibit evidence of physical soundness, while 62.6% of the roofs of buildings examined were patched and leaking.

(c) Condition of Infrastructure Facilities

Figure 3 shows the various sources of water supply in the area. It reveals that hand-dug well as the major source of water supply in the area, which accounts for 85.7% responses. Only 14.3% have access to tap water which is reported as not regularly available. This situation does not guarantee adequate supply of quality water in the area. Most of the wells were located in unkempt surroundings without cover, while the water in these wells was used raw without treatment. The rain water used as substitute during rainy season has the possibility of being contaminated as majority of the roofing sheets were rust and dirty.

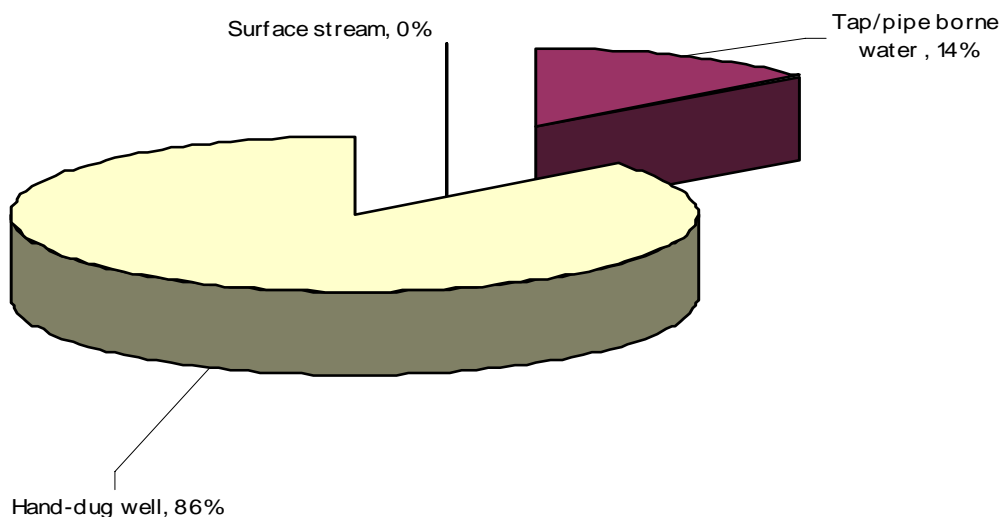


Fig. 3: Source of Water Supply
Source: Field Survey, 2010

From table 3 over 65.0% respondents used pit-latrines for sewage disposal. Only 10.9% used modern Water Closet System, 4.8% used bucket latrine, 11.3% and used bush/dunghill% do not have sewage management facility at all. Alternative methods used are either through mobile system (4.8%), bush or dung-hills (11.3%) and 7.8% used streams and drainages. This makes the area look dirty, ugly and stinking. The method of waste disposal too is generally absurd in spite of government efforts to curb indiscriminate dumping of refuse. The dumping of waste in this area gives room and breeding space for rodents, flies, rats, mosquitoes and other dangerous animals that can contribute to the spreading of diseases and other related hazards in the environment. For example, the regular dumping of refuse in Ala River (which is a major river in the study area) has caused blockage to the free flow of the river thereby leading to seasonal flooding into the premises of buildings around the place as indicated by 20.4% respondents. Liquid wastes too are poorly managed. Waste water from kitchen, bathrooms and laundries are not properly channelled into drainages. Standing water all over the places affords

breeding grounds for mosquitoes and flies. Most of the gutters are not cemented and full of foul smelling water which creates swimming ponds for pigs and ducks. To walk near the wall of many buildings is to experience terrible odour of urine disposed here and there by the inmates and passers-by. All these create ugly look of the environments and makes it unattractive. As results of these inhumane conditions, about 67% of the respondents were willing to quit the area for better places within the city (see table 4). Table 5 illustrates the condition of other facilities in the neighbourhood, such as source of electricity supply and its functionality, road accessibility, security and health facilities.

Environmental Problems Experienced

In this section, the various environmental related problems experienced in the area are shown in Tables 6 and 7. These include inadequate sanitary facilities as suggested by 54.4% respondents, poor water supply by 16.8% respondents, dirty environment by 14.8%, overcrowding 12.2% and 0.9% respondents suggested lack of good drainage system.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The followings are the policy implications of this paper, which are based on major findings. The area is ripe enough for extensive developmental programme which should focus on how to upgrade the physical condition of the area. This should aim at provision of decent and adequate housing units and healthy environment for the dwellers. The assistance of international bodies like the UNICEF and Centre for Human Settlement (UN-Habitat) can be requested in the area of infrastructural provision, through Urban Basic Service Programmes (UBSP). Also, provision of good drainages and water channels are recommended, particularly the execution of Ala River channelization project so as to curb the incessant flooding that plagues the residents around the area.

Although effective and enforceable environmental policies are difficult to develop and implement in many sub-Saharan countries including Nigeria, but this appear to be a viable solution if a country must be environmentally secured. In this wise, the re-introduction of the old sanitary inspectors is recommended as a sustainable strategy for any intending renewal and upgrading effort to be efficient in the area. However, the people should be educated through enlightenment campaign programme whereby they get acquainted with the benefits of healthy environments. Since poverty has the tendency to encourage such activities that lead to slum formation and growth, the ongoing minimum wage increase is hereby recommended to be extended to all and sundry so as to reduce the high rate of poverty that ravage the inhabitants of the study area.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Educational Level		
No Formal Education	129	56.1
Primary Education	54	23.5
Secondary Education	29	12.6
Tertiary Education	18	7.8
Total	230	100.0
Occupational Pattern		
Farming	31	13.5
Craftsmanship	44	19.1
Trading	71	30.9
Civil Service	19	8.3
Unemployment	55	23.9
Apprentices	10	4.3
Total	230	100.0

Income Distributions		
No Fixed Source of Income	44	19.1
Below # 5,000	74	32.2
# 5,000 – 10,000	50	21.7
# 10,001 – 15,000	43	18.7
Above # 15,000	19	8.3
Total	230	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 2: Building Characteristics

Materials used for construction	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Walling – Mud/mud blocks	182	79.1
- Cement/sandcrete blocks	48	20.9
Total	230	100.0
Roofing – Zinc/corrugated iron sheet	225	97.8
- Asbestos materials	05	2.2
Total	230	100.0
Structural Condition – Physically sound	35	15.2
Need minor repair	80	34.8
Need major repair	73	31.7
Old & dilapidated	42	18.3
Total	230	100.0
Age of Building – Below 10 years	11	4.8
10 -19 years	13	5.7
20 – 29	18	7.8
30 – 39	55	23.9
40 years and above	133	57.8
Total	230	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 3: Waste disposed methods and facilities

Waste disposal	Frequency	Percentages
Pit latrine	150	65.2
Water closet	25	10.9
Bucket latrine	11	4.8
Bush / dunghills	26	11.3
Streams and drainages	18	7.8
Total	230	100%
Waste disposal facilities		
Designated open space	49	21.3
Road sides	4	1.7
Controlled tipping	150	65.2
Incinerating/ burning	27	11.7
Total	230	100%

Authors' field work 2010

Table 4: Willingness to relocate to better areas in the city

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Willingness to relocate	163	67
Not willing to relocate	67	33
Total	230	100%

Authors' field work 2010

Table 5: Condition of Neighbourhood Facilities

Electricity Supply	Frequency	Percentage
Source – PHCN	209	90.9
- Self generating plant	04	1.7
- Hurricane Lamp	17	7.4
Total	230	100.0
Regularity – Constant/Regular	07	3.0
- Erratic/Irregular	206	89.6
- Not available	17	7.4
Total	230	100.0
Road Accessibility	157	68.3
Availability – Yes (available)	73	31.7
- No (not available)		
Total	230	100.0
Condition – Tarred	88	38.3
- Not tarred	74	32.2
- Ordinary foot-path	68	29.6
Total	230	100.0

Security & Health Facilities

Responses	Security Facility		Health Facility	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Available	01	0.4	60	26.1
Not available	229	99.6	170	73.9
Total	230	100.0	230	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 6: Environmental related problems and sicknesses in the study area

Problems and Sicknesses	Frequency	Percentages
Flooding	46.7	20.3
Cholera	20.9	9.1
Typhoid	54.1	23.5
Malaria	67.6	29.4
Diarrhoea	26.7	11.6
Dysentery	14	6.1
Total	230	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 7: Causes of environmental related problems.

Causes	Frequency	Percentages
Inadequate sanitary facility	127.4	55.4
Poor water supply	38.6	16.8
Dirty and unkempt environment	34	14.8
Overcrowding	28	12.2
Lack of good drainage system	2.0	0.9
Total	230	100%

Authors' field work 2010

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