

Disasters, vulnerability and inadequate housing in Nigeria: A viable strategic framework.

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Abstract

Inadequate housing has a significant impact on the livelihoods of poor people in Nigeria. It affects their economic, political, and social development, as well as providing poor resistance to natural and human induced hazards. More vulnerability reduction interventions are needed to tackle the devastating impact of climate change on the urban poor who are highly vulnerable as a result of their unplanned environmental conditions, low-quality shelter and poor infrastructural systems. This paper aims to develop a viable strategic framework specifically address the impact and vulnerability of dwellers of the substandard housing so as to enhance the creation of resilient communities and significantly improve their living conditions. It provides a broad understanding of dynamics and interrelationship between inadequate housing, disasters, vulnerability and urban poverty, as well as the causes and effects of inadequate housing on its inhabitants. It is hoped that the framework will serve as a guide for mitigating disaster, housing inadequacy and thereby improving the livelihoods of the urban poor.

Keywords: Inadequacy, Housing, Vulnerability, Urban poor, Disaster, Framework.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

At the beginning of the millennium, more than one billion people lived in inadequate, substandard housing conditions. According to Bredenoord et al.,[1], one-third of the world's urban population do not have access to adequate shelter. More than a billion people in developing countries are with no access to clean water and 270 million children without access to health services.

Housing stands as the single largest expenditure in a household budget; it mostly affects other necessities and even exacerbates an already insufficient income. Housing-Induced Poverty is often a silent or overlooked factor in considering both the causes of poverty as well as potential remedies to alleviate poverty [2]. Poverty issues often manifest themselves in spatial patterns. The manifestation of poverty arises when poor families and individuals cluster in one area, the outcomes of these developmental processes are diverse urban problems ranging from overcrowding, the deplorable environment, substandard living conditions, inadequate and poor infrastructural services, homelessness and other related problems [3].

Olotuah,[4] asserts that poverty is not only limited to one's ability to acquire life's basic amenities, it also restricts the choice of living environment. Most of the urban poor are now compelled to live in unsanitary conditions. Substandard and unhealthy housing contributes to an overall reduction in health outcomes among the poor. This situation indeed is a manifestation of vulnerability, social exclusion, helplessness and powerlessness.

Several researchers have given much credence to the fact that there is a strong link between poverty, inadequate housing and vulnerability. It is evident that poverty is a major contributor to vulnerability. The urban poor is more likely to live in substandard and insecure shelter in a severe environmental condition that is susceptible to disaster.

This paper attempts to take an incisive look at the causes and effects of inadequate housing on occupants and their vulnerability to natural and man-made hazards. It is also aiming at developing a useful model that will provide many answers to questions concerning inadequate housing and vulnerable urban poor.

2. Literature review: Theoretical framework

This section presents a comprehensive discussion on the current state of knowledge on the dynamics and nature of the interrelationship between inadequate housing, urban poverty and vulnerable urban poor. It seeks to review the related literature on the causes, effects of inadequate housing and consequences on poor urban dwellers. It provides a right direction to develop a model that capable of mitigating the vulnerability of inhabitants of substandard housing to natural and man-induced disaster.

2.1 Nigeria as a vulnerable country

Nigeria is one of the sub-Saharan countries, the most populous nation in Africa and seventh in the world. Nigeria lies between latitudes 4⁰ North of the Equator and latitudes 3⁰ and 14⁰ on the east of the Greenwich Meridian. Nigeria has a large expanse of land with the area put at 923,768.64sq.Kilometres and a population of about 177 Million people [5].Nigeria is becoming richer with economic growth, paradoxically, more Nigerian becoming poorer day by day. More than 67 percent of the entire population lives in poverty [6].

Natural and man-made disasters have continued to wreak havoc on almost everywhere in the world, both in developed and developing countries. However, in developing nations, people have the lesser capacity and fewer resources to resist the impact of hazards such as earthquakes, floods, extreme storms among others [7]. Nigeria is not an exception in this regards, as Adebimpe [8] puts it “Nigeria is a disaster-prone country”.

Floods, landslides, storms and extreme temperature are the major disasters that are frequent in Nigeria. Floods are unarguably most frequent and disruptive. In fact, the consequences of the recent floods in the country were enormous and disastrous. According to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) report, in 2012, Nigeria witnessed heavy downpour that struck the entire country. The impacts of the floods affected more than 7million people; 3, 871, 53 people were displaced, with 363 people killed, and 5,851 were injured [9].

In the same vein, the effects Nigeria’s floods on housing were unprecedented. The PDNA report in 12 most affected states shows that a total of 1,337,450 houses were wholly or partially destroyed (Table1) [9]. Also, in 2001, Nigerian Red Cross Society affirms that 280,000 Nigerians were affected by the various degree of disasters, and more than 183,000 people displaced, 3,683 injured and 1,099 died in 2003[10].

Table 1: Number of Totally and Partially Destroyed Houses in the Most-Affected States

States	Traditional buildings			Modern/ sandcrete buildings			Total number affected
	Number totally destroyed	Number partially damaged	Total number affected	Number totally destroyed	Number partially damaged	Total number affected	
Adamawa	117,829	36,134	153,963	-	23,401	23,401	177,364
Anambra	16,186	6,719	22,905	-	95,394	95,394	118,299
Bayelsa	79,730	26,577	106,307	-	26,577	26,577	132,884

Delta	84,834	4,465	89,299	-	-		89,299
Edo	13,153	14,249	27,402	-	-		27,402
Jigawa	11,623	5,230	16,853	-	282	282	17,135
Kebbi	103,048	52,555	155,603	-	-	-	155,603
Kogi	124,085	3,102	127,187	-	16,259	16,259	143,446
Nasarawa	16,326	136,049	152,375	-	5,759	5,759	158,134
Rivers	36,999	4,111	41,110	10,121	192,290	202,411	243,521
Taraba	81,688	32,675	114,363	-	-	-	114,363
Total	685,501	321,866	1,007,367	10,121	359,962	370,083	1,377,450

Source: National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), 2013.

2.2 Disaster, Vulnerability and inadequate housing

Globally, the frequency and gravity of disasters occurrence is on the increase. Both developed and developing countries are significantly affected. However, the most vulnerable to disasters are developing nations as a result of the lesser capacity and fewer resources to prepare and recover. The impacts of disaster may involve injury, loss of life and property, as well as loss of infrastructural services and environmental degradation.

According to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) [11], disaster is “ a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human,material,economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources”. In the last 40 years, natural disasters have killed more than 3.3million people and caused economic damages worth 2.3 trillion dollars [52]. Disaster is categorised as natural and human-induced events[12]. These include earthquakes, storms, droughts, floods, fires and others.

The vulnerability is usually concerned with future danger and potential harm. It refers extent to which a person, groups or society are incapable to anticipate, cope with resist and recover from the consequence of disasters [13][14]. An urban center, system or asset is vulnerable when its features and circumstances make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a risk[15]. Therefore, the vulnerability involves the situations triggered by various phenomena in the form of physical, social, economic, and environmental factors which makes a society or group of people susceptible to natural and man-made hazards.

There are various classifications of urban vulnerability; these include physical, social, economic and environmental factors (figure 1) [15] [11].

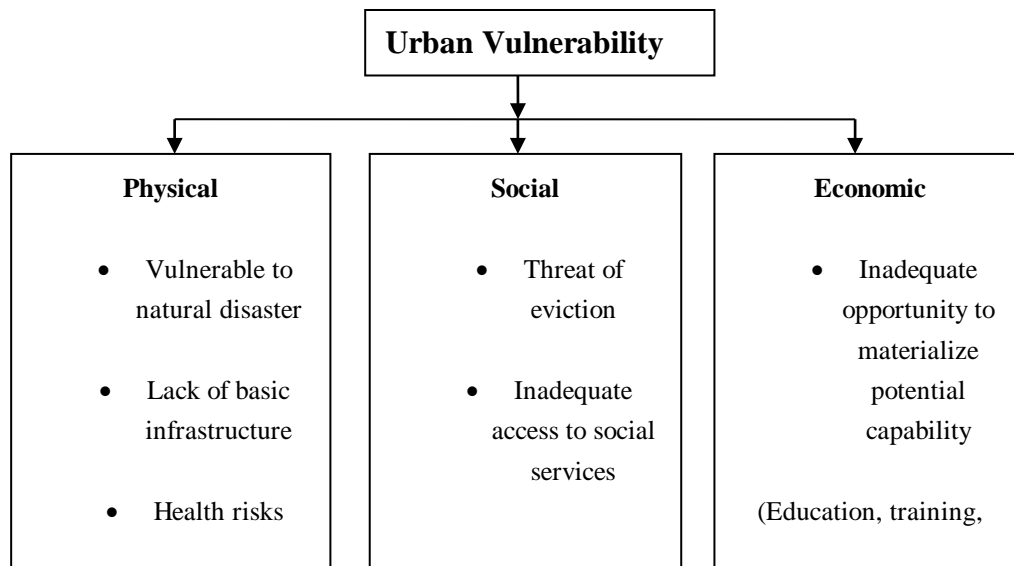


Figure 1: Classification of urban vulnerability

Adapted from Kidokoro, (2008) and UNSDR, (2009)

Housing is an indispensable companion and its relevance to almost every other indicator for human development cannot be overemphasized. As far back as 1948, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that *"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing..."* [16]. Despite this affirmation, and other commitments by the world leaders, more than one billion people who are urban residents still live in inadequate housing [17].

Inadequate housing is synonymous with housing conditions that are deficient and unhealthy. American Housing Survey(AHS) defines inadequate housing as an occupied dwelling unit that has moderate or severe physical problems such as deficiencies in water system, plumbing facilities, heating, electricity, selected structural conditions (leaking roof, holes in floor or ceiling, broken plaster or peeling paint), and sewer system among others[18]. It is evident that a house is inadequate when the necessary requirements in building codes such as legal security of tenure, functionality, and structural stability, among others are not met. Poor housing becomes unhealthy when occupants are most likely to be exposed to risk related respiratory conditions from poor air quality resulting from dust, dampness, mould, overcrowding, poor ventilation and sanitation.

2.3 The interrelationship between urban poverty, inadequate housing and vulnerability

The issue of urban poverty is multidimensional in nature and extraordinarily complex. UN-Habitat[19] expresses urban poverty in terms of households who are earning less than what is needed to afford a ‘basket’ of basic necessities, or living on less than US \$1 or US \$2 a day. In contrary, Wratten [20] believes that urban poverty is multi-faceted, its causes are interlinked with environment, housing, health, income generation, education among others and as such, its definitions varies between individuals.

Urban poverty is best measured in three ways according to Wratten,[20] and Satterthwaite[21]. These involve using quantitative approach (poverty line based on household budget) and qualitative approach (analyzes the way poverty affects different subgroups among “the poor” such as family, women, old people and ethnic groups). The integrated development approach combines both features.

Urban Poverty, inadequate housing and vulnerability are closely interrelated with an abundance of evidence. The urban poor living in poverty are more likely to reside on insecure lands with substandard housing quality and poor infrastructural systems. This circumstance makes poor urban residents more vulnerable physically, socially, economically.

The proliferation of low-quality shelters and infrastructural failure witnessed in cities particularly in developing countries are manifestation of urban vulnerability, resulting from less economic fortune, lack of institutional capacity and poor public urban policies[22] [17] [23]. It is a daunting task for people who live in extreme poverty whether in urban neighbourhoods or rural villages to improve their housing conditions. More than forty percent of inhabitants in the developing world are informal settlers [17]. Loewen and David [23] argue that impoverished segments of local populations that are faced with the burden of unemployment, crime, inadequate housing and poor health are trapped in a cycle of poverty.

2.4 Causes of inadequate housing

i. Poverty, Unemployment/Low level of income: Globally, Over 100 million people are homeless today and over a billion people are living in inadequate housing as a result of poverty, unemployment and low-level income. Ward [24] and Calderon Cockburn [25] agree that inadequate housing in Latin America and the Caribbean are mostly attributed to the state of poverty, low household income and unemployment. The International Labour Organization affirms that the number of unemployed people will continue to increase unless policies are changed. Globally, more than 200 million people are unemployed worldwide and expected to rise to 208 million in 2015[26].

ii. Insecurity of Land Tenure: Inadequate housing that is mostly self-made, a squatter or informal settlements with critically poor housing conditions, epitomize tenure insecurity in a very visible form. Raquel Rolink, United Nations Special Rapporteur, affirms “Access to secure

housing, and land is a prerequisite for human dignity and adequate standard of living, yet many millions of people live under the daily threat of eviction”[27]. An estimated 90 percent and 50 to 70 percent of rural and urban land in Africa are unregistered respectively[28].

iii. Rural –Urban Migration: The rapid urbanisation that we are witnessing is attributed to both natural population growth, and rural to urban migration. This enormous increase amounts to a crisis of unprecedented magnitude in urban shelter [29]. It has contributed to the growth of informal settlements dominated by the weak in the unsuitable deficient physical environment.

iv. Displacement based on natural and man-made disaster: Displacement can be triggered by poor developmental projects, natural disasters, war and conflicts. According to the Centre, for Housing Rights and Evictions, over 18 million people are displaced worldwide. It is as a result of planned forced evictions from their informal settlements between 1998 and 2008. The lack of tenure security on squatter settlements usually coincides with a risk of eviction[30]. The occupants of inadequate housing are not only under threat of eviction but are vulnerable to all types of disaster. They are not only psychologically weak, but the situation also discourages them from maintaining or improving their terrible dwellings [31].

2.5 Effects of inadequate housing

i. The incidence of Slums and Environmental Degradation: The formation of slums is attributed to financial incapability of higher population of the urban dwellers to afford decent housing. Slums are manifestations rapid urbanization and the urbanization of poverty [29]. The outcomes of these developmental processes are diverse urban problems ranging from overcrowding, the deplorable environment, substandard living conditions, inadequate and poor infrastructural services, homelessness and other related problems [12].

ii. Ill health: Housing quality and its environment play a significant role in the health condition of the occupants. Substandard housing conditions may trigger poor sanitary conditions that are multidimensional in nature [32]; [33]. WHO/Europe [34] affirms “*Ten housing-health linkages are considered to have some evidence for quantifying the burden of diseases*”. These include Physical, chemical, biological, building and sociological factors.

iii. Vulnerability to natural hazards and disasters: Most occupiers of deficient housing and their neighbourhoods that lack basic services such as adequate water supply, sanitation, drainage system among others are highly vulnerable to hazards and disasters. Dayton [35] argues that poor people living in poor housing, often on marginal land are significantly susceptible to disasters. Sadly, in developing a country like Nigeria, savings and insurance are not available to low-income households if a shock hits them.

iv. Social Exclusion and Inequalities: Poor housing and homelessness are good examples of poverty and social exclusion. A geographical area is socially excluded if prevented from participating fully in economic, political and cultural activities of such society. This may likely be as result of combination of linked problems such as unemployment, low income, lack of core competencies, inadequate housing, poor health and high crime environments among others

3.2 Design of sustainable neighbourhood/community development

An efficient, sustainable community is where a variety of housing types are closer to workplaces, schools, parks, shops and other amenities, making walking and cycling more convenient [44]. Hernandez-Moreno [45] also believe that sustainable urban forms facilitate benefits for dwellers, developers and government.

The most useful principles for the sustainable neighbourhood or community planning are highlighted by the US, EPA [44] and UN-Habitat [46]. These include:

Adequate space for streets and efficient street networks: The road network should occupy at least 30 percent of the land.

Use of land efficiently: Neighbourhood that make effective use of land limit the spread of suburban sprawl.

Design with nature: To protect the local environmental quality and new development should be planned in a way that is sensitive to its natural settings.

Social mix: The availability of houses in different price ranges and tenures in any given neighbourhood to accommodate different incomes.

Mixed land –use: At least 40 percent of floor spaces should be allocated for the economic purpose in any neighbourhood.

3.3 Provision of adequate housing

Housing is a fundamental human right; the lack of adequate housing has a significant impact on poor people's livelihoods affecting their health, social, political and economic outcomes. It is a catalyst for poverty alleviation that cuts across almost every other indicator for human development [47]; [48].

According to UN-Habitat [19], adequate housing is more than just a shelter or four walls and a roof. These are the features of adequate housing:

Security of tenure – Legal protection against forced evictions and harassment must be guaranteed.

Availability of services and other facilities: These include safe drinking water, proper sanitation, refuse disposal, lighting and energy for cooking.

Affordability: The house costs should be compatible with the income levels of the occupant or subsidises.

Proper location: The house should be in proximity to hospital, schools and transport.

Habitability: Adequate space, protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or threat to health should be provided.

Cultural adequacy: The expression of cultural identity and way of life should be guaranteed in an adequate housing.

3.4 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is a requirement for citizen participation in deliberation, decision making, execution and monitoring of government policies in a society without denying a voice directly or indirectly to be heard [48]. Cappo [49] defines a socially inclusive society as a concept where all members of a community feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity.

OECD-DAC [50]; DFID [37] and EUC [39] agree that social inclusion can be achieved by tackling social exclusion through poverty reduction. These are summarized as follow:

Economic development - Creations of decent jobs, adequate housing for the all, better livelihoods and higher income.

Human development - Improvement on health status and education advancement without discrimination.

Political development - Creation of legal, regulatory and policy framework that will enhance political participation, empowerment and rights.

Social-cultural development - Recognition of status and dignity of all citizens.

Protective life - Protection of all citizens particularly the vulnerable people from insecurity and risk.

4. Conclusion

Inadequate housing has a significant impact on social, political and economic outcome for the global poor. There is clear evidence that poverty and inadequate housing are strongly linked. While poverty causes inadequate housing, inadequate housing is also a causal factor of deepening poverty and vulnerability. Housing deficiencies such as lack of protection from weather, insecurity, exposure to health disaster, poor day-lighting and ventilation, as well as lack of access to public services limit a household's ability to break out of poverty trap and vulnerability. These deprivations incapacitate urban poor to generate income, secure education for their children and further take away their respect and dignity in their various communities.

Adequate housing is one of the effective means to reduce poverty as affirmed by Adarkwa [51] in his research. He opines that living in an improved housing with good infrastructural system aids poverty reduction and mitigate the vulnerability. Consequently, to address the fundamental

problems about inadequate housing and its vulnerability, a valuable strategic framework has been designed.

It is believed that this viable model will guide all levels of governments, urban planners and stakeholders in effective policy implementation. The paper advocates rigorous investment on adequate housing and infrastructural facilities in towns and cities in Nigeria so as to improve the well-being of the urban poor.

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