



Federal Republic of Nigeria

Planning Sustainable Urban Growth in Nigeria: Challenges and Strategies

Presentation by

Arc. John L.S. Alkali
Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of
Housing and Urban Development, Nigeria

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Not only has Nigeria experienced one of the fastest rates of urbanization in the world, its experience has also been unique in scale, in pervasiveness and in historical antecedents. This has resulted in a very dense network of urban centres unequalled anywhere in Africa. Unlike other countries in Africa, Nigeria does not suffer from the problem of a single, large, primate city where all development is concentrated; there are several large cities of importance spread across the country, a number of which are larger than most national capitals in Africa.

The rate of population growth has also been spectacular in recent times. Compared to a growth rate of 2.8 per cent for the total population,

the urban population in Nigeria over the last three decades has been growing close to about 5.8 per cent per annum.

The urban population is about 48.2 per cent and projections indicate that more than 60 per cent of Nigerians will live in urban centres by year 2025. Today, there are more than 840 urban centres, and well over 10 cities with populations of over a million. Lagos State, one of 36

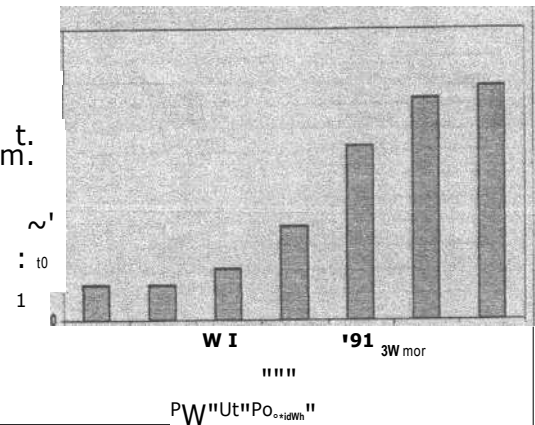
States is larger than more than 32 African countries and has a population projected to rise to 23million by year 2015. In another decade, four additional cities in Nigeria will qualify as mega-cities.

Urbanization Challenges

The above conditions certainly pose great sustainable development challenges for Nigeria's urban centres. The explosive rates of growth have not only progressively complicated and exacerbated inter-related problems of human settlements and the environment, but have also greatly accelerated poverty. Presently, 70million Nigerians live in poverty. Only China and India have more poor people. The demand for infrastructure, basic services and housing in expanding urban centres is on the increase. Issues of sanitation, waste management, crime, social conflict, governance and management also need attention. Moreover, there is a strong urban bias in the development of programmes and no coordinated efforts at rural development, which in turn is reflected in inadequate access to market for goods and services, and deplorable condition of the education, health, transportation, water and sanitation sectors. Most fundamental is the lack of resources and technical capability to manage the urban crises.

Planning sustainable growth and development

The Government's resolve to eradicate poverty, improve the livelihood of the people and ensure sustainable development of the country for present and future generations led to the formulation of strategic policies and



implementation of sustainable growth programmes, which are slowly, but significantly making an impact. The Habitat Agenda, Agenda 21 and the MDGs remain the basic framework for action. The key strategies of urban development, provision of adequate shelter; poverty eradication; environmental management; economic development; governance and international cooperation for development, are examined in the following sections.

Strategies for balanced development

Strategic planning and regional planning are very important institutional supports to an integrated approach to the sustainability of cities. The balanced development of human settlements in the country has been primarily achieved through increased states and local governments' creation. The increase to 36 States and 774 Local Government Councils structure in 1996 has meant the establishment of more urban centers in the country. This development has helped to ensure the even spread of towns and cities across the country. Furthermore, the location of a new Federal Capital in the central region, and the establishment of universities and colleges in virtually every state capital have helped in bringing about balanced urban settlement and growth.

However, despite the political re-structuring of the country, the widening disparities between the urban and rural areas in terms of the quality of life remains a major concern of sustainable development. To redress this problem, the 36 States have been regrouped into six geo-political zones based on linguistic affinity, contiguity and cultural affiliation. Political appointments, investment decisions and development projects for instance, are considered principally on the basis of geo-political balancing with the hope that it will bring about balanced development in the long-term.

Urban development reforms

The revision of the National Urban Development Policy in 2001 was another bold step towards ensuring sustainable human settlements in Nigeria. The Urban Development Policy has the goal of developing "a dynamic system of urban settlements that will foster sustainable economic growth, promote efficient urban and regional development and ensure improved standard of living and well being for all Nigerians". The direct involvement of the citizens in decision making is a priority for the success of the policy. Two factors identified for sustainable urban development are:

- (i) Participatory urban governance in which leadership of neighbourhoods and wards as well as occupational groups, chambers of Commerce, women organizations, youths, other non-governmental organizations are closely involved both for popular enlightenment and general consultations; and**
- (ii) A more effective urban management information system based on the numbering of all houses, the naming of all**

streets, the demarcation of all neighborhoods and wards in the city.

A necessary institutional framework has been established to ensure effective implementation of the policy by the creation in July 2003 of a Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to implement the provisions of the policy. Future priorities for sustainable urban planning include:

- Pursuing programmes of urban renewal and slum upgrading in decaying urban centres;
- Preparation of cadastral maps for all urban centres as a basis for efficient urban planning and development;
- Development of comprehensive master plans to ensure coordinated development;
- Establishment of a national urban information database for planning and raising citizens awareness and access to information;
- Implementation of community-based urban development projects in thirteen locations;
- Preparation of strategic regional development plans for the six geopolitical zones to reduce regional imbalances;
- Implementation of programmes directed at bridging the rural-urban divide;
- development of satellite towns to redirect growth to the hinterlands

and

- Building capacities for improved urban development and management.

Providing adequate shelter for all

The housing scenario in Nigeria is essentially one of inadequacy in quantity and quality. A widening gap exists between expectation and the capability of realization. The difficulty in mobilizing sufficient funds into the National Housing Fund has made it impossible to appreciably increase the housing stock. Other problems are poor access to land, secure tenure, nonavailability of cheap building materials, poorly developed local building materials base and absence of infrastructure on land for housing development.

In response to these challenges and to promote sustainability, a new National Housing Policy of Government was developed in year 2001 which has the primary goal of ensuring that "All Nigerians own or have access to decent, safe and sanitary housing at affordable cost and with secure tenure". To this end, and in partnership with the private sector, the Government is pursuing the implementation of 40,000 housing units per annum nation-wide

with at least 1,000 in each state and the Federal Capital. In addition several institutions responsible for delivering housing are being restructured_ and adequately funded to ensure enhanced performance. Other sustainability strategies in the housing sector include:

- **Developing and promoting the use of locally produced building materials as a means of reducing housing construction cost, in collaboration with the Nigeria Building and Road Research Institute (NBRRI);**
- **Promoting the use of indigenous professionals, appropriate design and technology in housing delivery;**
- **Promoting measures that will mobilize long term and affordable funding for the housing sector by restructuring and recapitalizing the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (apex mortgage institution) for better performance;**
- **Improving access to finance by refocusing secondary mortgage markets;**
- **Deliberately imbibing a private sector led housing provision through the introduction of incentives such as serviced land and tax rebates; and**
- **Development of a well managed land information system and computerization of land registries.**

Poverty reduction and economic empowerment strategies

Poverty eradication is the greatest challenge facing Nigeria today and indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The extent and severity of poverty in the country has worsened in recent years, and Nigeria ranks as one of the 25 poorest countries in the world. The main causes of poverty are unemployment, high level of inflation, poor governance, corruption, economic opportunities for the poor and lack of adequate access to assets such as land and capital by the poor. Government is working on halving poverty by year 2015, in line with the MDGs and recognizes that improvements in economic growth have to be accompanied by policies that improve opportunities for employment, income generation and access to resources among the poorest groups in society.

Accordingly, a number of poverty reduction and economic empowerment measures have been put in place since the return of democratic governance in 1999. A comprehensive National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was developed in 2001 which has the goal of eradicating absolute poverty over a ten-year period. Four specific initiatives include (i) Youth Empowerment Scheme which focuses on empowering youths economically (ii) The Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme that carries out rural electrification, rural water development and supply, rural transportation development and rural communications development (iii) the Social Welfare

Services Scheme which includes programmes on qualitative education, primary health care, farmers' empowerment and provision of social services and (iv) the Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme contain programmes for environmental protection as well as the development of agricultural, solid mineral and water resources.

Other sectoral strategies and actions plans that compliment NAPEP programmes include the Universal Basic Education Programme and the Distance Learning System that will enhance people's opportunities for employment. Emphasis is also being given to primary health care services, including the recently launched National Health Insurance Scheme as well as the establishment of the Community Banking Scheme to strengthen the financial capacity of the people.

The government's new development strategy called the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) pioneered in 2003 has poverty reduction at its core. The four key strategies under NEEDS include reorienting values, reducing poverty, creating wealth and generating employment. These are to be achieved through creating an environment where business can thrive, government is redirected to providing basic services, and people are empowered to take advantage of new livelihood opportunities. The States are also being encouraged to develop similar strategies (SEEDS), with interventions to benefit all segments of the Nigerian society especially women and other vulnerable groups.

Ensuring environmental sustainability

The key challenges in the environment sector include land degradation, pollution, flood and erosion, desertification, inefficient use of energy resources, loss of biodiversity, environmental disasters and deforestation. Actions aimed at ensuring environmental sustainability increased after the Earth Summit in 1992 and environmental concerns are gradually being integrated into resource management, policy and planning processes as a way of promoting sustainable development. A National Policy on Environment was launched in 1989. Similarly, a holistic approach to sound environmental management has been put in place with the recent adoption of a National Environmental Sanitation Policy and Plan of Implementation with the goal of ensuring "a clean and healthy environment by adopting efficient and costeffective strategies, to safeguard public health and well-being in line with national development objectives".

With regard to the water sector, reforms have been introduced to ensure the provision of safe and affordable water services for all Nigerians. Specifically, a National Water Policy, which includes an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Plan was launched in 2003. The desire is to achieve a water target by 2011, through a vigorous implementation of the "Water for the People, Water for Life" initiative. This will ensure that all state capitals, three quarters of the urban and semi-urban areas and two-third of all rural communities in the country have access to safe water.

The Sustainable Cities Programme being implemented in Ibadan, Kano and Enugu - in collaboration with UN-Habitat and JJNDP is another practical response to the search for sustainable development. The Programme focuses primarily on capacity building in urban environmental planning and management, on broad-based partnership and participation as well as on leveraging of technical and financial resources at every level, to resolve urban environmental problems. Additionally, the creation of a Federal Ministry of Environment, the Niger Delta Development Commission and the National Emergency Management Agency are among other actions of government directed at ensuring effective conservation of the natural resources and ecosystems and thereby setting the country on the path of sustainable development.

Good governance and development

Government realizes that good governance is fundamental to national development and that sustainable development cannot thrive on its own without sustainable peace and democracy. This is why strong emphasis is placed on ensuring a stable political environment, sustenance of democratic principles and government, and achievement of improved living conditions for the people. Several anti-corruption measures have been put in place. The recently enacted Anti-Corruption Act, the Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission, the Code of Conduct Bureau and Public Complaints Commission, and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) indicate Government's commitment in doing away with corruption. The Nigerian legislature has also taken bold steps to review various laws, decrees and statutes governing and regulating the development and management of human settlements through amending or repealing Laws and decrees that inhibit sustainable development.

Furthermore, Government's adopted framework on "National Programme on Governance for Sustainable Human Development" in August 2000 with key components of support to the Legislature, Judiciary and Executive at the Federal and State levels; strengthening the capacity of institutions and groups at the state and local government levels; promoting transparency, accountability and integrity in public and private sectors; support to economic governance and support to cross cutting issues such as conflict prevention, management resolution, environment, gender and human rights, are directed at further advancing good governance.

This is in addition to the launching of the Global Campaign for Good Urban Governance in Nigeria, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT on April 10 2001 with a main focus on eradication of corruption, promotion of transparency, accountability and social equity in the business of government. Five interrelated and mutually supportive priority areas have since been identified for intervention following the launch. Two of these focus on the issue of public revenue and expenditure at the local level, seen from the perspectives of the state, local governments and the citizens. Another two focus on building the capacity of groups that are critical in achieving effective urban governance, namely elected local council members and, in particular, women

leaders while the last component aims to introduce an innovative method of preventing urban crime based on broad partnerships to enhance security for all urban citizens, and a secure environment for investment and development. Together as a package, they will go a long way in implementing a series of practical measures to promote good urban governance at the national, state and local levels in Nigeria. A UN-HABITAT regional office was established in Abuja, Nigeria in 2003 to support these and other initiatives.

International cooperation for development

At the continental scale, Nigeria plays a prominent role in cooperative initiatives that will benefit Nigerians and chart a new course for sustainable growth and development. The NEPAD programmes, objectives of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the African Ministers Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) are all frameworks of cooperation between Africa and the rest of the global community to eradicate poverty; to halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process; to restore peace, security and stability in the continent; and to promote gender inclusion, transparency and good governance.

In addition, continuing partnership strategies with our web of international partners and funders such as UN-HABITAT, UNDP, UNICEF, UNEP, DFID, WHO and the World Bank over the years, has greatly contributed in unleashing sustainable growth and meeting key MDG's.

Conclusion: Future directions for sustainable urbanization

The urbanization process is irreversible in Nigeria and must therefore be turned into opportunities for growth. By the year 2010 and beyond, there will be more people in urban than rural Nigeria. To ensure that the magnitude and pace of urbanization does not drag on the country's overall development, Nigeria will continue to implement integrated sustainable development strategies in order that our cities become generators of development, not only for themselves but also for the rural hinterlands. Future priorities would emphasize the following imperatives of sustainable development:

- (i) Implement fully the MDGs, JPOI, Habitat Agenda and other sustainable development initiatives;
- (ii) Ensure effective, efficient and transparent public sector and public administration;
- (iii) Commit to sound economic policies and management;
- (iv) Sustain democratic governance that allows broad-based participatory decision-making and management;
- (v) Improve local implementation capacity for all actors to empower them to play an effective role in sustainable urbanization;

- (vi) Develop efficient and effective governance systems in African cities and other human settlements.
- (vii) Strengthen national and local institutional capacities in the areas of sustainable urbanization;
- (viii) Promote city-to-city cooperation to encourage exchange of best practices of sustainable urban development at all levels; and
- (ix) Mobilize external resources and more coordinated and concerted support for sustainable development.

The international community, on its part will need to support these initiatives by ensuring that they are adequately financed, technology is transferred, institutions strengthened and capacities built.

By way of conclusion, I want to thank the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations for organizing this important Conference on sustainable urban planning and sustainable architecture, which is a further demonstration of the Council's strong commitment to ensuring sustainability of our environment. I appreciate the exchange of experiences and lessons learnt, and I believe that working together we can evolve effective strategies for sustainable development in our rapidly urbanizing world.

I thank you for your attention.