TREATING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES AS ASSETS

THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR IN NIGERIA: TOWARDS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, AND SOCIAL HARMONY

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Poverty dominates the international development agenda of the 21st century. The improvement of the health and living conditions of millions of slum dwellers around the world is a primary concern of the current Millennium Development Goals for reducing poverty. Up to the 1980s poverty was largely associated with the rural areas in developing countries; but the situation has changed with the dramatic increase in the numbers and proportion of the population living in urban areas, and a corresponding increase in the level of urban poverty. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that the proportion of the urban work force engaged in the informal sector is highest in sub-Saharan Africa, and accounts for more than 50% of urban employment in two-thirds of the countries surveyed in 1999. Irregular settlements also have become so pervasive that they seem to outnumber legally planned development, and their social legitimacy appears to be no longer in question. Unfortunately, the appalling environmental conditions associated with informal sector activities and settlements constitute a major threat to the health and well-being of urban life.

The main policy challenge is how to support and regulate the urban informal sector in order to promote employment, productivity, and income for the poor, and at the same time ensure a safe, healthy and socially acceptable environment. Informal sector enterprises, especially those located in residential areas, pose real health hazards for the urban community, particularly for the urban poor who can least afford the high cost of health care. The policy dilemma appears to be how to contain the adverse environmental impacts of many of the activities of the urban informal sector without disrupting livelihoods, and causing social distress; how to promote environmental awareness and guarantee the right to the city, while at the same time protecting the vulnerable groups in the informal sector, especially women, children, and apprentices, from harm and exploitation.

The article explains how the informal sector has evolved in Nigeria over the last 50 years; the extent to which government policies and programs have facilitated or constrained the sector, and how informal sector enterprises and settlements can be upgraded and progressively integrated into the urban development mainstream. Part of this article presents historical material on the range and changing patterns of informal sector activities in a cross section of Nigerian towns and cities, to illustrate the policy biases against the sector in the colonial and early independence periods. But the main emphasis is on the contemporary challenges of the informal city, from its rapid expansion during the "oil boom" period of the 1970s to the economic crisis and adjustments of the 1980s and 1990s, which weakened the employment and law enforcement capacity of the state, and therefore encouraged a high level of informalization of economic activities. As a result, the distinction between the formal and informal spheres of activity became increasingly blurred.

This article suggests as a conclusion that what is needed is not less government, less control, or mindless deregulation of economic and planning activities, but rather a more enlightened, more participatory, and more equitable form of state intervention that eliminates needless restrictions, and provides a more appropriate and flexible regulatory framework that is compatible with local conditions and yet reasonably efficient and environmentally sustainable. The key question is: what is the best way to reconcile the 'informal' and the 'formal' city, so that the positive attributes of the informal sector and other non-formal institutions of civil society can be harnessed and

enlisted in the current campaign for good governance, poverty reduction, and economic recovery in Nigeria.

Policy Issues and Debates

Opinions differ widely on what should be the appropriate attitudes and policies towards the informal sector. Some of the more optimistic advocates of the sector tend to present it in romantic terms as a form of popular development, a vital source of employment and income for the poor, the seedbed of local entrepreneurship, and a potent instrument in the campaign to combat poverty and social exclusion. They dismiss earlier characterizations of the sector as easy to enter and requiring little money and skills, which led to the misconception that the informal sector required no form of official support. They also condemn the large number of regulations and bureaucratic procedures from the different institutions and levels of government which tend to stifle entrepreneurship, and to inhibit the realization of the full potential of the informal sector.

On the other hand critics, including many planners and government authorities, dismiss the sector as an anomaly, a source of disorder, and an obstacle to the development of a modern economy. They condemn the slums, health risks, insecurity, and exploitation associated with the sector, and hope that like other transitory phases in the course of development, the informal sector will wither away with time and economic progress. Even those who idealize the sector recognize that it is at best a mixed blessing. "In-so-far as informal sector activities do not respect legal, social, health and quality standards, and furthermore do not pay taxes, they violate the rules of fair competition". Indeed they argue that the informal sector has run its course, is now saturated, and may just be replicating the disguised unemployment that prevails in rural areas. These conflicting positions pose a difficult dilemma for planners and policy makers, and tend to reinforce the ambivalence and hostility of official attitudes towards the sector. If the informal sector thrives because of its informality, and because rules and regulations are minimal, does it make sense to try to formalize and integrate it into the formal economy with laws, codes, and standards that could disrupt its activities and growth? On the other hand, what about the health hazards, as well as the rights and safety, of the vulnerable groups that work in the informal sector?

These uncertainties about the informal sector are part of the age-long debates about the rural and urban paths to development, and doubts about whether urbanization in general is harmful or beneficial. Stereotypes about 'urban bias' suggest that the allocation of national resources is usually skewed disproportionately in favor of the urban areas. It is said that if conditions in rapidly developing cities continue to be improved, more and more people will be attracted to them to aggravate the problems of unemployment and squalor; that the worsening health and environmental problems of cities are caused by the unregulated activities of the informal sector, which, if allowed to continue, could make cities unlivable and unsustainable for present and future generations. However, the drive for sustainability has often tended to emphasize the "green agenda" for long term environmental security, and to overlook the more pressing "brown agenda" for improving the appalling living and working environment of the urban poor. Until recently the concern for environmental protection in Nigeria has tended to focus on non-urban issues such as soil erosion, desertification, oil spillage, the dumping of hazardous wastes, etc. giving only scant and largely negative attention to the worsening deficiencies in housing, water supply, sanitation, pollution, waste management, food safety, security, and other issues which directly affect public health and welfare. The improvement of urban conditions has often been sought indirectly through migration control and other policies to contain or reverse the trend of urbanization. This approach has not only failed to stop the inevitable and irreversible process of urbanization, but has pushed the cities to grow in a disorderly way, and for urban problems to accumulate.

Current research suggests that the path to urban sustainability lies in greater realism in building and managing more inclusive and socially equitable cities. This would involve continuously reviewing legislative and administrative activity in order to improve the security of land and housing tenure for the urban poor, to upgrade slums, and to strengthen urban local governance

through broad-based partnerships that take the needs and participation of the informal sector fully into account.

The Informal Sector in Nigeria: From Neglect to Recognition

Nigeria is the largest country in Africa, and the largest concentration of black people in the world — with a land area of close to 1 million square kilometers, and a population of well over 125 million. Estimates at the turn of the 21st century suggest that 43.5% of the population were living in urban areas, up from 39% in 1985, with projections that the urban population will reach 50% by the year 2010, and 65% by 2020. The rate of urban population growth is thought to be 5.5% annually, roughly twice the national population growth rate of 2.9%. More than seven cities have populations that exceed 1 million, and over 5,000 towns and cities of various sizes have populations of between 20,000 and 500,000. Greater Lagos, the former national capital, has grown from 1.4 million in 1963 to 3.5 million in 1975; it is currently over 6 million, and is projected to be 24 million by 2020.

Information on the size and employment structure in the informal sector is hard to obtain, but estimates suggest that the sector accounts for between 45% and 60% of the urban labor force, up from about 25% in the mid-1960s. Life expectancy at birth is about 52 years; infant mortality rate is as high as 19.1 per 1000; and the per capita income is thought to be US $274.

The development of the informal sector follows closely the general pattern of urban development in Nigeria. Each phase in the development of Nigeria's cities and economy has its own dynamics in informal sector development. A large number of Nigerian cities pre-date British colonial rule — as centers of traditional political and religious authority (Zaria, Benin, Sokoto, Arochukwu, Ile Ife) or as centers of internal and international trade across the Sahara and the Atlantic (Kano, Lagos, Calabar), or as military fortifications that attracted large numbers of farmers and craftsmen for defense and related purposes (Ibadan, Abeokuta). These native towns, with large indigenous populations, subsequently had European reservations and migrant quarters grafted onto them during colonial rule, but they have often retained their traditional characteristics — with traditional compound houses; customary attitudes and practices regarding food handling, waste disposal, and personal hygiene; urban agriculture; and livestock keeping. The areas of informality in such cities are very extensive.

British colonial rule neither anticipated nor approved of the growth of large African urban populations. Although many port cities, river ports, rail-side towns, and administrative centers owed their growth to activities generated by the European presence, colonial officials remained unreconciled to the idea of rapid urban growth, and tended to see cities as an unfortunate by-product of colonial activities which had to be firmly contained in order to avoid political subversion and social disorganization. Cities and towns were not conceived or promoted as centers of industrial production for job creation and self-sustaining growth, but rather as small enclaves for administration, colonial trade, and transportation. The policies and institutions for urban development, where they existed, were very restrictive and myopic, especially in the critical areas of land-use control, planning, and the provision of infrastructure and services. Urban planning and housing were used as instruments of segregation and social policy — to ensure that the small community of Europeans was protected in segregated high-quality residential reservations. Zoning and sanitation became an obsession. Sadly, the laws, codes, regulations, and institutions designed for the small populations envisaged in colonial cities and for "sanitary segregation" were inherited with little rethinking by post-colonial administrations, and have been quickly overtaken and overwhelmed by the process of rapid urban growth and post-colonial transformation. The expansion of the private sector and the pursuit of import-substitution industrialization in the years after independence gave a boost to urban employment and urban growth in both the formal and informal sectors. In post-colonial Nigeria and other African countries many analysts have observed:

a new process of urbanization unleashed by the masses of relatively low-income migrants, who have flocked into the cities since independence, and are seeking to solve their problems of accommodation and employment informally, and on their own terms... the urban poor are now dominant, and in most cases are transforming the city to meet their needs, often in conflict with official laws and plans.

Prior to the 1970s, the informal sector was not considered as a separate sector. Their activities were classified variously as traditional crafts and petty trade in the subsistence sector, or as small-scale industries within the formal sector, and treated as such. Some effort was made to upgrade what was considered their low level of productivity and low standard of workmanship through the establishment of small Industrial Development Centers (IDC), and later the Small-Scale Industry Credit Scheme (SSICS), to provide technical advice and training, and to offer small loans. No effort was made to protect informal sector products from competition with imported and mass produced goods, hence many informal sector operators tended to gravitate towards trading, services, and transportation.

With the expansion of the oil industry in the 1970s, after the disruptions of the civil war, the urban population expanded rapidly because of the increase in urban-based opportunities in administration, construction, commerce, and services, along with the gradual relegation of rural agriculture. The optimism of the oil boom and the prevailing international policy posture, as reflected in the 1976 United Nations-Habitat conference (Habitat I), encouraged the Nigerian government to undertake extensive programs of planning and public service delivery, including ambitious programs of public housing and the centralization of land-use control under the military dictatorship. The administrative decentralization brought about by the creation of new states (12 in 1967, and now 36) from the four former regions, and the creation of several local governments (now 779) fostered the growth of many large and secondary cities and towns that served as state capitals and local government headquarters. The urban informal sector expanded correspondingly to meet the increased demand of low-income wage earners for moderately priced consumer goods and services. But the formal sector still monopolized much of the support that government provided, and little effort was made to foster formal/informal sector linkages between the formal and informal sectors.

Contrary to what the advocates of deregulation had presumed, the economic recession of the 1980s and the austerity measures that accompanied IMF-imposed Structural Adjustment policies affected the informal sector adversely on both the demand and supply sides, as markets contracted and input costs rose. Reductions in public spending, declining real wages, and overall public sector retrenchments swelled the ranks of the informal sector beyond its absorptive capacity. Many formal sector enterprises forged new links, sometimes exploitative links, with the informal sector to cope with the difficulties of the economic crisis. The borders between the formal and the informal sectors became blurred. Government response to this situation was contradictory in some respects, on the one hand providing incentives to the informal sector by the establishment of training and credit facilities, and on the other hand, repressing the informal sector through overzealous prosecution in the so-called War Against Environmental Indiscipline.

Patterns of Development and Official Response

The informal sector encompasses a wide range of areas of informality — environmental, spatial, economic, and social, covering business activities, employment, markets, settlements, and neighborhoods. Each of these areas has implications for public policy.

Informal Settlements

The informal sector has since the early days of independence been the dominant provider of urban land and housing, as only about 20% to 40% of the physical development in Nigeria cities

is carried out with formal government approval. The weaknesses of government planning controls, and the haphazard developments associated with the informal sector have created disorderly and unhealthy urban environments.

Housing, Planning, and Health

The World Health Organization reckons that it is the home, not the clinic, that is the key to a better health delivery system. Only about 25% to 30% of Nigerians, mainly top government officials and other rich and privileged people, enjoy a decent quality of urban life. The vast majority of households, especially those in informal settlements, live in overcrowded conditions, within defective physical dwellings, sometimes located in areas which do not provide adequate defenses against disease and other health hazards. Because many people do not have secure tenure with respect to the land and houses they occupy, they have little inclination to improve the quality of the houses and the general environment because of constant threats of forced eviction. Government officials often argue that the practical difficulties of upgrading irregular settlements and connecting them to urban infrastructure and services tend to reinforce social exclusion.

For a long time successive post-colonial administrations appeared to see the growing urban problems "with the jaundiced eye of defenders of a colonial legacy". The Nigerian Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1946 remained essentially unchanged until 1992, not because it was working satisfactorily but because it was largely ignored and by-passed by rapid growth and spontaneous development. Most of the laws and regulations guiding environmental health and sanitation appear to be reminders of colonial segregation and oppression, and have very little current relevance. For instance, residential areas are also now widely used for small businesses, in complete disregard of the zoning arrangements which require separate areas for presumed incompatible activities. As was typical with the military, the Nigerian Land Use Decree was introduced in 1978, ostensibly to facilitate speedy and equitable access to land for much needed planned development. The proprietorship and control of all land was vested in the state. Various land allocation and advisory committees were set up to assist the state governors in the administration of land. In practice the procedure for obtaining and developing land become excessively bureaucratized, obstructive, and riddled with corruption. Restrictions on the availability of land, especially for the poor, encouraged the growth of more and more irregular settlements on the fringes of the towns or on vacant public land.

With respect to housing, Nigeria experimented with virtually all of the approaches that were fashionable in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s — slum clearance schemes which caused much distress and social dislocation, sites-and-services schemes which tried to open up new land and have it subdivided into serviced residential plots for distribution, and slum or squatter upgrading which tried to fit new infrastructure and services into already disorderly and crowded settlements, sometimes with the participation of local residents. Also, following Habitat I in 1976 and the oil boom of the 1970s and early 1980s, Nigeria embarked on an ambitious program of public housing construction. The federal government planned to add over 200,000 housing units to the existing housing stock, while the 20 or so state governments at the time would each build an additional 4,000 housing units. Mortgage facilities were established and a new government ministry was created for Housing, Urban Development, and the Environment, FMHUDE. Typically, only about 12% of the projected housing targets for 1970-74, and 24% for 1975-1980 was actually achieved. The enormous resources earmarked for the purpose were misappropriated or otherwise diverted to the construction of military barracks and other projects of doubtful priority. None of the housing programs advanced the housing conditions or needs of the poor in irregular settlements, but instead provided subsidized housing for middle-income groups, high-income people, and other well-connected individuals.

Water, Sanitation, and Health

In most Nigerian towns and cities water supply and sanitation are grossly inadequate for domestic and personal hygiene, in spite of the gains of the International Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade campaign of the 1980s. In many informal settlements water-borne and filth-related diseases, especially diarrhea and cholera are common. Less than half of urban households in most Nigerian cities have piped water and flush toilets. The rest depend on crowded and sometimes distant communal water taps, or draw water from wells, streams, or from itinerant water vendors. Pit latrines and buckets are still in use, often shared by many families. People commonly defecate and urinate in the open or in nearby bushes, so that food and water can be easily contaminated from exposure to human waste. Questions are beginning to be raised about simpler and more hygienic methods, and how best to distribute more efficiently and equitably the facilities and amenities that do exist.

Waste Management, Drainage, and Health

More waste is generated from commercial and domestic activities than can be properly managed with the rudimentary system available for collecting, transporting, and disposing of the wide variety of solid wastes in cities. The system is almost always overloaded, and large volumes of rubbish are left to litter the streets, or to accumulate in open dumps where flies and rats and other disease-carrying insects and rodents proliferate. For drainage, most cities have open drains and narrow shallow trenches which are often clogged with discarded household or industrial appliances, sand, and refuse transported by flooding. When the drains are not cleaned, they are unsightly and exude unpleasant odors. Potholes in the streets, pools of stagnant water, and waste gushing from bathrooms and kitchens provide breeding sites for malarial mosquitoes and other spreaders of disease. The level of environmental awareness is still low, especially in informal settlements, and the campaign for waste minimization and recycling has not advanced beyond the dangerous practice of picking and sorting through heaps of rubbish or moving from house to house to collect tin cans, plastics, empty bottles, paper, and discarded materials for possible recycling.

Food Safety, Food Security, and Health

Safe and nutritious food is the foundation of good health. In most Nigerian towns and cities, especially in informal settlements, food contamination and food-borne diseases are major factors in the high incidence of diarrhea and dysentery which kill many children. Unhygienic food handling and storage practices, especially with limited water and refrigeration facilities, appear to be the main problem. Food poisoning often occurs in open market places, slaughter houses, and in the extensive ready-to-eat street food industry, widely patronized by workers, school children, and others. The adulteration of foods and medicines is also rampant. The World Health Organization's Healthy Market Places Project has tried, especially in Ibadan, to educate producers, traders, and consumers about their responsibilities in ensuring food safety and hygienic behavior, and in taking the necessary precautions to reduce the risks of infection. The policy challenge is to promote appropriate legislation and education which would enable food vendors and catering businesses to upgrade the nutritional quality and safety of the food they serve. Dietary deficiencies among the poor also weaken the defenses against infection. The growth of urban agriculture is now considered a vital element in urban food security for poor households, although there is growing concern about food contamination by urban pollutants, and the spread of breeding sites for malarial mosquitoes.

Pollution and Health

The primary source of air pollution in most informal settlements is exposure to toxic fumes from cooking fires and stoves inside poorly ventilated homes. This is sometimes responsible for a

wide variety of respiratory infections and even more serious diseases of the lungs among women and children. Noise pollution is also a major problem. Loudspeakers from churches and mosques, bells rung incessantly by peddlers, hawkers, and other salesmen to advertise their wares, highly amplified music from record shops, and noise from private electricity-generating plants and grinding machines, all help to cause irritation, and can in extreme cases even impair hearing. As industrialization and the volume of automobile traffic increases, the problems of industrial emissions and exhaust fumes will add to land, water, and air pollution, with adverse implications for public health and quality of life.

The Informal Economy and Policy Responses

Some analysts suggest that the informal economy

> is large enough to permit, and diverse enough to necessitate a wide range of different policy measures, allowing government to mix incentives, assistance, neglect, rehabilitation and persecution within the total range of policies.

Informal sector policies in Nigeria in the 1980s were very repressive, while the response to the sector in the 1990s was much more pragmatic and promotional. The military administration of General Buhari that overthrew the Second Republic was so dissatisfied with the conditions of the urban environment that it discontinued the idea of central planning. Instead it initiated an aggressive campaign for environmental awareness and sanitation as the focus of the fifth phase of the so-called 'War Against Environmental Indiscipline' (WAI). A large number of environmental task forces were set up by State Edicts to organize public enlightenment campaigns, and to enforce environmental discipline through mobile sanitation courts. Special days of the month were set aside for general clean-up by everybody — to unblock drains, clean residential and work places, and remove heaps of rubbish. The cleanest cities were promised a prize of one million nairas, and a definite improvement in the environment appeared to have been achieved, at least temporarily. Unfortunately, the potential merit of the program was marred by overzealous officials and the military drive for quick results. The campaign soon became associated with misguided efforts to contain urban growth, and to restrain the informal sector, as the sector was blamed for all sorts of evil social influences — littering the streets, obstructing traffic, creating various forms of pollution and nuisance, crime, piracy, prostitution, foreign exchange malpractices, etc. Informal sector enterprises such as hawking and other forms of street business were incessantly harassed and compelled to relocate to remote and inaccessible outskirts of the cities and towns. Kiosks, illegal structures, and shanty towns in Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt, and other state capitals were raided and ruthlessly demolished.

The military approach was certainly not a permanent solution to the problem, as it caused so much discontent and distress, and provoked many human rights activists to protest. The government of General Babangida that overthrew General Buhari showed little enthusiasm for environmental sanitation, and initiated a number of rural and urban social programs to address the poverty and austerity that came in the wake of Structural Adjustment policies, notably the well-funded Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, and the Directorates for Employment, Mass Mobilization, and more. For the urban informal sector the most relevant initiatives were the establishment of the People's Bank, the Community Banks, and the National Directorate for Employment. Access to financial credit is important for small businesses aspiring to grow and become more profitable. Between 1990 and 1992 the Nigerian government established as many as 400 Community and Peoples Banks, modeled on the Asian experience with micro-lending, and on the principles of a traditional rotational credit system. These banks were to provide small loans and other forms of financial and business services for the poor and informal sector enterprises, with the whole community acting as guarantor for loan repayment. Within two years these banks together had built up assets of over 981 million naira, mobilized over 640 million in savings and deposits, and disbursed 150 million naira as loans and advances. Unfortunately, recent studies suggest that only about 10% of informal sector workers interviewed

were aware of how to take advantage of the new facilities offered by the banks and the Employment Directorate. Civil servants, military officers' wives, and other well-connected persons appear to have hijacked the scheme, often getting loans far in excess of the approved official maximum.

The National Directorate for Employment (NDE), established in 1987, was meant to promote self-employment through training and loans to unemployed youth, but the main orientation of the program was to reverse rural-urban migration by encouraging investment in rural agriculture. The informal sector was thought to be already saturated, although the government also launched the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (part of the NDE) to support the placement of apprentices in informal sector workshops, and to supplement their practical training with other forms of formal training for skills they would need in the future for their enterprises. Again, only a small percentage of unemployed youth and apprentices benefited from this initiative, which was harmed by underfunding and various forms of corruption and abuse.

Emerging Trends and Policy Directions

Since the World Bank and the United Nations system of organizations are the largest and most influential agencies for development assistance, the policies and development agendas they advocate tend to provide the international policy context for national and even local policies and programs for developing countries. The main elements of good governance which these agencies prescribe as essential for sustainable urbanization and the improvement of human settlements include the principles of **enablement**, **decentralization,** and **partnership**. The enabling strategy implies that the traditional welfare state approach, in which government sought to be the primary provider, should give way to a new role for government as enabler and facilitator that creates the right environment and incentives for the formal and informal private sector and civil society organizations to contribute to the development process. But government is also to intervene where necessary to enable markets to operate effectively, to ensure social equity, and to protect the poor and disadvantaged groups. There is also a new emphasis on a more collaborative approach to development that would integrate and mutually support the development objectives of the various stakeholders. For instance, the 1996 Habitat Agenda of the United Nations urges that

> Partnerships among countries and among all actors within countries from public, private, voluntary, and community-based organizations, the cooperative sector, non-governmental organizations, and individuals are essential to the achievement of sustainable human settlements development and the provision of adequate shelter for all and basic services.

There is also growing international consensus that the crisis of governance in developing countries is at the heart of the worsening urban environmental health conditions. Decentralization is considered essential because government is more effective when power is shared, and when the level of government nearest to the people is given sufficient authority and resources to respond effectively to local needs. Nigeria has since the 1980s tried to restructure the country's political system, and to decentralize the structure of administration by creating 36 states from the four former regions, along with as many as 774 new local governments. But decision-making and resources allocation have remained highly centralized. Local government and municipalities still remain under the legal and political influence of the higher levels of government whose leaders appear to have different political interests and priorities. There remains an urgent need for genuine decentralization to open up more political space at the local level and encourage more broad-based participation, accountability, inclusiveness, and social sustainability.

These cardinal principles of good governance, as well as the general concern for poverty reduction, are reflected in the different global initiatives of the last decade which seek to

implement the programs of action of the major UN conferences and development goals. In addition to the Sustainable Cities Program, the UN-Habitat and its partner organizations have launched the Global Campaign on Urban Governance and the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure that seek to promote more inclusive cities, and to guide national governments and local authorities on the need for improved governance practices, for secure land and housing tenure, and how to combat the incidence of forced evictions. The Urban Management Program (UMP), and Cities Alliance, both sponsored by the UN and World Bank, seek, like the Millennium Development Goals, to achieve a significant improvement in the lives of millions of slum dwellers within the next decade. As well, the World Health Organization's Healthy Cities Program seeks to highlight the health and environmental dimensions of urban development, and to promote a more integrated approach to urban management and human settlement development.

The Way Forward

The way forward lies in adapting the lessons of international research and experience to local conditions, and in the collaborative efforts of state and local authorities, the international development community, and informal sector workers themselves. The overall goal should be to build better functioning, more inclusive, healthier, and socially sustainable cities.

In the new urban partnerships proposed above, local governments are on the front line, and should be given greater authority, discretion, and enhanced capacity to mobilize support and resources, taking everybody's needs and views into account in formulating and implementing development policies and programs. The concept of Local Agenda 21, promoted by the Earth Summit in Rio and by ICLEI–Local Governments for Sustainability, is based on the premise that local governments are better placed than distant central or regional authorities to broker and harmonize the new partnerships among various stakeholders.

To play their role more effectively, local governments need improved technical, administrative, and financial capacity through genuine decentralization and increased support from national and international development agencies, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As well, it is essential to increase the level of local participation by allowing the poor more scope for their own initiatives, and greater influence on public policies and service provision. The various associations and organizations of local governments and local government employees in Nigeria such as Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) and National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGA) should act more forcefully as intermediaries in policy dialogue, and through networking promote the exchange of ideas, experiences, and resources. Above all, the ongoing consultations in the country to review the 1976 Local Government Guidelines, in order to strengthen the position of local governments, should be sustained and hopefully guided by the recommendations of the Political Bureau of 1987 on the matter.

At the national level, government must address squarely the unresolved constitutional question of intergovernmental relations in the Nigerian federal system, to ensure greater decentralization of roles, and a more equitable allocation of resources among the three tiers of government — federal, state, and local. As part of creating the supportive and enabling environment referred to above, governments at the federal and state levels should continuously review and update existing legislation with respect to urban planning, building standards, infrastructure, and environmental regulations in order to make them more realistic, attainable, and compatible with local conditions. While government and planners should retain long-term control to guarantee public safety and environmental health, local conditions dictate that planning should become more flexible, more advisory and promotional, and seek to mediate conflicting interests and values, rather than adhere to the traditional preoccupation with zoning, regulations, and controls to preserve the sanctity of public and private property, and to stop slums from forming. Some adjustments and compromises have to be made in order to ensure enhanced security of land and housing tenure for the poor and give them a sufficient stake in and incentives to improve the

quality of where they live and work. Informal sector settlements and activities must be decriminalized to ensure social harmony and sustainability.

Indeed, current research suggests that slums and irregular settlements grow not only because the people who live in them are poor, but because of overregulation, the sluggishness of government to provide adequate and affordable land, and failure to harness the energies and resources of the poor in the right direction. The creation of dual and parallel urban systems — the 'formal' and 'informal', the 'legal' and 'illegal', should give way to an appropriate mix and range of tenure systems and standards within the same city, providing scope for incremental improvement over time as resources improve. While the discredited colonial Town and Country Planning Act of 1946 has been replaced by the 1992 Urban and Regional Planning Law, none of the National Planning Commissions, State Planning Boards, and Local Government Planning Authorities envisaged in the implementation of the provisions of the new law have yet to become operational. There is also a long-standing need to review the centralized approach to land-use controls introduced by the 1978 Land Use Decree, and to move towards a more decentralized land delivery system, that would be more flexible, and would also incorporate traditional concepts and practices that are still widely adopted in most urban and peri-urban areas. This is in line with the current advocacy for reshaping formal institutions to reconcile them to local conditions and give them greater social legitimacy. Recent research by a World Bank team has stressed the need to restore "the structural and functional disconnect between informal indigenous institutions rooted in the region's history and culture, and formal institutions mostly transplanted from outside". Indeed, according to A. L. Mabogunje, many Nigerian and African cities still look like houses built from the roof down:

> all the institutions of modern urbanization are in place — the banks, the factories, the legal system, the unions, etc.; but all these appear to be suspended over societies that have no firm connections to them, and whose indigenous institutions, even when oriented in the right direction, lack the necessary scaffolding to connect to their modern surrogates.

Furthermore, while some of the anti-urban, back-to-the-land policies to contain and reverse rapid urbanization now appear to be unhelpful, it may be necessary to explore more actively national policies to slow down the rate of population growth in the cities and towns through programs for reproductive health and family planning, which, together with purposeful urbanization policies, could help to lower fertility and thus ease population pressures on urban services.

International development assistance also needs to be reviewed and better coordinated to give greater priority to poverty reduction and improved social services. New safety nets need to be evolved because of the dramatic increase in urban poverty following the economic crisis and structural adjustments of the 1980s and 1990s. The UN's Habitat Agenda urges multilateral and bilateral development agencies, the UN agencies, regional development organizations, and NGOs to provide new and additional financial assistance and technical support for capacity-building and institution-building in order to achieve the goal of 'Adequate Shelter for All'. There is an even greater urgency to address the structural causes and roots of poverty in the developing world through positive action on the issues of finance, external debt, international trade, and transfer of technology. The major development agencies should be given more support to disseminate information on best practices that could guide governance and human development policies in the developing world.

The different global development initiatives sponsored by the World Bank, UNDP, UN-Habitat, WHO, ICLEI, Cities Alliance as well as the NGOs, need to be better coordinated to complement each other, and to be able to identify gaps in the international development effort. Also, the new advocacy for decentralized cooperation among donors has the potential to promote North-South city-to-city relations for mutual benefit, and to channel resources and expertise directly to local governments and municipalities, and to other deserving local partners.

Global Urban Development

Finally, informal sector operators should not be content merely with self-help and being left alone to fend for themselves. With their diverse and widely dispersed enterprises and settlements, and their general orientation towards their rural hometowns, they are usually more difficult to organize and to develop much needed civic engagement. But they need better organization and self-regulation to be able to engage more constructively with government and other development partners, and to increase their power to lobby, negotiate, and influence public policy in favor of their sector. They could pool resources through 'clustering' and other ways of cooperating that foster mutual support to help their businesses grow and mature. Collectively they must curb some of the socially unacceptable 'coping strategies' that tend to discredit them, such as adulteration, crime, and other sharp practices, and confine themselves to genuine activities for livelihoods which are only technically 'illegal' in the sense of not conforming with official regulations and bureaucratic norms that are often arbitrary and inequitable. After all, as the Danish International Development Agency has stated:

> a modern economy can be made up of sectors and activities with very different sizes, types of technology, styles of organization and degrees of integration into local, national, regional and international markets... The fundamental raison d'etre of any economic system is the well-being of the individuals, their families and communities. Economic power, the growth of national income, the increase of profit, the enlargement of a firm are only instruments. Deified, they become obstacles to the welfare of the population. To modernize the economy is to use the best techniques available to allow the individual to work, to create, to earn an income, and to enforce the rights of employees and workers.

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Geoffrey, IN (2005). The urban informal sector in Nigeria: towards economic development, environmental health, and social harmony.Global Urban Development Magazine 1(1). Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) (2000). Urban Areas. The State of the Environment â€" Africa. Igoni, AH; Ayotamuno, MJ; Ogaji, SOT; Probert, SD (2007). Municipal solid waste in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Applied Energy, Elsevier 84(6): 664-670. The informal sector in the Nigeria context is unstructured with unregulated activities that create the environment for unfair labour practices due to non-protection of workers within this sector. As demonstrated by the segmentation theory which assumes a dual labour market structure consisting of a capital-intensive, secure primary segment and a labour-intensive, insecure but flexible secondary labour market segment (Lillie, Caro, Berntsen, & Wagner, 2013), the employment conditions under which many low-skilled and low-wage workers work are characteristics of the secondary (informal) market se...Â Majority of urban informal sector workers live in poor areas, lack basic health and welfare services and social protection and work in an unhealthy and unsafe working environment. The economy of Nigeria is a middle-income, mixed economy and emerging market, with expanding manufacturing, financial, service, communications, technology and entertainment sectors. It is ranked as the 27th-largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP, and the 24th-largest in terms of purchasing power parity. Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa; its re-emergent manufacturing sector became the largest on the continent in 2013, and it produces a large proportion of goods and services for... Economic development, environmental health, and. Social harmony. Geoffrey I. Nwaka. Poverty dominates the international development agenda of the 21st century.Â into the urban development mainstream. Part of this article presents historical material on the. range and changing patterns of informal sector activities in a cross section of Nigerian towns and. cities, to illustrate the policy biases against the sector in the colonial and early independence. periods.