

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH SLUM SAND THE NEED FOR BETTER HOUSING CONDITIONS IN PORT HARCOURT WATERFRONT

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Abstract: This paper reviews the state of slums in Port Harcourt and attempt to improve the conditions of living in the waterfront, popularly known as” Waterside”. “Waterside” settlements in the Rivers state especially in the city of Port Harcourt have a long history and tradition and also constitute the astronomical growth in the city’s population. The quest for low income earners looking for cheaper accommodation, lack of residential accommodation and the influx of occupational fishermen from neighbouring communities is said to be responsible for the springing up and expansion of most of these waterside settlements in Port Harcourt. Currently, these waterside settlements have formed part of the City’s landscape, the challenges and problems associated with the waterfront have been worrisome to the government of Rivers State. The effort of the government at different dispensations to deal with these problems had not yielded any good result, right from the government of Dr. Peter Odili, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Ameachi to the present government of Governor Ezenwo Nyesom Wike. The strategies put forward by these different administrations to tackle the problems of the waterfront had met bitter opposition from the residents of the waterfront, and this has caused the government to do little or nothing to this area in terms of infrastructural development. On the other hand the residents of this area which are popularly known as squatters are mindful of the fact that if the government intervenes, they might be rendered homeless since this had happened before in the case of Ndoki Waterfront, Marine base And Aggrey road Waterfront.

Keywords: *Waterside, squatters, government, problems, infrastructural development.*

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the number of people living in cities will progressively increase (Gomez and Salvador, 2006). Waterfront settlements, popularly known as "Waterside" in Port Harcourt was until then a functional "transit camp" for the fishermen from the riverine communities notably the Okrika fishermen, wood sellers, timber millers among others. At that time, Makeshift structures were erected to provide temporary resting place or shelter in the course of their business (Okafor, 1973). *Waterside* is the colloquial language used by the communities that settle in these areas and is a language which captures their marginal character and peripheral location literally and socio-economically. *Waterfronts* on the other hand are understood the world over to be areas of natural beauty, commercial potential and desirability. They are high value real estate with great investment potential. For some time now "Waterside" settlements in Port Harcourt, the capital of oil rich Rivers State has been an issue of concern to every successive administration in the state. The social and environmental problems associated with the inhabitants had been worrisome to both government and inhabitants of the city. Though, it had been established that the city was the seat of industry, business and education and had a lot of on-going reconstruction activities after the civil war in 1970. Its Port terminal status increased its economic importance. These advantages constituted the motivation for massive migration to Port Harcourt such that by 1973, the population of the city was estimated to have reached 231,632. It was this period that squatting began, as a lot of war returnees and immigrants from the villages could not find or afford conventional housing in the city. Since many were from riverine communities, waterfronts of the numerous rivers and creeks around the city became the favoured locations for squatting because they offered opportunity for continuation of traditional water-based livelihoods. Currently the number of squatter settlements in Port Harcourt is about thirty two (32) along the waterfronts, after the demolition of some of these waterfront settlements. It is estimated to account for about 65% of Port Harcourt's population. The city today boasts of a population over 1.5 million people (NPC, 2006). As a result of the growing population, the city has used up and exhausted the original landscape of 30,000 acres ceded to the colonial masters in the 1913 Hargrove Agreement for administrative convenience (Akpogemeh, 1995). Considering the economic importance of the city; being host to several multi-national oil companies and influx of people because of insecurity challenges in the middle belt region of Nigeria, this rapid growth is not surprising. As the

city grows in population, there has been no corresponding plan in the provision of residential accommodation by the government. The government doing little or nothing in this direction has completely left residential housing scheme in the hands of the private sector which in turn increase the cost of renting a residential accommodation within Port Harcourt, at their own time and conveyance. The difficulties in affording the high rent charged by private landlords compelled some residents to move away to settle at the waterfront where land is less desirable and cost of erecting a home is relatively low. This research is therefore directed at providing solutions to a better housing condition in Port Harcourt waterfront.

Study Area and Methodology

Port Harcourt is situated within latitudes $04^{\circ} 43''$ and $04^{\circ} 57''$ North of the Equator and between longitudes $06^{\circ} 53''$ and $07^{\circ} 58''$ East of the Greenwich Meridian (Figure 1). It is surrounded by waterfronts, patches of islands and creeks of the Niger Delta, such as the Amadi creek, Dockyard creek and Bonny River, at a height of about 12m above sea level. It is approximately 60km from the crest up stream of the Bonny River. Port Harcourt is presently composed of two Local Government Areas, which are Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt city Local Government Areas (LGA) respectively. The city is bounded to the north by Oyigbo and Etche LGAs, to the south by Bonny LGA, to the east by Okrika and Eleme LGAs, and to the west by Emohua and Asari-Turu LGAs.

This paper sourced its data from primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data came from responses to interview schedules and personal observations. Accidental sampling technique was employed in collecting information from 200 respondents that were drawn from Bundu and Okrika of Port Harcourt metropolis. Secondary data came from published and unpublished literatures that are relevant to the subject matter of the study. Simple descriptive statistics was used in analyzing the data to establish the findings. Personal observation and oral interview were also employed where necessary. Relevant information from government establishments relevant to this study was also extracted.

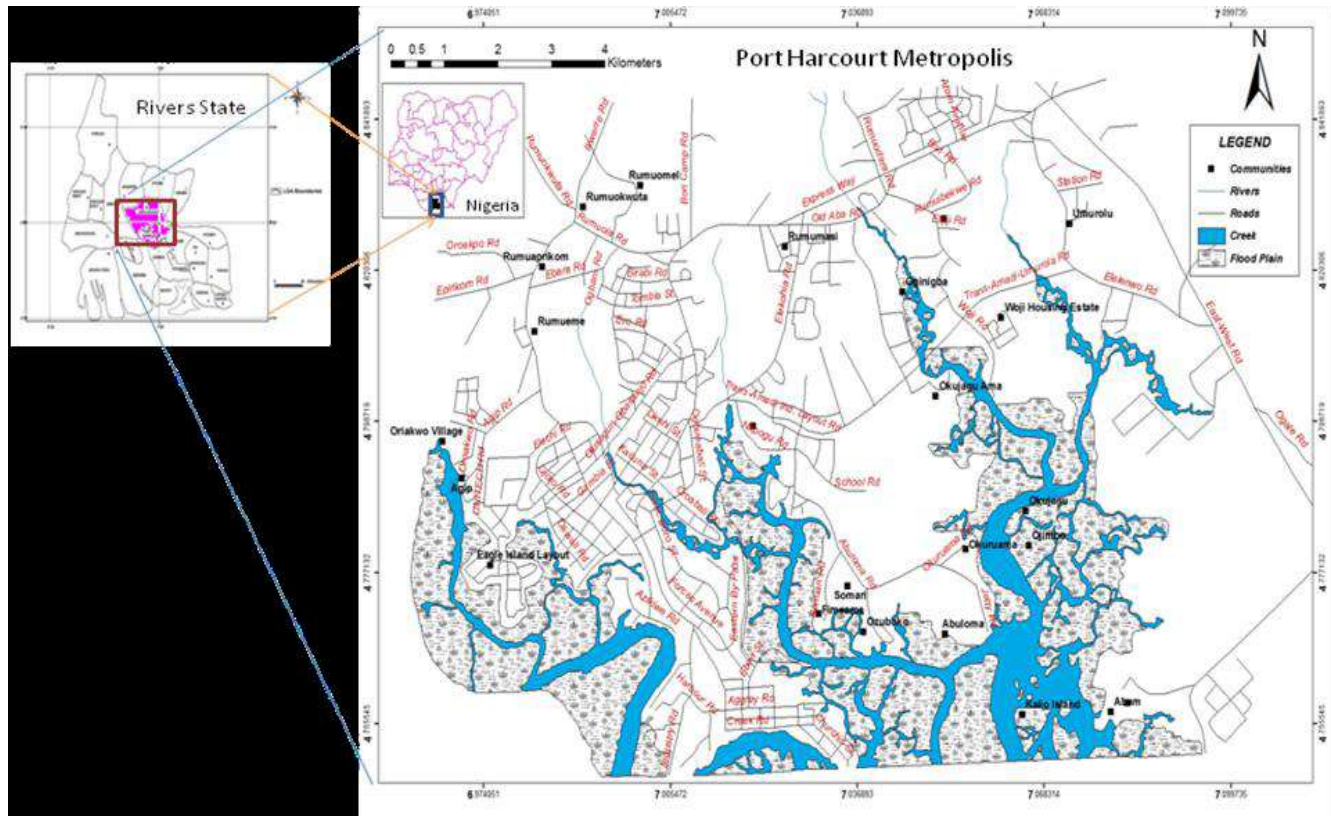


Figure 1: Port Harcourt Metropolis the Study Area

Challenges Faced by Squatters and the Current State of the Waterfront

The formation of slums and squatter settlements is not inevitable; this is evident in the varying proportions of the population living in such types of settlements in cities in the developing world (Giok and Kai, 2008). Slums are neglected parts of cities where housing and living conditions are appallingly lacking, slums range from high density, squalid central city tenements to spontaneous squatter settlements without legal recognition or rights, sprawling at the edge of cities and waterfront in some cities. Port Harcourt has a growing number of thirty two (32), “Waterside” settlements as shown in (table 1) and (figure 2). The activities and economic problem caused by the squatters in this area has made every successive government to be worrisome.

Table 1: Waterside settlements in Port Harcourt

S/No	Waterside Settlement
1.	Abuja
2.	Afikpo/Abba
3.	Andoni
4.	Awkuzu
5.	Bishop Johnson
6.	Bundu
7.	Baptist
8.	Captain Amangala
9.	Cemetery
10.	Egede/Akokwa
11.	Emenike
12.	Egbema
13.	Enugu/Aggrey
14.	Eastern By-pass
15.	Elechi Beach
16.	Ibadan/Yam zone
17.	Igbukulu
18.	Marine Base
19.	Ndoki
20.	NEPA
21.	Nanka
22.	Nembe/Bonny
23.	Orupolo
24.	Ogu/Okujagu
25.	Okrika
26.	Ojike/Urrualla
27.	Prison
28.	Rex Lawson/Etche
29.	Timber/Okwelle
30.	Tourist Beach
31.	Udi
32.	Witt and Bush

Source: Author's Field Report

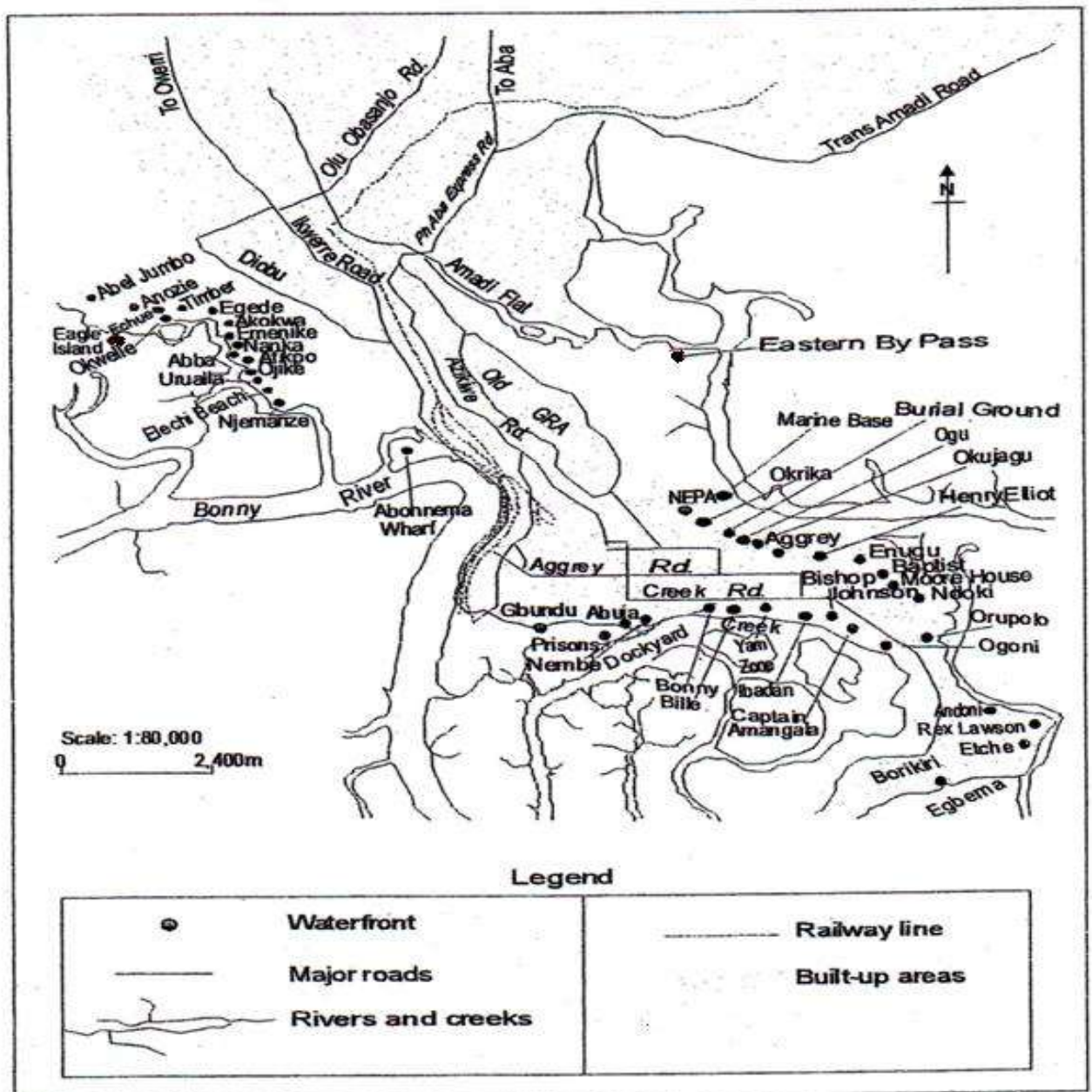
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Figure 2: Port Harcourt Metropolis Showing the Waterfronts(After Obinna & Nnah, 2006)

In an attempt to describe what the waterfronts in Port Harcourt look like, (Ochereome, N. Onah G. and Onoyume, J. 2009) said: “Come to any of the waterfronts in Port Harcourt, the elements of modern living are absent. The houses are made mostly of corrugated iron sheets and

timber. A few are normal block houses, but they are invariably so tightly spaced together that even commercial motorcycles find it difficult to gain access. Vehicle owners living at the waterfront park their vehicles along the major roads and trek to their homes down the “waterside”. When there is high tide from the mighty Bonny River coming in from the Atlantic high seas, the water from the adjoining waterways comes into homes. You can imagine what people who live here go through when it rains as it frequently does in Port Harcourt. There are no toilets in homes in some of them such as Bundu Waterfront. People answer the call of nature by either going close to the edge of the salty seawater, using the pier latrine (figure 3) or packaging their excrements in plastic bags and throwing them into the water”.



Figure 3: Pier Latrine at Bundu Waterfront
Source: Author's Field Report

Following the economic and social perspectives on waterfront as outlined above, there is the political perspective which views waterfront areas as the breeding ground of political radicalism and violence. This perspective stems from the basic assumption that slum dwellers' experiences of poor living conditions and a variety of socio-economic hardships would, in time, generate feelings of frustration and discontent. Such feelings would eventually lead to an eruption of political radicalism and violence (Portes, 1971).



Figure 4: Wood Constructed foot Bridge to Pier Latrine

Source: Author's field report

Finally, the environmental implication of the social, economic and political perspectives of waterfront areas is the emergence of decayed physical environments. Such as:

1. Poor Access Road
2. Over Crowded
3. Poverty Stricken
4. Clustered Houses

5. Crime Ridden
6. Filthy and Damp
7. More than 50% Household have no toilet facility
8. Many share an Outside Toilet
9. High Unemployment
10. Very Poor Standard of Healthcare and Education
11. Derelict Land and Pollution
12. Waste Materials/ Refuse Dump along the Waterfront
13. Security Challenges



Figure 5: Clustered Houses and Poor Access Road
Source: Author's Field Report



Figure 6: Stagnant Waste Water along one of the Foot Paths in the Waterfront Settlement

Source: Author's Field Report

of the squatters. Electricity is present in every settlements Basically one the prominent feature of squatter settlement is the deliberate absence of urban public infrastructure; this situation occurs because they do no form part of the city's master plan, they are hardly considered in the distribution of public infrastructure by the government. Amongst the

squatter settlements picked for the study, only Bundu has a public school. The government had in the past provided pipe borne water in some of these settlements as shown in (figure 6), but none is functional today because of lack of maintenance. The government has also made some effort in the provision of “pier toilet” (figure 7), but they are hardly adequate considering the population and this had helped small scale businesses to thrive and added some colour to night life in the waterfront settlement.



Figure 7: Pipe Borne Water Provided by Government
Source: Author's field report



Figure 8: Pier Toilet Provided by Government

Source: Author's field report

Aims and Objectives

Urbanization is generally regarded as the transformation of areas with rural character into towns. It is, in other words the growth of towns from their hitherto statuses of rural settings. The current urbanization rate of Nigeria is 5.5 percent per annum and the urban population was put at 50 percent in 2012 (Pepple, 2012). The (UN-HABITAT 2008) reports that Nigeria's inability to plan and manage rapid urbanization has resulted in uncontrollable growth in the entire major cities and towns. This is leading to decay of inner cities and the growth of shanty towns and slums, In order to check this menace the government has to be up and doing, create policy to improve the condition of living in the slums. The motivation and aim for this study stems from the living condition, social and environmental problems associated with these inhabitants. In order words to create a possible solution to redress and to improve their living condition.

DISCUSSION

In 1988, the Rivers State government headed by a military administrator, tried to deal with the squatter settlement problem by introducing a

programme aimed at providing a social housing service to improve the environment and enhance the quality of life of the average waterfront dweller through the provision of infrastructure and services, taking into consideration its low socio-economic status. Three squatter settlement redevelopment projects were completed. They were: Ndoki, Marine base and Aggrey road waterfronts. After the completion of these three projects the government was forced to review the program for the following reasons:

1. In two of the waterfronts redeveloped, only 29% of the original squatters were re-housed thereby intensifying the housing problems in the city,
2. The level of beneficiaries' dissatisfaction with the scheme was 42%.
3. Some of the new beneficiaries who were not original squatters resold or rented their units thereby defeating government's purpose.

Consequently Waterfront residents fear that any redevelopment process will lead to large-scale losses of homes and jobs as well as distress particularly to those who have no access to alternative accommodation and places for income-generating activities. On 16 March 2009, the Commissioner for Urban Development, Bar. Osima Ginah, presented a colourful, two-sided flyer that was published by the Office of the Special Assistant to the Governor on Waterfronts Development at a date unknown to the Commissioner (figure 8). This flyer is entitled "What you must know about development of Port Harcourt waterfronts". The text refers to all waterfronts in Port Harcourt. In Question & Answer style, the flyer informs the reader that the RSG wants to develop the waterfronts to:

1. Make them into decent residential areas,
2. Turn them into recreational centers,
3. Improve the physical infrastructure
4. Provide adequate security
5. Develop water ways along the waterfronts, and
6. Stop criminals from using it as hideout

This is to be achieved through the following activities:

1. Carry out adequate census/enumeration and valuation exercise,
2. Undertake verification of ownership,
3. Carry out compensation/rehabilitation of genuine structure owners,
4. Carry out Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA),
5. Carry out site survey,
6. Collapse old structure, and

7. Development.

The flyer further states what will happen to the present occupants of the waterfronts:

1. “Government will pay compensation after valuation to assist genuine owners to rehabilitate.
2. Genuine owners will be offered first choice of purchase, when these waterfronts are redeveloped”.

WHAT YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT

DEVELOPMENT OF PORT HARCOURT WATERFRONTS

- Urban waterfronts whether natural or artificial are prime pieces of real estate in the developed countries.
- Port Harcourt waterfronts however, have remained undeveloped resulting from misuse and lack of planning.
- Development of our waterfronts are often misunderstood and generate adverse feelings among the people.
- This is due to insufficient information and gross unawareness on the part of the people about the benefit in a properly developed Waterfronts.

1. THE CURRENT STATE OF THE WATERFRONTS

- Currently, waterfronts in Port Harcourt are unplanned and over populated.
- Living conditions are characterized by overcrowding and lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, potable water, electricity, poor sanitary condition etc.
- The waterfronts have become hideouts for hoodlums, armed robbers and criminals.



2 WHY GOVERNMENT WANTS TO DEVELOP THE WATERFRONTS

- To make them into decent residential areas.
- To turn them into recreational centres.
- To improve the physical infrastructure of the areas.
- To provide adequate security in the area.
- To develop water ways along the waterfronts.
- To stop criminals from using it as hideout.



3. HOW DOES GOVERNMENT INTEND TO ACHIEVE THIS?

- Carry out adequate census/enumeration and valuation exercise of the waterfronts.
- Undertake verification of ownership.
- Carry out Compensation/Rehabilitation of genuine owners of structure.
- Carry out Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- Carry out site Survey.
- Collapse old structure.
- Development.



Can't it look like this?



PLEASE TURN OVER

Old Waterfront

4. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PRESENT GENUINE OCCUPANTS OF THE WATERFRONTS?

- Government will pay compensation after valuation to assist genuine owners to rehabilitate
- Genuine owners will be offered first choice of purchase, when these waterfronts are developed.

5. DO YOU KNOW?

- That in developed country, urban Waterfronts are the most beautiful landscape with prime pieces of real estate?
- That Port Harcourt Waterfront as component parts of the capital city have remained unplanned, overcrowded and without basic infrastructure?
- That Governor Rotimi Amaechi led administration has drawn a blue print to develop Port Harcourt and the Waterfronts are not left out of such development plan?
- That government effort at developing the Waterfronts is sometimes misconstrued by the elite due to lack of proper information or due to sentiment, political and ethnic considerations?
- That Government is eager to transform Port Harcourt waterfronts into decent residential areas, recreational centres and transportation waterways?
- That the development of the waterfront will be done in phases.
- That Governor Rotimi Amaechi has appointed a Special Assistant on Waterfronts Development?
- That the Special Assistant on Waterfront Development has started the enumeration and valuation exercise of all waterfronts?
- That the enumeration and valuation would lead to the rehabilitation/compensation of genuine owners of structures/buildings and the ultimate development of the entire waterfronts?
- That all genuine owners of structures/building shall have the first choice of purchase after the waterfronts have been developed?
- That government will not pay compensation for any structure/building developed after the first of January, 2009.

*Let us co-operate with Government.
Let us help Government to provide for us.*

For further information call:
The Office of the Special Assistant
to the **Governor, on Waterfronts Development.**
07063251905. Email: developmentwaterfront@yahoo.com










Figure 9: Flyer Produced by the Office of the Special Assistant to the Governor on Waterfronts Development “What you must know about Development of Port Harcourt Waterfronts”.

RECOMMENDATION

For an effective tackling of the condition of living in the waterfront and a way of improving their housing condition, thus, a successful slum upgrading programme should embrace a number of principles:

1. Government should accept and acknowledge slums and their importance;
2. It is assumed that political will and leadership makes slums upgrading possible;
3. Government should include the slums in the city's plans, mobilize partners and provide security of tenure;
4. In planning for slum improvement, relevant authorities should plan with, and not for, the slum communities;
5. Government is expected to ensure continuity of efforts over time and institutionalize the programme;
6. Government is expected to allocate budget, design subsidies, mobilize public and non-public resources;
7. There should be alternatives to new slums formation and this require the upgrading of slums and preventing the formation of new ones; and
8. Government is expected to invest in community infrastructure (Cities Alliance, 2013).

In line with the charter of the Cities Alliance, countries around the world have devised strategies for the upgrading of slums. One of such strategies involves the use of a bottom-up approach as opposed to top-down; it also involves the empowering of local government authorities and agencies to implemented slum upgrading programmes. Some countries that have achieved success on the basis of employing this strategy include among others, Indonesia, Brazil, Jordan, India, Tunisia and the Philippines (World Bank and UN-Habitat, 1999). For these countries, the key ingredient for success was the political commitment of national and local government authorities to the bottom-up community-based strategies (World Bank and UN-Habitat, 1999).

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, a reference to a project that was done by the researcher in his first year of his master degree programme in the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt with respect to an Urban Regeneration project using Bundu Waterfront as the site will be of significance. The idea was to improve the condition of living of the Bundu waterfront. Bundu community (figure 9), is a suburb of Port Harcourt city, it is located along Bonny river in Port Harcourt township with an estimated population of about 32,000 persons. The people of Bundu are of different occupation and they are not predominantly fisher men even though they live by the waterfront. Bundu community is a multi-culture settlement.



Figure 10: Bundu, 28.52 Ha, Population 32,000

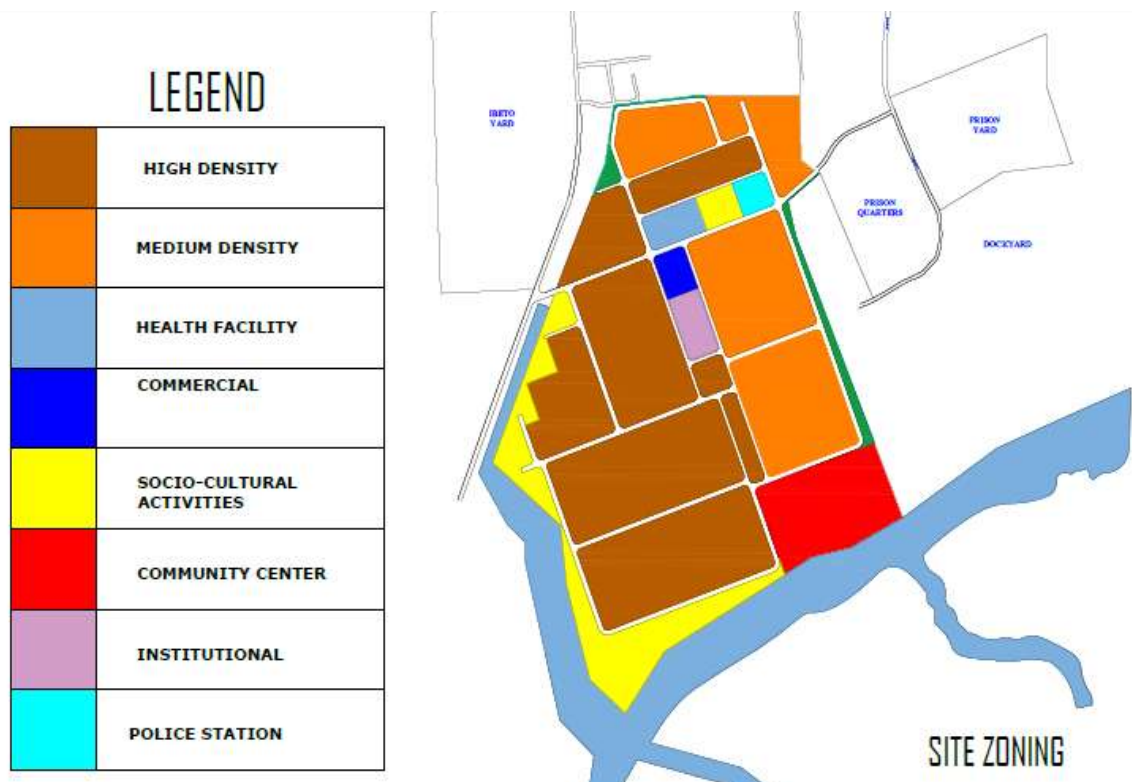
After a thorough study of Bundu waterfront the following data was achieved.

1. About 7.2% of the squatters lived there due to proximity to water
2. There are high levels of unemployed persons and retirees for both males and females.
3. Amongst male, 44% were unemployed and 40.1% were retired.
4. Amongst female, 34.5% were unemployed, 35.1% were retired and 16.5% were fulltime housewives.

5. Amongst males modal occupation was craftsman/technician (17.3%)
6. Closely followed by trading (16.8%).
7. Fishing was also significant (15.9%),
8. Businessmen (12.5%),
9. Civil servant (13%), etc.
10. Amongst females, trading was the mode (33.7%)
11. Followed closely by business (32%).
12. Income levels were generally low as about 75 percent of the occupants earned less than N18, 000 monthly.

With the above data the following design was achieved.

1. Community center with/ without sports facility.
2. Health center.
3. Police station.
4. Commercial area.
5. School.
6. High density residential area.
7. Medium density residential area.
8. Socio-cultural activities area.
9. A good road network



HIGH DENSITY HOUSING

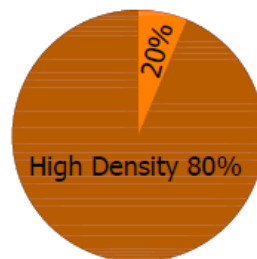
- * 16 Apartments in a Block
- * Houses about 8 persons in each apartment
- * 128 estimated population in a Block
- * 200 Blocks of 16 apartments each to house 25,600 persons

MEDIUM DENSITY HOUSING

- * 8 Apartments in a Block
- * Houses about 7 persons in each apartment
- * 56 estimated population in a Block
- * 114 Blocks of 8 apartments each to house 6,400 persons

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

* High Density Housing = 80%



* Medium Density Housing = 20%



Figure 11: Site Layout

Slum prevention and control is vital to creating sustainable cities. Also, slums eradication is a vital component of the millennium development goals. So with the above site layout, it clearly shows that our waterfront can actually be turn into Paradise with the involvement of the government and the understanding from the waterside dwellers.

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