

The Impact of Urban Renewal on Quality of Life (QOL) in Calabar, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study focuses on the impact of urban renewal on quality of life (QOF) in Calabar, Nigeria. The cardinal objectives of the study include, to assess the impact of urban renewal programme on the quality of life of the residents of Calabar; and to examine the effect of urban renewal on infrastructural development in the study area. The study adopted the survey method and the following types of data were collected: data on the various components of urban renewal such as rehabilitation, expansion, dualization of roads, construction of roundabouts and flyovers, planting of ornamental trees, flowers as well as data on aspects of quality of life such as mode of transport, likeness of residential neighbourhood, and so on. The findings show that a number of urban renewal projects have been undertaken. For example the planting of about 1588 different tree stands, rehabilitation of a total 215.39 kilometers of roads, and the mounting of about 377 electric poles along the major streets of Calabar. The study has also shown that urban renewal has positively impacted on the mode of transport of urban residents, people now prefer or like their residential neighbourhood, potable water supply is now available in most parts of the metropolis, while the waste disposal/management system is more efficient. The study recommends the need of government to raise the income of residents, the adoption of a participatorial approach, and the need to formalize an efficient and durable legislative framework for all urban renewal programmes in the State.

Keywords:Urban renewal, quality of life, urban decay

1.0 Introduction

The origin of urban renewal programmes can be traced to the great depressions of the 1930s where there was obvious dissatisfaction with the housing conditions in Britain. During this period, unprecedented skyscrapers were built in most British/English cities to replace obsolete residential structures. According to Enger and Smith (2004), the origin of urban renewal programmes in the United States of America can be traced to the 1937 Housing Act which made provision for slum clearance and the replacement of dilapidated houses with subsidized public housing which have modern facilities.

In Nigeria, the first attempt at urban renewal was in Lagos in 1955 as an aftermath of the outbreak of cholera and bubonic plague in 1929 (Mabogunje, 1974; Kutela and Adesola (1984), Sule (1988) and 2003; Usani, (1986). Other Nigerians towns and cities are presently undergoing very massive and deliberate urban renewal programmes such as Ibadan, Port Harcourt, Calabar, Makurdi, Kano, among others. In addition, a number of slum up-grading programmes/schemes are being executed in different States in Nigeria under the World Bank Community Based Urban Development Programme. The States benefitting from this programme are Bauchi, Jigawa, Ondo, Ebonyi and Akwa Ibom. Furthermore, the National Urban Renewal Programme is presently going on in three Nigerian cities namely Badiya in Lagos State, Aba in Abia State, and Kurna Asabe in Kano metropolis. What can be gleaned from the foregoing is that urban renewal is mostly undertaken by government and a few supportive international organizations.

At the inception of the idea of urban renewal, the term was used to connote the correction of urban decay in the urban areas, slum clearance and the rescuing of both the fabrics and functions of the Central Business District (CBD). The term urban renewal refers to the renewal of the decayed parts of an urban centre on behalf of, and with the tacit co-operation of, the people who live and work there. It is the totality of all public and private actions which are embarked upon to give the urban area the required face-lift or rehabilitation (Greer, 1965). Also, urban renewal has been defined as a deliberate effort to change the urban environment through planning and large scale adjustment of the existing city areas to present and future requirements of urban living and work. It is, thus, a comprehensive community neighbourhood re-development programme through which the physical structure of a particular section of the city is upgraded so as to improve the aesthetic quality and livability of urban life. Similarly, urban renewal, according to Northam (1979) is the prevention of the spread of slums and blight through the rehabilitation and conservation of deteriorated areas.

Over the years in Nigeria, both the Federal, States and Local Governments have made concerted efforts to improve the quality of life (QOL) of the residents of city and metropolitan centres through urban renewal programmes. The provision of social services, massive provision of urban infrastructure, improvement of the aesthetic level of the environment, the provision of recreational facilities, health and related programmes,

coupled with the heightening of the awareness of self actualization outfits, have pre-eminently positive implications in bolstering and bettering the quality of life of urban dwellers.

The Treasury Board of Canada (2004) defines quality of life as the product which interacts with a number of factors consisting of social, political, economic and environmental conditions. These, often interact, cumulatively and in diverse ways to affect both social and human development at the individual and societal levels. Development experts agree that quality of life has both subjective and objective dimensions (Jiriko, 1998). Subjective quality of life has to do with feeling good and being satisfied with things in general, while objective quality of life is concerned with fulfilling the societal and social demands for material wealth, social status and physical well being. The International Society for Quality of Life Studies based in Virginia in 2004 defines quality of life as the product of the interplay of the social, health, economic and environmental conditions which affect human and social development.

This study is based on Calabar, the capital of Cross River State located at the south eastern corner of Nigeria which has enjoyed a very long and continuous urban history. The city had the privilege of becoming the first capital territory of Nigeria between 1882 and 1902 before losing that status to Lagos when the southern and northern protectorates were amalgamated in 1914. Since 1967 when Calabar became the capital of South Eastern State (later Cross River State in 1976), the social, economic, political and spatial dimensions of the city have grown exponentially. The consequence of this spatial growth and expansion has been the deterioration and dilapidation of large portions of the city especially the older parts of Duke Town, Henshaw Town, Efut, Old Town, Akim Qua, Ediba Qua, Big Qua Town, Ikot Ansa and Ikot Ishie, into very squalid conditions. Since 1999, at the inception of the democratic dispensation, successive State government administrations have embarked on very vigorous urban renewal programmes up to the time of this study. Several districts in Calabar, which hitherto have been infrastructurally bankrupt, physically decrepit and perhaps down-at-heels, have been given a rather comprehensive rehabilitation in such a manner that the city is today regarded as the cleanest and most aesthetically beautiful city in Nigeria. Hence the epithet the "Paradise City" or "Destination Centre". It is in the light of this that this study is interested in the assessment of the impact of urban renewal programmes on the quality of life of the residents of the State Capital, Calabar.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The sporadic and unprecedented growth of urbanization over the last thirty years has caused a number of urban problems. According to Ezeagu (2000), cities in Nigeria are growing in a haphazard manner as a result of increased urbanization, modernization, industrialization and transportation which have caused several stresses and strains on the urban milieu. These enduring tensions are manifested in a number of ways such as physically, economically and socially.

Physically, deteriorating urban areas exhibit poor or moribund sanitation facilities, accumulation of refuse/waste materials, adverse environmental conditions such as noise, dust, fumes and odour from effluent discharges. Others include missing amenities such as public water supply, play ground and other recreational centres, sewage system, poor road network and the absence of adequate drainage facilities. In most cases, the central portions of cities are the locale of very old slums whose houses are in varying degrees of squalid conditions, while squatter settlements are scattered here and there on the cityscape. The concomitant development of urban sprawl on the fringes of the city has added to the problem of unplanned residential neighbourhoods which tend to destroy the scenic beauty of the city (Eni and Ufoegbu, 2012).

From the economic perspective, cities in Nigeria as in most developing countries, are growing in population whereas the urban economic base of those cities is unquestionably weak and sometimes declining. These cities are unable to provide the needed economic opportunities as quickly as they are attracting and absorbing migrants from the rural areas. The consequence is that such migrants suffer from multiple socio-economic deprivations (Eni, 1998). The economic indicators also include declining property values (economic obsolescence), prevalence of tax delinquent properties with sometimes abnormally large building space.

The social dimensions of urban decay deal with very high economic situations which lead to deteriorating rates of delinquency, social anomie, prevalence of diseases, prostitution, gangsterism, violence, high crime rates, urban guerillaism, among others. These make city life insecure, thus forcing residents to flee from the central portions to the fringe or countryside. The preponderance of dimensions of urban decay inevitably reduces the quality of life of city dwellers. Hence, the need for urban renewal or redevelopment. The study is, thus, guided by the following objectives.

1. To assess the impact of urban renewal programme on the quality of life of the residents of Calabar.
2. To examine the effect of urban renewal on infrastructural development in the study area.
3. To make suggestions towards a sustainable urban renewal programme in Calabar.

For the purpose of this research, two hypotheses are formulated for testing namely:

1. Urban renewal programmes have a significant influence on the quality of life of the residents of Calabar.
2. Urban renewal has a positive effect on sustainable infrastructural development in Calabar.

1.3 Conceptual Context/Literature Review

Globally, the rate of urbanization especially in developing countries is frightening (Eni, 2009). By 1850, only 2% of the world population lived in cities, whereas by 2000AD, the proportion was close to 50%. It is a known fact that about 7% of the present rate of urbanization is taking place in developing countries. According to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), by 1950, out of a total of 10 metropolitan regions in the world, 7 were seen in developed countries. However, by the year 2000AD, only 30% of the 10 largest cities were located in developed countries, while the other 70% were found in developing countries. By projection, it was assumed that by 2010, there were 23 mega cities in the world each with a population in excess of 10 million, out of which 19 were located in developing countries.

Experts on urban studies agree that the level of urbanization in Nigeria by far exceeds the overall level of population growth rate. For example, Okoro (2007) has shown how the urban population in Nigeria increased dramatically from 1 million in 1850 to about 11 million in 1963 and by the year 2000AD, the number of millionaire cities rose from 14 to more than 20.

The glaring portrayal of urban growth and city expansion shown above is replicated in very visible environmental consequences such as cities encroachment on land immediately surrounding them, shortage of shelter or housing deficit, pollution of land, air and water, urban environmental degradation, proliferation of slums, squatters and other unconventional settlements, overcrowding of persons and tenements, homelessness forcing people to take shelter under bridges or broken down vehicles (see Salau, 1993; Eni, 1998; Obot, 1983; Cunningham & Saigo, 2003; Sule, 2003; Enger & Smith, 2004). There is also malnutrition, despicable poverty, a deficient urban infrastructure such as inadequate water supply, toilet, electricity, roads, drainage, lowering of property values or blighted structures, environmentally induced diseases such as cholera, malaria, typhoid, loss of biodiversity, and different forms of deviant behavior usually associated with substandard living conditions.

Theodore Razak has captured the above fact graphically when he averred that:

The super city... stretches out tentacles of influence that reach thousands of miles beyond its already sprawling parameters. It sucks every hinterland and wilderness into its technological metabolism. It forces rural populations off the land and replaces them with vast agro-industrial combines. It flushes its wastes into every nearby river, lake, ocean or trucks them away into desert areas. The world becomes its garbage can (quoted in Miller, Jnr. 1990).

This ugly picture shown above by Rasak, is equally true of most cities in Nigeria. Thus, Nigerian cities are increasingly becoming delinquent and are characterized by a number of anomalies as already mentioned above. Hence, government policy of revamping the decayed or decaying urban environment, through the policy of urban renewal and its associated programmes becomes inevitable. The objective is the betterment of the quality of life of urban residents.

According to Northam (1979), urban renewal, as an urban redevelopment process consists of six successive stages including a workable programme, land acquisition, relocation, demolition, provision of public facilities, and re-sale. This explains why for urban renewal to succeed, it must depend heavily on the availability of legislative authority or the power of eminent domain for the acquisition of blighted or non-conforming structures which ordinarily would be problematic because of the stiff opposition that will greet such attempts (Eni, 2006).

The foregoing synchronizes with Sule's (2004 & 2010) assertion that urban renewal incorporates such areas as reduction in traffic problems, improvement in water quality, electricity, provision and rehabilitation of an accessible road network, provision and improvement of healthcare delivery system, all geared towards improving the quality of life of urbanized people. Urban renewal also involves slum upgrading. This provision results in the maintenance of housing standards through the stricter enforcement of building codes. Although it has been argued that urban renewal programmes increase the cost of building construction, but it also produces a healthier environment which boosts the quality of life of the people (WHO, 1986).

In two separate works, Eni (2006) and Egbe (2007) have captured the perception of the residents of Calabar on the on-going urban renewal programmes taking place in the city. Eni (2006) has shown that 80.8 percent of the respondents commend what government was doing and so should do more. Egbe (2007), whose work was specifically on the assessment of urban renewal programme in Calabar metropolis, stated that:

There is a general impression that the State Government is doing well in the area of urban renewal. It is also true that relatively today, Calabar can unarguably be classified as a clean city. What is, therefore, pertinent in the exercise is the sustainability and the need to complete projects that were hitherto initiated by the former administration and the need for a legislation on environmental laws to back up the exercise (Egbe, 2007).

To make the urban renewal programme more sustainable, Egbe (2007) suggest that more machines and vehicles

should be made available to all the agencies involved in waste collection and evacuation, and the workshop at the premises of Waste Management Technology (WMT) should be equipped with spare parts and tools to facilitate their operations.

As already mentioned above, urban renewal programmes are presently taking place in Calabar, the study area, as well as in other cities in Nigeria such as Lagos, Uyo, Port Harcourt, Benin City, Akure, Makurdi, Owerri, among others. The various components of the urban renewal programmes are expansion, rehabilitation, construction and dualization of new urban roads, construction and beautification of roundabouts, construction of flyovers as in Port Harcourt, Uyo and Ibadan, planting of ornamental trees, flowers and lawns as in Calabar (Mofinews, 2004).

1.4 Research Design

This study adopted the survey method. The types of data collected include data on the various components of the urban renewal programmes such as rehabilitation, expansion, dualization of roads, construction of roundabouts and flyovers, waste disposal, street sweeping, planting of ornamental trees and flowers.

1.5 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This section is divided into two sections namely an analysis of urban renewal projects in Calabar and the impact of urban renewal programme on the quality of life (QOL) of the residents of Calabar metropolis.

1.5.1 Urban Renewal Projects in Calabar

For an extensive treatment of urban renewal projects see the works of Eni (2006), and Egbe (2007). A cursory glance of these works shows that, so far, the urban regeneration scheme, covers tree planting, rehabilitation or reconstruction of urban roads, street lighting and waste management. With respect to tree planting, about 1588 different trees stands have been planted on the major streets of Murtala Muhammed Highway, IBB Way/Air Port Road, Palm Street and the Mary Slessor Avenue. Similarly, a total of 1597 different flower stands have been planted in various parts of the city. The overall aim of the tree and grass planting exercise is to create a conspicuous green belt within Calabar especially in the area stretching from the Governor's Office, Old and New Secretariats, Moor road, up to the Marina Beach.

The rehabilitation/reconstruction of urban roads was done in two phases. Under the first phase, about 13.73km were rehabilitated in Calabar South Local Government Area and 22.8km in Calabar Municipality. The second phase of the project commenced in 2003 and is still on-going. The roads were categorized into types A, B and C and so far a total of 179.66km of roads have been worked upon.

With respect to street lighting, a total of 377 electric poles have been mounted. The streets/roads covered include the Murtala Mohammed Highway (222), IBB Way (42), Mary Slessor Avenue (41), Etta Agbor Road (38) and Airport Road (36).

The waste management component has also made very impressive progress. The trucks used in the disposal of wastes in the metropolis are in three categories namely the dumpster bins which are small in size are about 87: the medium sized skip bins are 56, while roll-off bins which are the largest are 42 in number. These bins are spatially located along the major streets. A very significant aspect of the sanitation of Calabar is the introduction of street sweeping along designated streets by the Calabar Urban Development Authority (CUDA). The street sweeping is done mostly by women whose activities are divided into groups or cells.

1.5.2 Impact of Urban Renewal on Quality of Life

The basic assumption of this study is that urban renewal programmes lead to an improvement in the quality of life of urban residents. To establish this assertion, the responses of the inhabitant of the study area, on four parameters namely mode of transport, likeness (preference) of neighbourhood, availability of water in the house, and the mode of refuse disposal were obtained. The comparison was between the pre-urban renewal era and the year 2011 when several advances were made in government's urban renewable activities.

1.5.2.1 Mode of Transport: The mode of transport of the residents of Calabar is presented in Table 1. It shows that before the year 2000, 31.5 percent of the respondents used commercial motorcycles (**ala lok**), while 21.7 per cent made use of public buses/taxis. Also 25.5 per cent used their private vehicles, 7 per cent used official cars, whereas 3.2 per cent were involved in trekking. However, the picture has changed in 2011 where people no longer use the popular and somehow ubiquitous commercial motor cycles (**ala lok**) because of the State government's ban on them.

Table 1: Mode of Transport in Calabar

S/n	Mode of Transport	Before 2000		By 2011	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Commercial Motorcycle	90	31.5	-	-
2	Commercial Buses/Taxis	62	21.7	101	35.3
3	Trekking	11	3.8	17	5.9
4	Private cars	73	25.5	118	41.3
5	Official vehicles	20	7.0	25	8.7
6	Motorcycles (private)	18	6.3	13	4.5
7	Bicycle	12	4.2	11	4.2
	Total	286	100.0	286	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, September, 2012

About 35.3 per cent patronize commercial buses/taxis, while 41.3 per cent now make use of private vehicles/cars. Two factors may explain the quantum leap in the private ownership of cars in Calabar Metropolis. First, it may be that the advent of democratic governance in the State since 1999 has positively impacted on the economic well-being of residents. The amount of disposable income of residents has increased hence their ability to buy and own cars. Second, the urban renewal programme of government has significantly increased the number of new roads either rehabilitated or constructed, hence the tendency for an increase in the private ownership of cars.

1.5.2.2 Likeness (Preference) of Residential Neighbourhood: A combination of a number of inter-related factors may explain a resident's dislike of a residential area such as untarred, pot-hole ridden roads without drainage lines/gutters, filthy, refuse infested environment, high rents, poor electricity, and so on. By the year 2000, 52.8 per cent of the residents disliked their neighbourhoods while 29 per cent liked it as shown in Table 2. But by 2011, the picture changed dramatically as 60.5 per cent liked their residential areas while 26.6 per cent disliked their areas of residence, while 12.9 were undecided.

Table 2: Likeness of Neighbourhood in Calabar

S/n	Response	Before 2000		By 2011	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Liked	83	29.0	173	60.5
2	Disliked	151	52.8	76	26.6
3	Others	52	18.2	37	12.9
	Total	285	100.0	286	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, September, 2012

The implication is that residents tend to like their neighbourhoods in 2011 as a result of the massive urban regeneration programmes of the State Government that have taken and are still taking place. An improvement in residential quality and the general beautification of the urban milieu have caused residents in the study area to now prefer to remain in their neighbourhoods.

1.5.2.3 Availability of Water Supply in Calabar Metropolis: One component of the urban renewal programme in Calabar is the improvement in the supply of potable water supply to the generality of the residents. Before 2000, the water situation was deplorable as shown in Table 3, where about 50 per cent of the people patronized boreholes as their source of water supply, while private connections from the Cross River State Water Board Limited, the Government Agency responsible for water supply, and public taps from the same agency constitute 30.1 per cent and 13.3 per cent respectively. About 6.6 per cent had no source of water supply. However, in the year 2011, the picture changed positively as a result of the urban renewal programme.

Table 3: Availability of Water Supply in Calabar

S/n	Source of Water	Before 2000		By 2011	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Public Taps (Water Board)	38	13.3	47	16.4
2	Private connections in the house (Water Board)	86	30.1	144	50.4
3	Boreholes	143	50.0	81	28.3
4	Not available	19	6.6	14	4.9
	Total	286	100.0	286	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, September, 2012

At that year, a total of 66.8 per cent of the residents of Calabar make use of water supply from the State Water Board Limited. This is a very positively significant improvement in the availability of water city dwellers in the study area.

1.5.2.4 Mode of Refuse Disposal in Calabar: Respondents were asked to assess the efficiency of the mode of refuse disposal in the study area. The results are captured in Table 4 where by the year 2000, residents who used private dump sites were 24.8 per cent, 37.8 per cent used public open dumps, 9.1 per cent used burning/burying, while 25.9 per cent dump wastes in open drains/gutters. Only 2.4 per cent made use of government refuse bins. By 2011, 63.3 per cent of the inhabitants make use of refuse disposal bins provided by the State Government. The government agencies saddled with the responsibility of environmental sanitation in the metropolis are the Calabar Urban Development Agency (CUDA) and the Waste Management Technology (WMT). It would appear the efficiency of these two agencies accounts for why the other unconventional disposal methods account for about 36.7 per cent. Hence, the general cleanliness of Calabar.

Table 4: Mode of Refuse Disposal in Calabar

S/n	Disposal Method	Before 2000		By 2011	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Private dump	71	24.8	27	9.4
2	Public open dump	108	37.8	16	5.6
3	Burning/burying	26	9.1	16	3.5
4	Inside drains/gutters	74	25.9	52	18.2
5	Government refuse bins	7	2.4	181	63.3
	Total	285	100.0	286	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, September, 2012

1.6 Public Implications/Recommendations: This study has shown that the Cross River State Government's urban renewal programme is very much on course. It has also shown the response of the residents of Calabar who are the immediate beneficiaries of the programme. Therefore, based on the foregoing findings, the following recommendations are proffered.

1. Effective urban renewal in Calabar should place emphasis on raising incomes and reducing the proportion of the unemployed residents.
2. Government should encourage the participatorial approach of residents in urban renewal programmes. Stakeholders should be given access to mortgage loans to enable them purchase plots of land as well as renovate their houses where appropriate and applicable.
3. Government should not always wait to use urban renewal as a last resort in enhancing environmental quality. In addition, slum growth should be gradually checked before they expand to an uncontrollable level.
4. Government should put in place an adequate, durable and efficient legislative framework for all urban renewal programmes in the State. This will provide the basis for land use zoning, development controls, financial provisions, and so on. With this legal support, the planning authority will perform its duties like exercising powers in areas designated for general redevelopment, demolition of dilapidated buildings and also stop any development without approval.
5. Government should establish a functional structure where there is proper co-ordination between highly technical personnel whose duties are clearly defined to avoid unnecessary duplications.
6. The task of urban renewal should not be left in the hands of government alone. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) should be encouraged and allowed to participate, so as to help in improving the quality of urban life.

1.7 Conclusion

This study has shown that the different government urban renewal programmes in Calabar in particular has improved the general cleanliness of the capital city. Hence, Calabar is now popularly referred to as the cleanest city in Nigeria or the "Paradise City". The fact, therefore, remains that with the introduction of urban regeneration activities, the mode of transport has improved, the water supply situation has become more reliable while the refuse disposal system is now more efficient. As a result, residents of the city have a general "likeness" of their respective places of residence. When all these are put together, it would be safe to conclude that the urban renewal programme of the Cross River State Government has significantly impacted on the quality of life (QOL) of the residents of Calabar. Thus, the State Government needs to be highly commended and encouraged to embark on more urban renewal programmes not only in Calabar, but also at the other sixteen local government headquarters, taking particular note of the aforementioned recommendations.

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