

Urbanization and poverty in Nigeria

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Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, usually called the giant of Africa. The country is proud of being the largest economy in the continent. Nigeria is the largest exporter of petroleum products in Africa and produces 2.7% of the total world's oil turnover which is the largest in the continent. Nigerian economy was rated as the 27th largest economy in the world based on the nominal GDP and the 22nd largest based on purchasing power parity. In contrast, Nigeria is ranked 176th in the world, 24th in Africa (the least in the sub-Saharan African) based on Human Development Index (HDI), that takes into account not only the economic situation, but also the social and medical one. Nigeria who has the largest economy in Africa, is also ranked among the bottom countries in the continent in terms of human development. Poverty is prevalent in Nigeria with about 98 million Nigerians that are multidimensionally poor.

Nigerian poverty is a special form of poverty; extreme poverty in the mist of abundance. It is a kind of poverty that is not common on the world's table of countries and their economic situations. The standard of living in Nigeria does not reflect the wealth of the nation. Therefore, it is quite interesting to ruminate on the factors that interplay in the Nigerian economic terrain and the socioeconomic environment of the Nigerian poverty scenario. Practically, many factors contribute to this problem; poverty is a multidimensional issue that has root in virtually all fields of human endeavor. However, one of the (traits that qualify extreme poverty in Nigeria today) is urbanization. Urbanization is defined as the growing increase in the proportion of a country's population living within the urban metropolis and the peripheries. It is usually expressed as a percentage of the total population. In other words, urbanization measures increase in proportion of the country's population that reside in urban centers.

Usually, urbanization is supposed to be a source of economic advantages to the country. For instance, urbanization brings about the formation of large markets at specific locations which promotes productivity, inter firm linkages and employment of labour. From the social perspective, urbanization favours socialization, access to education and to new technologies, and the provision of social infrastructures that boost development and alleviate poverty. Urbanization also facilitates globalization through the international transactions that ensue among countries from the economic advantages and the geopolitical weight that build up in the urban settings. Therefore, urbanization is a socioeconomic phenomenon that any country could wish for because it's transformative, informative and a reliable agent of economic development.

The invaluable potentialities of urbanization is also acknowledge by the development experts who drafted the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The goal "11" of the scheme envisages sustainable cities and communities for people in the underdeveloped countries by the year 2030. The goal aims to transform the human settlements and cities to a more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable ones. This include safe, comfortable and affordable housing for all. However, the parameter for measuring progress with regard to this target is the proportion of urban population living in slums or unplanned settlements. This is a very plausible criterion and target, if achieved will mitigate the hardships that characterized the urban life in a place like Nigeria and it will also boost rural-urban drift across the country. A lots of rural dwellers are not motivated to relocate to the cities because of the hardship, insecurity, social unrest and the moral decadence that is prevalent in the urban centers across the country. In other words, the goal

“11” of the SDGs is a laudable goal, if achieved will be a milestone success for this generation and the posterities of Nigeria.

The Problems

Virtually all the urban centers in Nigeria are facing the problem of inadequacies. Electricity, water, roads, housing, hospitals, schools, drainages are all inadequate in supply, due to the huge population that is eking out the little available facilities. Hence, suffering, high death rate, high traffic mortality, high maternal mortality, frequent outbreak of diseases, violence and crimes. Nigerians survive in the cities by adaptation to the environment and survival of the fittest. Even many of the people that live outside the slums are not better off because the basic facilities are not in place. According to a number of anonymous reports The affluent ones provide everything for themselves; they generate electricity by themselves, supply themselves water through boreholes and wells, they provide themselves security by employing security guards and those who cannot endure the bad road conditions in their areas fix some roads for their personal comforts (such roads are called private drive pathways, in January 30 2019 the Nigeria’s Business mogul, Aliko Dangote signed for the construction of 19 federal roads across Nigeria).

Transportation problem. Traffic jam is the hallmark of intra-city transportation in Nigerian cities. For instance, my friend who lives in Lagos metropolis (like her other colleagues in her place of work) leaves home for office not later than 4:00am and return home from the office not earlier than 11:00pm when the children would have gone to bed. If she leaves home for office later than 4:00am or there about, she will not be able to arrive office at the time she is expected to resume to the office. And if she leaves office earlier than 10:00pm she will run to traffic jam on the way, where people are helplessly vulnerable to armed robbery attack.

The housing problem. The acute hardship that associate with housing in the Nigerian cities make the existence of the slums inevitable. People who cannot afford the exorbitant rents of the modern houses built in the newly developed areas, usually opt for the slums for cheaper sheltering. Although, houses in the slums are relatively cheap, but the attendant hardship is outrageous. In the slums, life is suffering and smiling¹. Yet, people see it as a place of last resort, in the absence of better and affordable alternative. Consequently, the slum dwellers in the Nigerian cities account for the sizeable proportion of the urban population in Nigeria. Therefore the negative features of slum growth tend to spread throughout the city; for this reason the response of the government on reasons for mass forced evictions of people from slums across the urban centers in the country. The most cogent reason for the mass forced evictions of people from those informal settlements according to the government is the fact that those slums are havens for prostitution and robbery. 21 January, 2020 (Today News Africa)

One of the undeniable facts about the slums in some of the Nigerian cities is that, the standard of living there is lower than that of an average rural settlement. In some shantytowns (slums), there is no road access to many houses. Therefore, transportation of goods to such houses and out of them is always hectic if not completely impossible in some instances. The provisions of amenities like drainage, electricity and pipe burn water is hard because of the sporadic location of buildings in those areas². The slum dwellers are people whose hope of migrating to the cities have been dashed and consequently, settle for subsistence life with their children and wards being exposed to undue hardships.

In Nigeria, social vices and crimes spread from the cities to the rural areas. This is evident in the wide gap between the crime rate in the cities and the rural areas. The part of the cities where the crimes are emanating from is the slums. The harsh condition under which children are being raised in the slums cause many of the children to become wild and eventually take to the streets. The streets are filled with minors who are fending for themselves. Many of such children are being lure into crimes and illicit acts

by the unscrupulous elements in the society. So, social vices and crimes emanate from the slums and spread to the cities and from the cities spread to the entire parts of the country, hence the prevalence of criminal acts in the country. This is evident in report of the Nigerian police, the Nigerian police launched Operation Puff Adder on April 5 2019, and by June 6 2019 the force arrested 2,175 suspects made up of 852 arrested for kidnapping, 865 for armed robbery, 359 for murder and 99 for cultism. Regarding arms recovery, the IG stated that 834 arms, including two rocket launchers and 19,009 live ammunition, were recovered. According to him, the bandits were arrested following intelligence report that led to the raid of criminal hotspots in the metropolitan areas, not in the rural areas.

The Factors

The factors that turn urbanization to anti-development agent in Nigeria are; one, the high cost of urban maintenance and the enormous urban centers in the country. Urbanization is good and fills with useful potentialities, but to keep an urban setting working is highly resources consuming. The moment an urbanization process sets in an area, the growth process is a continuous one and so the needs of the community. The more new entrants migrated into the community, the needs in terms of social infrastructures, physical infrastructures, feeding, housing, health, security and jobs escalate. Slight failure on the part of the government to put those things in place will translate into a network of multidimensional problems. Nigeria as a developing economy with her level of development stands out for his high number of urban areas, in compariso, for example, with other countries with a low human development index. The remaining 35 countries in that category of ranking, have at most one urban center that is 500,000 to 1,000,000 in population each. But, Nigeria has twenty four urban centers that are 500,000 to 1,000,000 in population. If Nigeria will have more than her counterparts, it should be at most two. There is no country in the world that is in the same level of development with Nigeria that has more than one urban center of that capacity. Consequently, the urban centers in Nigeria are underfunded, hence the woes. (Oyeleye, 2013)

Another factor that contributes significantly to the disadvantages that associate with urbanization in Nigeria is poor governance. The political alibi that is often told to the public is that; the urban centers in Nigeria are enormous, the needs of those urbans are huge and the income at the government's disposal does not commensurate the needs of the cities. Yes, this could be true but with good governance there would have been some improvements. Although the government does not have enough means, but from every indications, the governments lack the political will towards improving the awkward situations that characterized our cities. Urban centers with their enormous needs and large population can only be fixed by good and committed managers. The urban centers need nothing but a proactive management board that have wealth of experience and knowledge in urban development and ally maters. The successive government in Nigeria over the years have not really identified with the problems of the urban centers in the country. Consequently, poverty is more sever in the urban centers because the challenges of the cities are huge and it will take a visionary government that has full awareness about the plights of the cities to tackle the abject poverty that is ravaging the Nigerian cities.

Reference

OYELEYE O. I. (2013) Challenges of urbanization and urban growth in Nigeria. American Journal of Sustainable Cities and Society. Issue 2, Vol. 1 Jan- Dec 2013. ISSN 2319 – 7277. Available online on <http://www.rpublication.com/ajscs/ajsas.html>.

3. List of countries by Human Development Index: the Low human development

S/N	Country	2018 data (2019 Report) rankings	Urban areas over 500,000
1	Syria	154	1
2	Papua New Guinea	155	1
3	Comoros	156	1
4	Rwanda	157	1
5	Nigeria	158	24
6	Tanzania	159	1
7	Uganda	159	1
8	Mauritania	161	1
9	Madagascar	162	1
10	Benin	163	1
11	Lesotho	164	1
12	Ivory Coast	165	1
13	Senegal	166	1
14	Togo	167	1
15	Sudan	168	1
16	Haiti	169	1
17	Afghanistan	170	1
18	Djibouti	171	1
19	Malawi	172	1
20	Ethiopia	173	1
21	The Gambia	174	1
22	Guinea	174	1
23	Liberia	176	1
24	Yemen	177	1
25	Guinea-Bissau	178	1
26	Congo	179	1
27	Mozambique	180	1

28	Sierra Leone	181	1
29	Burkina Faso	182	1
30	Eritrea	182	1
31	Mali	184	1
32	Burundi	185	1
33	South Sudan	186	1
34	Chad	187	1
35	Central African Republic	188	1
36	Niger	189	1

Sources: United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report, 2019; and the United Nations' 2019 revision of World Population Prospects

4. "The prevailing crimes in Nigerian urban centers include robbery, kidnapping, rape, murder, child trafficking, murder, political violence, fraud, suicide, and prostitution among other crimes, which are the resultant factors of urbanization. All these crimes are urban affairs and not rural affairs, because many inhabitants of the countryside are related in one way or the other" (Oyeleye, 2013)