

# Urban Poverty and Environmental Conditions in Informal Settlements of Ajegunle, Lagos Nigeria

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## 1 ABSTRACT

In many parts of the world millions of people live in informal urban settlements especially in developing countries where lack of resources and inadequate infrastructural facilities lead to degradation of the environment. Deteriorating environmental conditions populate poverty. The issue of urban poverty in Nigeria as exemplified by the situation in Lagos being the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria has been aggravated by high rate of rural urban migration coupled with the inability of the urban areas to create jobs for the immigrants. Currently Lagos reflects the embodiment of the contemporary decay of urban life as evident in the standard of living, congested apartments, degraded environment, crime among others. This paper therefore examines the interplay between poverty and environmental conditions of informal settlement with Ajegunle, Lagos as case study. Social, economic and cultural characteristics as well as environmental issues associated with people living in this area are examined. For this purpose a reconnaissance survey of the study area was carried out and it was observed that there are currently a total of 4,236 houses from which 10% were selected for sampling. Therefore, by approximation a total number of 424 houses were selected for questionnaire administration. Systematic random sampling technique was used hence; every 10th house was selected for questionnaire administration. The findings revealed that majority of the residents are poor and their daily life pattern is characterised by unpleasant, unhealthy and difficult situation as a result of low financial capacity, lack of adequate infrastructural facilities and decent housing as well as environmental degradation. The study recommends the need to prepare detailed infrastructure network plan for the community with population density being the major index in determining the adequacy, improve the general quality of the environmental and physical conditions of the area, land tenure regularization, security of tenure and the need to recognize and improve the inhabitant means of livelihood which is centered on informal activities.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

The 1980s and early 1990s are commonly known as a period of urban crisis across the continent of Africa (UNCHS, 1996). This crisis reflected in the deterioration of urban services and infrastructure and changes in the labour market. The economic stagnation and the structural adjustment policies imposed on nearly all African governments did not also help matters as many people migrated to the cities from rural areas in search of a better means of livelihood. As a result of all these, the low-income and slum areas in the African cities generally became the fastest growing areas (Kanji 1996).

Today, cities in developing countries enmeshed in extreme poverty and fail to create the jobs necessary for development. The share of the population living in urban areas is rising inevitably. According to the report of the Global Urban Observatory (2003), urban poverty in developing countries is typically concentrated in slums and other informal settlements. The bulk of the urban poor in Africa as exemplified by the Nigerian situation are living in extremely deprived conditions and indecent housing with insufficient physical amenities like water supply, sanitation, sewerage, drainage, community centres, health care, nutrition, pre-school and non formal education. Nigeria with an estimated population of over 125 million and a land area of about 924 square kilometers has large deposits of oil, gas and solid minerals and a sizeable educated and skilled workforce. Despite these, the country has not been able to effectively harness her resources to develop the economy sufficiently to improve the poor condition of its people (Akpobasah, 2004). The UNDP Human Development Report 2004 ranks Nigeria as the 30th poorest country in the world. Currently about 65- 70% of the population lives below the poverty line, half of which probably lives on less than half a dollar per day and precarious situation (UNDP, 2004).

The issue of poverty in Nigeria especially in the urban areas as exemplified by the situation in Lagos being the commercial nerve of the country has been aggravated by the present trend of rural urban migration coupled with the inability of the urban areas to create the jobs necessary for development. Currently Lagos reflects the embodiment of the contemporary decay of urban life as evident in the poor standard of living, congested apartments, degraded environment, crime among others. The statistic released by UNDP in 2003 revealed that 51% of male residents and 54% of female residents of Metropolitan Lagos are poor and live in

a condition contrast to prosper, healthy and livable city. It is against this background that the research seeks to investigate the interplay between poverty and environmental condition in Ajegunle being the most populous informal settlement in Lagos metropolis.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Poverty can be defined in different ways. Some attempt to reduce it to numbers, while others argue that a more ambiguous definition must be used. In the end, a combination of both methods is used in defining poverty. Generally, economists and social workers use two approaches to define poverty. Some people describe poverty as a lack of essential items – such as food, clothing, water, and shelter – needed for proper living. At the UN's World Summit on Social Development, the 'Copenhagen Declaration' poverty was described as a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. When people are unable to eat, go to school, or have any access to health care, then they can be considered to be in poverty, regardless of their income. To measure poverty in any statistical way, however, more rigid definitions must be used.

Therefore, poverty is not only a state of existence but also a process with many dimensions and complexities (Mahmood). According to Ravallion (1995); Sen (1999) it is usually characterized by deprivation, vulnerability (high risk and low capacity to cope), and powerlessness. These characteristics impair people's sense of well-being. Poverty can be chronic or transient. Poverty has been defined in different ways, but it is important to know that poverty is not only defined in terms of economic needs (such as income or food). Poverty also has a social dimension (poor quality of housing and the living environment, i.e. lack of access to basic services like clean water, health care, education etc.). However, even a definition in economic and social terms does not describe poverty well enough. Apart from not having access to the benefits of development, poverty is also a lack of choice and of voice, of rights and security of participation in decision making (Shubert, 1996).

Consequently, urban poverty is a monster with many heads and arms that limits the possibilities available to the poor in the cities. The poor are marginalized to the point where they are unable to determine their own destiny. Two decade ago, only one third of the world's poor was living in urban areas while it is estimated that now half of the poor are concentrated in cities and towns. Currently, it is estimated that of the world's population of six billion people, half of whom live in urban areas, there are over one billion poor people living in slums and spontaneous settlements (UN HABITAT, 2003b).

The urban poor in developing countries nevertheless survive, because they can look after themselves. They find land in the city to live and build their own houses. If possible, they construct their toilet and drainage system. They tap electricity from an adjacent house through an informal connection. If they are threatened with eviction, they find another place to live. They work in irregular and low-paid jobs, and develop and operate micro-enterprises to make a living. They organize their savings and loans groups so that they can make investments in housing or business. They produce and sell goods and services to each other in quantities and quality for which there is a demand among the poor. The urban poor show a great ingenuity in finding solutions to their problems and meeting their basic needs (Fallavier et al, 1999). These solutions most often result into environmental problems inform of sub-standard housing, poor waste disposal system, poor environmental sanitation and degradation among others.

Almost everything the urban poor need is somehow available in the market. However, because the market is informal, if not illegal, and non-transparent, the poor have to buy whatever they need at a relatively high cost. Because they do not have much money, they buy goods and services on the informal market where the price per unit tends to be higher than in the formal market. Even if the public sector provides a good or service for free (e.g. education, health care), the poor have to pay to gain access, because free goods and services are always in short supply. As noted by Fallavier et al, (1999), the urban poor lack information (including information about their rights), therefore, they have to rely on middlemen who often take a disproportional cut. Because they cannot afford to follow the rules and regulations and are forced to operate in the informal sector (for their housing, their micro-business), they are always vulnerable to extortion (Fallavier et al, 1999). The urban poor would be less poor, if they did not have such relatively high costs of living.

## 2.1 The Urbanization of Poverty

Over 6 billion people currently inhabit the world and, despite a reduced population growth rate, this number is expected to increase to 8 billion over the coming decades (United Nations Population Division, 2001, 2002). It is important to note that most of this growth will occur in cities of developing countries. The term “urbanization of poverty” describes the process of cities becoming more and more the places where the poor of the world can be found.

In many developing countries, lack of employment opportunities in the rural areas contributes to urbanization, which is further accelerated by natural population growth. Often, however, cities do not offer sufficient employment opportunities for their rapidly increasing population. As a consequence, many cities are characterized by a high incidence of informal employment opportunities, which are unstable and yield only low incomes. The resulting poverty in combination with lack of affordable housing are driving forces behind the formation of informal settlements commonly known as slums, which offer only sub-standard living conditions to their inhabitants thereby compounding the poverty level.

It is an irony that the people in the cities are automatically better off compared to those living in the rural areas. Research by UN-HABITAT in 2003 has shown that 924 million people, or 31.6% of the world’s urban population, are living under unacceptable conditions, and this figure will increase unless there is a deliberate efforts to improve the living conditions of current and future urban dwellers.

Urban poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. The urban poor live with many deprivations. Their daily challenges according to Baharoglu and Kessides (2004) include; limited access to employment opportunities and income, inadequate and insecure housing and services, violent and unhealthy environments, little or no social protection mechanisms, and limited access to adequate health and education opportunities. He went further to state that urban poverty is not just a collection of characteristics; it is also a dynamic condition of vulnerability or susceptibility to risks.

The poor in the cities according to Baker and Schuler (2004) suffer from various deprivations such as lack of access to employment; adequate housing and infrastructure; and social protection and lack of access to health, education and personal security. Urban poverty is often characterized by cumulative deprivations: one dimension of poverty is often the cause of or contributor to another dimension.

## 2.2 Informal Settlements

The phrase informal settlements has been accepted as well as contested by scholars in various disciplines. According to Leeds and Leeds (1978), the occupation of land that does not belong to the person settling on it is what distinguishes informal settlements from other settlements. The inappropriate invasion of land characterizes these settlements as an illegal form of land use because occupation is neither based on the legal ownership of such land, nor in payment of rent to the legal owners. In a study identifying the significant variables that determine the character of squatter settlements, Leeds, (1969) argues that the uniform identifying characteristics are their illegal and unordered origins or organized invasion and, because of their origin, their continued juridically ambiguous status as settlements. Sietchiping (2000) refers to informal land use as any human establishment, human settlement or land use in the urban area which is not suitable or in opposition to the expected standard and regulations. Informal land use includes the poor and precarious housing within the city or in the city fringes or other areas where land are vacant, accessible and affordable.

According to Srinivas (2003) informal settlement is characterized by unauthorized use of vacant public or private land, illegal subdivision and/or rental of land, unauthorized construction of structures and buildings, reliance on low cost and locally available scrap construction materials, absence of restrictive standards and regulations, reliance on family labour and artisanal techniques for construction, non-availability of mortgage or any other subsidized finance. Study by Sietchiping in 2000 revealed that informal land use is characterised by overcrowding, deterioration, insecurity, absence or insufficient basic facilities. These conditions endanger the health, prosperity, safety or moral of the inhabitants and the community at large is unpleasant for living.

The development of informal settlement - the evolution of what are now described as illegal settlements- was blamed in the seventies on the tendency of the private land market to marginalize the poor (Turner, 1980; Gilbert and Ward, 1985). Informal land use according to World Bank (1999) constitutes an expression of poor urbanization and poverty of city dwellers as well as failed policies, bad governance, corruption, inappropriate regulations, dysfunctional land markets. Furthermore, informal (settlement) land use originated

from difficult problems of housing, immigration rate, politics, physical planning, landlessness, land tenure system and employment especially in the urban areas (Yapidiahou 1995). In particular, they originate from the existing gap between the number formal/regular land supply and the need.

In developing countries' cities, Lagos inclusive land in the formal market remains too expensive for the urban poor. Government allocations are slow and bureaucratic, and the land allocated for shelter considered usually insufficient. Recent empirical observations in nine African countries according to Mattingly and Durand-Lasserve (2004) revealed that informal land systems are effective enough in terms of the quantity delivered to be an alternative to formal urban land delivery systems. They are less bureaucratic and more flexible than formal systems. They are more effective in reaching poor people. However, their viability, sustainability and livability raise a series of questions as the system produce poorly planned areas with insufficient basic services as in the case of Nigerian cities.

Nigeria is one of the most rapidly urbanizing countries in Africa and the challenges that come with this especially in the supply of adequate land for basic services, decent housing and other uses that make settlement prosper, healthy and livable are major challenges that government faces (FMH&UD, 2003). This had long been recognised by government therefore; attempt to meet these challenges led to promulgation of land use act of 1978 which seeks to nationalize the land tenure system in the country and entrusts the administration on government. Nevertheless, in Nigeria today as epitomised by the situation in Lagos the informal sector is 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 (Nwaka, 2005). Generally, dwellings in informal settlements are built by the spontaneous undirected and untrained efforts of the squatters who cannot afford to secure legal or formal land or a safe site on which a house can be built. Usually informal developments are located on vulnerable and area such as deep or dangerous slopes. They are known as catastrophe prone areas (Sietchiping, 2000).

Informal land developments provide shelter for over 85% of the population of urban dwellers in most developing countries (UNCHS, 1996 and 2000; Durand-Lasserve, 1997). Yet, they either do not appear at all in government records or are regarded with so much negativism as to warrant constant harassment or exclusion from provision of necessary infrastructure and amenities (Durand-Lasserve and Tribillon, 2001; Agbola, 2001). As a result, actors involved in the informal and illegal land markets are denied access to formal opportunities for optimization of capital formation and accumulation.

According to World Bank (2006) over two-thirds of the population of Lagos lives in the informal settlements that are scattered around the city. The Lagos Master Plan 1980–2000 identified and classified 42 slums in the city. There are now over one hundred of such communities in Lagos. Many poor and low income families excluded from access to land and housing in the formal sector find refuge in the informal settlements where land and housing can be purchased and built according to means and capacity. Although, they generally lack security of tenure by virtue of not having the certificate of occupancy however, many informal settlement residents hold bona fide rights and interests in the land on which they live, having validly acquired land from legitimate land holding families or communities.

Driven by the quest to eliminate or drastically curb the spread of informal settlements, the government has used forced eviction as a preferred tool of urban engineering with counter-productive outcomes. Generally, these evictions are planned and carried out without regard for the due process of law. In addition to the broad range of social, economic, psychological, cultural and physical havoc inflicted on the victims, forced eviction has helped to fuel the growth of new informal settlements or the expansion of existing ones with more complex dimensions. These communities are routinely denied funds needed for the provision or maintenance of basic facilities such as community health centres or portable water (Morka 2007).

### **2.3 Environmental Condition of Informal Settlements in Lagos**

Lagos urban agglomeration is characterized by a very significant presence of the urban poor, with a growing poverty profile. Informal settlements have multiplied over the years and the living condition of the poor is getting worse. Environmental decline, inadequate basic services and infrastructure in the informal settlements across the state hit the poor hardest. Informal settlements which range in size from clusters of

shacks to entire districts are scattered across the state in many local governments area. The number of informal settlements and informal settlements dwellers in Lagos Metropolis are increasing at a faster pace on daily basis. As far back as 1984, 42 settlements had been identified as blighted (UNCHS/Lagos State Government). The number has risen to about 100 as at 2004 (UN-Habitat/Lagos State Government, 2004). The study carried out by Nubi and Omirin in 2006 revealed that over 70% of the built up area of the Lagos metropolis is blighted. Although, presently there is no accurate data on the exact number of such settlements and their population but there are indications that there are over 200 of such settlement in the state. It is observed that the informal settlements are located on private and government lands without access to basic services. The poor, not only dwell in the slums of the city but are spread in squatters and informal settlements located in vulnerable areas such as swamp, canal setback, rail line setback, marginal land among others, deprived of basic infrastructural services. This makes them more vulnerable to environmental degradation, threats of eviction, ejection and demolition.

The urban challenges of developing countries as identified by Population Reference Bureau in 2004 include environmental hazards, natural disasters, public and reproductive health, and poverty. These are all apparent in the various pockets of informal communities located across Lagos metropolis. The environment components such as land, water and air which provide support system for healthy living are been polluted daily in Lagos as a result of pressure on them due to human developmental activities and desire to meet daily livelihood. According to Gandy (2006) the city's sewerage network is virtually non-existent and at least two-thirds of childhood disease is attributable to inadequate access to safe drinking water. In heavy rains, over half of the city's dwellings suffer from routine flooding and a third of households must contend with knee-deep water within their homes during raining season.

With this situation, the poor are mostly affected because they often live in ecologically vulnerable areas. There are many of such settlements in Lagos notably, Ajegunle, Makoko, Iwaya, Amukoko, Ilaje among others.

## **2.4 Urban Poverty, Environmental Conditions in Informal Settlements as a Bane of Achieving Livable, Prosper and Healthy Cities**

In the 21st century the world has become urban, with the majority of the global population living in cities and towns. The fastest rates of urbanization are now taking place in developing countries, where average incomes are the lowest (Weiss, 2001). This suggests that poverty which used to be a rural phenomenon is becoming gradually more urban issue, especially in the developing world. Urban areas are the main generators of economic prosperity, and thus are best positioned to contribute toward the elimination of poverty. Urbanization is an incentive to development and wealth creation in the sense that cities are places of innovation and attractors of industrious and agile individuals (Serageldin, 1996). However, the potentials of urbanization especially in the developing countries have been hampered by the its overwhelming negative effects such as congestion, poverty, environmental decay, pollution, unemployment and incidence of informal settlements formation as a result of inability of government to adequately meet the housing and infrastructure needs of the urban poor. Urban poverty has many dimensions. It can generally be characterized by a combination of the following characteristics: inadequate income and inadequate or unstable economic assets, inadequate social capital, lack of services and infrastructure and inadequate housing.

It is worrisome that today millions of people still live in indecent housing in informal urban settlements without basic services like clean water, sanitation, basic roadways or footpaths, and drainage. This is a common phenomenon in Lagos urban centers. The impacts of service failures and indecent housing on health, livability, prosperity and sustainability of human settlement cannot be over emphasized. Housing in its present day definition is more than just a shelter but include the environment and all necessary infrastructures that make life comfortable. Housing is a key determinant of quality of life that can be measured at individual, household, and community levels. It has economic, social, and psychological and physical significance which support community functioning. The need for adequate and decent housing is now part of the central focus and an integral component in National strategies for growth and poverty reduction. Decent and affordable housing is one of the basic needs of individuals, the family and the community at large. It is a pre-requisite to the survival of man. Housing as a component of the environment has impact on the health, livability, prosperity, efficient, social behaviour, satisfaction and general welfare of the community at large.

However, it has been established that housing problem in developing countries' cities as exemplified by Lagos is not only limited to quantities but also qualities of the available housing units environment. The problem is more pronounced in urban informal settlements where overcrowding, congestion and inadequate facilities have become order of the day. These problems are more compounded by lack of legal title (secured tenure) of the residents. It has been argued at different quarters that security of tenure is one of the most important catalysts in stabilising communities, improving shelter conditions and provision of decent and adequate housing for the urban poor who are mostly accommodated in informal settlements which are characterized by poor environmental conditions.

The environmental quality of urban areas has a serious effect on the health status of all urban residents. While the entire urban population suffers from poor environmental quality, the urban poor tend to be the most vulnerable as they are often living in marginalized parts of the city, contiguous with waste sites and well beyond the reach of water, sanitation and other environmental services. Their situation is further amplified because they do not have sufficient resources to invest in infrastructure improvements. The negative consequences of poor environmental quality impact every aspect of their lives as well as the livability and health of the community at large.

Healthy cities require safe, easily accessible, and affordable water; sanitation; safe home and work environments; clean air; and reduced exposure to disease pathogens. Poor housing conditions, exposure to excessive heat or cold, diseases, air, soil and water pollution along with industrial and commercial occupational risks, which are inherent features of informal urban settlements and their dwellers, exacerbate the already high environmental health risks for the urban poor. Lack of safety nets and social support systems, such as health insurance, as well as lack of property rights and tenure, further contribute to the health vulnerability of the urban poor.

### **3 THE STUDY AREA (AJEGUNLE)**

The study is set in Ajegunle which is located in Ajeromi Ifelodun Local Government Area of Lagos state Nigeria. The site is a major informal settlement, often described as 'jungle city' with a multi-ethnic population. It is the most populated slum in Lagos State. Ajegunle has a population density of 750 the highest of all slums in Lagos state. The slum area of Ajegunle constitutes 12.8% of the total area of all 42 blighted areas as at 1995. According to Stoveland Consult, WTP Study of 1997, majority of the multi-ethnic population of Ajegunle are of school age and highly, economically productive. Ajegunle is made up of five resident communities, and consist of people from all parts of the country with the dominant groups being the Ijaw, Ilaje, Hausa, Ibo, Urhobo and Yoruba ethnicity. Their main occupation is trading in the formal and informal sectors. The average household in Ajegunle spends about N6000 on food, N2000 of transport, N600 on housing and N885 on energy/fuel for cooking and lighting. Despite the slum nature, these figures of economic information are comparable to the Lagos average as found in 1995. Nevertheless, the present study is carried out to validate some of these figures.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

Two main types of data – spatial and attributes – were used for the study. These were obtained from the primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources include; published materials from journals, textbooks, government publications and gazettes. Primary data was obtained through personal observation and questionnaire administration. Questionnaire was designed and administered to elucidate information on socio-economic characteristics, building conditions, infrastructural facilities and environmental condition of the study area. Direct observation was also used to validate claims and responses on physical, environmental and housing conditions of the study area.

This study adopts Survey Research Design method, because it allows the establishment of unique characteristics of the population and the ability to develop a detailed picture and intensive knowledge of the case study. A reconnaissance survey of the study area was carried out and it was observed that there are currently a total of 4,236 houses from which 10% were selected for sampling. Therefore, by approximation a total number of 424 houses were selected for questionnaire administration. Systematic random sampling technique was used hence; every 10th house was selected for questionnaire administration. Data are presented on the socio-economic characteristics, building conditions, infrastructural facilities and

environmental condition of the study area. The analyses of data are therefore presented below to explain poverty and environmental conditions of the study area.

## 5 FINDINGS AND RESULTS

### 5.1 Socio–Economic Characteristics of Respondents

The study reveals that larger proportions of the respondents are male with a figure of 231 (59.2%) most of whom are of adult age of 20 years and above. Majority of the respondents are educated having at least basic primary education. It can therefore, be concluded that it will be an advantage in case of any attempt at improving the environmental conditions of this settlement, since it may not be difficult to communicate with them at the same time get practical input from them.

The study further reveals that majority of the respondents are Yoruba with a figure of 194 (49.7%) follow by Igbo which records 136 (34.9%) and Hausa with 21 (5.4%). People from other ethnic groups are not significant in the study area. As observed during the survey, majority of these people came from other states outside of Lagos. The Yorubas among them are mostly from Yoruba speaking states in the North Central geo-political zone (Kwara and Kogi States). The historical background of the people revealed that they were mostly traders from these hinterland states who used to stop over during their trips, until when they gradually began to make temporary structures that could accommodate them for the period of their transactions. The site later became prominent for such functions to the extent that the temporary habitation became relatively permanent homes for most of these people. Friends, family members and other relatives were invited and the process of permanent occupation began which, was later consolidated, sustained and established.

Typical of any informal or squatter settlement, the study reveals that majority of the respondents are employed in informal sector. 52.1% are traders, 30% are artisan, 7.9% are civil servants, 2.1% are farmers, 1.5% engaged in fishing while the remaining 6.4% fall in other category. This could be attributed to the fact that the area is dominated by poor immigrants, characterised by the informal activities that is uniquely associated with the low income groups. Majorities of the residents earn less than N10, 000.00 a month while only few of them earn above N50, 000.00 a month with a figure of 175 (48.3%) and 21 (5.8%) respectively. This suggests that majority of the resident live below poverty line. The implication of this is reflected in the daily standard of living as many are unable to meet their basic needs which make life more unbearable for them. Average number of household per building in the study area is between 5-6, while the average number of people per household is between 7-8. Further investigation revealed that the average room per building is six and average number of people per room is four. This suggests that the occupancy ratio is on the high side. The implication of this is reflected on the existing infrastructural facilities and daily life of the residents which is full of unpleasant and difficult situations.

### 5.2 Building, Infrastructure and Environmental Conditions

Over 70% of the buildings in the area are Brazilian type while 13.1% of the buildings in Ajegunle are traditional compound type and 9.2% are flat. It is not surprising that most of the building are Brazilian (face me and face you) buildings or rooming apartment because it is believed to be the main design and characteristics of low income group as well as poor communities in Nigeria cities. Most of the buildings (50.3%) are predominantly residential however, a significant proportion representing 40.5% of the buildings are mixed use while other land uses account for 9.2%. Personal observation revealed that the activities within the mixed use include residential, shops, schools, place of worship. This means that many of the residents engage in informal activities such as petty trading within their homes.

Most of the buildings sampled in the areas have been built over 20 years ago. 75.2% represents age of the buildings above 20 years in the study area. 17% of the buildings were built between 11-20 years ago while 5.1% were built between 6-10 years ago and 2.7% were built less than 5 years ago. Further investigation revealed that some of the recent buildings which are less than five years were rebuilt from the old decaying buildings. This suggests that the community is an old settlement and had been built up long ago.

About 85.9% of the buildings are accessible by roads but, the main problem is that majority of the roads are not tarred and the conditions are extremely poor. The roads are characterized by poor drainage, lack of street lighting, absence of pedestrian walkway as well as on street parking. Also some of the roads are used as refuse dump site.

Conditions of the roofs, walls and foundations were used to assess building condition. The survey revealed that larger percentage of the buildings is extremely poor. 80% of the buildings are poor, 13.8% are fair while 6.2% of the buildings are good. Further investigation revealed that poverty (lack of money), fear of forced eviction and long time neglect by government as claimed by the residents are major factors responsible for the present poor conditions of the buildings as well as overall physical and environmental condition of the communities.

The study revealed that 81.8% of the residents shared toilet facilities, 14.4% have access to private toilet and 3.8% of the residents do not even have access to toilet facilities. Field investigation revealed that significant proportion of these toilets are located outside or away from the buildings and their conditions are generally poor. Sharing of toilet facilities by too many people has bad environmental and health implications.

Majority of the respondents (75%) shared bathroom similar situation is applicable to kitchen, as high as over 81% shared kitchen. Also, some of the kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities are detached away from the main buildings which make them not too convenient for use at some particular time of the day especially at night. Field observation revealed that the conditions are very poor.

### **5.3 Assessment of Community Infrastructural Facilities**

Assessment of the infrastructural facilities by the residents revealed that the daily life pattern of the residents is characterised by unpleasant and difficult situation as majority adjudged that the conditions of the available infrastructural facilities are poor while some basic ones such as play ground, open space, recreational area, fire station, among others are not even available. These claims were also verified by personal observation and were found to be true.

Electricity is provided by Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN but, the supply is erratic. This is not surprising as it exemplify the general power situation in Nigeria. The area lacks effective refuse collection service and has no central sewage system therefore, the main mode of solid waste disposal is through cart pushers who eventually dispose them to unknown destination or at times on the existing streets.

The need for children to play coupled with the absence of playgrounds has made them to convert streets to playgrounds. The existing road conditions are extremely poor while most of the buildings do not have access to potable public water supply, however, larger proportion get there water supply from well and borehole own by private individual.

## **6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

With reference to the issues discussed under research findings and results as well as the issues arising from reviewed literature, recommendations in this study are structured into broad areas on: how to alleviate the poverty of the residents, improve the level of infrastructural facilities, housing conditions and general environmental conditions of the study area so as to achieve a Healthy, livable, prosperous and sustainable human settlement.

It is evident that decent housing is a major problem of informal settlement dwellers. This is largely due to their low level of financial capacity coupled with inefficient land administration system which have further exclude them from urban life and increased their vulnerability to eviction, disaster and environmental health problem. Therefore, any attempt to achieve livable, healthy and prosper cities must as a matter of urgency address housing issue. This means that there must be a conscious effort focusing on provision of decent housing for the poor at an affordable rate. This can be achieved through different means such as site and services, compressive housing. Also, the issue of land tenure must be looked into because land is a major factor of housing provision. It becomes very difficult to provide decent housing and basic services to the poor where the title or the interest on the land is unclear. Furthermore, urban informal settlements dwellers can be encouraged to improve housing and general environmental conditions of their settlement through land regularization that guaranties security of tenure and provision of array of basic facilities. Improvement in the living environment of the poor will help them to be more productive and increase their income over time while security of housing and land tenure is expected to help the poor overcome the problem of social exclusion from urban life.

The study discovered that the amount of infrastructural facilities available in the study area is grossly inadequate while some are not even available. Availability and adequacy of infrastructural facilities is a

major factor that determines the environmental condition and livability of any settlement. Therefore, efforts should be directed towards upgrading the existing ones while those that are not available should be provided. This could be achieved through preparation of detailed infrastructure network plan for the community with population density being the major yardstick in determining the adequacy. The design should allow for individual self-funded incremental service connections and affordable capital, maintenance and user costs for services. The infrastructure network should also be planned to extend outside of the community limits, to assist in the management of peri-urban growth.

The social economic characteristic of the residents suggests that the majority of them fall below poverty line and they are mostly employed in the informal sector. They make little money which could not even be enough to meet basic needs of food, cloth and shelter not to talk of having some to invest in the improvement of their housing conditions and general environmental conditions of the community. Therefore, deliberate effort should be made to improve the livelihood of this category of people. Their means of livelihood which is centered on informal sector should be recognised and be supported.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Ajgunle being the most populous informal settlement in Lagos, demand for infrastructural facilities continues to be on the increase despite the present situation of dwindling economy and inadequate infrastructural facilities or perhaps unavailability. The study has analyzed the interplay between poverty, environmental conditions of informal settlements and attainment of livable and healthy cities. Socio-economic characteristics and environmental conditions of Ajgunle informal settlement in Lagos were examined. It has been established that the residents are mostly poor, lack basic infrastructural facilities and live in precarious situation. It has also been observed that majority of them do not have adequate source of income which they could probably use to liberate themselves from bondage of poverty. Without equivocal, poverty, lack of adequate infrastructure facilities and decent housing are some of the major factors contributing to the poor environmental condition in informal settlements.

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