



NIGERIA: ONITSHA URBAN PROFILE



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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

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FOREWORD



According to research published in UN-Habitat's¹ flagship report, *The State of the World's Cities 2010-2011*, all developing regions, including the African, Caribbean and Pacific states, will have more people living in urban than rural areas by the year 2030. With half the world's

population already living in urban areas, the challenges we face in the battle against urban poverty, our quest for cities without slums, for cities where women feel safer, for inclusive cities with power, water and sanitation, and affordable transport, for better planned cities, and for cleaner, greener cities is daunting.

But as this series shows, there are many interesting solutions and best practices to which we can turn. After all, the figures tell us that during the decade 2000 to 2010, a total of 227 million people in the developing countries moved out of slum conditions. In other words, governments, cities and partner institutions have collectively exceeded the slum target of the Millennium Development Goals twice over and ten years ahead of the agreed 2020 deadline.

Asia and the Pacific stood at the forefront of successful efforts to reach the slum target, with all governments in the region improving the lives of an estimated 172 million slum dwellers between 2000 and 2010.

In sub-Saharan Africa though, the total proportion of the urban population living in slums has decreased by only 5 per cent (or 17 million people). Ghana, Senegal, Uganda, and Rwanda were the most successful countries in the sub-region, reducing the proportions of slum dwellers by over one-fifth in the last decade.

Some 13 per cent of the progress made towards the global slum target occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean, where an estimated 30 million people have moved out of slum conditions since the year 2000.

Yet, UN-Habitat estimates confirm that the progress made on the slum target has not been sufficient to counter the demographic expansion in informal settlements in the developing world. In this sense, efforts to reduce the numbers of slum dwellers are neither satisfactory nor adequate.

As part of our drive to address this crisis, UN-Habitat is working with the European Commission and the Brussels-based Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group to support sustainable urban development. Given the urgent and diverse needs, we found it necessary to develop a tool for rapid assessment and strategic planning to guide immediate, mid and long-term interventions. And here we have it in the form of this series of publications.

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme is based on the policy dialogue between UN-Habitat, the ACP Secretariat and the European Commission which dates back to the year 2002. When the three parties met at UN-Habitat headquarters in June 2009, more than 200 delegates from over 50 countries approved a resounding call on the international community to pay greater attention to these urbanization matters, and to extend the slum upgrading programme to all countries in the ACP Group.

It is worth recalling here how grateful we are that the European Commission's 9th European Development Fund for ACP countries provided EUR 4 million (USD 5.7 million at June 2011 rates) to enable UN-Habitat to conduct the programme which now serves 59 cities in 23 African countries, and more than 20 cities in six Pacific, and four Caribbean countries.

Indeed, since its inception in 2008, the slum upgrading programme has achieved the confidence of partners at city and country level in Africa, the Caribbean and in the Pacific. It is making a major contribution aimed at helping in urban poverty reduction efforts, as each report in this series shows."

I wish to express my gratitude to the European Commission and the ACP Secretariat for their commitment to this slum upgrading programme. I have every confidence that the results outlined in this profile, and others, will serve to guide the development of responses for capacity building and investments in the urban sector.

Further, I would like to thank each Country Team for their continued support to this process which is essential for the successful implementation of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Joan Clos'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Dr. Joan Clos
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

¹ UN-Habitat - United Nations Human Settlements Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) is an accelerated and action-oriented urban assessment of needs and capacity-building gaps at the city level. The programme is supported by funds from the European Commission's European Development Fund and it is currently being implemented in 20 African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries. PSUP uses a structured approach where priority interventions are agreed upon through consultative processes. The PSUP methodology consists of three phases: (1) a rapid participatory urban profiling at national and local levels, focusing on Governance, Local Economic Development, Land, Gender, Environment, Slums and Shelter, Basic Urban Services, and Waste Management, and proposed interventions; (2) detailed priority proposals; and (3) project implementation. PSUP in Nigeria encompasses profiles for Ifako-Ijaiye, Karu and Onitsha, each published as a separate report. This is the Onitsha report and it constitutes a general background, a synthesis of the eight themes; Governance, Slums and Shelter, Gender and HIV/AIDS, Environment, Local Economic Development, Basic Urban Services, Heritage, and Transportation, and priority project proposals.

Onitsha, the gateway to eastern Nigeria and economic nerve centre of Nigeria, is located on latitude 6.1°N and longitude 6.8°E in the Anambra North Senatorial Zone of Anambra State. It occupies the eastern bank of the Niger River, covering some 50 square kilometres. Onitsha is strategically located and accessed through the east-west national main road from Lagos through Benin, which links the eastern north-south route via the Niger Bridge at Onitsha. The main concentration of population and industrial activity and the areas showing the greatest potential for growth are situated along this transportation axis. The recent process of urban expansion largely reflects the communication network. Onitsha's location, which combines both road and waterway access points, makes it one of the four main potential industrial and commercial growth areas in Nigeria.

The city is split into two local government areas, Onitsha South and Onitsha North. Both areas are bound by Ogbaru local government to the south, Idemili North and Oyi to the east, and Anambra East to the north.

BACKGROUND

Onitsha is located in Anambra State, which is one of Nigeria's 36 states and one of 5 states in the country's south-east geo-political zone. The other states in the zone are Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. The new Anambra State was created in August 1991, together with Enugu State from the old Anambra State, with its state capital at Awka. The state is divided into 21 local government areas for administrative purposes, each with its headquarters.

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Urban Profiling

The Onitsha Urban Profiling consists of an accelerated, action-oriented assessment of urban conditions, focusing on priority needs, capacity gaps and existing institutional responses at local and national levels. The purpose of the study is to develop urban poverty reduction policies at local, national, and regional levels, through an assessment of needs and response mechanisms, and as a contribution to the wider-ranging implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The study is based on analysis of existing data and a series of interviews with all relevant urban stakeholders, including local communities and institutions, civil society, the private sector, development partners, academics, and others. The consultation typically results in a collective agreement on priorities and their development into proposed capacity-building and other projects that are all aimed at urban poverty reduction. The urban profiling is being implemented in almost 30 ACP¹ countries, offering an opportunity for comparative regional analysis. Once completed, this series of studies will provide a framework for central and local authorities and urban actors, as well as donors and external support agencies.

METHODOLOGY

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme consists of three phases:

Phase one consists of the rapid profiling of urban conditions at national and local levels. The capital city, a medium-sized city, and a small town are selected and studied to provide a representative sample in each country. The analysis focuses on eight themes; governance, slums and shelter, gender and HIV/AIDS, environment, local economic development, basic urban services, heritage, and transportation. Information is collected through standard interviews and discussions with institutions and key informants, in order to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the national and local urban set-ups. The findings are presented and refined during city and national consultation workshops and consensus is reached regarding priority interventions. National and city reports synthesise the information collected and outline ways forward to reduce urban poverty through holistic approaches.

Phase two builds on the priorities identified through pre-feasibility studies and develops detailed capacity-building and capital investment projects.

Phase three implements the projects developed during the two earlier phases, with an emphasis on skills development, institutional strengthening and replication.

¹ ACP - African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States

This report presents the outcomes of **Phase One** at the local level in Onitsha.

URBAN PROFILING IN ONITSHA

The urban profiling in Onitsha is one of three similar exercises conducted in Nigeria; the other urban profiling centres are Karu and Ifako-Ijaiye.

REPORT STRUCTURE

This report consists of:

1. a general background of the urban sector in Onitsha, based on the findings of the Onitsha City Assessment Report, a desk study, interviews, and a city consultation. The background includes data on administration, urban planning, the economy, the informal and private sector, urban poverty, infrastructure, water, sanitation, public transport, street lighting, energy, health, and education;
2. a synthetic assessment of the following eight themes; Governance, Slums and Shelter, Gender and HIV/AIDS, Environment, Local Economic Development, Basic Urban Services, Heritage, and Transportation, in terms of the institutional set-up, regulatory framework, resource mobilization, and performance; this second section also highlights agreed priorities and includes a list of identified projects;
3. a SWOT² analysis and an outline of priority project proposals for each theme. The proposals include beneficiaries, partners, estimated costs, objectives, activities, and outputs.

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ONITSHA

The founding fathers of Onitsha migrated from Benin between 1630 and 1680 and settled immediately after crossing the Niger River. Onitsha is often known as the “waterside town” (Udo 1981). In 1857, when the trade expedition led by Macgregor Laird on the Niger arrived at Onitsha, the settlement had a small market similar to neighbouring Ibo markets, held every four days. In the company of the expedition was Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a freed slave who led the Church Missionary Society team. The Roman Catholic mission came later. These two Christian religious groups were responsible for the early establishment of schools and colleges in Onitsha. The Central Primary School at Odoakpu in Onitsha was established in 1860.

Historically, Onitsha has exercised a great deal of political, economic, and social influence over the

² SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

surrounding area, including the neighbouring towns of Obosi, Nkpor, Oba, Ogidi, Nkwelle-Ezunaka, and Umunya, which existed before the founding of Onitsha.

Onitsha expanded inland, which led to the development of new residential areas along major arterial roads including Awka Road, Oguta Road, New Market Road, Old Market Road, Iweka Road, Modebe Avenue, Venn Road, Court Road, Park Road, and Old and New Cemetery Roads. The planned new residential layouts also include the GRA, American Quarters, Fegge, Woliwo, Odoakpu, and Omagba; the indigenes mostly reside in Inland Town (the historical and traditional section of Onitsha).

The central business district of Onitsha is around the main market, which is one among many. The influx of traders from all parts of the country and Cameroon invariably contributed to the town's physical and population growth. The low price of commodities in Onitsha market, the wide range of goods, and the accessibility and low cost of transportation to and from the town continue to draw people. Onitsha's location on the Niger River is advantageous; in addition, the bridge over the Niger makes the town the only gateway between south-eastern and south-western Nigeria.

The rapid growth in the size of the town and the market coincided with the period of formal occupation of southern Nigeria by the British when Onitsha market became a daily market. Over the last 300 or 400 years, Onitsha became the commercial hub of Nigeria, the focal point of canoe traffic bringing yams, beans, rice, maize, and imported merchandise from the upper Niger, the Benue valley, and the coast through Benin, Warri, and Sapele. Onitsha has historically been a collecting and distributing centre rather than a production centre, and this explains its vast trading area, which includes places as distant as Kano, Sokoto, Maiduguri, and Jos.

Onitsha also grew to become a major industrial, educational, religious, and administrative centre. As an industrial centre it now houses the largest number of industries in Anambra State. As a major religious

and school leavers seeking employment. From 52,745 in 1953, the population of Onitsha more than trebled by 1963. By the 1991 census, the figure was 256,941 – 136,230 males and 120,711 females.

The 2006 census gave figures similar to 1991, but the census was not properly carried out in Onitsha. Members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra disrupted the exercise in Onitsha and other parts of Anambra State, claiming that those areas were “Biafraland”. Using the National Population Commission's growth rate of 2.83 percent, the 2006 population of Onitsha projected from the 1991 figure of 256,941 would have been 390,509. This figure represents the night time population; the daytime population could be up to 1.5 million, a result of commuting workers and visitors. The rapid growth in the population of Onitsha has obvious implications for the physical planning and development of the town.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Onitsha is administered by the Obi, a paramount traditional ruler who is assisted by a hierarchy of male and female chiefs and age groups. The male chiefs include the Ndi Ichie (Red Cap Chiefs), Agbalanze Society (Ozo-titled men representing various lineages and quarters), and Agbalaniregwu, as well as a Council of State consisting of prominent titled men representing various lineages and quarters. The Red Cap Chiefs are categorized as Ndiche Ume (Privy Council or Standing Committee), Ndiche Okwa and Ndiche Okwaraze.

The age groups that play a role in traditional social organization include Ogbo-soachi-ani, Oro-Okwute, Otu-Agbo (age grades), and Umu-Ilo (young boys). Among women, the hierarchy includes Omu (Queen of Onitsha), Otu Odu (titled women), Ikporo Onitsha (married women), Umuada Inyemesi, and Umu-Agbogo (young girls). The Ndi Ichie advise the Obi generally and take decisions in times of emergency. They are the custodians of the prosperity and welfare

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