

Waterfronts Redevelopments in Port Harcourt Metropolis: Issues and Socio-Economic Implications for Urban Environmental Management

¹Obafemi, Andrew A. (Ph.D), ²Odubo, Tonye V.

¹Department of Geography & Environmental Management University of Port Harcourt. Choba, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

²Department of Geography & Environmental Management Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Amasoma, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

-----ABSTRACT-----

This paper examines the issues involved in waterfronts slums demolition, the fears expressed by the residents affected, as well as the constraints that the implementation of the demolition policy would have to grapple with, while weighing the pros and cons of the policy in the light of best practices for urban renewal programme. It weighs the arguments of those who see these areas as dysfunctional settlements opting for clearance or redevelopment, with the functionalist who believe that the area should be rehabilitated as they perform both social and economic functions. It submits that a sudden and complete clearance may be very expensive, counterproductive or may even compound redevelopment and intensifies housing problems, while arguing for 'Rehabilitation and Renovation' approach to urban renewal. Where this is not feasible to achieve, then a gradual (Phasing) redevelopment process be adopted, such that the total area for demolition will be subdivided into phases, cleared and redeveloped one after the other.

Keywords: urban renewal, waterfronts settlements, slums, demolition, clearance

Date of Submission: 09 July 2013



Date of Acceptance: 15 December 2013

I. INTRODUCTION

Waterfronts have evolved over the years to mean different things in different countries of the world, but there is a consensus among scholars that waterfronts are focal points in many cities, and are playing significant role in the social, political and economic life of the communities where they are found and developed. Besides, intensive local and international trade as well as diverse commercial and water-based transportation activities is often prevalent in most waterfronts. Today, that a great number of urban residents are often crowded into blighted or slum areas of the cities is no more news, what is perhaps news is the percentage of these urban residents that are often accommodated in the shanties of the various cities waterfronts especially Cities in developing nations like Nigeria.

[1] Considers waterfront development as very important because they stimulate modern development in the city. In other words, waterfront redevelopment has been regarded as a means to increase the economic vitality of localities, create new public spaces, and increase access to valued cultural and natural amenities. According to [2], waterfronts redevelopment projects can be grouped into six main categories, namely: commercial waterfronts; cultural, educational and environmental waterfronts; historic waterfronts; recreational waterfronts; working waterfronts; and residential waterfronts. But fundamentally, waterfronts redevelopment are often focused on achieving the following: "to improve public access; to revitalize and improve the image of the city; to achieve economic regeneration; to provide facilities and services for local people; and to underpin the improvement of the physical environment. In some cases, the underlying forces that shape waterfront revitalization are the economic and political intentions of planners and developers" [3].

It must be appreciated that the concern which planners, policy-makers, urban studies researchers and the general public have shown about the state, issues and problems of the urban environment especially on slums has culminated into the diversity of actions and responses now available in the literature of urban geography and planning. In Nigeria, the main approach has been outright demolition of these slums and waterfronts, after forced eviction and forced relocation with the early experiences of slum demolition in Nigeria dating back to the 1920s. For instance, the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB) carried out slum demolition in response to the bubonic plague that broke out at the time. This was followed by the pre-independence demolition which resulted in the celebrated Isale - Eko clearance to give the visiting Queen of England a pleasing view of the area. The Maroko demolition was a rather unsuccessful attempt by the government to address the housing problems [4].

At the end of the civil war in 1970, Port Harcourt acquired an enhanced status as capital of the new Rivers state, created in 1967. The city was the seat of industry, business and education and had a lot of on-going reconstruction activities. Its Port terminal status increased its economic importance. These advantages constituted the motivation for massive migration to Port Harcourt such that by 1973, the population of the city was estimated to have reached 231,632 [5]. It was this period that squatting began, as a lot of war returnees and immigrants from the villages could not find or afford conventional housing in the city. Since many were from riverine communities, waterfronts of the numerous rivers and creeks around the city became the favoured locations for squatting because they offered opportunity for continuation of traditional water-based livelihoods.

Marshland colonization is carried out systematically from the fringes by continuous adding of stabilizing material (Junk, periwinkle, shell, etc) [6]. By 1993, the number of squatter settlements in Port Harcourt has risen to about Forty-nine (49) along the waterfronts, and estimated to account for about 65% of city's population. In 1988, the Rivers State government tried to deal with the squatter settlement problem by introducing a programme aimed at providing a social housing service to improve the environment and enhance the quality of life of the average waterfront dweller through the provision of infrastructure and services, taking into consideration its low socio-economic status [7]. Three squatter settlement redevelopment projects were completed. They were: Ndoki, Marine base and Aggrey road waterfronts. After the completion of these three projects the government was forced to review the program for the following reasons:

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

Unfortunately, these 1988 efforts by the government aimed at providing a social housing service which will improve the environment and enhance the quality of life of the average waterfront dwellers through provision of infrastructure and services did not meet its target.

The consequences of the failures of past attempts at addressing slums and waterfronts problems and their redevelopment is that, today, most waterfronts in the city have become synonymous with sites for slum developments, and how to deal with these slum areas has remained a great challenge for the Rivers State government. Of course, they are now areas of the city generally described often as in a deplorable state, where housing conditions are unacceptable, amenities and infrastructure are grossly inadequate, socio-economic pathological conditions such as overcrowding, poor access road, diseases, prostitution, alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, etc are inherent. Many scholars have categorized these waterfronts slum areas as dysfunctional settlements in need of clearance or redevelopment. But for the functionalist, they believe that the area should be rehabilitated as they perform both social and economic functions, such as transit homes for urban immigrants and the poor; and generators of essential quantities of unskilled and semi-skilled labour to the urban centres. On the other hand, the attention of the environmentalist is often drawn to the environmental implication of the emergence of decayed physical environment manifesting in ecological and environmental degradation. To them, whether it is a squatter settlement, blighted area, or waterfronts, the dehumanizing conditions are similar. These areas are therefore in dire need of renewal for which different solutions have been proffered.

Unlike the 1988 slum demolition policy, a new demolition policy was announced on the 21 August 2007. Its main aim was to get rid of criminal hideouts in the waterfront settlements by a total clearance and redevelopment of 25 waterfronts settlements in Port Harcourt. The settlers and commissioner for Lands Housing and Urban Development were both given till December 2007 to evacuate and completely demolish the areas respectively by the state government. It was this twist in scale, intension and hasty deadline without proper consultations and provision of alternatives that aroused such debates and agitations which greeted this demolition policy. It is against this background that this paper examined the issues involved in waterfront demolition order by the state government in Port Harcourt as well as the constraints that the implementation of this demolition policy had to grapple with while weighing the pros and cons of the policy in the light of best practices for urban renewal programme and waterfront redevelopment.

On the demographic profile of the Waterfronts settlements in Port Harcourt, one of the studies that has been carried out in Port Harcourt with particular reference to waterfronts in the city is that of [5], who revealed that there are about 49 waterfronts. On this premise, only 24% of the residents of these waterfronts were truly long distance immigrants, having come from other states. In other words, most of these residents were from Port Harcourt Local Government areas and from other L.G.As in Rivers state. The bulk of the squatters, which is about 80% arrived between 1981 and 2000, while the 1990s constituted the larger proportion. On why they chose to reside in these places, about 57.3% of the squatters mentioned socio- economic status which made them unable to secure better accommodation. A few others lived there because of proximity to relatives and desire to live in a free environment. In this slum area also, patrol by law enforcement agents are infrequent due to poor access roads, absence of electricity and presence of aggressive criminals which increased risk to security personnel. About 7.2% of the squatters lived there due to proximity to water.

There are high levels of unemployed persons and retirees for both males and females. Amongst male, 44% were unemployed and 40.1% were retired. Amongst female, 34.5% were unemployed, 35.1% were retired and 16.5% were fulltime housewives. Amongst males modal occupation was craftsman/technician (17.3%) closely followed by trading (16.8%). Fishing was also significant (15.9%), businessmen (12.5%), Farmers (12%) civil servant (13%), etc. Amongst females, trading was the mode (33.7%) followed closely by business (32%). Income levels were generally low as about 75 percent of the occupants earned less than N18, 000 monthly.

II. THE STUDY AREA

Port Harcourt evolved as a product of the Hargrove Agreement of May 1913, when the then colonial administration acquired approximately 25 square miles of farmland from the local people upon which to develop the town (now known today as Port Harcourt). The name Port Harcourt was given by Lord Lugard in memory of the then secretary of state for the colonies, Lewis Harcourt. Presently, Port Harcourt is situated within latitudes $04^{\circ} 43'$ and $04^{\circ} 57'$ North of the Equator and between longitudes $06^{\circ} 53'$ and $07^{\circ} 58'$ East of the Greenwich Meridian. It is surrounded by patches of islands and creeks of the Niger Delta, such as the Dockyard creek, Bonny River and Amadi creek, at a height of about 12m above sea level. It is approximately 60km from the crest up stream of the Bonny River. Port Harcourt is presently composed of two Local Government Areas, which are Port Harcourt and Obio / Akpor Local Government Areas (LGA) respectively. The city is bounded to the north by Oyigbo and Etche LGAs, to the south by Okrika LGA, to the east by Okrika and Eleme LGAs, and to the west by Emohua LGA.

From a humble beginning with about 5,000 people, the population of Port Harcourt grew rapidly to about 17,158 in 1921. In 1926, Port Harcourt was made the provincial headquarter (originally) of Owerri province, this further led to a rapid growth of her population, such that by 1953 national census, the population of Port Harcourt had increased to about 71,634, and to 213,443 in 1973. The 1991 census figure put the population of both Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt city LGAs at 703,416 with Obio/Akpor LGA accounting for 263,017 and Port Harcourt city LGA put at 440,399 [8]. Based on a growth rate of 2.84%, the projected population from 1991 figures for these LGAs put the population at 521,199 for Port Harcourt LGA and 311,199 for Obio/Akpor LGA for 1996. For 1999 projection, the figures are 552,745 (Port Harcourt), and 330,113 (Obio/Akpor). For 2002 projection, it is 605,981 (Port Harcourt), 361,906 (Obio/Akpor). The 2006 population and housing census, the population of the

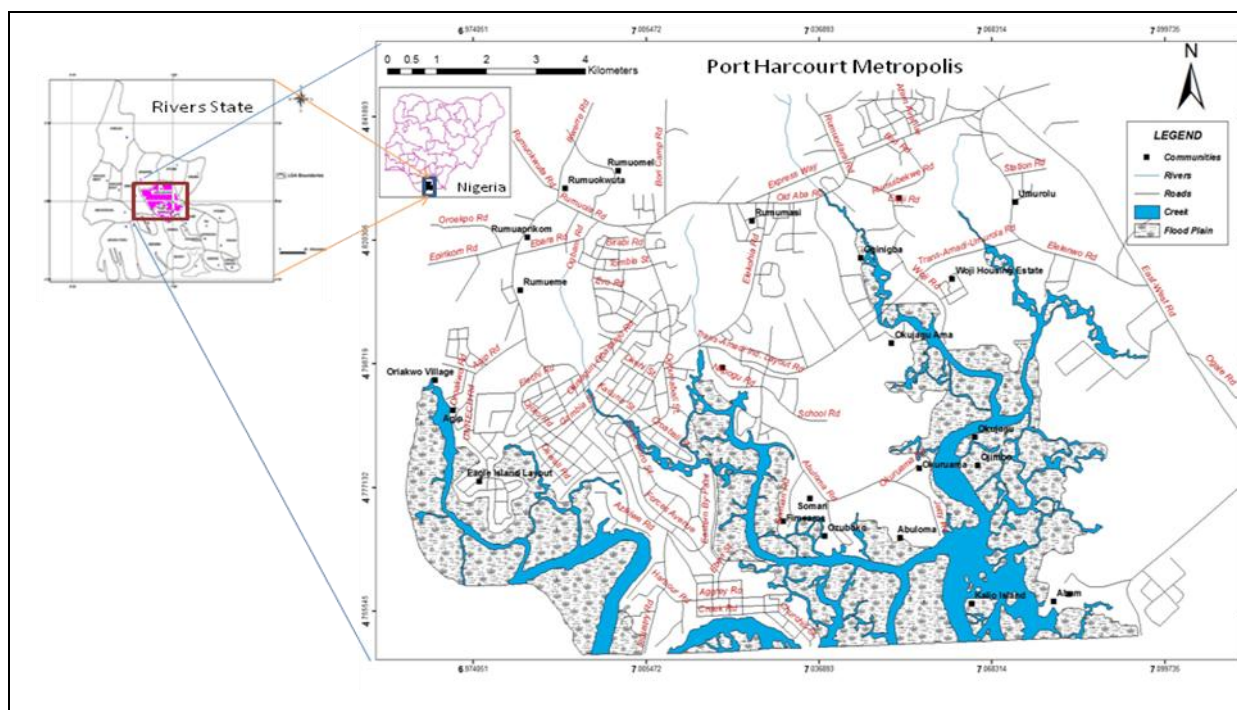


Figure 1. Port Harcourt Metropolis the study area

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data upon which this study is based were generated from empirical investigations by the researchers. This was however complemented with secondary archival data. The primary data were sourced through the use of scheduled interviews, personal observations and the administration of structured questionnaire to generate data on the respondents' demographic profile, their perception, experience and exposure to the good and the bad sides of waterfront dwelling. The target population for the questionnaire survey who were randomly sampled was mainly those living or doing business in the waterfronts selected for the study. During a pilot survey to ascertain the number and locations of the waterfronts, about 49 were identified as earlier revealed by [5].

For this particular study, these 49 waterfronts were grouped into seven (7) zones in which about 25 questionnaires were distributed in each zone. (See TABLE A1 in appendix). The questionnaire was structured into five sections ranging from socio-economic background of the people, awareness of the government policy on waterfronts redevelopments, constraints and implications, as well as proffering suggestions of possible urban planning and management imperatives. In all, a total of 150 completed and retrieved questionnaires were analyzed for the study out of the 175 that were served to the people based on 25 questionnaires per zone. Besides conducting interviews with selected stakeholders, also found to be very useful for the study were existing published literature and gazetted information as sources of secondary data relevant to the study area and the objective set out to achieve. Others include relevant accurate and up-to date base maps.

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio - economic and environmental profile and conditions of Port Harcourt Waterfronts

In an attempt to describe what the waterfronts in Port Harcourt look like, [10] said:

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

[11] a former Commissioner for Information in Rivers State, in an article in The SUN newspaper on Sunday, September 13, 2009, aptly captured the stigma the waterfront settlements leave like a diabetic scar their dwellers: “There is an awful stench that hangs in the air, and those who spend some time there carry this odour around town, giving off a whiff of decay.” It is further observed that

“Apart from sanitation, the most distinguishing attribute of the Port Harcourt waterfronts is the total lack of security and the reign of the laws of the jungle put in place by underworld mafia lords who made themselves immune to the laws of the land. For years, the state law enforcement agencies were unable to take control of crime in these settlements. Women are regularly molested. Hardly does a day pass without people being murdered. There is an unwritten law which forbids victims of crime to report to the police. Those who break the law will pay with their lives or those of their dear ones. In fact, some gang chiefs have erected permanent outposts where sentries are stationed to watch out for the presence of law enforcement agents. “There are landlords who rule by the gun. There are gunrunners who feel free and fear no laws. There are drug dealers who fear no NDLEA operatives; there are gangs that decide the fate of the rest of society. There are hired killers who laze about with sharp knives and tout for jobs; there are freelance killers waiting for any odd job. Of course, there are sundry criminals (they are legion) who serve as recruits for political thuggery, oil bunkering foot soldiers, chieftaincy tussle warriors, militants, prostitution, etc.” [11].

The conditions highlighted by different persons at different times paints the picture of waterfronts which has made it a target of demolition in order to redevelop the area by various administration, most especially during the tenure of Chief Celestine Omehia and Governor Rotimi Amaechi. For instance, when former Governor Celestine Omehia assumed power and decided to tackle criminality head-on, he determined that to achieve this, the waterfronts had to go. He approached President Umaru Yar'Adua and painted the grim picture of the challenge the waterfronts posed to security, development and social wellbeing of the people. Though his tenure could not see his dream for the urban renewal of Port Harcourt, his successor took it up to implement same policy.

During its fact finding mission to Port Harcourt recently, the executive secretary of the National Human Right Commission (NHRC) Prof. Ben Angwe, was quoted by [12] as describing the waterfronts as 'inhabitable', and that though the waterfronts were inhabitable, it was the responsibility of the Commission (NHRC) to protect the rights of the people and enforce them (rights)". But the position of the state government is that 'it was determined to get rid of the criminals and their hideouts on the waterfront, as well as to transform the area into a major tourist attraction in the state', hence it decided to demolish the shanties. The survey and observations carried out in some of these waterfronts, reveals the level of social and environmental decay, planlessness of housing as well as poor sanitary and health condition in such environment, which agrees with the views already highlighted above on the socio-economic and environmental profile and conditions of Port Harcourt waterfronts.

4.2 Issues and background of the Demolition Plan

The Rivers State Government (RSG) announced on the 21st of August, 2007 the demolition of 25 waterfronts developments (settlement) currently housing between 50,000 and 100,000 people according to local estimates [13]. This policy was announced after several weeks of violence which culminated in running street battles in Port Harcourt between armed men on motorbikes and the army. In some areas near the waterfront there are checkpoints, occasional machine gun nest or mobile stations were setup as part of the government's response to the street violence that erupted. Dozen were killed and many wounded most of them bystanders, caught in the sporadic shooting during the armed men raids and in the crossfire between the army and the armed men. No adequate records of figures were made [14].

The Rivers State Government announced the demolition policy as part of security measures to checkmate the upsurge of criminal activities, which are said to be using the waterfronts as hideout. Thus, there was a negative reaction between the waterfront settlement and the rest of city. Six thousand housing units were to replace the former shanties. The commissioner for lands, housing and urban development was given until December to ensure complete demolition of all structures at the waterfronts. Occupants of waterfronts were instructed to relocate before December 2007 without designating areas for them to relocate to. Shortly after the announcement, objections and criticisms erupted continuously. Several issues were brought up by this government's decision while the stakeholder's reactions/perception on the whole issues soon became more intensive and complex as the day went by, some of which are addressed in this paper.

In their 'Fact Finding Mission Report, March 2009', the Amnesty International observed that the exact number of people who were living in Abonnema Wharf is not known, as no official survey has been carried out. According to UN-HABITAT estimates from 2009, the population of Abonnema Wharf is more than 30,000 people, including traders and those engaged in small businesses. However, many people may have left the community following the ongoing threat of demolition [15]. According to one estimate, between 10,000 and 20,000 people were forcibly evicted. The body also contended that the Rivers State government has not followed its own Physical Planning and Development Law 2003 ("Law No 6"). Under this law, it should have established an "Urban Renewal Board," to oversee all urban planning in the area. In failing to put in place the necessary legal bodies to oversee the demolition and redevelopment of the area, the RSG has contravened state law. RSG also failed to explore all possible alternatives to demolition as provided for under the law (Article 50). The Amnesty International therefore call on the Rivers State authorities to immediately provide effective remedies including adequate alternative housing and compensation for all those people whose homes have been destroyed, regardless of whether they rent, own, occupy or lease the land or housing in question. They should also adopt guidelines on development based evictions that are in line with the UN guidelines, and fully implement the 2003 Physical Planning and Development Law. Amnesty International is concerned that the RSG is using the prevention of crime as an excuse to forcibly evict people.

In 2009, the state government demolished the Njemanze Waterfront, known for its notoriety in cultism and later moved in to demolish Bundu-Ama community, another waterfront dominated by the Okrika-Ijaw speaking community. However, the demolition was disrupted as the Ijaws went to court to challenge the action but the Federal High Court sitting in Port Harcourt, in 2010 upheld the action of the state government, hence giving strength to the demolition exercise. Furthermore, reporting for the leadership newspaper, [16] reported a stakeholders meeting at the government house, Port Harcourt, Governor Amaechi described water-fronts as the "depots for arms and ammunition" that must not be allowed to continue to exist, saying that military and police personnel would be used during the demolition exercises to prevent resistance. He lamented that; "Arms and ammunition are stock-piled at the waterfronts, and when crimes are committed there, they will not be reported to the police and other security agencies. There are observatory points there to monitor security agents. With the volume of arms and ammunition at the waterfronts, we are sitting on time bombs". This is the vivid and driving force why the RSG insists that waterfront demolition will be implemented. It shows that the RSG is desirous of delivering the dividend of democracy through the protection of lives and properties of all residents of the city.

4.3 Reawakening of Ethnic Sentiment of ‘Riverine’ and ‘Upland’ Divides and Minority Ethnic Groups Politics

Although, there has been the issue of ‘Riverine’ and ‘Upland’ politics before the waterfronts settlements demolition was announced, it is obvious from the drummings and views canvassed on behalf of some ethnic groups as well as some general comments made by individuals on the pages of newsprints that it tended to trigger ethnic sentiment between the ‘Riverine’ and ‘Upland’ communities in the state. For instance, it was reported that some of the waterfronts residents accused the government of attempting to drive away non-Ikwerre ethnic groups from Port Harcourt and redistributed new planned development to the Ikwerre indigenes as the governor himself is Ikwerre. They condemned the attempt of the government to drive them away in the guise of fighting crime. According to the MOSOP information officer, Bari-ara Kpalap, “the MOSOP detest violence in all form and support genuine effort to bring peace and security in the state. The group is concerned about the continuous demolition by government between 1999 and 2007” [17].

In 2000 and 2005 the Rainbow town and Agip waterfront settlements (respectively) were demolished with the aim of eradicating hideouts of miscreants. The situation only became worse. Not only did violence continued but thousands of people were rendered homeless. “Today, this government is also hinging its policy on the same premise. Yet the administration remains silent about the large shanty town, which stretched from Okija Street to Ikoku axis along Ikwerre Road in Diobu. More than 60% of these waterfronts to be demolished were claimed to be within the Ijaws’ occupied areas” [17]. Thus, The Ijaw National Congress, (INC) urged the government to suspend the planned demolition because it would give the impression that the policy is geared towards the displacement of Ijaws in the city. The policy came after a call for state of emergency by Ijaw political leaders. Hence, the INC leaders see the plan as a form of ethnic cleansing, or a call for state of emergency through another route as affected individuals will protest [18]. The Ijaws especially the Okrikas who lived in these waterfronts and fishing settlements as original aborigines feared displacement more. The Ikwerres on the other hand were against the call for a state of emergency by the ijaws as they saw it as a plot to force their Governor out of office (being of Ikwerre origin) and was therefore in support of the demolition plans to eradicate militias [17].

Furthermore, the waterfronts demolition policy seems to have reawakened the issue of the primordial minority ethnic groups politics in the state. For example, one of the minority ethnic groups affected by the demolition plan such as the Ogonis showed support for the demolition plan while asking for concessions. The president of KAGOTE (a socio-cultural group in Ogoni land) led a delegation of Ogonis on a visit to government house to show support for the plans since the redevelopment will improve the environment. They acknowledged that the land was duly acquired in 1913 as a crown land from the Okrikas and Diobu community. The interest of the Ogonis according one of the report in Daily Trust was to ensure that resettlement was conducted in such a way that the people will be satisfied [17].

4.4 Government’s Actions or Intentions versus Citizen's Distrust for Government

The affected people and some other Port Harcourt residents were skeptical about the implementation of the redevelopment programme intended; in terms of the timely delivery of rebuilt houses, final beneficiaries’, hasty deadlines and the fact that the government had not specified the areas designated for resettlement while the area was being redeveloped. Though, the then commissioner for information briefed newsmen that the policy will take a human face, as demolition will commence only after squatters are resettled. This could not assuage the affected people especially since no mention of the place was made and the time the squatter were to move to the resettlement area(s). The commissioner also mentioned that those who co-operate will be given first attention during the relocation programme and that the ministry of land, housing and urban development were working out the details of relocating people back to the planned 6000 housing units [17].

The reactions from some of the local residents shows that they were skeptical about the sudden haste to demolish the settlements without provisions made for alternative resettlement areas or compensations. It was reported in the that compensations will be fair but did not say whether it was in the plan of the government to make such payment. The squatters feared that the rich will benefit from redevelopment rather than those in need of shelter. While many were of the opinion that the government has links with the armed men, others were of the opinion that the gangs were trying to make the state ungovernable for the ex-incumbent administration for unfulfilled promises and others believe that the disturbances were a product of the past government which was alleged to have armed the youths for political purposes. This study also reveals that the residents of these waterfronts had not forgotten the inability of the government to successfully resettle those affected by previous demolition in Port Harcourt. Again, specific mention were made of the demolition of Rainbow town and Agip waterfront settlements demolished with the aim of eradicating hideouts of miscreants in 2000 and 2005 respectively in which thousands of people were rendered homeless. These they (waterfront dwellers) said were responsible for all the fears they have expressed about the perceived insincerity of the RSG to keep their promise. To them these fears appeared to have been proven with the sudden demolish of Abonema Wharf waterfronts recently.

According to Amnesty international's report in November 2011, a Rivers State High Court issued an injunction against the Rivers State authorities, ruling that they should not evict and demolish the homes, businesses, churches and schools of Abonnema Wharf Community residents in Port Harcourt. In June 2012, the government started paying compensations to landlords in the community. Prior to the payment of compensation, the government convened a meeting on 17 May 2012 to inform people of the compensation process and the planned demolition afterwards. This was subsequent to the consultation sessions held in October 2011 and March 2012. The authorities announced in May 2012 that they would demolish Abonnema Wharf but said this would not be until landlords were compensated and residents given notice to relocate. However, "the residents did not receive any written or verbal notice for this demolition and were not offered any alternative housing and many property owners are yet to receive payments in the incomplete compensation process" [19].

4.5 Human Right Issues and the Demolition Plan

Expressing their opinion on the foregoing, the Ijaw ethnic nationality observed that the planned demolition constitutes a flagrant disregard of the human rights of the squatters. They were of the opinion that since Port Harcourt itself sits on indigenous people's lands, the peoples' right should be protected as the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the declaration on human rights of Indigenous People (Document A/6i/L.67) which protects the cultural environments and survival right of indigenous peoples [18]. After the Agip waterfront demolition, the Institute of Human Right and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL) released a statement that it was deeply troubled by the manner in which the Rivers State Government has continued to show disservice to the ideals and principles of UN's economic, social and cultural rights, the African charter on Human and people's rights and the Nigeria constitution, which in relevant sections emphasized the rights of citizens to shelter. The government here failed to provide houses for its population, majority of whom live in shanty despite huge oil revenue accruing to the state from Federal Accounts, yet they have turned out over Ten thousand Rivers men, woman and Children to the streets from the Agip and Rainbow town areas [20]. The demolition plan of 2007 was tending towards the previous direction. According to the new government, the right to shelter is the reason behind the suspension of the demolition policy.

In her swift reactions after the recent demolition of the Abonema Wharf, the Amnesty International believed that the demolition constitutes a forced eviction and is therefore a violation of human rights. Amnesty International is particularly concerned that this is the second major forced eviction undertaken by the government in the waterfronts area and that other communities in the waterfronts may be subjected to similar human rights violations. It therefore urged the Rivers State Government "to cease all forced evictions immediately and to adopt a moratorium on all mass evictions and demolitions in the state until all legal and procedural protections required under international human rights law and standards are in place, in particular the requirements on consultation, adequate notice, legal remedies and adequate alternative housing. In particular, Amnesty International made the following recommendations to the RSG to:

- *"Provide effective remedies including immediate alternative adequate housing to all those who were forcibly evicted from Abonnema Wharf during the demolitions between 27 June and 2 July 2012 and full compensation for any loss of property and possessions that were damaged in the process.*
- *Provide emergency relief, including access to food, shelter, water, sanitation and health care services to all those affected by the demolitions in Abonnema Wharf.*
- *Ensure that women have equal access to all measures concerning compensation and provision of adequate housing.*
- *Adopt a moratorium on all evictions and demolitions in the waterfront areas, until adequate safeguards are put in place to ensure that all evictions comply with international human rights standards.*
- *Comprehensively review the role of police and JTF in assisting demolitions, evictions, enumerations and ensure security personnel are not deployed to assist the administrative authorities in carrying out illegal evictions.*
- *Do not compel people to sell their houses to RSG unless under the relevant provisions of the Land Use Act (1978), which provides for the payment of compensation and the option of relocation as stipulated in the Act.*
- *Develop a housing policy which protects and fulfils people's right to adequate housing and ending forced evictions, including women's rights. Guidelines for eviction should be based on the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement, and must comply with international human rights law and standards.*
- *Legislate and enforce a clear prohibition on forced evictions.*
- *Fully implement the Rivers State 2003 Physical Planning and Development Law No. 6, by establishing all required legal bodies to oversee planning and development in the state.*
- *Provide tenants with reparations, which include restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and a guarantee of non-repetition, adequate accommodation and assistance with relocation."*[20].

4.6 Alternative Plan to the Waterfronts Demolition

Many were of the opinion that the government should follow alternative renewal approach toward dealing with the waterfront settlement. During the stakeholder meeting when the government announced its policy, some welcomed the plan on the condition that the 6000 housing units should be done in phases and timely delivered. Another condition put forward was the relocation of the residents to a temporary site pending the completion of the housing units. Residents complained that government has not taken cognizance of the population in the waterfronts before coming up with the proposed number of housing units and they have not provided alternative relocation areas within the short evacuation time allowed [21].

Although, the demolition did not take place as originally planned due to some legal encumbrances, it is obvious that the suggested approach by the residents of these waterfronts during the series of stakeholders meeting to be temporarily resettled somewhere by the government did not sell to the government. The compelling need to fight criminality and insecurity to standstill by the government perhaps propelled them to commence the demolition of some of the waterfronts, while some were demolished after negotiation with those affected had been concluded and the payment of compensation commenced.

Recently, the government's sudden demolition of Abonema waterfront was said to have been motivated or based on rival gang clash in the area. This may have vindicated the government insistence that most of the waterfront are now hide out for criminals, the more reason that they will be demolished. Reacting to the visit of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) who visited Port Harcourt to investigate allegations of gross human rights violations in the demolition of waterfronts by Rivers State government, "the Governor vowed to demolish several others so long as they remained abode for criminals in Port Harcourt." [12] & [22]. This strong persuasion of the government must have been tied to the fact that, a crime free city will no doubt translate to a liveable, prosperous and peaceful city, where planning and sustainable urban environmental management is encouraged. Thus, an attempt to clear off miscreants and crime associated with waterfronts is desirable.

4.7 The Role of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Development

Following the announcement of the demolition plan by the RSG, the commissioner was given until December 2007 to completely demolish buildings in the 25 waterfronts selected for redevelopment. Six Thousand housing units were to replace the former structures. On this premise, the commissioner for land, housing and urban development constituted an eight member committee to come up with a report for the planned redevelopment. Their term of reference included; identification of waterfronts, constraint and logistics for demolition project. A survey team visited all the waterfronts from Diobu to Marine base and certain recommendations were made in their report which was put on hold as a higher committee chaired by the Deputy Governor was constituted to come up with a report following increasing debate and criticism of the policy. According to the chairman of the eight (8) member committee, the report was not for public consumption. But it should however be noted that the committee did not plan any design for the proposed 6000 housing units neither were they required to recommend alternative relocation site thus confirming the fears of the citizen. Two months into the four month deadline before the policy was abruptly suspended, the second committee was yet to make public any report, though the deadline still remained. Though the government had stated that 25 waterfront were to be demolished, the ministry visited about 45 waterfronts. Further inquiry with the ministry revealed that 25 was a wrong estimate of the number of settlements existing in the waterfront areas designated for demolition. Most waterfronts identified are named after the settlements. Therefore 45 waterfronts were intended for demolition. It is this role played by the ministry that made those affected by the exercise the ministry of complicity.

While expressing concern on how 6000 housing units will accommodate original population of the waterfront settlers, the ministry was of the opinion that redevelopment should be done in phases after a number of housing units have been provided elsewhere for resettlement purposes. Again from the perception of the people, the government was seen to be concerned about insecurity of tenure which perhaps was one of the major factors for protest against the policy by the people. The people on the other hand fears that when they are displaced from the land, they may not regain their lands back. Furthermore, with the launch of the Greater Port Harcourt Master plan and Scheme, it became more obvious that the fight for the soul of waterfronts in Port Harcourt was not over, as the RSG restated its desire to build a new and secure city where crime will not be condoned. Hence any hideout of criminal were to be unveiled, and of course, the waterfronts is said to have become notorious hide out for criminality, to the point that law enforcement agents do not easily find it easy to patrol the area for obvious reprisal from some miscreants using the place as a shield to perpetrate crime. It is this sort of things that bring to fore the implication of waterfronts demolition for sustainable urban environmental management. In his reaction recently to the demolition of the shanties on Abonema waterfront, the Commissioner for Urban Development and Town Planning in Rivers State, was quoted by [16] as saying that "the residents were officially instructed to move out of the area two years ago, and that it is the rate of crime and the need for urban renewal accounted for why the place was demolished,"

4.8 Perceived challenges of the Waterfront Demolition Policy

As in other cases of settlement clearance and demolition in Nigeria and in elsewhere all over the world, pre and post impact assessment of the area and the people affected has always been associated with several challenges ranging from psychological, socio-cultural, economic, political, health and environmental. The figure 2 below illustrates the responses as perceived by selected residents of the waterfront settlements surveyed to examine the basic challenges being faced by affected residents by the demolition policy. From the various responses, it was obvious that the people had a strong attachment to where they had resided for years in these waterfronts. The thought of being dispossessed of their land and property generated so many concerns and fears ranging from economic, social, psychological, physical, environmental, political challenges. For instance, from fig. 2, it is observed that the respondents agreed to all the challenges identified and thrown up in the survey, such that while the response of 'agree' was ticked more than any others in the likert scale options used, the option of strongly disagree was least subscribed to in their response except for health problems.

Whereas for physical, environmental and economic challenges, a combination of agree and strongly agree responses showed a similar trend of higher response to that of 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. While 66%, 65% and 74% were the responses that environmental, physical and economic problems and challenges exist in the waterfronts respectively, 34%, 35% and 26% of the respondents ticked disagree and strongly disagree. For social and psychological problems at the waterfronts, the responses were similar, except that about the same percentage of respondent strongly agree and agree with 34% and 37% respectively. The further implication of this last response is that, there is still lack of trust for the government to treat them fairly which arose partly from the way some of the previous similar cases of demolitions were handled, using the cases of the Rainbow town, Agip waterfront demolition both in Port Harcourt, as well as that of Maroko saga in Lagos. The psychological effects and trauma of having their homes demolished with all its accompanied sufferings and constraints are real.

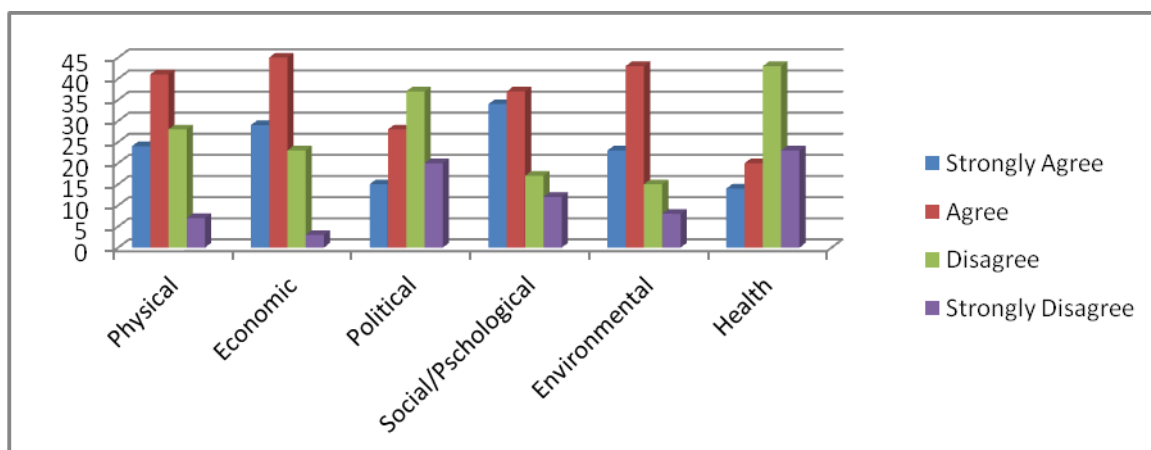


Figure 2: Perceived challenges of waterfronts residents affected by the demolition policy.



Plate 1: Typical view of waterfront settlement In Port Harcourt.



Plate 2: Waterfront Toilet System with poor sanitary and waste management

But interestingly, when asked about the health condition of the residents, only 14% and 20% ticked 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree', whereas those who did not agree that health problems were big issues in the waterfronts were higher with 66%, that is, with 43% disagree and 23% strongly disagree respectively. (See figure 2). This perceived response notwithstanding; it is obvious that the generally dirty and insanitary environmentally degraded conditions of these waterfronts positively correlate with high incidence of health related problems. (See Plates 1 and 2). The respondents may have felt that saying the obvious will mean providing an additional reason beside crime to demolish the waterfronts.

The loss of businesses and sources of livelihood stain the waterfronts residents on their faces. Also, the disconnection that will be brought on them by dislodging families and neighborhood ties achieved over the years that they had lived together were feared will be completely lost. Commenting on these challenges earlier in the Guardian newspaper [18] had reported that "Carrying their daily business activities while searching for alternative residents within the short notice is quite a torture and many may become homeless". Thus the psychological torture for them was a serious issue. Social displacement was anticipated thus family and other social ties will be broken as squatters will be forced to find scarce shelter elsewhere. Many may be forced to live in the street while others may end up in worst living conditions, like the Maroko victims. According to the secretary of the Wakirike Ethnic National survival organization the pains and psychological trauma of demolishing what people have toiled for generations could not be imagined. They anticipated looting and other criminal acts will be suffered in the hasty evacuation and protest and unrest will be heightened [23].

On 28 August 2009, Njemanze informal settlement, one of the waterfront neighborhood in Port Harcourt was demolished as part of this urban renewal programme. Between 13,800 and 17,000 people were claimed to have been forcibly evicted from their homes without prior and genuine consultation with affected residents and without the provision of adequate notice, compensation or alternative accommodation and legal remedies. Reporting the situation to the Amnesty International, some of the residents lamented thus:

"The damages are enormous and cannot be easily quantified. Entire communities are demolished, thousands of people forcibly evicted and people's homes and belongings destroyed. Women are particularly affected during forced evictions and large scale demolitions. Women lose businesses as well as homes as trading are often localized within the community. Many women are the breadwinners for the family, small scale and informal businesses are destroyed along with women's livelihoods, exposing themselves and their children to further human rights violations and poverty.

Families are forced to split and many return to villages with no work or schools to go to. Risk from previous demolitions (Njemanze) of children becoming street children, with parents forced to leave the area. Majority of the women told Amnesty International the lack of access to adequate housing, education, proper healthcare, security and security of tenure as their major problems. Some women had to engage in commercial sex work as they were unable to find any alternative income. This also exposed them to sexual violence in the community. Many women became single mothers responsible for their young children" [24].

The account above summarizes the socio-economic implications of the waterfront redevelopment policy of the RSG. The issues of the loss of family ties, businesses, housing as well as their means of livelihood are real. However, it is also real that the perceived environmental quality status of waterfronts is such that human being should not live there. This was the submission of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) who visited Port Harcourt to investigate allegations of gross human rights violations in the demolition of waterfronts by Rivers State government.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The formulation and the implementation of the government policy on waterfronts demolition had generated enormous reactions than imagined. Its implementation which has been confronted with a lot of challenges arose partly from the divergent perspectives of the various stakeholders on the motive and objectives of the policy in the first place. On the whole, every effort to persuade the residents of these waterfronts on the sincerity of the state government to be fair and just did not sell very easily. While on the other hand, it was canvassed that the fears being expressed by those affected were simply unfounded. However, this was why the suspension of the policy by the new administration then was welcomed and the new government received with open arms. As stated earlier by [18], the fact that the new incumbent governor is of Ikwerre ethnic origin was seen by some residents that he is God sent and have come to make amends. If the demolition was implemented as planned without adequate provision for squatters, they said, thousands would have gone homeless, their means of livelihood lost, untold sufferings and hardships would have been inherent.

The continued application of western urban development method (which has already been revised in western countries) has inhibited reassessment of issues in the Nigerian context. These methods should be reviewed and modified to deal with our peculiar problems so as to ensure its success [25] & [26]. Rehabilitation and Renovation approach to urban renewal should be the first choice of method. Where this is not feasible to achieve then a gradual (Phasing) redevelopment process be should adopted. The total area for demolition will be subdivided into phases, which will be cleared and redeveloped one after another. A total large scale clearance is rather expensive and thus delays redevelopment and intensifies housing problems.

First, the population of an area marked for clearance should be ascertained. The land should be duly acquired with the structures on it according to the legal provisions, made. Relocation of residents from the acquired buildings into satisfactory quarters should be done before demolition, thus efforts should be made to provide relocation areas to accommodate displaced persons if the housing stock of the city cannot absorb them. Assessment of the structured should precede clearance. Proposed designs for new development should be made with affordable housing and amenities of Aborigines and other displaced landlords in mind. The number of housing units should be as close as possible to the original numbers. The construction of storey buildings will allow space for the provision of other amenities and infrastructures lacking in the area such as hospitals, playgrounds, roads etc. Another alternative is to provide sites and services elsewhere to support the above method. This will reduce the pressure on the waterfront land. Despite popular opinion there are people in the waterfront who will prefer to live somewhere else. Interested landlords and tenants who can afford it and do not wish to go to the waterfronts after redevelopment, can buy these plots and develop them through cooperative or self-help ventures. Also government could assist the development with loans.

In conclusion, it must be stated that continuous urban planning and redevelopment are inevitable if a modern and liveable city is desired. Unfortunately the economic, social and environmental profile of Port Harcourt waterfronts is such that presents living conditions there as dehumanizing and unacceptable. A better housing policy needs to be planned and implemented. The government owes it to its people to provide a livable environment such that access to basic amenities is available, while also taking into consideration the various issues and problems encountered by waterfronts dwellers so as to make necessary provisions and adjustments. To ensure success of the demolition policy, the welfare of the people should take precedent over getting rid of miscreants. The former should be the goal and the latter an added benefit or part of the objectives. This is premised on the fact that “watershed” settlement in Port Harcourt is intricately linked to the culture of the Niger Delta, where many communities are geographically situated on the banks of rivers and creeks to support artisanal fishing, and as the main routes for transportation to many other communities. The redevelopment of these waterfronts promised by the government should be such that can blend the ‘transferred waterside’ lifestyle of these waterfronts residents to an urban setting and lifestyle amenable to global best practices and opportunities in a modern and sustainable city of Port Harcourt.

REFERENCES

- [1.] D.M.Wrenn, *Urban waterfront development*. Washington, DC Urban Land Institute; 1983.
- [2.] A. Breen and D. Rigby, *The New Waterfront – A Worldwide Urban Success Story*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996.
http://www.umich.edu/~econdev/waterfronts/ Cape Town’s. or http://www.waterfront.co.za/profile/company/projects.php
- [3.] P. Malone, *City, Capital and Water*. New York, Routledge; 1996
- [4.] T. Agbola and A.M. Jinadu, *Forced Eviction and Forced Relocation in Nigeria: The Experience of those Evicted from Maroko in 1990*. Published by SAGF, Publications for International Institute for Environment and Development.
- [5.] V.C. Obinna and W.W. Nnah, *The Squatters of Port Harcourt: A Socio-Economic Profile and Policy Implications*. Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Rivers State University of Science and Technology. Port Harcourt.B.Tech. 2006
- [6.] I. Imbasi, *A Systematic Evaluation of the Rivers State Government Urban renewal Programme*. B - Tech Project Report. Rivers State University of Science Technology, Port Harcourt,1994.
- [7.] Okoko K. (1993). "Commissioner for lands and housing, Rivers State. Personal communication cited in Imbasi (1994). B - Tech Project Report. Rivers State University of Science Technology, Port Harcourt, 1994.
- [8.] Census News, Federal Republic of Nigeria 1991 Population Census. A house magazine of the National Population Commission Vol. 1 September 1992.
- [9.] NPC, National Population Commission, Official results of National Population and Housing Census, 2006.
- [10.] N. Ochereome, G. Onah and J. Onoyume, The Port Harcourt Waterfront: Confronting the curse of an oil city. Thursday, December 10, 2009. http://www.nairaland.com
- [11.] E. Okah, The SUN Newspaper on Sunday, September 13, 2009,
- [12.] C. Akasike, Abonema Waterfront: End of a hideout of criminals. August 18, 2012 .
- [13.] E. John, Demolition Plans Bring New Ethic Twist to Port Harcourt". *Youth Empowerment Foundation*. 2007.
- [14.] L. Alex, *Anger over Nigeria's Gang Blitz*. BBC News, Lagos (4 October 2007)
- [15.] UN-HABITAT, *Evictions and Demolitions in Port Harcourt*, Fact Finding Mission Report, March 2009
- [16.] O. Anayo, *Nigeria: Demolition of Houses Continues in Port Harcourt*, Leadership newspaper, 11June 2012.
http://www.leadership.ng
- [17.] A. Muhammed, *Nigeria: Politics of Waterfront Demolition in Rivers*. A Daily Trust (Abuja) Publication (21 July 2007)
- [18.] K. Ebiri and R. Chikereuba, *Rivers State Waterfront Residents Rejoice Over stalled Demolition*. A Guardian Newspaper Publication. 2007
- [19.] Amnesty International, *Nigeria: Forced Eviction of Abonema Wharf Waterfront: "Pack and Go*. Index: AFR 44/034/2012 Amnesty International p5, July 2012.
- [20.] W. Bell-Gam, Government of Demolition Further Abuses the Right to Shelter of Agip Waterfront Residents". An Institute of Human Right and Humanitarian Law. Press Release (13/04/05).2005
- [21.] G. Oshodi, *Nigeria: Port Harcourt Waterfront Resident Protest Demolition*. A Vanguard Newspaper Publication. Lagos, Nigeria, 2007.
- [22.] J. Onoyume, *No going back on Waterfront demolition - Amaechi*. National News July 10, 2009.
http://www.vanguardngr.com/2009/07/1.ameachi.
- [23.] K. Ebiri, *Port Harcourt Slum Residents Say No to Demolition*. A Guardian Newspaper Publication. 2007
- [24.] Habitat, *Port Harcourt Waterfronts. HABITAT 2012 FORUM GENEVE, Informations générales: Port Harcourt Nigeria*. 2012.
- [25.] G.A. Onibokun, *Issues of Nigerian Housing*. NISER, Ibadan. 1982.
- [25.] R.A. Sule, *Recent Slum Clearance Exercise in Lagos (Nigeria): Victims or Beneficiaries*. Geo- journal Published by Springer Netherlands, Spring Ink. 2006.

TABLE A1: Squatter/Waterfronts Settlements in Port Harcourt Metropolis

S/n	Settlement	Remarks	S/n	Settlement	Remarks	S/n	Settlement	Remarks
DIObU AREA [ZONE 1]			19.	Echue		36.	Ibadan	
1.	Agip	**	20.	Njemanze		37.	Bishop Johnson	
2.	Eagle Island	**	21.	Abonema Wharf		38.	Moore Johnson	
3.	Abel Jumbo		OLD TOWNSHIP [ZONE 3]			39.	Baptist	
4.	Ukwuato		22.	Recreation		40.	Enugu	
5.	Timber		23.	Bundu		CORONATION LAYOUT [ZONE 5]		
6.	Okwelle		24.	Prisons		41.	Elliot Henry	
7.	Egede		25.	Abuja		42.	Captain Amangala	
8.	Akokwa		26.	Nembe		43.	Ndoki	
9.	Emenike		27.	Bille		BOROKIRI [ZONE 6]		
10.	Nanka		28.	Yam zone		44.	Orupabo	
DIObU AREA [ZONE 2]			29.	Aggrey		45.	Etche	
11.	Abba		30.	Okujagu		46.	Rex Lawson	
12.	Afikpo		31.	Ogu		47.	Ogoni	
13.	Okwuazu		32.	Burial Ground		EASTERN BY-PASS [ZONE 7]		
14.	Ojika		33.	Okrika		48.	Andonni	**
15.	Urualla		34.	NEPA		49.	Eastern By-Pass	**
16.	Elechi Layout		NEW LAYOUT [ZONE 4]					
17.	Udi		35.	Marine Base				
18.	Anozie							

Source: Obinna & Nnah (2006), Ministry of land, Housing & Urban Development, Rivers State, etc.

NOTE: * *Waterfront squatter settlements marked for demolition*
** *Waterfront squatter settlements not marked for demolition*

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHORS

Dr. Andrew Adesola Obafemi

Teaches Geography and Geoinformation techniques at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. He obtained B.Sc, M.Sc & Ph.D in Geography as well as a Masters degree in Cartography option. His teaching and research interest in Geography and Geoinformation techniques makes him to be regularly assigned to teach Cartography, GIS, Remote sensing, Surveying, Disaster Risk Management and Urban Geography courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Dr. Obafemi, who is currently a Senior Lecturer, belongs to several national and international scholarly and professional associations such as Association of Nigerian Geographers, Nigerian Cartography Association, Nigeria Environmental Society, etc. In addition to his fairly extensive local and international publications in his chosen field of Geography and Geoinformation, he is a Registered Environmental Manager (REM, USA) and a fellow of the Institute of Corporate Administration of Nigeria (FCAI).

Mrs. Tonye V. Odubu

Is of the Department of Geography & Environmental Management at the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria where she teaches Urban Geography, Rural Development Planning among other courses. She is currently an Assistant Lecturer in the University. She obtained a B-Tech in Urban and Regional Planning, M Sc in Geography (Rural Development option) and she is currently on a Ph.D programme in Geography specializing in Rural Development.
