

Chapter 1

Africa's Housing Sector as a Pathway to Achieving the SDGs



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Introduction: The Urban Development Challenge for Africa

Adequate, affordable housing has long been recognised as central to global development strategies (Cocina et al., 2019). However, the inclusion of a specific 'urban goal' for sustainable cities and communities in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015) has been recognised as a new milestone in the effort to integrate the residential environment into the sustainable development debate. A further required step, however, is fuller recognition of the myriad of ways in which a healthy housing sector can also contribute to meeting the other 16 integrated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated targets by 2030. As the first five-year milestone of implementation of Agenda 2030 is reached, this book presents new scholarship in the African context that demonstrates the centrality of quality homes to achieving the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda, which was ratified in 2016 at the HABITAT III conference in Quito (UN HABITAT, 2015; 2017a,b).

No doubt, there is an urgent need for scholarship in this direction. Cities are supposed to advance economic, social and environmental development and present the laboratory for resolving most of the challenges confronting humanity today. However, with high and rapidly rising urbanisation rates, African cities are not seen to be fulfilling this role. Rather, they are characterised by increasing slum proliferation and housing shortages as well as inadequate urban infrastructure that reduces business formation, competitiveness and productivity. All of these inhibit efficient inter- and intra-city human, material and resource flows. Similarly,

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African city management has for too long been based on outdated, irrelevant colonial-era urban planning dogmas. Consequently, there have been discordant city layouts and poor spatial connectivity, congestion and gridlocks, sprawls, inefficiency of infrastructure systems and decreased productivity. All of these have created negative externalities for the social, environmental and economic sustainability of urban areas. Therefore, it is now imperative to question the old ways of viewing and managing the city, if we are to chart a fresh path towards more competitive and yet more sustainable cities in Africa.

This collection draws on evidence reviews and new empirical studies to scrutinise the ways in which housing policy and provision can provide a pathway to achieving the SDGs in the African context. A key tenet of UN Agenda 2030 was that no one would be left behind in the effort to end poverty and hunger as well as to share wealth and address inequality. To this end, sustainable urbanisation was viewed as crucial to people's quality of life. Although implementation of Agenda 2030 is envisaged as being deliverable through a 'global partnership', paragraph 41 indicates that individual countries have the primary responsibility for their own economic and social development. As such, the chapters in this collection explore the shared and contrasting experiences on housing provision in African cities, alongside examining the deficiencies in government policy from various perspectives, considering alternative housing finance models and, very importantly, questioning—through empirical analysis—the various assumptions that had been believed to limit Africa's progress in achieving adequate housing for its teeming urban populace. In all these, linkages between housing and the SDGs are explored and specific areas of connection identified.

Housing and the Sustainable Development Goals

Housing issues are of course most directly relevant to SDG11, which seeks to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Under SDG11, Target 11.1 is to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and to upgrade 'slums' by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). Reducing the proportion of the urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing is a key indicator of progress.

Subsequently, the New Urban Agenda emerged as a detailed declaration and implementation plan, with a similar goal of 'leaving no one behind'. Paragraph 32 of the Implementation Plan committed signatories to promoting the development of age- and gender-responsive housing policies, which were integrated with the employment, education, healthcare and social integration sectors, as well as with all levels of government. Policies were to incorporate the provision of “adequate, affordable, accessible, resource efficient, safe, resilient, well-connected and well-located housing (Paragraph 32). Paragraph 33 committed to stimulating the supply of affordable and accessible housing for different income groups, including those in

marginalised communities and vulnerable situations, e.g., homeless persons. The UN HABITAT's New Urban Agenda (NUA) offers a shared vision in which all people have equal rights to housing and other benefits of the world's cities (2017a). Calling for a 'paradigm shift', the NUA proposed standards and principles for the planning, construction, development, management and improvement of urban areas, including housing and residential neighbourhoods, from national urban policies to local implementation. The approach applied equally to all civil-society organisations, emphasising links between urbanism, economic opportunities and an improved quality of life. It levers for the transformative change of city planning, land readjustment programmes and basic services as well as housing and public space, while recognising the importance of monitoring progress (UN HABITAT, 2017b).

The New Urban Agenda's integrated approach recognises the important connections among housing, well-being and people's capacity to flourish and contribute to economic and social development. It is in this sense that the quality of homes and neighbourhoods underpin the capacity of societies to achieve the 17 integrated goals (Figure 1). Chapters in this book make explicit connections with Goals 3 (Health), 6 (Water and Sanitation), 7 (Energy), 9 (Infrastructure), 11 (Sustainable communities), 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life below water), 15 (Life on Land) and 16 (Institutions). There is undoubtedly equal scope to make connections between access to housing and eradicating poverty, hunger and inequality (1, 2, 10), as well as supporting education (4), gender equality (5), work (8), responsible consumption (12), while strong partnerships (17) are required to coordinate housing and urban development. Key to optimising these intersections is the need for integrated research often in the form of “interdisciplinary collaborations between natural and social scientists and transdisciplinary team building that brings together academic and non-academic (practice-based) researchers to investigate sustainability challenges of mutual interest (Patel et al., 2017, p. 787).



Fig. 1.1 The Sustainable Development Goals
Source United Nations (2020)

The measurement of progress towards the SDGs is central to implementation of Agenda 2030 but it is also important to consider how this implementation can be conceptualised for analysis. Arguably, implementation depends largely on mobilising structures of governance (at global, national and local levels) through a classical policy-making approach (Hill & Irving, 2020). In practice, however, implementation may be much more incremental, while the attachment of measurable targets to the broad aspirational goals reflects evidence-based policy models that emerged in the 2000s. In their review of the conceptualisation of informality in housing, d'Alencon et al. (2018) acknowledged the need for a global/theoretical conception embracing national, city and neighbourhood levels of implementation. Therefore, they suggested better understanding of governance frameworks involving actors associated with 'informality', as well as of the political economy underpinning specific urban realities (p. 64).

In a policy paper directed towards developing the NUA (N-AERUS, 2016), it was argued that inadequate housing and unequal access remain central characteristics of rapid urbanisation, at least as partly explained by the failure to adopt effective measures due to the fact that key stakeholders benefit from the status quo. In order to disrupt that status quo, the paper suggested, it is necessary to make the case for more radical interventions including market regulation, use of taxation to influence affordability and widen access, taking account of formal and informal housing and stressing social justice perspectives, as well as for adopting post-colonial theory and de-colonialising methods (N-AERUS, 2016, p. 7-8). In the global north, housing policy outcomes have also been at least partly explained by the embeddedness of institutional structures (often underpinned by neoliberal agendas), thus creating a path dependency that resists change (Bengtsson & Ruonavaara, 2010; Anderson, Dyb & Finnerty, 2016).

Kaika (2017) noted that the NUA's call for "safe, resilient, sustainable and inclusive cities" essentially remains path-dependent. This includes the use of techno-managerial solutions (such as smart cities), the indicators for monitoring and the overall institutional frameworks, which were viewed as belonging to a failed paradigm. Kaika characterised the approach as merely 'vaccinating' citizens in order to help them absorb further inequality. This interpretation sees the NUA as mediating, rather than alleviating, the effects of global inequality. Where communities rejected such strategies, there was more possibility to disrupt path dependency and establish alternative approaches to accessing housing, healthcare, sanitation, etc. Real social innovation, then, was to be found in dissent, rather than in consensus (Kaika, 2017), while policy development from within countries in the south was seen as a requirement for disrupting policy pathways. The notion of path dependency and how prior trajectories can be disrupted or shifted to new directions lends itself to a wider consideration of how housing can be a pathway to meeting the wider set of integrated development goals.

Housing as a Pathway to Achieving the SDGs

Scholarship to date has connected housing to the fields of some SDGs more than others. For example, housing has long been understood as a social determinant of health (Dahlgren & Whitehead, 1991; Marmot, 2010). Globally, home and housing are at the heart of communities and represent a key sphere in which public policy can affect people of all socio-economic cadres. The World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health shows the intergenerational nature of the SDGs (Bluestone, 2016). The World Health Organization housing and health guidelines on the health benefits of improved housing emphasise avoidance of overcrowding, appropriate indoor temperature and indoor safety and accessibility (WHO, 2018). The guidelines also recognise the importance of housing affordability, security and the surrounding environment in achieving overall well-being.

The residential setting also underpins community activities, including community resilience and recognition of 'asset-based' approaches to residents' capacity to enjoy life and cope with its challenges (Windle et al., 2011). In a resilience model, individuals, households and communities are seen as having resources to cope with difficulties, in contrast to a 'deficit' model of illness or housing disadvantage. Resilience, as capacity to deal with difficulties and even thrive in overcoming adversity, has also been recognised by the World Health Organization as an important factor in lifelong health and well-being (Medical Research Council (UK), 2010). However, the concept of resilience, has also been criticised for failing to sufficiently challenge the prevailing structures that cause and sustain disadvantage (Kaika, 2017).

Nevertheless, there is still scope to better document housing as a determinant of other factors such as economic, social and cultural opportunities and outcomes. Communities may build resilience to disadvantage, while institutionalism and path dependency may help explain why change is sometimes only incremental, even where progressive strategies are in place. It is therefore important to consider how far historical policies (colonial and post-colonial) determine contemporary national and local implementation of Agenda 2030 in African countries. While ultimately there may be no single conceptual approach that best explains the intersection of housing and the SDGs at the community level and national development, the triangulation of new research findings with the existing scientific literature and policy/practice can shed new light on evolving debates. Within the wider context of global sustainable development and city governance, then, our contributions analyse the ways in which a wide range of factors comes into play in shaping not only the development of settlements but also changes in sustainable economic and social development.

The evidence in the following chapters suggests that the benefits of housing improvements are not yet fully recognised in the wider spheres of the SDGs and Agenda 2030. There are also potential research areas that have not been addressed in this collection. Nevertheless, the range of issues examined demonstrates the continuing need to better integrate interventions to achieve the global goals.

To an extent, agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda can be interpreted as rational planning tools for sustainable development but, where implementation is highly constrained, arguably path-dependent and incremental. National programmes and local projects can bring about real improvements in quality of life. The importance of community settings and practices to good health and education, for example, remains core to better understanding of community interpretations of sustainability and development and thereby to developing culturally effective responses and interventions.

The 2030 Agenda is ambitious, if also somewhat idealistic. All participating nations have signed up to 'no one being left behind'. In a largely neoliberal world focused on economic competitiveness, however, this has rarely, if ever, been a realistic goal in most national agendas. The importance of housing to the other SDGs may be widely recognised but national and local agendas need to demonstrate integrated commitment to improved housing along with other mechanisms for achieving the SDGs. While there may be a danger that incrementalism ultimately implies almost no or limited progress, the international priority to the UN Sustainable Development Goals offers continuing opportunities to better address the global challenge of meeting the housing and community needs of low-income groups in an environmentally sustainable way, which in turn will support progress regarding the other goals.

Contemporary Housing and Urbanization in Africa

Contemporary African cities are defined by multiple issues that have challenged optimisation, competitiveness and efficiency in urban areas. Globally acceptable tools such as the Sustainable Development Goals provide the critical directions for change that can bring about resolution of these challenges for the benefit of all Africans. However, there is urgent need to incorporate these goals into sectoral concerns to catalyse change. Housing represents a substantial proportion of urban land use. As both an economic good and a social service, housing transcends the brick and mortar with which it is built. Indeed, homes underpin the fundamental quality of life and all other economic and social activities for work, play and living, thereby incorporating the immediate environment and neighbourhood, as well as the individual's dwelling. The science and practice of the planning, supply, production and management of housing in its micro and macro environment are avenues for incorporating and operationalising all of the SDGs, with a particular focus on the residential environment.

This book's focus on Africa and African perspectives is deliberate. There is a dearth of collections of scholarly works dedicated wholly to African issues and that comes out of the work done by African scholars and practitioners with collaborators from within Africa and elsewhere. The challenges facing African cities are monumental, as they play host to some of the most daunting statistics on the impact

of infrastructure and economic development on livelihoods, municipal efficiency and national growth and development. As the SDGs seek to promote environmentally conscious and socially just development, the quest for development in Africa often overrides consideration of what has been termed the tripod of sustainability (economic, social and environmental sustainability). This volume brings together scholarly research and argument that cuts across and intertwines this tripod into options that can deliver on the promise of the SDGs. The project is an initiative of the Centre for Housing and Sustainable Development at the University of Lagos, which identified the gap in grounded research that links the housing sector with the SDGs in African cities.

It is worth reiterating that the chapters in this volume critically examine the various interconnections between housing and the SDGs, exploring how the SDGs can be used as a platform for addressing issues surrounding housing, such as affordability and accessibility, and how housing and its neighbourhood impact the environment. Thus, externalities of housing neighbourhoods on pollution, waste management and slum proliferation are brought forward. The volume also addresses contemporary issues in housing production, housing investment and finance, housing governance, housing supply and urban design processes as avenues for achieving the goals and targets of the SDGs. The critical analysis of taken-for-granted dogmas, such as the right to housing and the relevance of the SDGs, also finds expression in the chapters.

In achieving the book's core objective of interrogating the connections between housing and the SDGs, the chapters represent the outcomes of engaging stakeholders in the epistemological, practical, theoretical and methodological issues associated with housing as a platform for achieving the SDGs in Africa. The book therefore explores the interconnections, interactions and linkages between the SDGs and housing through original research, practice, experience, case studies, desk-based research and other knowledge media.

The remainder of this introductory chapter outlines the range of contributions in the book in the context of progress towards the SDGs and the ways in which housing within African countries contributes to sustainability and development, beyond the SDG11 accommodation target. The contributions have a strong focus on evidence from Nigeria, as well as contributions from South Africa, Ghana and Uganda. Many of the materials will have relevance/transferability more widely in Africa, even as there are also wider comparative insights from outside Africa.

Housing, Urbanisation and SDGs in Africa

There are chapters that explore issues of housing policy and governance in the African context. Chapter Two (Taibat Lawanson, Basirat Oyalowo and Timothy Nubi) examines the global goals in local contexts through a focus on pathways to sustainable urban development in Lagos. Anthony Olowoyeye addresses the theme

of housing management in Chapter Three. Housing's centrality to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals is reflected in unequal patterns of infrastructure development, health outcomes and social injustice. The chapter identifies strategic and historical causes of the problems of post-independence housing systems in Africa having 'not taken' the road recommended by the Economic Commission for Africa in 1963, with the consequences of this missed opportunity still being felt. A key conclusion is that until robust policies enable housing to become a key driver of economic, social and infrastructural development, in a system that works for all, meeting the SDG goals will remain difficult across Africa. Chapter Four presents our international comparative analysis, in a consideration of potential learning from the experience of homeownership in Singapore (Hikmot Koleoso & Basirat Oyalowo). Starting with Sustainable Development Goal 11.1 as a declaration of the need to ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing for all citizens, the authors address poor access to housing as a cause of poverty in developed and developing countries. They examine national homeownership structures as means of economic and social development and as a potential platform for eradicating poverty, as in the transformative experience of Singapore from its underdeveloped status into an international economic hub. The study analyses the key policy tools and features of Singapore's housing reforms and interventions to reflect on what Nigeria (or other African nations) might adapt for a sustainable housing policy to contribute to achieving SDG11.1. The importance of government's political and financial commitment to homeownership is supported by evidence of socioeconomic and cultural needs as well as financial ability. Successful features of the Singapore scheme that might be considered in African countries include design, affordability, legislation, regulation, allocation, physical management and regeneration of properties within the homeownership sector.

There are also chapters in this collection that focuses on housing quality and health, with findings from Nigeria and South Africa. John Ntema, Isobel Anderson and Lochner Marais present their findings on health outcomes in Mangaung Upgraded Informal Settlement in South Africa (Chapter 5). The close association between housing and health underpins their consideration of SDG3 (health and well-being) and SDG6 (standards in water and sanitation provision, as well as the housing-oriented SDG11). Their evidence supports international and South African findings that the health of residents in upgraded informal settlements is connected more to infrastructural development and neighbourhood access to social amenities than to physical housing conditions. New evidence from the analysis of Mangaung households' perceptions of health found that lack of basic sanitation and water, as well as of primary health clinics, were factors constraining health improvements. Thus, policies to ensure improved health services and sanitation in upgrading programmes are needed to contribute more effectively to achieving the SDGs on health and housing as well as water and sanitation. Similarly, in Chapter Six, SDGs 3, 6 and 11, as well as 5 (gender equality) and 17 (partnerships), are considered in relation to the housing and health of slum dwellers in six Nigerian cities (Johnson Bade Falade). This study analysed the

roles of slum housing in meeting the *physiological and psychological needs of residents and in protecting them from disease*. The study assessed the contributions of 26 indicators to meeting the health and well-being needs of residents. The results varied across the six slums and the analysis highlights the implications for promoting healthy housing and urban renewal, as well as for realising the targets of Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda.

The distinctive theme of housing and the environment is explored by a number of chapters in this volume. Chapter 7, by Temitope Sogbanmu, Opeyemi Ogunkoya, Esther Olaniran, Adedoyin Lasisi and Thomas Seiler, examines environmental sustainability and the impact of human activities on aquatic ecosystems in Nigeria's Lagos and Ogun states. SDG 14, which addresses the need to support life below water, is thus the focus, given the realisation that in urban Africa rising population rates pose environmental challenges for the management of aquatic resources. The authors' research exposes stakeholders' perceptions of environmental risk to air quality, water quality and impact on aquatic animals. The need for improved education, communication and implementation of evidence-based policies for the management of these ecosystems is highlighted as crucial to the planning of human settlements near aquatic ecosystems. Air quality is the focus of Chapter 8 (Irene Appeaning Addo & Oluwafemi Olajide) – a feature of good health (SDG3), climate action (SDG13), and life on land (SDG15), as well as being central to sustainable settlements and homes. Indoor air pollution in Africa is recognised as one of the leading causes of pulmonary diseases and death, given the high incidence of use of biomass fuel for cooking. This study on Nigeria and Ghana revealed a high incidence of indoor air pollution in sub-Saharan Africa (related to widespread home-based enterprises, use of solid fuels and poor ventilation), yet indoor air pollution is hardly recognised at policy and institutional levels, with little emphasis on monitoring and abatement. The study therefore recommends further research and action on indoor air pollution to drive the achievement of improved air quality by 2030.

The critical question of how human rights are embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals is explored in contributions by authors writing from Uganda and South Africa: however, the ideas are generally applicable. Chapter 9, by Mutyaba Emmanuel Musoke, is a narrative of the linkages between housing and well-being in Uganda. Starting from the premise that adequate housing is a necessity for health and well-being, the chapter develops the theoretical argument that housing is a human right that needs to be respected to achieve the promotion of health and well-being (SDG3). The review confirms that the home should be a place where people feel safe and have a sense of belonging, in addition to being a place that supports physical and emotional well-being as well as productivity. John Ntema presents a South African case study that examines aspects of relocation and informal settlement upgrading in Mangaung Township, Free State Province (Chapter 10). In post-apartheid South Africa, only 28% of all settlement upgrading projects improved existing communities, while the remainder were greenfield projects to which residents in informal settlements were relocated. The mixed-methods study

contributes new evidence on households' perceptions of basic service infrastructure, amenities and governance in a relocation site in Mangaung Township (Bloemfontein). Challenges included promotion of housing development at the expense of inclusive, sustainable communities and undermining of participatory project planning and design and limiting contributions to SDGs 3 (health), 4 (education), 6 (water and sanitation) and 11 (cities and communities).

Resources to achieve the sustainable development goals are a critical factor in delivering progress. Thus, the four chapters analyse the role of housing investment and finance. In Chapter 11, Oluwaseun Oguntuase and Abimbola Windapo review the potential of green bonds and buildings for achieving sustainable and affordable housing and reaching a number of SDGs, including 3 (Health), 6 (Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 13 (Climate Action). *The analysis reflects how the development of the Nigerian green bond market presents an investment opportunity for green buildings to achieve sustainable development.* Chapter 12 considers self-help financing for homeownership. Andrew Ebekoziem examines the lived experiences of Nigerian middle-income groups in Lagos. The analysis highlights barriers to, and strategies for, becoming homeowners, identifying residential mobility among middle-income earners as contributing to the city's expansion. Land purchase and building approval processes were common obstacles, while organised self-help housing provision merited further government policy support. Pro-poor policy and regulatory frameworks, it is suggested, will improve housing outcomes. Micro-finance support tools such as “soft housing-loans with less prohibitive conditions and supporting local building schemes can contribute to achieving more sustainable homeownership for all by 2030. Chapter 13 presents an analysis of macroeconomic strategy in Nigeria. *Using archival data from 1960-2019, John Ogbonnaya Agwu explores the dynamics between the exchange rate, rental values and the housing deficit. The results support previous findings that aggregated macroeconomic indices influence the real estate sector and that exchange rates may be a catalyst for stimulating housing development and reducing the housing deficit.* In Chapter 14, Akeem Ayofe Akinwale challenges the application of de Soto's (2001) work on “why capitalism triumphs in the West and fails everywhere else” to the poverty equation in Nigeria. *The review sets the literature around Soto's ideas on poverty alleviation against the backdrop of Nigeria's capitalist ideologies and anti-poverty programmes and also draws on Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995) to consider alternative strategies for property rights and access to capital among the poor in developing countries.*

Three chapters focus on urban design issues. In Chapter 15, Akin-Otiko reflects on the meanings and morality of pre-colonial traditional Yoruba architecture, showing how post-colonial housing responses departed from traditional designs and meanings of home, thereby impacting negatively on attempts to solve the housing problem in Nigeria. It is argued that traditional meanings should be reincorporated into strategies to solve Nigeria's housing problems. The themes of urban sprawl versus densification and housing in Nigerian

cities are explored in Chapter 16 (Saidat Olanrewaju & Olumuyiwa Adegun). It is argued that urban sustainability and resilient communities cannot be achieved without significantly changing the way housing and other urban spaces are planned, designed and developed. Reviewing research to date, the chapter concludes that the urban sprawl in Nigeria has undesirable economic, environmental and social impacts, including for housing. Compact urban housing development, including densification policies, is proposed as an urban form better suited to achieving sustainability in Nigerian cities. Neighbourhood design and security in mass housing schemes in Lagos is the focus of Chapter 17, by Foluke O. Jegede, Eziyi O. Ibem and Adedapo A. Oluwatayo. This chapter presents findings from a study on the influence of residential neighbourhood planning and design of housing units on the security of lives and property in 12 public housing estates in Lagos Metropolis. The results reveal how the layout of estates, housing design and construction features all influenced residents' perception of security. The study also identifies areas that need to be strengthened.

We close our volume with conclusions from Basirat Oyalowo and Taibat Lawanson on how housing and urbanisation in Africa can contribute to a sustainable future and achievement of the SDGs (Chapter 18). Given that the United Nations (2020) SDG platform monitors progress across all 17 sustainable development goals, this collection adds valuable new scholarship on the role of housing in the African context. We hope that readers will become further galvanised in their efforts towards future housing research and policy development across African nations, as well as engaging in more integrated actions to strengthen the housing sector as a pathway to achieving truly sustainable and socially just development for all Africans.

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