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# TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN LAGOS, NIGERIA: A TIME LINE STUDY OF AJEGUNLE COMMUNITY (1998 - 2008)

Taibat Lawanson<sup>1</sup>, Oluwafemi Olajide<sup>2</sup> and Immaculata Nwokoro<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

*This paper investigates the growth of an informal settlement in Lagos, Nigeria over a period of ten years. Major issues considered are the basic socio-economic attributes, quality of housing facilities and neighbourhood infrastructure. The research adopted systematic random sampling of 390 household heads in Ajegunle in 1998, 2002 and 2008 respectively. The responses over the three periods were collated and analysed alongside the specific targets outlined in the MDGs 1 and 7. The study revealed that poverty level of the respondents had grown worse over the study period. The contentious issue of security of tenure was also evident and reflected in unwillingness by respondents to improve their environmental conditions. The paper concludes by suggesting pragmatic measures towards meeting the specific targets of the Millennium Development Goals in the study area and include the adoption of pro-poor planning strategies for urban regeneration.*

**Keywords:** Poverty, MDG, Environment, Lagos, Urban Regeneration,

## Introduction

In order to address the problem of poverty and promote sustainable development, the United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted in September 2000 committing 189 countries around the world to do all they can to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and equality and achieve peace, democracy and environmental stability. The following year, the Secretary General put forward eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that contain 18 numerical targets and 48 indicators. These goals set time bound targets, by which progress in reducing income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion - while promoting gender equality, health, education and environmental sustainability - can be measured. The goals are ambitious but feasible and, together with the comprehensive United Nations development agenda, set the course for the world's efforts to alleviate extreme poverty by 2015. Goal 1 on which all the

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others are hinged is a commitment to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Target 1 is to halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$1 a day. Specific indicators include reduce substantially the proportion of the population surviving on below US\$1 per day; the poverty gap ratio and also the share of the poorest quintile in national consumption (UNSD 2003).

In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of Africans living in poverty has actually increased, by 100 million between 1990 and 2005.. About 79 per cent of working-age men are employed, but half earn less than \$1.25 a day and the proportion of urban residents in slums is as high as 71.9 % (MDG Report 2008).

Poverty in developing countries is typically concentrated in the informal settlements, whether slums or squatter settlements. Commonly called shantytowns, slums and/ or squatter settlements, they are deprived settlements characterized by excessive residential densities, largely uninhabitable housing and the absence of sanitation, basic infrastructure and social services (Aina, 1990). It has been observed that residents of these shantytowns are faced with many challenges ranging from low standard of living, poor housing condition, threat of forced eviction, insecurity of tenure among others (Srinivas, 2005).

The proliferation of informal settlements results in the unwieldy expansion of the urban centres and this poses a major planning problem as provision and management of roads, drainage and sewage systems among other infrastructure proves very difficult. Furthermore, shantytowns, a consequent of urbanization, cause increases in the incidence of poverty, diseases and epidemics, environmental pollution, urban conflicts and crime.

Certain schools of thoughts persistently argue that insecurity of tenure contributes largely to the poor living conditions, low standard of living and poverty in the shantytowns. Since they usually do not have legal titles to the lands they occupy and by virtue of their lack of economy cannot access mortgage facilities, they are unable to improve their living conditions. Tebbal (2003) asserts also that the constant threat of forced eviction inhibits them from any such tendencies. Shantytowns are the most tangible evidence of the pervasive poverty in urban areas and studies have revealed sizable as well as pockets of almost seventy of them in the Lagos Metropolis (Agunbiade, 2006). Currently Lagos reflects the embodiment of the contemporary decay of urban life as evident in the standard of living, congested apartments, degraded environment, crime among others (Morka 2007). The statistic released by UNDP in 2003 revealed that 51% of male residents



and 54% of female residents of Metropolitan Lagos are poor and live in precarious situation. Today, over two-thirds of the population of Lagos lives in the informal settlement or slums that are scattered around the city (Morka, 2007). The master plan of Metropolitan Lagos (1980) identified forty-two (42) blighted areas within the metropolis. Maroko was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> and had since being demolished in July 1990 by the Lagos State Government. Following public outcry, Lagos State Government with funding assistance from the World Bank conceived the Infrastructure Upgrading Programme for Metropolitan Lagos. Consequently, Four - Year Renewal plans were prepared for the following areas: Ajegunle, Badia, Amukoko, Makoko, Iwaya, Agege, Ilaje and Bariga. A demonstration project was implemented in Olojowon - a section of Badia in 2005.

The existence of squatter settlements in urban areas may be inevitable phenomena. As long as urban areas offer economies of scale and agglomeration economies, cities will continue to grow, attracting migrants from rural areas, leading to more squatting. The degraded environments continue to deteriorate and constantly reflect the continuing inability of city authorities to supply infrastructural services and adequate housing; hence the *raison d'être* for this paper. The Millennium Development Goals

emphasise the impacts of insecure tenure and its links with poverty, and thus the role of secure tenure in poverty reduction. This is the main reason the environmental conditions of Ajegunle are being considered in line with the goals 1 and 7. Ajegunle being the most populated shantytown in the Lagos Metropolis.

### Study Area

Ajegunle is located at Ajeromi Ifelodun Local Government Area. The site is a major slum, often described as 'jungle city' with a multi-ethnic population of 345,634 (baseline projection of 2006). It is the most populated slum in Lagos State and sits on 208ha of land. Ajegunle has a population density of 750'. However, the Local Planning Authority reworked the population estimates for Ajegunle to 500,000 based on occupancy rates, tenement rates and rateable properties in the blighted area. Five resident communities make up Ajegunle, and consist of people from all parts of country with the dominant groups being the Ijaw, Ilaje, Hausa, Ibo, Urhobo and Yoruba ethnicity. Their main occupation is trading in the formal and informal sectors. The area can best be described as a residential-cum-commercial because commercial concerns are located at the frontage of almost every building. Residential Land Use consists mainly of traditional compounds (bungalow) and Brazilian/multi-family units, usually one-



storey building with corrugated iron sheets as roofing material. These houses are built very close together with no consideration for accessibility and drainage. Commercial activities include petty trading and artisan workshops such as carpentry, tailoring and the like. There are many day and night market with the largest being the Boundary Market, built by the State Government.

### Methodology

The study adopted a Case study research design. Ajegunle was chosen based on her identification as the most populous informal settlement (SNCLavalin, 1995). Two principal data types – spatial and attributes – were considered for the study. These include data on socio-economic characteristics and tenure status of the residents, poverty profiles, physical and environmental conditions of the study areas. Both secondary and primary sources were employed to obtain the necessary data.

Data collation was done over a ten year period. Selected years were 1998, 2002 and 2008. Target population were household heads and sampling

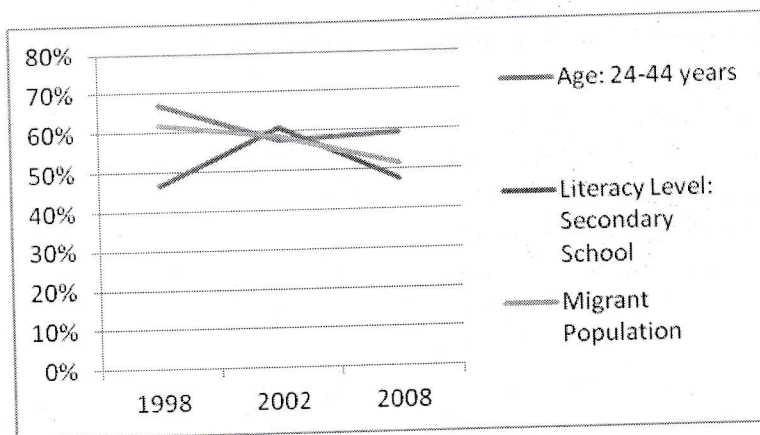
technique was by systematic random sampling in which sampling was done on sixty identified streets on each of the sampling periods. Data collection was done through the administration of structured questionnaires as well as direct observation. Sample sizes were 10% of total number of buildings. These were 200 in 199, 174 in 2002 and 390 in 2008.

### Data discussion

The predominant gender of respondents was male in 1998 and 2008 while in 2002, it was female. Over 50% of respondents fell into the working age population and midline figures show that the population is relatively educated with many of them having at least secondary school education as shown in Figure 1 below.

Average household size reduced over the period from 10.4 in 1998 to 7.8 in 2008. This may be due to emigration of people from Ajegunle to the emerging peripheral communities such as Mowe, Otta and Owode among others. Migrant populations also decreased for the same period and this may be adduced to the same reason.

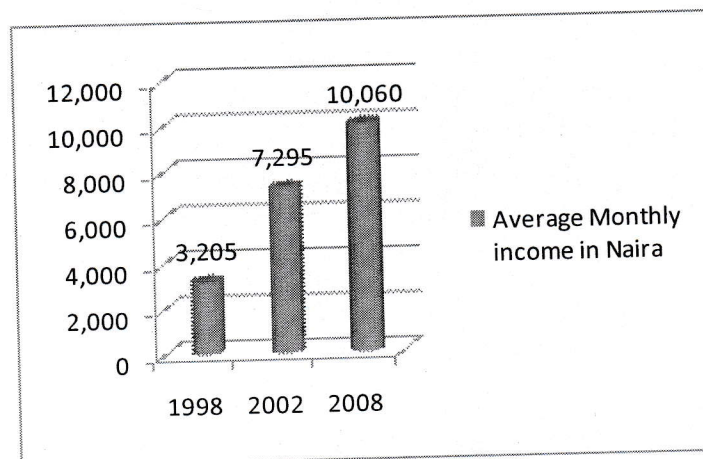




**Fig. 1 Socio Economic Profile of Respondents**

Predominant occupation in the study area was artisan in 1998 but subsequently petty trading. The reason for this is likely to be the influx of cheap Chinese goods which undermined the efforts of cottage industries. Furthermore, the democratic dispensation threw up fresh economic challenges as the local touts metamorphosed into revenue officers for the local governments and targeted artisans in particular. The ratio of

formal to informal sector workers increased from 1:2.17 in 1998 to 1:3.35 in 2002 and 1:6.99 in 2008. Clearly, this is a response to the low wages accruable to people of lower educational and professional status who had to find other means of income. Average monthly income responded to the minimum wage but still remain grossly inadequate to meet daily needs (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2 Average Monthly Income (N)**

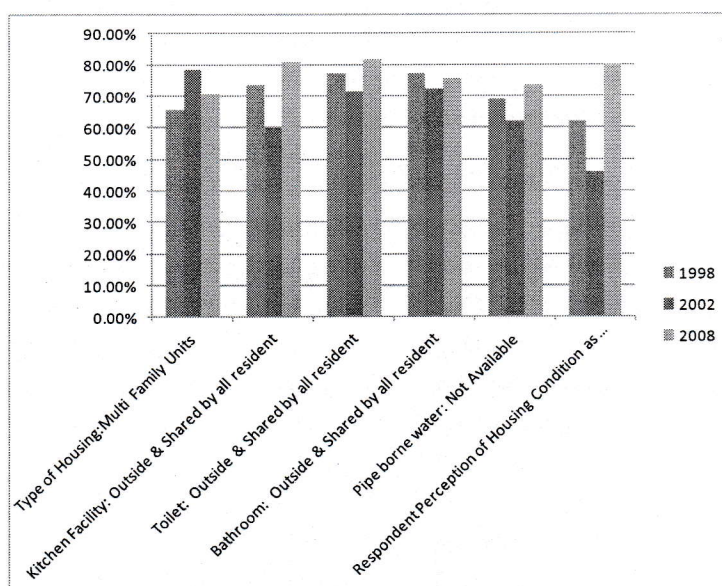


## Housing Conditions of Respondents

The predominant housing type is the multi family unit with as many as ten households per building in some instances. Most cases had one household

of at least six persons sharing a single room.

Housing facilities were located outside in makeshift structures and shared by all residents in more than 70% of cases for the three years as shown in Figure 3.



**Fig. 3 Housing Conditions of Respondents**

Most of the residents did not have access to pipe borne water, this figure reduced in 2002 and went back up in 2008. This means that the public water supply that was instituted by the political class had broken down and people were back to their regular means of water supply - surface wells and water vendors.

Majority of the respondents perceive their housing condition as poor and expressed dissatisfaction with the

condition of housing facilities available. They described them variously as dirty, unsafe and unsanitary. Wastes from the makeshift bathrooms and toilets were not channelled and thus gathered in stagnant pools, creating breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other insects.

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## General Environmental Conditions of Ajegunle

Motorable access to buildings was generally unavailable across the study area. In 2008, over 85% did not have motorable access to their homes compared with only 52% in 1998 as shown in Figure 4. Drainage was generally open and blocked in most cases with the situation being particularly deplorable in 2002. The major method of waste disposal was by dumping along the road side; little wonder the blocked condition of drainages. Dumping of refuse by the road side was done by 81% of respondents in 1998; 2008 recorded only a slight decrease in figures (79.5%). Organized open spaces were totally

unavailable. Children played along the streets and adults turned street corners to roadside bars and betting halls. Major energy for cooking was the kerosene stove while alternative power source was the kerosene lamp in 1998 and 2002 and with the proliferation of Chinese goods, petrol generators became the preferred mode of power supply in Ajegunle. The environmental health implications were not lost on the respondents as more than 72% were able to attribute the frequency of air borne diseases such as throat infections and coughs to atmospheric pollution caused by petrol generators and kerosene stoves. Cases of asphyxiation were rampant, especially when the generators were kept indoors for safety reasons.

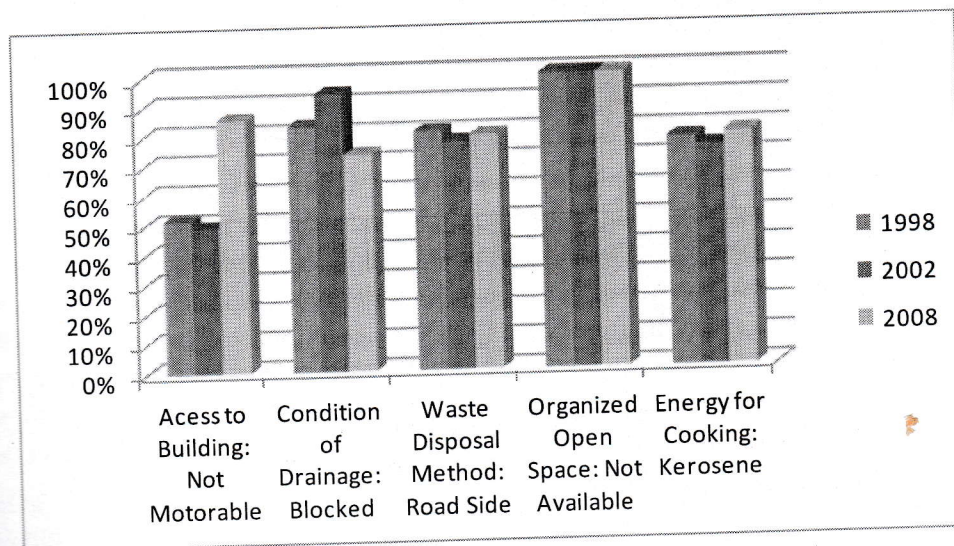


Fig. 4 General Environmental Conditions of Respondents



## Tenure Issues

Issues of housing tenureship, length of stay in the neighbourhood and evidence of land registration were discussed extensively. More people are emigrating from Ajegunle as shown in Figure 5, whereby those who have been resident in the community since 1980 reduced to only 53% as at 2008. Housing tenureship is mainly tenancy with 93% living in rented apartments in 1998. This

figure fell to 60% in 2002 and rose considerably to 83% in 2008 thereby corroborating literature study of the prevalence of absentee landlords in most squatter settlements.

More than 50% of the land in Ajegunle is family owned though most of them are unable to produce any land title or planning approval for their properties. However, more people since 1998 have begun the process of registering their titles even though this figure is negligible

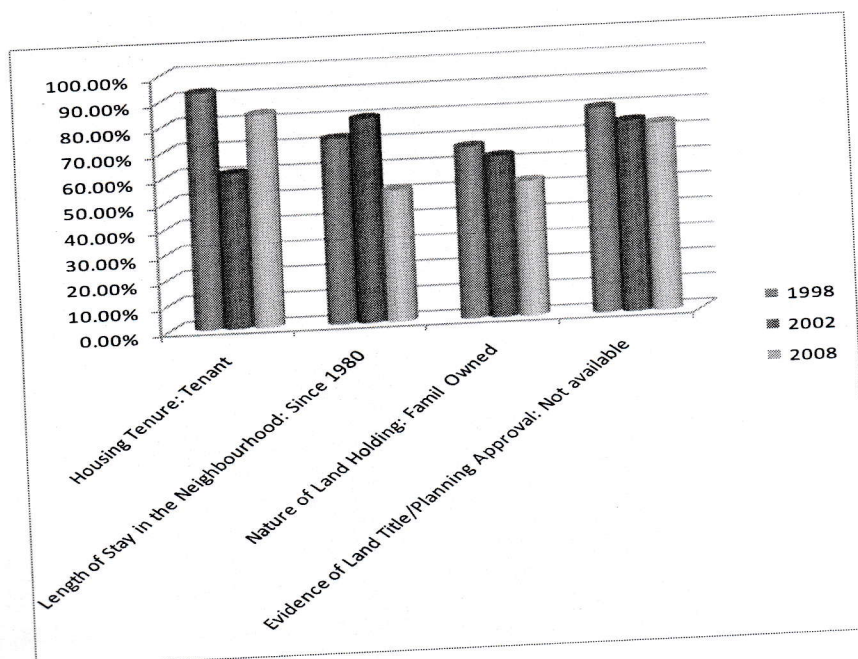


Fig. 5 Security of Tenure

## Income and Subsistence

From Table 1 below, it is obvious that the average monthly income is increasing in numerical value. However,

its purchasing power has been greatly sabotaged due to spiralling inflation across the country. Average monthly income is only slightly higher than the minimum wage in 2008. Prior to that



time, average monthly income in Ajegunle was always lower than the national minimum wage, even though the figure was usually more than the UN Standard for absolute poverty.

Furthermore, reliance on the informal sector has increased greatly in order to

meet shortfalls. Incidents of all members of a household contributing to family income are common. Apart from parents being primary income earners, children contribute by hawking and doing menial jobs after school.

**Table 1 Average Monthly Income**

Year	National Minimum Wage/ Month (N)	National Minimum Wage/ Month in US (\$)	Average monthly income (N)	Average monthly income in US (\$)	UN Minimum income Standard for Absolute Poverty (\$)	Value @ June 1 <sup>st</sup> US \$1.00 to Naira
1998	3,500	40.70	3,205	37.27	30.00	86.00
2002	7,500	65.79	7,295	63.99	30.00	114.00
2008	7,500	64.66	10,000	86.72	37.5	116.00

### Conclusions

This paper has x-rayed the poverty and environmental conditions in Ajegunle over a period of time. The major results from the study revealed that poverty level of the respondents had grown worse over the study period. Not surprisingly, the average monthly incomes were significantly lower than the national minimum wage for each of the study periods. Consequently, the housing and environmental conditions have been in a deplorable state over the same time period. It thereby discovered that the

Nigerian government is merely paying lip-service to issues of slum improvement and poverty alleviation. The contentious issue of security of tenure was quite evident and reflected in an unwillingness to improve environmental conditions by the respondents. A high rate of emigration was also noticed as more people are emigrating from Ajegunle whereby those who have been resident in the community since 1980 reduced to only 53% as at 2008. Housing tenure ship is mainly tenancy with 93% living in rented apartments in 1998. This figure fell to 60% in 2002 and rose considerably to



83% in 2008 thereby corroborating literature study of the prevalence of absentee landlords in most squatter settlements.

Environmental degradation is both a cause and consequence of poverty. It is the poorest farmer and herdsman, the asset less households and settlers of shantytowns and industrial margin areas who are the most exposed to hunger, famine and starvation.

It is obvious that poverty is on the increase in Ajegunle. Majority of the people rely on the informal sector to survive. Sanitation is also poor and in fact the squalor in the community has grown worse over the period of study. However, land titling has improved and people are more aware of their rights and responsibilities as residents. In all, the MDG Goals 1 and 7 are not being met in Ajegunle and in practical steps must be taken to address this.

Urban Development and the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals can be effected by a pragmatic and efficient campaign aimed at tackling poverty and environmental degradation. The Millennium Development Goals are interdependent. Achieving one will help achieve the others (Jolly, 2003). Therefore, addressing the most pressing challenges of the urban poor will result in the reduction of environmental degradation

and the achievement of sustainable urbanization in Ajegunle and indeed any other informal settlement.

### Recommendations

Strategies for urban regeneration of Ajegunle should be hinged on the strategies of Pro-poor planning, Local Economic Development and Community Engagement. Apart from improving the environmental quality of the area through the implementation of the Slum Upgrading Programme, the residents of Ajegunle must also be rehabilitated. Omole (2000) advocates economic revitalization as an effective approach to urban renewal. When the poor are economically empowered, they can be removed from slum areas and established in better living environments. Employment generation, a core aspect of pro poor planning can be applied to achieve this.

Slum upgrading can be done through principles of community engagement. This is the empowerment of people, organizations and communities to attain or restore viability. It does so by motivating change in the nature and stocks of both social and economic capital. Such an approach is tantamount to a sort of indigenous development, in which local resources are assembled to kick-start the progression that would bring prosperity to places where it is initially in short supply. Community



engagement is a means for evoking participation of community members to muster resources and coordinate their strategic usage in support of community-based goals. It aims not only to elicit the character of a desired future through community involvement in decision-making, but also seeks to harness the community in attracting needed resources and nurturing social capital gains. Whereby residents, in conjunction with planning authorities and local government set minimum standards of a sustainable environment and meet those standards within approved timeframe, an opportunity should be given to them to benefit from the land whether as leases or tenants of the government with legal documents with which they can access aid from formal financial institutions to better their lot.

Pro-Poor Planning is a marriage of Community Development and Urban Economic Development. Communities suffering economic insufficiency, stagnation or decline often seek remedies for these shortcomings through strategic economic development planning. Such activity aims to amass within communities and regions the resources needed to insure employment opportunity, to supply necessary public and private goods and services, and thereby to sustain or improve the quality of life. Healthy, safe and sustainable communities require means to amass wealth and resources, and the wisdom to

invest these for the common good. As a public sector enterprise, however, Pro-poor Planning addresses the totality of a given jurisdiction rather more than it does the disparate individual communities that compose it. Both though concern geographically delimited spaces. Of course the smaller the jurisdiction, the more homogenous and unified may be its internal social and residential configuration and hence the more similar and cohesive may be the populations served, and the more likely it will be that Community Development will be enhanced.

**Relating these recommendations to the MDS, the following are recommended.**

1. Improve the informal economy through the development of cottage and agro-allied industries to create job opportunities (Goal 1 Target 1 and 2)
2. Ensure appropriate preparation, implementation and monitoring of master plan. It is also important to adopt a green culture and promote the development of parks and gardens and ensure retention of adequate natural green areas within human settlements to maintain ecological balance and amenity. It is also necessary to improve the living conditions of rural communities and stimulate and sustain self-reliant development to curb rural-urban migration. (Goal 7 target 9).



3. Adopt an integrated approach to the provision of water, electricity, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management involving the community and private sector operators. It is also necessary to actively seek community participation in all activities.(Goal 2 Target 10)
4. Develop and implement guidelines and put in place appropriate

institutional arrangement for effective land resources management, while promoting easy access to land especially for low income families. Furthermore, urban renewal strategies must be put in place and a framework for infrastructure maintenance must be implemented (Goal 7 Target 11).

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