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INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF LAND BASED AGENCIES AND THE PRACTICE OF GOOD URBAN GOVERNANCE IN MINNA NIGER STATE

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Abstract

Land based agencies in Minna are mainly government owned and is established by edicts primarily to provide services at the state and local levels. Their existences are partly responsive to the requirement of the government for a tripartite level of service provision for the citizenry. This paper suggests ways that will make the land-based agencies more effective in services provision in response to good urban governance practices. It examines the stipulated functions of the selected agencies against the real impact of their services. Type A and Type B questionnaires were administered to the selected agencies and households respectively. Stratified random sampling technique was employed using the wards in the study area as strata to obtain information on households' access to the services provided by the agencies as well as their assessment of the services provided. Descriptive analysis was employed in the analysis using SPSS package to cross tabulate some variables and inferences drawn. This paper revealed functional overlaps resulting in the duplication of functions among the agencies. Also, it revealed the cause of the haphazard state of the study area. These revelations suggest improvement in the operations of the agencies for more effective service delivery to the people in the state. Finally, this study made recommendations like redefining the edicts and functions of course, enlightening the citizenry the more on the need to observe due process and the long term benefits of doing things right, etc for an effective and improved service delivery to the citizenry.

Keywords: *Urban, Governance, Services, Agency, Delivery*

Introduction

Our cities today are centre for commerce and administration. The challenges of globalisation on our cities to perform satisfactorily those basic functions are becoming more enormous and sophisticated. It therefore calls for a renewed methodology and approaches towards solving myriads of challenges facing them. These challenges include: housing, water and sanitation, transportation, land administration, solid waste management and other urban management problems which include urban violence and security.

In an attempt to face these challenges, several agencies and organizations have been established to undertake certain functions directed towards solving some defined urban problems. However, these agencies and organizations seem, to lack competences to deal sufficiently with these problems. This is partly because of the nature of their structure, their overlapping functions which result in functional conflicts and worst of it is that they fall short when they are weighed on the scale of "good urban governance" which is a panacea to providing effective services to the citizen.

Aim

To suggest specific ways that will make the land-based agencies more effective in the services they provide in response to the practice of good urban governance.

Objectives

- Highlight the concept of organizational structures and urban governance as they relate to the agencies under study.
- Examine the operations and the achievements of the agencies in relation to the people's perception of their capacities to serve them.
- Suggest ways of overcoming the problems of these agencies.

Methodology

The major methodology adopted for this work is the use of primary source of data collection through questionnaire administration where the fourteen political wards of the study area are used as clusters. Two types of questionnaire were administered in the study area. Type A questionnaire was directed to the four selected land related agencies to obtain information on their functions, services provided, their adherence to the practice of good urban governance and their problems.

Type B questionnaire was directed to the randomly selected households covering the fourteen political wards in Minna (See figure 1 below). Ten questionnaires were administered to each of the clusters giving a total of 140 questionnaires. This is to generate data on the characteristics of their landed properties as well as their assessment on these selected ministries and agencies involved in land matters and urban management.

The questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS package where frequencies of some responses are presented pictorially. Also some variables were cross-tabulated, inferences generated and the results discussed in this paper.

Fig. 1: Ward map of Minna



Sources: Ministry of Land and Housing Minna, 2010

Institutional Framework/Organizational Structures

An organization has been described as a social group deliberately created and maintained for the purpose of achieving specific objectives. It is also the structure and process by which a co-operative group in the society allocates its task among its members, identifies relationships and integrates its activities towards common objectives. It is also the systematic

arrangement of interdependent parts to form a unified whole through which authority, coordination and control may be exercised to achieve a given purpose (Aghosola, 2004).

Organization structure is the arrangement of the organizational workforce in hierarchical order for effective delivery of service of for the achievement of set goals. Every organizational structure is hinged on two considerations: hierarchy and motivation.

Hierarchy is explained by Simon (1975), as a practical ordering, sometimes like a tree of an organization from the highest to the lowest in rank.

Allan, (1977), also explained that high frequency of interaction between the individual within a hierarchical framework improves the coordination of effort required for effective output. Motivation is the initiating and directing of behaviour in an organization.

Motivation according to Steens (1975) is a necessary ingredient of any successful organization. Hence every organization's structure is set up in such a way that it can promote and encourage motivation within and between the classes within the framework of the organization structure.

The need for a good administrative framework for physical planning in Nigeria is very pertinent and long overdue, particularly now that planning profession is going through transition from almost total obscurity to apparent recognition by the government.

Administrative strategies allow for orderliness which in turn makes room for successful progress and constructive interchange of rational ideas. The primary function of an administrative framework for planning is to control the use of land, and the character and management is a multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary activity. It is not therefore surprising to find multiplicity of government organizations involved in the management of the urban areas. In urban land and urban land related management, various ministries are involved. In Niger state as in other states, we have several ministries such as Ministry Of Land, Survey And Town Planning, Urban Development Board, Federal Ministry Of Environment And Housing And Niger State Environmental Protection Agency all working towards harmonious urban physical systems. However, sometimes, the overlapping functions of the different organizations do not allow the cities to enjoy these set goals.

Good Urban Governance

Urban governance is explained variously by different people on their interest. Some see it purely as urban management, a process of operating and maintaining city's infrastructure and services. Others see it from the political perspective to include democratic process in urban administration, while others explain it in the light of financial accountability and administrative efficiency (FM W&H, 2000).

Abumere (2001) highlighted the major tenets of good urban governance to include promotion of local democracy, equal access to resources inclusiveness, decentralization, transparency and accountability and citizenship among others.

Irrespective of the angles which these definitions seem to explain urban governance, it is clear that it is all about a desired standard of practice for which common values or norms can be identified. In a broadest sense, good urban governance is the process by which 'common good' being all the things which make up a decent quality of life and good society are provided and manipulated.

According to FMW&H (2000), urban governance is more than just the exercise of authority by government. It involves working across boundaries within the public sector as well as between the public, private and community sectors.

Partnership and networking are the keys to successful urban governance. Governance is not the same as government, and it is a process rather than a product. A common mistake is to see good urban governance as a cure for all urban ills. Also it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to achieve increased equity or sustainability. It simply increases the chances of better outcomes than in the absence of governance principles. Good urban

governance principles need to be seen in context, as part of a general system for running cities and not as an isolated process. It is also a powerful tool in helping to make cities better places to live and to work.

Highlighting the objectives of good urban governance, FMW&H (2000) listed them as follows:

- Reduce poverty as well as social, cultural and ethnic exclusions within the cities.
- Involving maximum number of people and stakeholders in the political process of cities.
- Sustainability – balancing the social, economic and political needs of present and future generations.
- Co-operation- developing collaboration between spheres of government and shared competencies.
- Efficient delivery of services and local economic development- often this is achieved through the development of good public/private partnership.
- Transparency and accountability – this is necessary to minimize corruption in government activities, including predictable and fair regulatory arrangements.

In general, contemporary governance involves multiple stakeholders, interdependent Resources and actions, shared purpose and blurred boundaries between the public and private, formal and informal, state and civil societies sectors, greater need for coordination, regulation and building consensus.

Land-Based Agencies and The Practice Of Good Urban Governance

The agencies responsible for urban management are so numerous and offer one type of services or the other to the citizens under their jurisdiction. How well they have fared in their functions is a recurrent question in the minds of the people. It is most likely that people are dissatisfied with the level of services provided by these agencies; in this case, the agencies involved in land administration and provision of land based infrastructure.

Good urban governance provides a platform first for ensuring that the people are served effectively, second, that the *modus operandi* and practices of these agencies can be measured against the requirement of good urban governance earlier highlighted.

The agencies in the spirit of good urban governance must ensure social, cultural economic inclusion of the citizen by way of involving the public and the private in their decision making and their operations.

Considering the multiplicity of these agencies, a clear-cut boundaries need to be put in place to ensure subsidiary – a situation where decisions are taken at an appropriate level under a delegated authority. These will also mean avoiding conflicts between them by defining mandates; spelling out who does what?

There is a need for cooperation and collaboration between the agencies sharing competences and experiences. This will reduce friction and provide an avenue to deal with common interest and problems.

The agencies by the demands of good urban governance, must involve the people in decision making. This would ensure efficient delivery of services and local economic development.

Transparency and accountability by these agencies would reduce corruption and ensure fair deals in their operation and service provision.

Analysis of The Functions of The Agencies

Niger State Urban Development Board (NUDB edict no.3, 1988), Niger State Environmental Protection Agency (NISEPA edict 1996), Federal Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development and Ministry of Lands, Housing and Town Planning have been established in the state to perform several functions in the built environment.

The general area of operations include: land administration, housing development, environmental sanitation and pollution control, preparation of planning schemes and

development control. In the exercise of their functions, there are areas of overlap of functions among these agencies; they include

- Construction and maintenance of roads involving urban development board and ministry of works and transport
- Traffic management (urban board and ministry of works and transport)
- Maintenance of street light in state (urban development board and Niger state road maintenance agency NIGROMA)
- Layout design and land allocation (urban development board, Niger state ministry of lands, survey and town planning, federal ministry of lands, housing and urban development)
- Provision and maintenance of markets in the state (urban development board and Niger state development company)
- Refuse and sewage collection, disposal (NISEPA) and urban development board)
- Maintenance and serviced plots maintenance (housing corporation, federal ministry of lands, housing and urban development and urban development board)
- Pollution monitoring and control (NISEPA, NAFDAC and NESERA)
- Environmental degradation and flood control (NISEPA and NISEMA Niger State Environmental Management Agency)

These areas of functional overlap are potential sources of conflict between the agencies. This of course is not healthy for effective operation and services provision for the citizenry. A lot of time and resources is rather channelled towards resolving conflicts instead of service provision; consequently the citizens are the worst hit.

However, the agencies made suggestion for effective resolutions of these conflict areas as follows:

- That the stakeholders from various agencies should come together to address areas of conflict and duplication of functions
- Redefining functions and of course, the edicts
- Collaboration between the agencies

Two out of the four agencies rated their services as good while the remaining two admitted that their services are fair. This self assessment may not be totally relied upon; however, this result shows that there is still room for improvement in the services rendered to the public.

Public participation is a good requirement for good urban governance. The agencies sampled agreed that public participation breeds better output and that they involve the public in one way or the other. While some admitted that they meet with community/opinion leaders, some claimed they use electronic and print media to involve the public in their operations. It is clear however, that good urban governance and of course public participation is not just informing the public but most importantly, involving them in decision making and taking.

Some of the problems identified by these agencies that hamper their effective performance includes, finance, manpower, machinery/ equipment, legislative and bureaucratic bottlenecks including the duplication of functions.

Analysis of Household Responses (Questionnaires)

Majority of the respondents (55%) were of the ages 41 and above. This group of people are likely to be house owners and are in good position to opine on the effectiveness of the agencies under study.

82.9% representing 116 of the respondents are males while 17.1% are females. This shows gender variation in the ownership of houses. Males possess properties than females in the study area.

Out of the 140 respondents, 138 representing 98.6% are house owners. This is not unconnected with the deliberate targeting of the house owners to respond to the questionnaires. Most of the questions would be best answered by the house owners.

77.1% of the houses sampled are on local plots bought or acquired from the Mai Angwaa or individuals while 22.9% of the plots are in government layout as shown in table 1 below. This shows the extent of planlessness of the study area. Most of the plots are not serviced by facilities and are less controlled by stipulated agencies.

Table 1: Plot in government layout or local plot Is your plot in govt L/O or Local plot

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Government Layout	32	22.9	22.9	22.9
Local Plot	108	77.1	77.1	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's field work, 2011

Table 2 below shows that 54.3% of the house owners in the study area have building approval while 45.7% do not have. This also shows a level of illegal development with attendant consequences of slum development and a degraded environment.

Table 2: Building Approval Building Approval

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	76	54.3	54.3	54.3
No	64	45.7	45.7	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's field work, 2011

54 representing 38.6% of the respondents that have building approval got their approval within 1-5 months. This is a good time period and shows some level of effective service delivery.

25 (17.5%) of those that did not get their approval within 1-5 months, attributed the delay to the following in order of importance; Bureaucratic bottlenecks (9.3%), Approval cost (7.1%), Corruption (1%) and others unspecified (4.3%). This is suggesting a quest for a new direction in the administration of land matters as well as a revisit to the cost of approving land developments in the state.

On whether there was site inspection during construction, 43.6% admitted that there was, while 55.4% did not concur. This is a clear sign of laxity on the part of the agency responsible for this task. The developers may be tempted to go against the approved plan. Out of those visited, 38.6% admitted that they were visited only once and 4.3% were visited more than once. This buttresses the fact that the development control in the study area is weak and could lead to chaotic development of the city.

On the opinion of the respondents as regards to the efficiency of these agencies (Niger State Urban Development Board, Federal Ministry of Environment and Urban Development, Niger State Ministry of Lands, Survey and Town Planning, and Niger State Environmental Protection Agency), 3.6% of the respondents opined that these agencies are very effective except NISEPA who has a response rate of 15% to her favour as being most efficient. Majority of the respondents as shown in the frequency tables attached, are of the

opinion that these agencies are effective in their service delivery except Federal Ministry of Environment and Urban Development whose highest response rate is 15.7% opined that it is inefficient. This may not be unconnected to the fact, that it has limited access and direct contact with the people of the state because of its national level of operations. It does not impact directly on the people of the state.

However, those who opined that these agencies are inefficient are not negligible. 45.7%, 47%, 34.3% and 53.7% agreed respectively (according to their listing overleaf) that these agencies are inefficient. These responses are sufficient enough to suggest improvement in the operations of the agencies for more effective service delivery to the people in the state.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Since the bulk of the target population are males and aged between 41 and above whom at the time of their building development, emphasis on standards/requirements were not much, they tend to be the vulnerable group regarding non-compliance to the stipulated norms on building development. The females and the younger house owners tend to observe the requirements probably for fear of the unknown.

This study shows the extent of planlessness of the study area as 77.1% of the houses sampled are on local plots that are not serviced by facilities and are less controlled by stipulated agencies.

Despite above average result of building approval, some levels of illegal development with attendant consequences of slum development and a degraded environment prevails.

The study reveals that 52 of the approved buildings got the approval within 1-5 months. (See table 3 below). This implies low level of building approval being done within 1-5 months as the delay in approval tends to discourage intending house developers from doing the expected thing.

Table 3: Cross tabulation

Building Approval * Approved within 1 - 5 months Cross tabulation

Count		Approved within 1 - 5 months			
		Approved within 1 - 5 months			Total
			Yes	No	
Building Approval	Yes	0	52	24	76
	No	61	2	1	64
Total		61	54	25	140

Source: Author's field work, 2011

This is suggestive of charting a new direction in the administration of land matters as well as a revisit to the cost of approving land developments in the state.

The study also reveals that a lesser percentage of the buildings were inspected during construction showing the agency responsible for this task is found wanton. Of the four selected agencies, a surprising 3.6% vote of the respondents opined that these agencies are very effective except NISEPA who has a response rate of 15% to her favour as being most efficient.

Conclusion

Conclusively, issues relating to land administration and development without proper checks lead to haphazard and conflicting arrangement of physical developments. The study brings to the fore the result of lack of coordinated administration of land related matters among various agencies concerned leading to duplication of responsibilities and possible intentions of areas not catered for. These revelations suggest improvement in the operations of the agencies for more effective service delivery to the people in the state.

Recommendation

It is observed that the inefficiency of these selected agencies on one part is informed by the areas of functional overlap which are potential sources of conflict between them. This of course is not healthy for effective operation and services provision for the citizenry. A lot of time and resources is rather channelled towards resolving conflicts instead of service provision; consequently the citizens are the worst hit. On the other part, the citizenry who tends to manipulate protocols and due process directly and indirectly influences the efficiency of these selected agencies negatively.

However, this study made recommendation for effective resolutions of these conflicts areas as follows:

- That the stakeholders from various agencies should come together to address areas of conflict and duplication of functions
- Redefining functions and of course, the edicts
- Collaboration between the agencies
- The citizenry should be enlightened the more on the need to observe due process and the long term benefits of doing the right thing at the right time and at the right place.

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