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IMPACT OF URBAN MANAGEMENT POLICIES ON THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF MINNA, NIGER STATE.

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Abstract

The informal sector is increasingly being recognized as dominant agents of urban economic development. The activities of this sector have far reaching impacts on the economic functionality of the urban space, particularly in developing countries, just as various policies measures of government have impacts on this group. This study examines the impacts of the recent relocation of the main market, demolition of illegal commercial structures and workshops of artisans along major roads and traffic corridors on the activities and well-being of the informal sector operators. The study made use of primary and secondary data sourced from randomly selected members of the sector as well as opinions of some senior officials of both the Niger State Ministry of Environment and the State Urban Development Board. The study, amongst others revealed that some of the urban management measures and programmes have impacted negatively on the informal sector and have actually led to lost of means of livelihood, dwindling incomes and unemployment among members of this sector. Amongst others, the study recommends that since the urban informal sector has come to stay, prototype structures be designed and regulated for use of operators along major streets without necessarily obstructing free flow of traffic.

Keywords: *impacts, informal sector, policies, urban management*

Introduction

For over two decades now, the pattern and rate of urbanization in the developing world have been phenomenal. It is expected that by 2030 over 60% of the population of the developing countries will be living in urban centres (UN-Habitat, 2008). This unprecedented pattern of urbanization has brought about several challenges including social, economic and environmental problems, among others (Sethuraman, 1997). In addition, the governance structure of the cities in the developing world, especially Asia and Africa has been described as not only weak but non-inclusive. Urban management structure and policies in the developing countries have had little impacts on the standard of living of the people and their pattern of livelihoods. Therefore, among the resultant effects of the high rate of urbanization and urban management problems are the increasing trend of urban poverty, violence, squalor, slum as well as gross unemployment. These have all combined to increase the informalization of the urban economy. Many urban residents, particularly the poor, the poorly educated and women who

have limited resources and opportunities have had to seek some form of engagements in the urban informal sector to make a living.

Many of the urban management policies and programmes in some states of Nigeria impact negatively on the informal sector since activities in the sector are unorganized and fragmented. Many of the actors in the sector carry out their various activities in areas of the cities where they are mostly prohibited by the land-use regulations but which afford them the opportunities of attracting patronage.

This study therefore, examined the impacts of some urban management measures such as the recent relocation of Minna Central Market, prohibition of hawking and trading activities in and around the old market and along major roads, demolition of illegal trading and commercial structures and workshops of artisans along major routes as well as prohibition of parking in designated places on the informal sector in Minna. The study equally examined the awareness or

otherwise of these measures among members of the informal sector.

2. The Study Area

Minna, the capital of Niger State is a relatively medium-sized city. It is located between latitude $9^{\circ} 37' - 9^{\circ} 45'$ North of the Equator and Longitude $6^{\circ} 33' - 6^{\circ} 39'$ East of the Greenwich Meridian. The city by origin is predominantly Gwari although today it is equally home to diverse ethnic groupings from different parts of the country, especially, Hausas, Nupes, Yorubas and Igbos. Minna is a relatively warm settlement whose daily temperature ranges from 23°C during the harmattan season and a high temperature of about 38°C during the peak of the dry season usually between February and mid-May.

The city is one of those northern settlements that owe their growth to the construction of the railway in 1911. However, its status and developmental pattern changed in February, 1976 when it became the capital of Niger State. The present city is widely dispersed along the main arterial road from Chanchaga along Suleja Road in the south to Tundun Fulani in the north, a distance of about 16

Kilometers. The construction of both the Eastern and Western bye passes in the 1900s has further complemented the spatial growth of the town (See fig. 1 for the sketch map of the city and its road network). Amongst other factors, the establishment of the Federal University of Technology and the location of the headquarters of the National Examination Council (NECO) in the city have further boosted its growth and development.

The study is however, focused on specific areas of the city where informal sector activities are usually carried out. These include Pakungu, Mobil/ Ketere n'Gwari Road, Tunga, Shiroro Road, New Market/ Airport Road axis, Kuta Road/Sabon Gida/Maitumbi axis, Boss Road and Western Bye Pass. These are areas of the city where commercial activities are mostly carried out.

The city being the capital of the State and its main economic hub has a relatively developed informal sector with a sizeable proportion of its residents employed in the sector. The activities of the sector have far reaching impacts on the city's economy as there are few industries.

engaged in non-wage employment, namely the self-employed, self-employed assisted by family, day labourers, and unpaid family workers. Similarly, Sethuraman (1976) reported that ever since the term was first used in a study on Ghana and then taken up in the report of the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Development Programme (ILO/UNDP) employment mission to Kenya, it has continued to gain considerable usage in the literature on development policy in general and employment policy in particular.

Several authors have also explored the nature, scope and relative importance and contribution of the sector. Some observed that in the urban context, the informal sector refers to small enterprise operators that are selling food and goods or offering services that involve the cash economy and market transactions. Suharto (2002) contended that despite the fact that the informal sector provides a livelihood for huge number of people in the national labour force in Indonesia (as high as 80% for non-agricultural workforce and contributing about 90% in new jobs in the past decade (Charmes, 2000), it continues to have low productivity, poor working conditions, low incomes and few opportunities for advancement. Verick (undated) is also of the view that contrary to the expectation of much of the early development literature, the informal sector has not only persisted but actually grown in many developing countries, particularly in Africa where it dominates the economy both in terms of output and employment and contributing about 72% of non-agriculture employment in sub-Saharan Africa. The United Nations (UN, 1996) also reported that the informal sector in Africa is dominated by trade-related activities, with services and manufacturing accounting for only a small percentage.

The informal sector in the developing countries, particularly Africa is

characterized by a number of traits and peculiarities. Aside the high proportion of women and self-employed, there are also a number of defining features of informal sector workers such as low educational level and wages and hence poverty, and poor employment conditions. These are aside the risks and uncertainties which, due to a high probability of failure is manifest not only in the ease of entry to the sector but also in quick exits (Evers and Mehmet, 1994; Verick, undated). Sethuraman (1976) also contended that the informal sector refers to the part of the economy that does not fall under the purview of organized economic activities and that the general characteristics of the sector include reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprises, small scale of operation, labour-intensive and adapted technology, unregulated and competitive markets and low level capital requirement, amongst others.

Schneider (2002) carried out an assessment of the informal sector in about 110 countries in the year 2000 and discovered that the average size of the informal economy as a percentage of the Gross National Income (GNI) was 41% in the developing countries, 38% in transition economies and 18% in Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The author therefore, concluded that the key determinants of the size of the informal sector are the burden of taxation, government regulations and social security contributions. Similarly, Kahn (2010) maintained that many Less Developed Countries (LDCs) contain sizeable shadow economies arguing that informal economic activity constitutes perhaps about 70% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria and Egypt and perhaps as much as 30% of those of Chile, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Brazil, Paraguay and Columbia.

The role of the urban informal sector in development has been one of the many contentious issues in the public policy

area. According to Hussmanns and Mehran (1989), the informal sector has been recognized as an important employment-generating sector and an important source of production and income. Nwaka (2005) writing on the urban informal sector in Nigeria reported that the ILO estimated that the proportion of the urban work force engaged in the informal sector is highest in sub-Saharan Africa where it accounted for more than 50% of urban employment in two-thirds of the countries surveyed in 1999. The author pointed out that the main policy challenge therefore, is how to support and regulate the urban informal sector in order to promote employment, productivity and income for the poor among others.

ILO (2007), has outlined the factors responsible for increasing informality of the economy in the developing countries and these include poverty and the provision of livelihood opportunities and jobs for the working poor, the inability of the industrial sector to absorb in more productive jobs, the increasing flexibility of work in the formal economy, with work arrangements lacking security and proper social protection as well as weak governance. Gundogan and Bicerli (2009) have also found a correlation between urbanization and informal economy contending that one striking feature of urbanization in the developing countries is the presence of a large informal sector with between 30% and 70% of the urban labour force engaged in the informal sector.

Pratap (2006) contended that measuring the actual size and contribution of the informal economy has somewhat become problematic given the nature of informal activities. The author however, reported that a variety of methods have been used to construct estimates including direct approaches which rely on survey data such as standard household surveys as well as data from fiscal audits which can generate

estimates of the magnitude of undeclared income in a given nation. This assertion however, contrast with the view of Onyenechere (2011) who quoted government publications that the share of informal economic sector employment out of total gainful employment in Nigeria rose from 27.3% in 1970 to 38.2% in 1989. The author further asserted that although opinions differs on what should be the appropriate attitudes and policies towards the informal sector, what is however, clear is the fact the sector plays an important role in employment creation and poverty alleviation by providing incomes to unskilled and semi-skilled workers who otherwise would be unemployed.

4. Research Methodology

In carrying out this study, both primary and secondary data were sourced and used. The primary data include some socio-economic characteristics of members of the informal sector, the impacts of selected urban management policies and programmes on the activities and means of livelihoods of informal sector players and their coping strategies, which were all obtained through the administration of 1,200 questionnaires. Eight (8) major areas of the city where informal activities are mostly carried out were identified and 150 copies of the questionnaire were administered on randomly selected players in the informal sector in each of these areas. The areas include Kpakungu, Mobil – Ketele n'Gwari Road, Tunga, Shiroro Road, Kure Ultra-modern Market – Airport Road axis, Kuta Road – Sabon Gida axis, Boss Road and Western Bye Pass. The respondents included a cross-section of the sector including street traders and vendors, shop owners, market men and women, taxi drivers, commercial motorcyclists and some artisans such as motor-mechanics, vulcanizers, and furniture makers amongst several others. Representative samples of at least 50 of

each of these groups were obtained. Out of the 1,200 administered questionnaires, 1,168 were returned. Interviews were also held with some senior officials of both the State Ministry of Environment and the Niger State Urban Development Board, two agencies of government particularly concerned with some of the urban management policies and programmes of government, about their respective activities.

The data obtained from both the questionnaire administration and oral interviews were analyzed and presented using descriptive methods such as frequency tables and percentages.

5. Recent Urban Management Measures in the Study Area

According to officials of the Niger State Government, particularly the State Ministry of Environment and the Urban Development Board some urban management measures have been put in place within the last three years which have impacted on the informal sector and these include:

- (a) The relocation of the city's Central Market from its previous site to a newly constructed, bigger and more spacious one named Kure Ultra-Modern Market off the Western Bye-pass and adjacent the Old Airport (this was carried out between 2009 and 2010);
- (b) Prohibition of trading and all forms of commercial activities and demolition of sheds at the site of the old market (this was done between late 2009 and early 2010);
- (c) Demolition of illegal commercial structures along major roads in the city (this exercise was mostly carried out in 2009 and not less than five hundred (500) structures mostly kiosks, sheds and unapproved structural attachments or additions to main buildings were affected);
- (d) Demolition and banning artisans from locating their workshops, sheds and garages along major roads and traffic

corridors (this was also done between 2009 and 2010);

- (e) Demolition and destruction of unauthorized bill-boards and sign-posts of informal activities operators (started in 2009 and still on-going);
- (f) Prohibition of hawking and street trading in the city's central area (also done in 2009 and still in force); and
- (g) Prohibition of on-street parking along major roads in the central business area of the city.

According to the two State government agencies, the above listed measures were mostly informed by three policy measures of government. These are the need to ensure smooth traffic movement within the city, promote orderliness and neatness and enhance the city image and beauty. Apart from the above measures, to further ensure these three policy measures, the State government has also employed over three hundred (300) street sweepers and sanitation officers, while also embarking on the construction and renovation of monuments at major road intersections and round-about within the city.

6.0 Data Analysis and Presentation

6.1 Educational Qualification of Respondents

The various educational qualifications of members of the informal sector in Minna are shown in table 1. The table shows that members of this sector without formal education constitute 11.39%, those with only primary education constitute 20.29%, while those with secondary education constitute 44.09%. Key players in the sector with different post secondary qualifications constitute 24.22%. This clearly shows that participants in the sector are relatively educated and this negates the previously held view expressed in some studies that members of the sector are poorly educated. The rising level of unemployment in the country could be responsible for the increasing engagement of the relatively educated in this sector.

Table 1: Educational Background of Members of the Informal Sector

S/N	Educational Background	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	No formal Education	133	11.39
2.	Primary School	237	20.29
3.	Secondary Education	515	44.09
4.	OND/NCE	164	14.04
5.	HND/B.Sc.	88	7.53
6.	Post-Graduate	3	2.65
	Total	1168	99.99

Source: Field survey, 2010

6.2 Income Pattern of Informal Sector Operators

Table 2 shows the different income distribution of operators of the informal sector in Minna. Operators in the sector who earn less than N10, 000 (ten thousand naira) per month constitute 30.91%, those who earn between N10, 000 (ten thousand naira) and N15, 000 (fifteen thousand naira) constitute 24.74%, while operators with income of between N15, 001 and N20, 000 constitute 11.73%. Operators in the sector who earn between N20, 001 and N30, 000 per month are 9.67% while those

who earned more than N30, 000 monthly constitute 22.94%. This income pattern indicates that majority of the operators in the sector earn very low income, especially when the eighteen thousand naira minimum wage law recently passed in the country is considered. This is however, not surprising given the ease of entry and exit into the sector as well as the low capital requirement. This affirms earlier studies that one of the distinguishing characteristics of operators in the sector is their low income level.

Table 2: Monthly Income of Respondents

S/N	Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
1.	Less than N10, 000	361	30.91	30.91
2.	Between N10, 000 – N15, 000	289	24.74	55.65
3.	Between N15, 001 – N20, 000	137	11.73	67.38
4.	Between N20, 001 – N30, 000	113	9.67	77.05
5.	Between N30, 001 – N35, 000	86	7.36	84.41
6.	Between N35, 001 – N40, 000	51	4.37	88.78
7.	Between N40, 001 – N50, 000	54	4.62	93.4
8.	Above N50, 000	77	6.59	99.99
	Total	1168	99.99	

Source: Field survey, 2010

6.3 Level of Casualty of Identified Urban Management Policies

The study shows that some of these urban management measures have had direct and indirect impacts on members of the informal sector in the study area. According to the results of the survey conducted and as shown in table 3, out of 1168 total respondents, 453 or 38.78%

claimed to have been directly affected by one or more of these measures, while another 22.86% claimed to have been indirectly affected, being dependants of direct victims. This pattern shows that the urban management measures have had serious effects on informal sector operators as about 720 or 61.64% were affected one way or the other.

Table 3: Nature of Impact of Identified Urban Management Measures

Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage
Directly Affected	453	38.78	38.78
Indirectly Affected	267	22.86	61.64
Not Affected	448	38.36	100.00
Total	1168	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2010

6.4 Impacts of Identified Urban Management Measures

Some of the specific impacts of the urban management measures on members of the informal sector have been identified. Table 4 shows that 55.0% of those that claimed to have been affected had suffered dwindling income or revenue, 15.69% had their capital bases totally lost, while 19.03% claimed to have lost the physical structures for their various economic activities. A total of 10.28% claimed to have either lost or resorted to other means of livelihoods as a result of the enforcement of identified urban management measures. This pattern of

responses clearly shows that not only has these urban management measures affected the means of livelihood of operators in the informal economy, it has further impacted negatively on their living standard by the reduction in their income.

However, when members of the sector affected were asked how they have been coping or adapting to the dislocation in their means of livelihood occasioned by some of these urban management measures, not a few opined that they have had to resort to other trades or take up petty paid employment, while yet a few have remained unemployed since then.

Table 4: Impacts of Identified Urban Management Measures

S/N	Impacts	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Dwindling income	396	55.00
2.	Loss of capital base	113	15.69
3.	Loss of structures	137	19.03
4.	Loss of livelihoods	74	10.28
	Total	720	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2010

6.5 Respondents' Perception of the Relevance of the Urban Management Measures

Given the relatively high number of those that were affected by the enforcement of some of the urban management measures among informal sector players, respondents were asked whether they consider such management measures as necessary or relevant. It was however, surprising to discover that about half of the respondents considered many of such management measures as very necessary, while 27.74% were indifferent. Only a mere 20.21% of the respondents said such measures were not necessary or relevant. More surprising is the awareness of majority of the respondents that such management measures were actually designed to make the city more beautiful and ensure greater security and protection of the people from vehicular accidents.

However, in spite of the necessity or relevance of the urban management measures, almost all the respondents were of the opinion that the poor people in the society and their means of livelihoods are vulnerable to such measures. They therefore, considered the government and its agencies as insensitive to the plights and economic activities of the poor people in the society as such urban management measures adversely affects their income generating activities.

Considering the necessity of some of the urban management measures applied, an overwhelming majority of the respondents were of the view that the relocation of the Central Market was very necessary, especially against the background of the congestion of the old market and its traffic generating problem along the major road in the centre of the city.

7. Discussion

No doubt, many of the identified urban management measures applied in Minna are good and desirable, particularly when viewed against the objectives of the policy

driving them. However, their impacts on operators in the informal economy are such that their means of livelihood and indeed living standards are sometimes threatened. As shown in this study, a considerable number of operators in this sector have either had their income reduced or lost their entire capital base. The impact could be regarded as severe as many operators are low income earners who could not secure employment in the formal sector. Such impacts on the informal sector, also rubbish the much touted desirability and sustenance of poverty reduction measures.

It should also be emphasized that several studies have shown that the urban informal sector, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, provides key services to the urban economy, which ordinarily comes handy within the living neighbourhood and would otherwise have been difficult to provide in some material hour of need. These include the services of such artisans as the tailors, shoe cobblers, motor mechanic, vulcanizers, welders, furniture makers and traders in sundry items who often operate in make-shift kiosks and sheds.

The argument can be canvassed that there is a mechanic and related artisans' village where these people are suppose to be operating, as well as markets for other traders and hawkers. The fact however, is that such facilities are often inadequate, lacking basic facilities and amenities and sometimes almost inaccessible due to bad road roads. The poor street traders and hawkers cannot even operate freely in the formal markets as facilities are not provided for them, while majority cannot afford the high rent of shops and stalls both within and outside the markets.

The poor people who constitute a very high proportion of urban residents and the informal sector of the economy are in most cases adversely affected by some of these

measures. No doubt, there are usually trade-offs in implementing desirable urban management measures and reforms, the procedures need redesigning in such a way that less people and their economic activities and interests are affected. Where the envisaged dislocations and impacts are considerable, it is necessary to build-in palliative measures and viable alternatives to address them, especially where these are seen to have far reaching effects on the informal sector. This is because, given the high rate of poverty and unemployment, especially among youths and women, the sector is increasing becoming a platform that provides the much needed succor and alternative means of livelihoods. Therefore, the sector rather than been destabilized needs government attention and support to further strengthen it. It is only when such are done that various urban management policies and programmes can become effective and beneficial to the masses of the people and yield the expected result.

6. Recommendations and conclusion

To address the identified negative impacts of selected urban management measures on the informal sector in the study area, this study offers the following recommendations. The study recommends that the Niger State government in particular and all state governments in general should as part of the over-all poverty alleviation strategy ensure that programmes and policies that would further impoverish the people are avoided. Where some of these are desirable for overall public good, measures should be put in place to lessen the envisaged effects, particularly on the poor and vulnerable groups in the society.

That given the increasing role and relevance of the informal economy to the overall urban economic system in the country, specific measures should be fashioned and implemented to strengthen

the sector especially in the face of daunting unemployment condition in the country. For instance, in the location and building of markets and other commercial outlets, specific areas should be designated for hawkers and other traders who otherwise may not be able to afford the usual exorbitant rates and rents of acquiring stalls and shops.

The artisans and technicians who are members of the informal sector provide specific and specialized services to the urban economy. Therefore, the urban land use and zoning system and regulations needs to acknowledge their desirability and contributions by making ample spaces available in areas where they could be easily accessed by the people desiring their services without creating additional operational costs for them. The idea of locating mechanic villages, which are most times inadequate, in some obscure and poorly accessible parts of the city, should be revisited. Since the urban system is already getting used to their presence along major traffic corridors, some sort of structures could be designed and regulated for their use in major activity areas without necessarily obstructing traffic flow and causing other environmental problems.

In addition, where proposed urban development measures would be seen to be having some adverse effects on specific members of the public, the need for general education and awareness campaigns far ahead of their implementations becomes inevitable. The Niger State government and its agencies, as part of overall good governance should pursue an all-inclusive government by effectively carrying the public along in policy formulation and implementation.

Finally, it is recommended that where measures of urban development would affect specific groups in the society such as the informal sector, government should undertake an inventory of those to be affected and put specific measures in place

to lessen the envisaged impacts. This is in addition to devising alternative means of

accommodating those that might be affected.

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