

House Demolition, Replacement and Occupancy: The SPDC Ogboloma Community Experience

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Abstract

The paper examined SPDC's house demolition, replacement and owner occupancy with a view to unveiling if the houses constructed meet the needs and expectations of the people. The study utilized a 14 item questionnaire and adopted the descriptive research design. The data was analyzed using cross tabulation to determine the existence or not of a relationship between variables. Five research questions were formulated to find out the occupants, type of houses demolished, type of houses they preferred as well as their feelings. The findings are that majority of the houses were owner/occupier; the people are generally satisfied with the replacement, but would have preferred 6-rooms single building to avail them the opportunity of renting part and occupying the other rooms. The people also require garri/cassava/ogbono drying space, which the present houses lack. The company should properly consult the people on the type houses and reparation in future as well as making provision for alternative accommodation for the displaced, during construction.

Keywords: House Demolition, Replacement, Occupancy, SPDC, Ogboloma Community, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Housing is one of the basic needs of mankind notwithstanding the differences among societies. Housing serves various needs of man such as shelter, economic, social and psychological. In some cultures an adult without a house is considered not complete. Again in certain societies owning a house is a necessary requirement for certain social offices, such as chieftaincy, membership of certain cults and associations, marriage and even a befitting burial during death. Therefore, every adult endeavours to secure at least one.

Housing is therefore a desirable privilege and right to every adult, yet many people do not own one. Members of any society, both developed and developing strives to acquire one, but since resources of society are not equitably distributed, many are not privileged to own one. It is for the above reasons that Mondel (1994) see adequate housing as encompassing more than the four walls of a room and a roof over one's head and essential for healthy living, fulfilling deep-seated psychological need for privacy and personal space, physical need for security and

protection from inclement weather and social need for basic gathering points where relationships are forged, nurtured and maintained.

The challenges of adequate housing in terms of quality and quantity are almost universal. This is because the poor and needy often times in most societies have less access to this important resource while the rich and powerful continue to have far greater access or opportunity for its ownership and use.

In spite of the global recognition of housing to human kind, for welfare and survival, as a source of healthy living, a place of rest and relaxation, and shelter to prevent one from vagaries of weather conditions, enhance both aesthetic beauty and environmental health, a social, economic and cultural resource, yet during periods of hostilities it is often the first material object for attacks and destruction by opponents. Again, due to the intensive oil related operations in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, oil companies lay series of pipes of various dimensions across the length and breadth of the area. Many pipelines are laid through communities or other human habitats. Further, due to the prime position the oil business occupies in Nigeria's economy, many communities, such as Finima, Soku, Twon, etc. to mention a few were mandatorily relocated wholly or partially to give way to pipelines, refineries, oil tanks farms and other oil related constructions.

Statement of the Problem

Ogboloma community in Yenagoa Local Government Area (LGA) of Bayelsa State, Nigeria is one such settlement that has been affected by the oil company operations. Ogboloma is host to the oil rich Etelebou oil field in Bayelsa State. In order to give way for the laying of gas and crude oil pipelines to link Etelebou and Ubie oilfields and ultimately to the Nigeria Liquefied Gas (NLG) manifold, a section of Ogboloma community affected by the pipeline right of way was asked to vacate. A number of houses of various categories were demolished. A total of 15 2-bedroom apartments were constructed and handed over to the affected landlords. One is compelled to find out if the affected persons were provided with a house, do the new houses meet the needs of the owners, who are the occupants of these buildings; are they landlords or tenants, and how do they feel homeless during the period of demolition and reconstruction. The paper hopes to find answers to these questions.

Objectives of the Study

The overriding objective of this paper is to evaluate the whole exercise of house demolition and replacement by Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) at Ogboloma in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are (i) to know if the occupants are owner/occupiers or tenants, (ii) to know if the houses constructed meet the needs of the people, (iii) to find out their feelings of homeless during the period of demolition and reconstruction, and (iv) to know what type of houses and facilities would have been preferred by the people.

Research Questions

- Who are the occupants of the houses provided by SPDC as replacement?
- Does the new house meet your needs?
- What type of house(s) owned by you was demolished?

- What type of houses and facilities would you have preferred?
- How did you feel being homeless during the period of construction?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Misra (1996) argues that housing was universally recognized from the dawn of history. In modern times however humans became conscious of better facilities which make human life easy and comfortable. Shelter is a basic human need and forms an intrinsic part of human settlement and closely linked with socio-economic development. Essentially a dwelling place, it fulfils many social needs of the household; it creates employment, guarantees voluntary savings and creates a conducive condition needed for achieving crucial goals. Housing is not only a basic human need, it constitutes a vital component of man's welfare, life sustenance and survival. This is because in the hierarchy of man's needs, housing has been ranked second only to food (Onibokun, 1982). The importance of housing is universally acknowledged as one of the most basic needs with a profound impact on the life style, health, happiness as well as productivity of the individual.

Housing should be a home, a resting place with fundamental purpose of a secured, rewarding, happy or at least a livable space. In the context of socio-cultural functionality, housing is viewed as an area for recreation and identification. According to Abraham (1964), housing is not only a shelter but also part of the fabric of the neighbourhood life and of the whole social milieu. It touches many facets of economic activity and socio-cultural contacts, good image, a sense of belonging and an indicator of social status.

Housing is considered a consumable item because when households dwell in a house, they interact even with the surrounding therefore consumption takes place. When they consume housing, they purchase or rent more than the dwelling units and its characteristics; they are also concerned with such diverse factors as health, security, privacy, neighbourhood and social relations, status, community facilities and services, access to job and control over the environment (Lawrence, 1995).

A well housed person is healthier than a person who is in bad housing with mud or is homeless. People in poor housing or those homeless suffer cognitive impairments, asthma, mental health disorders, diabetes and other chronic diseases as a result of living in substandard housing that might be riddled with mice, lead paint, mud or chronic dampness issues. Majority of Nigeria's policies and programmes are in most cases abandoned or poorly implemented without coordination. The housing delivery strategy in the country is therefore an epitome of life service politics.

Existing studies on housing situation in Nigeria, especially in urban areas however reveal acute housing problems in both qualitative and quantitative terms (Abiodu, 1983, Onibokun, 1985). Awotona and Ogunshakin (1994) noted that a large population in Nigeria lives in substandard and poor housing. The reality of this scenario is many urban families accommodate extended family members, living with many inconveniences, while spatial congestion and overload of infrastructures cause problems in living comfort.

The rapid urbanization and poor economic growth have compounded the problems of inadequate housing in Nigeria. The housing inadequacies particularly for the low income group have been complicated by high rate of population growth, inflated real estate services and infrastructure, and a lack of implementation of planning policies. The reality of this situation is that existing housing stocks are far insufficient to cater for the increased population. Beside the

shortfall in housing supply in relation to demand, the majority of dwellings in the hinterland – mostly owned by the indigenes, remain unplanned (Abiodun, 1985).

Since housing remains a social responsibility of every government, and to a large extent the health of a country and the well being of the people depends on the quality, conditions and level of success of the housing sector, it is imperative that appropriate policy framework be put in place to address urban housing problems necessitated by rapid urbanization in Nigeria (Gilbertson et al., 2008).

The National Rolling Plan from 1990-1992 projected the housing deficit in Nigeria to be between 4.8 million to 5.9 million by 2,000. The 1991 Housing Policy estimated that 700,000 housing units needed to be built each year if the housing deficit ameliorated. The document indicated that no fewer than 60 percent of new housing units will be built in the urban centres (Oguozobe, 2001).

There is no doubt that the problem of housing is a universal one, as virtually all nations are faced with the problem of providing adequate accommodation for their citizens. This explains the concern expressed in most of the less developed countries. Nigeria is said to have one of the highest urban growth rates in the world, where the urban poor live in over-crowded housing, often in self-provided temporary structures in slums and squatter settlements where they exert unprecedented pressure on deteriorating urban infrastructure and social services (Diogu, 2002; Olotuah & Bobadoye, 2009). Describing the appalling housing situation in Nigeria, Olotuah and Bibadoye (2009) noted further that the incidence of population increase in urban centres has created severe housing problems resulting in overcrowding, inadequate dwellings, and a situation in which 60% of Nigerians can be said to be houseless persons.

Public sector housing provision started during the colonial era commonly referred to as the ‘white man’s quarters’, ‘European Quarters’ or reservations. The policies were modest attempt to provide quarters for the expatriate staff and some selected indigenous staff in specialized occupations such as the police, military, prisons, railways, ports authority, etc. The policy marked the provision of Government Residential Areas (GRAs), which was intended to provide habitable housing and environment for expatriate staff similar to housing provisions in their home countries (Onibokun, 1975; Oni, 1989; Omenge & Udegbe, 2000).

Housing no doubt is an essential resource for man’s healthy living. But where one is compelled to lose his house because government or a private concern need access its property or right of way, it becomes disturbing. Ogboloma community members willing vacated their houses to enable SPDC lay pipes to link its manifold to the oil wells. In return the affected landlords were provided with a proto-type 2-bedroom apartment each as compensation.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey method aimed at observing and determining the needs, effects and challenges of house demolition, replacement and occupation. A total of 45 respondents answered the questions. In each household: an adult male and female, and a youth or other dependant members were the respondents. The instrument employed for the data collection was a 14 item questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by two experts in the design of instruments for data collected. Crombach alpha was employed to test the reliability of the instrument used and a cumulative reliability estimate of .769 was obtained. Cross tabulation statistical method was utilized to analyse data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The age composition of respondents show 28.89% are within the age bracket of 12-19 years; 24.44% are within 20-35 years, 31.11% are aged 36-45 years and 15.56% are aged 46 and above years. A total of 26 (57.78%) are males, while 19 (42.22%) are females. Of these 25 (55.56%) indicated married, 31.11% remaining single, 8.89% are either divorced or separated, while 2.44% are widowed. In the area of educational attainment, 13.33% had no formal educational training; 28.89% are holders of the First School Leaving Certificate; 44.45% are holders of WASCE or equivalent, while 13.33% indicated possessing diploma/degree. Finally, 13 (28.89%) are farmers, 33.33% are civil servants, 22.22% are students of secondary and tertiary institutions.

Research Question 1: Who are the occupants of the new buildings provided by SPDC?

Table 1 shows a very high house occupation by landlord/landlady or others members of their household with as much as 80%. On the other hand, 15.56% of those occupying are tenants which signifies that some house owners rented out their houses to tenants for various reasons ranging from the houses not meeting their needs, need to make quick money by renting to tenants, and others giving them to relatives to occupy for a period of time.

Table 1: House Occupancy

Occupant	Freq.	%
Landlord/Landlady	36	80.00
Tenant	7	15.56
Squatter	2	4.44
Total	45	100

Research Question 2: Does the new house meet your needs?

Data in table 2 shows that the new houses provided by SPDC in replacement for the demolished ones meet the needs of only 22.22%, while 31.11% were simply not satisfied. A total of 28.89% see the replacement exercise as beyond their expectations considering SPDC's history of handling such issues. On the other hand, 17.78% feel the replacement fell below expectation. In sum, the 'satisfied' and 'beyond expectation' respondents are 23, representing 51.11%, while the 'not satisfied' and 'below expectation' categories totaled 22, representing 48.89%.

Table 2: New Houses and Needs Satisfaction

Psychological State	Freq.	%
Yes	10	22.22
No	14	31.11
Beyond Expectation	13	28.89
Below Expectation	08	17.75
Total	45	100

Research Question 3: What type of house(s) owned by you that was demolished?

Table 3 shows the house ownership of Ogboloma residents before the demolition, and subsequent replacement of their houses each with a 2-bedroom apartment. Majority of the affected people owned block buildings with corrugated iron sheets. This was followed by people whose houses had between 1–4 rooms. A total of 7 respondents (15.56%) each indicated that they had houses with mud paste and corrugated iron sheet, and 5 respondents owning block buildings with 5-10 rooms. This further shows that the demolished houses were mainly those erected with corrugated iron sheet upon blocks. It also shows the high preference of houses with single roods of between 1-15 apartments.

Table 3: House Ownership by Respondents

Variables	Freq.	%
Mud paste with thatches	3	6.67
Mud paste with corrugated iron sheet	7	15.56
Block building with corrugated iron sheet	14	31.11
Thatches with thatches	0	0.00
Block buildings with 1-4 Rooms house	9	2.00
Blocks buildings with 5-10 rooms	7	15.56
2-bedroom block building	5	11.11

Research Question 4: What type of houses and facilities would you have preferred?

Respondents were asked to indicate what type of house/facilities they would have preferred to the present 2-bedroom apartment. Table above shows that 15.56% preferred 3-bedroom apartment with a parking lot; 22.22% preferred 4-bedroom apartment with fish/cassava/ogbono drying unit, 26.67% preferred twin 2-bedroom apartments each with fish/cassava/ogbono handling space; finally 35.56% preferred a building of 6 single rooms with fish/cassava/ogbono drying space. This not only show the preference respondents have for blocks of single rooms, which could not only accommodate subsets of their families, but be readily rented to different tenants to make some money (see table 4).

Table 4: Preferred House type/facilities

Variables	Freq.	%
3-Bedroom with parking lot	7	15.56
4-bedroom apartment with fish/cassava/ogbono drying unit	10	22.22
Twin 2-bedroom apartment with fish/cassava/ogbono drying space	12	26.67
6 Rooms single building with fish/cassava/ogbono drying space	16	35.56
Total	45	100

Research Question 5: How did you feel being homeless during the period of demolition and reconstruction?

Table 5 sought to know the landlord and family members psychological state of being homeless during the period of demolition and reconstruction. The responses indicated that 19.44% were sad because they squatted with relatives during the period; 47.23% sad it was very displeasing as they expected the provision of alternative accommodation for them during the over six months period of construction and handing over of keys to house owners; 33.33% said they were happy even though they were not provided with alternative houses during the period because the new 2-bedroom apartments being provided were far better than their previous ones.

Table 5: Psychological State of houses owners during construction and handing over

Psychological State	Freq.	%
Sad	07	19.44
Displeasing	17	47.23
Happy	12	33.33
Total	36	100

CONCLUSION

The study examined the issue of SPDC’s demolition and reconstruction of houses with a view to have right of way for the purpose of laying oil and gas pipelines to link Ubie and Etelebou oil fields to its manifold and LNG facilities. A total of 15 2-bedroom houses were reconstructed and handed over to house owners as compensation. The study reveals majority of the houses are occupied by house owners. Only a few were given out as rented quarters to tenants and relatives for a brief period. As much as 23 (51.11%) were either satisfied and/or see the replacement of houses as more than expected, and those not satisfied or seeing the provision as below expectation were 22 (48.89%). Many of the houses destroyed by SPDC were constructed with blocks and corrugated roofing sheets.

It was revealed that given the opportunity, the people would have preferred a 6-room single building with fish/cassava/ogbono drying unit or space. This was followed by a twin 2-bedroom apartment with fish/cassava/ogbono drying space (22.22%). The preference for the single rooms building would enable the landlord to rent out some rooms to tenants and occupy others. Also, polygynous families could accommodate all wives and children under one roof. SPDC should have been provided with alternative accommodation to the landlords during the period of reconstruction to ameliorate the psychological stress they went through. In future affected landlords should be properly consulted on the type of house of form of reparation.

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