Responding to Urban Violence Via Human Rights Approach to Urbanization

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ABSTRACT: The concept of urbanization in global development is a new approach which is currently sweeping through developing countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Mali) like a wild fire. However, with the huge efforts and speed at which urbanization is being pursued, many governments of these countries appear overwhelmed and unable to cope with its challenges as they are not able to provide enough basic infrastructures and services for the growth urban population. Nigeria is one of the countries struggling to cope with the challenges of urbanization especially in the areas of security of lives and property. The desire to write this article was motivated by the current inadequacy in urban policy implementation in relation to security in Nigeria. Relevant literature and archival retrieval of historical documents were reviewed. This article discussed important features of urbanization challenges in Nigeria like: rapid population growth and changing demographic structure; poverty and unemployment; difficulties in accessing housing delivery inputs; and lack of adequate capacity on the part of government. Finally, it examined the implications of these challenges in relation to the issue of insecurity in urban areas and maintained that urban policies in developing cities if properly implemented and managed should bring about a reduction of the lingering and persistent insecurity challenges and promote economic and social development.

KEYWORDS: urbanization, violence, government policies, human rights, development

Introduction: The Concept of Urbanization

According to Friedman (2018) urbanization is when large population of a country decides to move into smaller cities and towns in search of social amenities and industrialization for improved living conditions. This happens when people move from rural farmland to cities and towns and most developing countries experience it especially once they start becoming industrialized as cities and towns become hubs of trade and culture, and more people start moving out of the countryside to gain access to some of these social and financial benefits. Consequently, urbanization is a natural part of developing societies.

It is important to know that as long as a country is moving towards industrialization, urbanization is inevitable as people want to move away from agriculture and begin to seek better access to employment and resources in the cities. Even though this movement toward the cities will affect agricultural growth and development, there are other benefits that propel the people and they serve as the factors contributing to urbanization, and fortunately, many of them are positive. For example, search for best opportunities to provide improved living conditions for themselves and their families, and fortunately, urban environments are often the answer as there are increased employment opportunities. There are more jobs in urban areas and these lure people out of rural areas with the promise of a better life and a higher-paying salary as there are more jobs in virtually every industry in the cities and towns than in the rural areas.

Other opportunities that serve as incentives for the people to move away from rural communities to flock to cities and towns include access to better schools, healthcare facilities, better living standards, and increased trading transactions. There is a long list of social benefits associated with moving to urban environments as they can start families and offer their family members access to better living conditions.

Another attraction to the city is modernization. City people are more modern than rural dwellers, and they are attracted to the fashion, food, and ideas flowing in the city. People often move to cities for a fresh start as they learn more about culture and experience the hustle and

bustle of daily city life, thereby making it very attractive, even though their experiences might eventually be disappointing.

One disadvantage of many people moving from rural areas to urban areas is over crowdedness of the cities. With the promise of greater opportunities, more rural residents move there and too many people pack themselves into small spaces, and gradually, they begin to face unemployment and crime rate begins to rise. Accommodation becomes an issue when cities and towns experience overcrowding leading to rent increase which is fantastic for landlords but devastating for tenants. Another effect of overcrowding of urban areas is unemployment as more people are chasing the few available jobs as they need to earn income to keep up with the rising cost-of-living. Gradually, as more people become unemployed or underemployed, the quality of job is no longer considered as people just need jobs to meet up with the cost of living. With rents getting so expensive, people will begin to move to slums and ghettos begin to develop. Also, as the demand for education and social services increase, it puts more strain on them making poverty to increase. The increase in poverty makes feeding difficult thereby forcing people to go into crime to make ends meet and drug use is inevitable. Although, it is important to note that crime is not solely the problem of urban environments, but it's certainly more common there.

Overview of Urban Insecurity Challenges

Urban violence and insecurities have a long history which can be traced to the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain (McMichael 2000; Engelke 2012) as they argue that the economic competition to survive in the cities is closely associated with crime and violence purported by the unemployed and Szreter (1997) further argue that with the increased crime and violence, the attention of urban planners must be required (Nyabvedzi and Chirisa 2012; Brennan 1999). According to UN-Habitat (2007) between 1980 and 2000, crimes increased from 2300 to 3000 crimes for every 100 000 people in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean recorded an increase in crime rates whereas North America and Western Europe recorded a decrease in crime rates. Also, Friel et al. (2011) reported that there is an increase of crime by 60% among urban dwellers in developing and transitional countries. But more frighten is the increase in proliferation of terrorism in some cities in the world, notably in cities in Africa due to the operation of terrorist groups such as al-Shabaab and Boko Haram (Cole and McQuinn 2015; Pate et al. 2015; Ibrahim 2010).

The Arab Spring of North Africa has resulted into insecurity in the region causing violent conflict and political disorder characterized by criminal networks that include drug trafficking and human smuggling/slavery (Gartenstein-Ross et al. 2015). Events on 11 September 2001 in USA are still fresh on our minds. Europe is not left out as on 13 November 2015 gunmen and suicide bombers almost simultaneously hit concert hall, a major stadium, restaurants and bars in Paris, France resulting in the death of 130 people while many others were left wounded (BBC News 2015). Brussels transport hub too was attacked Brussels on 22 March 2016 and Brussels Zaventem airport was bombed resulting in the death of 32 people and over 100 more wounded (John et al. 2016).

The implications of these examples are that crime and violence affect the functionality of urban areas more severely therefore, the planning, designing and management of urban areas need to consider urban safety and the consequences of insecurity. Scholars (The World Bank 2011; Jutternsonke et al. 2009) have argued that in today's world, lack of security in most urban areas is identified as a key social problem, as it arrests city development and productivity of the local economy of urban areas. Urban insecurity causes intense urban chaos, which culminates to instability and civil unrest in urban areas.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that guided this study is the Frustration–Aggression Theory, was proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller Leonard Doob, Orval Mower and Robert Sears in 1939, and further developed

by Neal Miller in 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1969. The theory says that aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating, a person's efforts to attain a goal (Frustration-Aggression Theory: Definition & Principle, 2017).

When the theory was first formulated, it stated that frustration always precedes aggression, and aggression is the sure consequence of frustration, however, two years later, however, Miller and Sears re-formulated it to suggest that while frustration creates a need to respond, some form of aggression is one possible outcome. Therefore, the re-formulated format argued that while frustration prompts a behavior that may or may not be aggressive, any aggressive behavior is the result of frustration, making frustration not enough, but a necessary condition for aggression. This theory explains the causes of urban violence as the rural dwellers who left their communities with high hope and plans for a decent city life was dashed and this disappointment made them angry, frustrated and aggressive leading them into illegal activities in order to survive therefore making the cities unsafe or insecure.

The Concept of Urban Development Based on Human Rights Perspectives

> Urbanization can only be a force for positive transformation if it respects and promotes human rights (UN Human Rights)

> Urban governance on the basis of human rights can help to set up problem solving mechanisms to guarantee social peace, economic growth and political participation. (Mihr 2010, 1)

> People whose basic human rights are denied or abridged will at some stage stand up, protest and even act violently against whatever political system denies their rights. Because urbanization and the growth of megacities is more common in less democratic countries, human rights are more likely to be abused or violated than in more democratic countries. Thus, if governments make concessions and urban dwellers claim their rights, the respect, promotion and claim of these human rights could be seen a tool for conflict resolution. (Mihr 2010, 9)

From the above statements, it is very obvious that urbanization programs that do not factor in the principles of human rights protection and promotion will definitely lead to violence. These quotations have shown that there is a close relationship between human rights protection and peace and human violation and conflict. In developing sustainable urbanization that promotes peace, the experts must encourage free, active and meaningful participation of all stakeholders, especially the vulnerable group because urbanization done *with* and *for* all users with a priority to protect and improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable will be most effective. When people are carried along in any form of development, their priorities are factored in and they have a sense of ownership and therefore, can be sustainable.

The executors of the urbanization plan must be held accountable in the execution of their assignments and make sure that the rights of the people are respected and promoted because these rights are inherent, meaning that it is permanent or inseparable part of human. Another characteristic of human rights is dignity, which means that humans must feel respected and worthy as human rights are designed to support and sustain the dignity of individuals, including self-confidence and finally inalienable, meaning that they cannot be removed, surrendered, or transferred, bought, sold, or negotiated even if considered a burden, inalienable rights are always in existence. When urbanization is conceived with these principles in mind, then they will respect the inhabitants both at the planning and implement stages of that development. Right-based development can cause violence to reduce if not eliminated as they will include free and fair dispute and complaint mechanisms.

The principle of peaceful co-existence of all urban dwellers must guide urbanization. This principle is important because it helps in urban development activities of the stakeholders to embrace strategies for the political, social and economic empowerment. For the city dwellers to be socio-economically and politically empowered, their fundamental rights and freedoms must be upheld. Promoting freedom of speech and assembly, the right to information, consultation and participation in decision-making processes, and the right to vote, among others is a must if peaceful co-existence is to be achieved. Urban violence is caused by the absence of socio-economic opportunities which can be addressed at the planning level and be followed through to implementation.

Resolving Urban Violence based on Rights Approach to Development

In order to resolve urban violence, it is not just policing the streets and incarcerating people for offences alleged to have been committed which is what the criminal justice system is doing. No, efforts should be made to address the root causes of the problem by looking at the problem of rights violations and discrimination meted against the people. These violations should be addressed not only on the basis of gender and geography, but also on the basis of race, culture, religion, age, disability and social and economic status, because too often the voices of the poor, people living in slums and informal settlements, women, children, minorities, migrants, refugees, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, older persons and others, are not heard in urban development processes, resulting in development that further marginalizes and discriminates against those most in need.

Building better cities that can help reduce over crowdedness can be a violence reduction strategy. When a large number of people live in a small space, automatically, these cities become unhealthy for their residents' due pollution of all sorts, then these cities become unsafe. These unhealthy cities become a breeding ground for violence and insecurity. In an effort to reduce the effects of crowdedness in the urban areas, is to build cities with the environment in mind and can work for everyone.

Urbanization experts should consider the use renewable energy, water recycling, and green travel in planning the cities to the benefit of all. Also, local administrators should consider the future needs of the cities, especially population growth and demographic changes so that the city dwellers can thrive in the nearest future. Apart from the physical planning of the cities to prevent overpopulation or over crowdedness because it exacerbates the already existing problems, fighting overpopulation starts with education, so providing more educational resources is one of the best ways to combat excessive urbanization. Family planning education resources are very important as they help to check overpopulation problem, and the other forms of insecurity that come from unwanted pregnancy and drug abuse leading to violent life style.

Opportunities for better life (access to better schools and health care) are the reasons people move to cities and towns as with upward mobility they're no longer stuck in the social class in which they were born. The demand and supply of job opportunities and labor must match so that companies can hire more people to work for them. The implication of these economic activities is that the surrounding area benefits as property value rises, and people can move up the social ladder. Creating more jobs and opportunities as the population rises helps in keeping city residents comfortable and this is essential for sustainable and safer urban environments. It is important to know that there is a relationship between restlessness/discomfort and crime development, so, creating socio-economic opportunities is a violence reduction strategy.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Right-Based Development

Morten Broberg & Hans-Otto Sano (2018) recorded that the view that dominates the argument of the advocates of human rights-based approach to urbanization is the approach that ensures that the weakest citizens have access to essential services such as health care, water, sanitation and education. However, the group they are advocating for is the migrants who are often placed in very weak

positions with regard to such services because they know that even though it is the States' responsibility to eliminate discrimination against migrants, most times, they are not careful to do so. Another reason these advocates push for right-based urbanization is that it is suitable for strengthening the concept of citizenship. According to them, the marginalised or vulnerable groups in different parts of the world are entitled to their rights and therefore, the advocates are demanding the strengthening of the channels by which they can assert these rights.

The third reason is that it provides a natural focus on the use of legal mechanisms in development assistance and development policy in general which ensures that individuals or groups are given legal means to help improve their conditions as they are now aware that they have rights that can be enforced. Also studies have shown that developing countries that are in transition from dictatorships to democracies are likely to comply with international obligations not to commit human rights violations because they know someone is watching and finally more widespread campaigns for a human rights-based approach can contribute to promoting legislation that benefits the poor or groups that are discriminated against as bilateral donors, NGOs can easily get into political discussions in those states.

Just like everything that has an advantage has a disadvantage, human right based development of urbanization has limitations. This approach to development must be carefully studied to know if it is relevant to the situation or even the program and therefore, must be strategic. For example, one of the challenges of human right based development is that it can make development debates and actions more political causing more harm than good.

Action, it can be counter-productive. For example, the battle could lead to inequalities and conflicts between different groups in society, and possibly even leading to the favoring of some groups in preference to others; also, it can promote non-sustainable use of natural resources, where one group obtains control over natural resources at the expense of one or more other groups; and finally, it can promote inappropriate governance, because the grant of rights can also be used to secure (increased) power to certain groups at the expense of other (less politically strong) groups.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to know that human rights-based urbanization is beneficial in advancing and developing a sustainable and socially inclusive urbanization. Right-based approach promotes equality, combats discrimination in all its forms and empowers stakeholders and communities. Therefore, in managing urban violence, it is compulsory for urban developers to factor in the principles human rights that are universal and relevant to all human beings no matter where one is living. Human rights approach to urbanization makes it possible for developers to build cities that work for people creating places of equal opportunity for all, where people can live in security, peace and dignity without violence.

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