

# RE-PLANNING THE MASTER PLAN: THE CORRUPTION AND POLITICS OF LAND ALLOCATION, HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS AMONG THE URBAN POOR IN ABUJA NIGERIA

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## **ABSTRACT**

Rapid urbanization has continued to occur in many post independent capital cities in Africa with serious competition for land and housing among urban dwellers thereby posing challenge to governments. Consequently, this paper examines how corruption and politics have constituted hindrances to efficient land administration and housing provision and promoting homelessness among the urban poor in Abuja as against the provisions of the Abuja Master Plan (AMP). The locale of this study is the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The study adopted a survey method of data elicitation with questionnaire and interview schedule as instruments. A sample size of 271 was generated via Raosoft sample size calculator to represent the city's estimated population i.e. 3,095,118. The generated data were presented and analyzed using Microsoft Word graphs and simple statistical percentage. The findings reveal that the government is yet to meet up with the development phases of the AMP as demands for access to land and housing by the ever increasing population of the city, particularly the downtrodden, are yet to be met. This was due largely to corruption and politicization of land administration as well as controversial provisions of the Land Use Act (LAU) and AMP. Consequently, this paper recommends among other things that the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) should collaborate with ICPC and EFCC in establishing Anti-Corruption Units at various strategic directorates of the FCTA and her agencies to curb sharp practices in land administration. Also, FCTA should synergize with the Federal Ministry of Power Works and Housing (FMPWH), Federal Housing Authority (FHA), Federal Mortgage Bank (FMB), and UN-Habitat to declare state of emergency on housing and construct affordable, accessible and quality mass housing across the FCT so as to address the lack of access to land and homelessness among the urban poor in Abuja.

## **Key Words:**

*Abuja Master Plan, Urban Poor, Land and Housing Provision, Politics, Corruption and Homelessness.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Land administration and housing provision are the twin challenges that are prevalent in virtually all new capital cities of the world. The declaration of Abuja, like other capital cities, attracted a huge rural-urban migration as well as steady relocation of other cities dwellers to the FCT since 1976. Thus, the projected population of the city in the AMP got over-blotted as the demands for access to land and housing provision became serious tasks for the FCTA to proffer adequate solutions. It is in the mist of this that corruption and politics have been fingered as parts of the main factors responsible for lack of access to land and affordable housing that is engendering homelessness among the urban poor in Abuja. More importantly, the marginalisation of this category of people, who account for about 70% of the population in the nation's capital, is a veritable enabler for urban violence and threat to Nigeria's national security. Therefore, the rapid urbanisation of Abuja, the corruption and politicisation that have characterised the land administration and housing schemes within the AMP as well as homelessness among the urban poor have compelled a multidisciplinary academic investigation which this paper offers to proffer policy options towards solutions.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The declaration of Abuja as Nigeria's capital city known as Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in 1976 and subsequent movement of the Presidency and Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) from Lagos to Abuja in 1991 marked the metamorphosis of a once rural community to an urban center. Consequently, Nigerians from all walks of life commenced migration into what they hoped to be their 'new world'. Unfortunately, the Master Plan of the city was not adequately designed to accommodate a very significant number of this category of people. Thus, these group of citizens continued to be homeless as access to land and housing became more stringent. Currently, Nigeria is having 20million housing deficit out of which the FCT accounts for about 10% given the continuous population explosion and rapid urbanisation of the city. Thus, the Federal Government and FCTA had, and are responding to this challenge by initiating several land allocation and housing schemes in the city. However, the endemic corruption and politicisation involved in these schemes explain the difficulties faced by urban poor in accessing land with adverse implications on housing problems in the FCT. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) recently came up a comprehensive report on the corruption cases that have characterised the FCT land sector which demand urgent national attention. For instance, one of the latest corruption cases is the selective allocation of 6,000 square metres of land to each of the principal officials of the National Assembly, some members of the Federal Executive Council (FEC) and the ruling political party leaders at the expense of strategic demands by some MDAs and the poor masses (Sahara Reporters, 2019). Therefore, this paper intends to examine the land issues relating to homelessness among the urban poor in Abuja *vis a vis* the politicisation and corruption in government's response to these challenges within the purview of the AMP.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Given the foregoing context, this research is guided by the following questions.

- Was the Abuja Master Plan adequately designed not to accommodate all categories of people?

- Have government land administration and housing schemes failed to cater for the urban poor due to corruption and politicis?
- Should the Land Use Act (LUA) be reviewed to engender more opportunities for the less-privileged citizens to own land?
- Can the Abuja Master Plan (AMP) address the lack of access to land and homelessness among the urban poor in the city without any review?

## **METHODOLOGY**

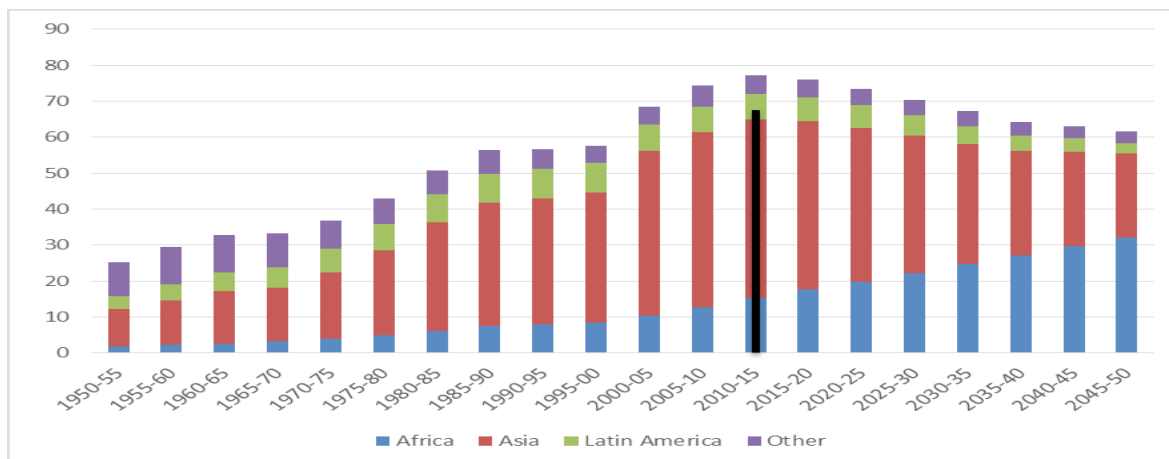
This research adopts both qualitative and quantitative methods of data elicitation and analysis. The study relies heavily on primary data that were generated from fieldwork through questionnaire administration and key informant interview. The respondents were adults of 18 years and above across the urban poor, the aboriginals, government officials at the FCTA, Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA), Abuja Development Control, FMPWH, and the FHA. Also, the secondary data generation was done via review of existing literature.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Urbanization, Urban Governance and the Plight of the Urban Poor**

Rural-urban, urban-urban and international migrations are the three elements of human movements and relocations that are mostly responsible for complex population mix that usually characterize the demography of virtually all the major cities of the world. Consequently, the UN-DESA (2014) observes that by 2050, the world's population will have grown from its 2012 level of 7bn to over 9bn. Almost three-quarters of these people will live in urban areas; as urban population growth will mainly occur in low- and middle-income countries in Africa and Asia, which are currently among the least urbanized regions. In the same vein, UN-Habitat (2018) postulates that as the rapid urbanization around the world continues to be a global concern, with over 60 per cent of the world's population expected to live in cities by 2030 and nearly 70 per cent by 2050, the need for addressing urban development challenges for poverty reduction becomes a crucial step towards achieving human progress and sustainable development. The scale of change has been remarkable, mainly as a result of the urbanization of some of the world's largest countries. India and China are expected to add over 400m and 290m urban dwellers, respectively, to the global urban population between 2014 and 2050 (UN DESA, 2014).

It is imperative to note that although megacities of 10 million residents and above have attracted more attention of recent, ODI (2016) observes, in agreement with UN-DESA (2014) that, it is in the small and medium-sized secondary cities of Africa and Asia that most future urban development will take place. The fact that more people in developing countries will be living in urban areas have profound implications for development cooperation agencies and their policies.



**Fig. 1: Millions more urban people each year by world region.** Source: UN-DESA (2014).

Consequently, governance has remained a major concern as many city administrators and development agencies have failed in planning and implementing socio-economic policies that could bridge inequalities and engender inclusive and sustainable development thereby making living difficult for the urban poor. According to the World Bank (2010), urban poverty is estimated to affect approximately one third of all urban residents, or one quarter of the total poor in the developing world. In Nigeria, the current poverty capital of the world, where about 46.5% i.e. 91,885,874 out of 197,686,877 people are living below the poverty line, the plight of this vulnerable group in the urban centers can only be imagined than experienced. Abuja’s population as at 1950 was 653,427 which has skyrocketed to the current estimate of 3,095,118 people according to the United Nations Urbanization Prospect (2018). However, the poverty content of this demography has continue to raise concern as Obiadi et al (2019) puts it at 67.1% i.e. 2,076,824 people that are living below \$1.90 or #693.5 per day.

### **The Abuja Master Plan, Access to Land and Housing Provision**

In 1977, the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) commissioned International Planning Associates (IPA) to develop a ‘Master Plan’ for the FCT, which was approved by the Government in 1979 (IPA, 1979; CHRE and SERAC, 2008). Consequently, the entire land mass of the FCT was categorized into various envisaged uses as contained in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Categorization of Lands in the Abuja Master Plan.**

S/N	Category of Land	Use Land Budget (in hectares)	Percentage of Total
1	Government Activity	500	1.96
2	Services	891	3.49
3	Residential	12,486	48.97
4	Light Industries	920	3.61
5	Infrastructure	1,840	7.22
6	Commercial	561	2.20
7	Open space & Recreational Facilities	8,300	32.55

8	<b>Total</b>	<b>25, 498</b>	<b>100%</b>
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Source: IPS (1979).

It is important to note here that the land tenure system in Nigeria as espoused in the LUA of 1978 vested the power of land ownership on the Government. In the case of FCT, the lands have been made to belong to the Federal Government for whom the Minister of the Federal Capital stands in proxy. The FCT Minister oversees the allocation and the usage of the city lands in accordance with the categorization in Table 1 above.

One of the primary reasons for accessing land by Abuja dwellers is housing; and to this effect, the government made frantic efforts at providing housing at the initial epoch of the city make up. For instance, Ukoha and Beamish (1997) report that between 1980 and 1994, the FCDA had completed construction of more than 22 000 housing units and the FHA had completed 1 571 units. Most of these units were not affordable to Abuja residents and annual costs were subsidized up to 98.5-99.9 percent for civil servant residents (Morah, 1993). CHRE and SERAC (2008) asserts that the sudden increases in the population of Abuja placed enormous pressure on the city's still rudimentary infrastructure particularly its housing. The massive housing deficits that resulted from the influx of relocated civil servants, without adequate measures from the FCDA to provide access to affordable housing, gave rise to rapidly rising rents, overcrowding, large numbers of shared households, the growth of small-scale private sector housing in the outlying settlements of Abuja and homelessness. Over the years, however, successful administrations of the FCTA have done series of land allocations that have been fingered to be corruptly and politically executed thereby denying the urban poor the opportunity of owning land and increasing homelessness in the city.

### **The Corruption and Politics of Land and Housing Administration-Appraising the Homelessness Among the Urban Poor**

Corruption is a global phenomenon that has been said to be responsible for underdevelopment of many states. For instance, UNODC (2017) asserts that nine out of every ten bribes paid to public officials in Nigeria are paid in cash and the size of the payments made, it is estimated that the total amount of bribes paid to public officials in Nigeria in the 12 months prior to the survey was around 400 billion Nigerian Naira (NGN), the equivalent of \$4.6 billion in purchasing power parity (PPP).

In land administration and housing sector in the FCT, corruption and politicization of allocation procedures have been reported to have been the order of the day. The recent ICPC comprehensive study of the corruption that characterized land administration in Abuja and identified the following as corruption red flags:

- Forgeries and Cloning of land documents
- Allocation of plots of land made without the FCT Minister's approval
- Presence (beyond regulated time of 2 years) of pockets of undeveloped plots of land in districts with engineering infrastructure
- Missing of land documents in AGIS and Land Administration Department
- Existence of Land Syndicates and Speculators
- Neglect of the guideline to set up a
- Revocation of certain Land Titles without due process

- Fake layouts and Fraudulent Allocations in Area Councils
- Differences in land use in the records of AGIS and Urban and Regional Planning Department
- File scams in AGIS/ Land Administration Department
- Delays in processing land documents
- AGIS payment scam
- Complaints about ‘pressures from well-connected individuals and groups’ on staff to circumvent laid-down procedures/processes
- Presence of touts around the premises of AGIS/Land Administration Department and similar establishments.

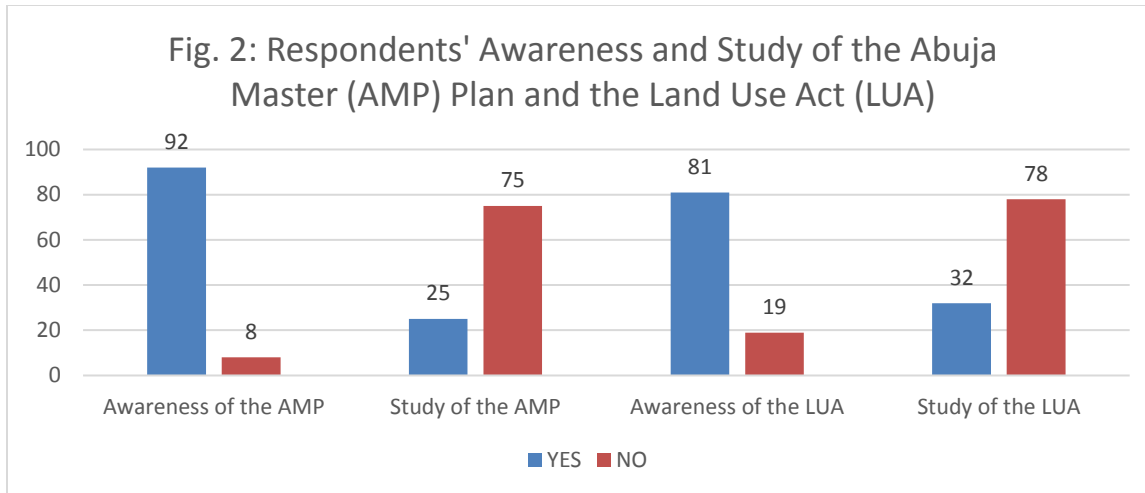
Through the CRR tool served on AGIS, URPD, Land Administration Department and Department of Development Control, ICPC (2015) also posits that the following negative acts have a high probability of occurrence in their operations: Abuse of power, Conflict of interest, Dishonesty, Favouritism, Bribery, Fraud, Influence peddling, Sharp practices, Insider trading and Abuse of privileged information. The Commission then concludes that the predisposing factors for corruption in lands administration in the FCT are:

- The huge discretionary powers given the FCT Minister under the Land Use Act of 1978 and the FCT Act of 1976.
- Excessive discretionary powers of the Director, Land Administration Department in determining which land applications are fully processed for Ministerial approval.
- Lack of policy documents and standardized procedures regarding land administration processes (ICPC, 2015).

The above presents a context where corruption have become so endemic that it has permeated every segment of land administration of the FCT.

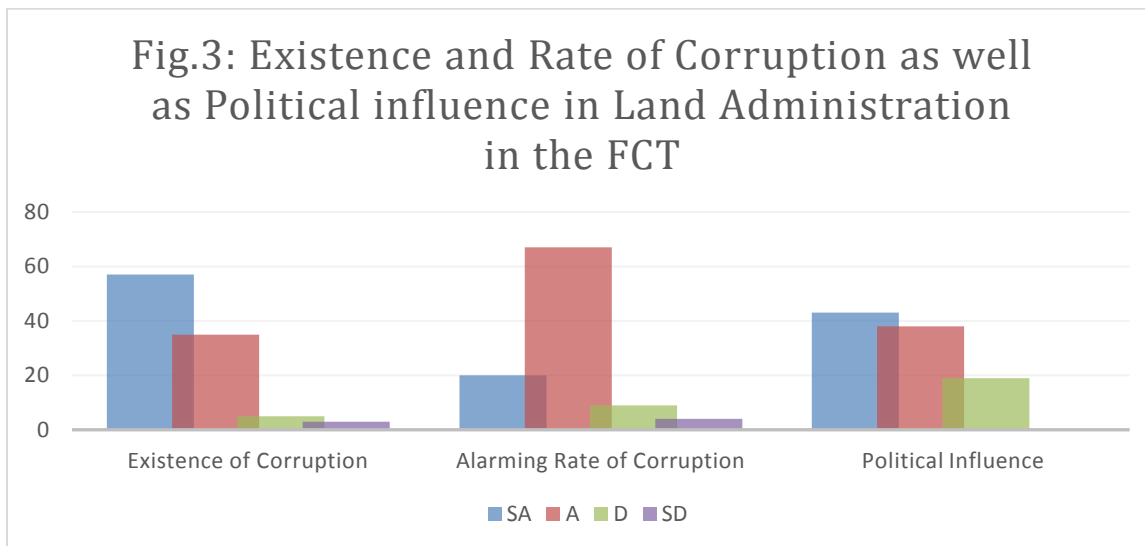
## **DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

The questionnaire that was designed in tandem with the research questions and objectives of the study was administered to 271 respondents being a sample representing the 3,095,118 human population of the FCT. The sample size was obtained using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator with 90% confidence level and 5% margin error. The return rate of the administered questionnaire was 241 representing about 89% of the total sample size of the study. Therefore, the confidence level was justified by the high return rate of the administered instrument thereby authenticating the empirical nature of the research. The elicited data are hereby presented and analyzed below.



Source: Author's Survey, 2019.

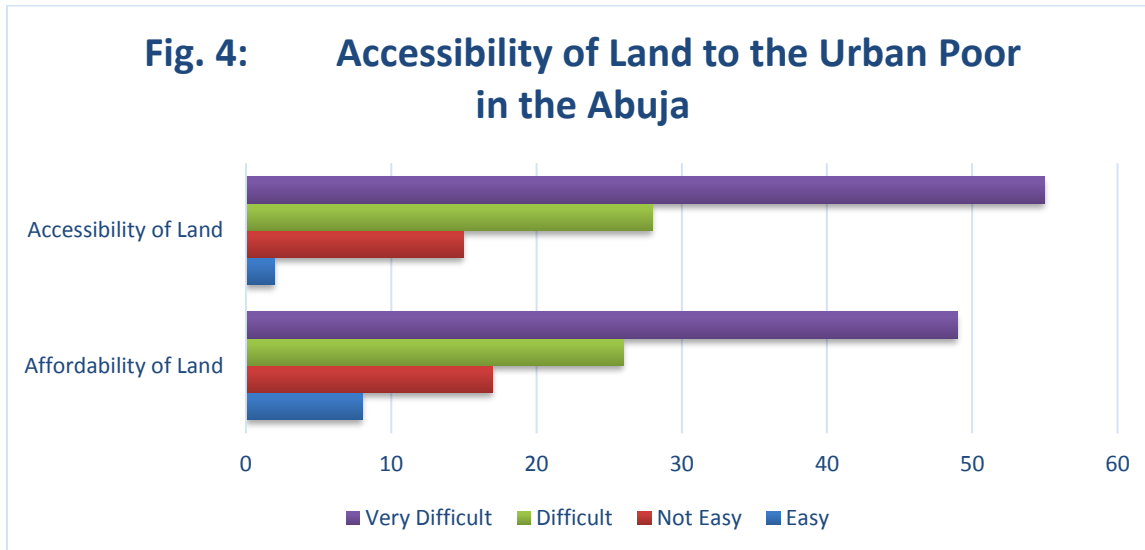
The Fig. 2 above shows that majority of the respondents were aware of both the AMP and LUA with 92% and 81% respectively; and 8% and 19% of them are not aware about the existence of both documents respectively. When it comes to studying the documents however, only 25% and 32% of the respondents attested while the majority of them that represent 81% and 78% respectively are yet to read the documents.



Source: Author's Survey, 2019.

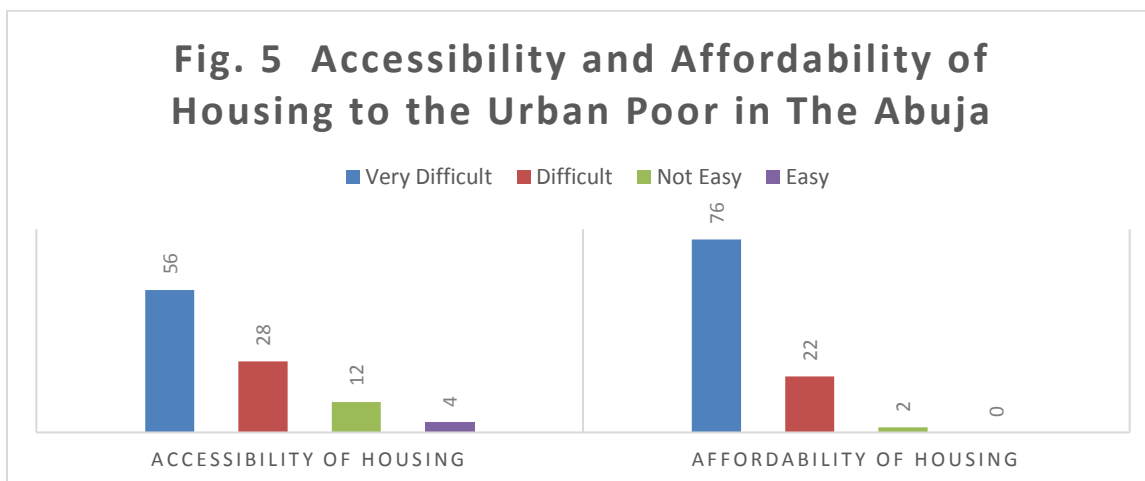
From Fig. 3 above, 57% and 35% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the fact that there exists corruption in the FCT land administration. However, 5% and 3% of them disagreed and strongly disagreed to such claim. Furthermore, concerning whether corruption in the FCT land administration has gotten to an alarming rate, 20% and 67% of the participants responded in the affirmative i.e. strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while the minority of them that constitute 9% and 4% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. On the issue of whether political influence is used in the FCT land

administration process, 43% and 38% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while 19% of them disagreed and no one strongly disagreed.



Source: Author's Survey, 2019.

Fig. 4 above indicates that 55% of the respondents were of the opinion that access to land by the urban poor is very difficult. While 28% of the believe that it is difficult, 15% and 2% were of the views that it is not easy and easy respectively. Similarly, 49% and 26% of the respondents were of the view that the financial cost of land is very difficult and difficult to afford respectively, while 17% and 8% believe it is not easily and easily affordable respectively. This confirms the position of Ikejiofor (1999) that "...accessibility to land poses the greatest difficulty to urban housing production in many developing countries."



Source: Author's Survey, 2019.

As indicated in Fig. 5 above, majority of the respondents i.e. 56% and 28% were of the opinion that accessing government housing schemes is very difficult and difficult respectively; while 12% and 4% of them believe it was not easy and easy to access

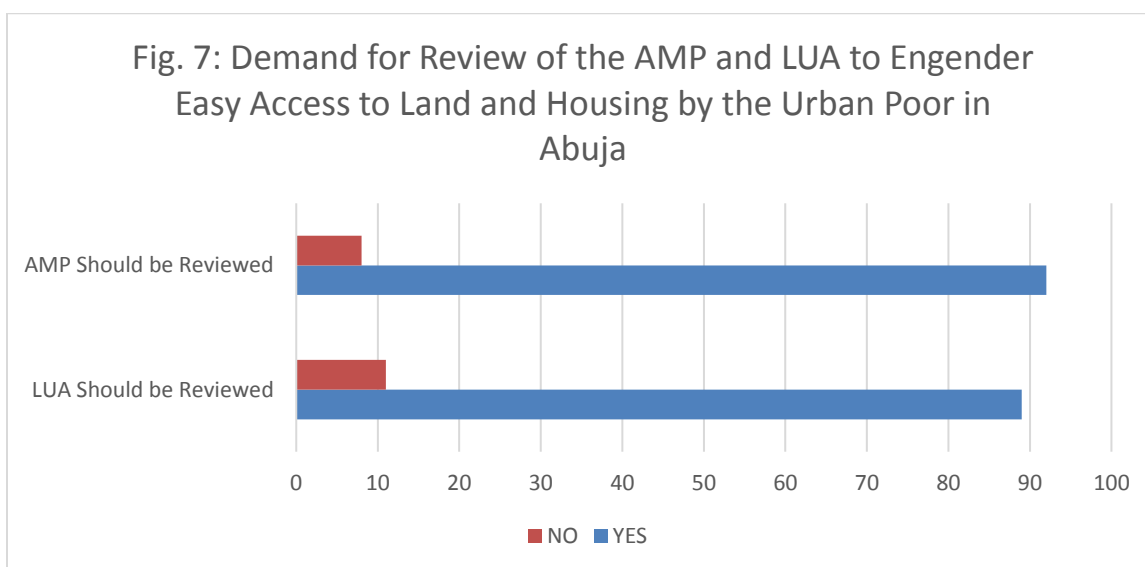


respectively. This is in tandem with the assertion of CHRE and SERAC (2008) that, due to a shortage of affordable housing exacerbated by the 2005-2006 sale of approximately 24, 844 Government subsidized housing units in the FCT many residents of Abuja have been unable to find affordable accommodation in the formal housing market.



Source: Author's Survey, 2019.

Fig. 6 above, about 52% and 32% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that both government and private sector responses to housing deficit, particularly homelessness among the urban poor in the Abuja have not been adequate. However, 12% and 4% of them disagreed and strongly disagreed with such inadequacy. Also in Fig. 6, 65% and 32% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that corruption and politicization of processes have continued to hinder government housing provision in Abuja; while 3% of them disagreed.



Source: Author's Survey, 2019.

Fig. 7 above shows that about 92% and 89% were of the opinion that the Abuja Master Plan and the Land Use Act should be reviewed respectively so as to engender easy access to land and housing by the urban poor in the capital city. About 8% and 11% were however did not think a review is needed on the AMP and LUA respectively. These findings corroborate the view of Lawal and Adekunle (2018) that the challenges associated with the customary land tenure system led to the promulgation of Land Use Act (LUA) of 1978 with the aim of creating cheaper and easier accessibility for Nigerians. However, the LUA has not brought about any significant improvement in access to land for productive purposes in Nigeria.

### **DEDUCTIONS OF POLICY OPTIONS**

From the foregoing analysis, it is imperative for policy related deductions to be made to inform appropriate action from concerned stakeholders in land and housing administration of the FCT in particular and Nigeria in general. Consequently, the followings are considered germane in making the AMP and LUA work inclusively, curb corruption and politicization that are exacerbating lack of access to land and homelessness among the urban poor in Abuja.

- Although there is a general awareness about the existence of both the AMP and LUA as critical documents that are central to land tenure systems and policies, they are yet to be studied and understood by the majority of the populace. Also, the urban poor are of the view that the AMP was not designed to accommodate people of their class. Therefore, both the FCTA and the FMPWH should ensure availability of the documents on the home page of their various official websites for public use. Furthermore, they should initiate a massive publication of hard copies of the documents in English and major local languages for easy comprehension.
- As it is a public fact that corruption in the FCT land administration is alarming, as posited by the ICPC (2013), Sahara Reporters (2019) and the findings of this current work, the FCTA should collaborate with the ICPC and EFCC to establish Anti-Corruption Units in every directorate of the capital city administration. Also, the FCTA should transform all land administration processes from analogue to digital with the development of a transparent and user friendly online land application and allocation portal. This will not only curtail corruption but also eliminate political influence.
- It is obvious from the findings that the urban poor are not just facing the challenge of homelessness, but also that of financial capability to own land or house officially. Therefore, the FCTA, FMPWH, FHA, FMB and UN-Habitat should synergize and declare a state of emergency on housing and come up with affordable, accessible and quality mass housing projects across the FCT.
- Given the lacunae that have been identified in the contents and implementation of the AMP of 1976 and LUA of 1978, an inclusive and sustainable review should be carried out in ensuring easy access to land by the urban poor for economic or shelter purposes.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper has examined the corruption and politics of land administration, housing provision and homelessness among the urban poor in Abuja. The author posits that

inadequate provisions for the low income earners, both in the formal and informal sectors, in the AMP regarding access to land and housing has created difficulties for the urban poor in Abuja. Corruption and politics have continued to hinder land administrative processes of the FCTA; and this have reach an alarming rate which requires an urgent action. For the urban poor who constitute about 70% of the FCT population not to constitute a ready army for urban violence and threat to national security, FCTA should collaborate with relevant national and international agencies to bring about quality, accessible and affordable mass housing purposely for this category of citizens. A review of both the AMP and LUA is needed to remove the bottlenecks that have continued to make access to land and housing provision difficult for the downtrodden particularly in the Abuja and Nigeria in general.

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