

EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMMES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to develop a theoretical and conceptual framework for the evaluation of impacts of public housing programmes on sustainable development in Nigeria. It seeks to address the challenge of adoption of inappropriate tools in evaluation research on public housing provisioning. The paper argues that for adequate knowledge of the impact of public housing on sustainable development, a broad-based framework that transcends boundaries of many disciplines should be engaged in the evaluation process. Therefore the proposed framework draws on a holistic and realistic approach to evaluation based on objective-oriented theory; theory-driven evaluation paradigm and a number of conceptual issues that allow for the assessment of relationships between input, output, outcomes and impacts, as well as sustainability of benefits of public housing programmes. The distinct features of this framework include: an open-ended evaluation approach; the use of survey tools in capacity and auditing of housing providers, household survey and environmental impact audit in assessing the impact and sustainability of public housing programmes.

Keywords: Evaluation, Public Housing Programmes, Impact, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Housing is the second most essential human need after food. It is an integral part of human settlement that has a profound impact on the quality of life, health, welfare, productivity of man as well as economic development and environmental sustainability. This implies that housing has multiplier effect on the human society and economic development. In spite of this essential nature of housing, a large proportion of the population in most developing countries does not have access to decent housing at affordable cost (Rondinelli, 1990; Tipple, 1994; Ajanlekoko, 2002; Sengupta and Sharma, 2008). As a result of this, inadequate housing condition constitutes an insurmountable challenge that has continued to receive attention from governments and individuals in most developing countries. As part of human tradition which seeks to investigate, describe, understand, proffer solutions and take actions to ameliorate defects in human conditions, and enhance individual and collective well-being; both public and private sectors have continued to take actions aimed at addressing social and economic challenges posed by inadequate provision of housing in most countries of the world. These actions are in the form of legislations, policies and strategies, which most often culminate in housing programmes. It is argued that the housing problem in developing countries in general and Nigeria in particular has been aggravated by inappropriate housing programmes. This is because public housing programmes should ideally be the principal source of decent and affordable housing to the majority of people who cannot afford housing provided by the commercial private sector (Mukhija, 2004). Although between 1960 and 1999 various administrations in Nigeria had embarked on a minimum of seven public housing programmes; but these programmes have failed in solving the problem of housing in the country. The burgeoning housing challenge is more in urban areas than in the country side due to rapid rates of urbanization and high level of

poverty which is hitting very hard on the low income earners. Similar studies have also observed severe shortage of housing units, overcrowding of existing ones and proliferation of slums and shanty developments lacking basic amenities (Corker et.al.; 2007; Aribigbola,2008) whereas in the rural areas most houses are poorly constructed, unsafe and without access to portable water supply and electricity (Onibokun (ed.),1985).Hence, the perennial problem of housing persists.

However, evidence in literature (Akinmoladun and Oluwoye, 2007; Ademiluyi and Raji, 2008) shows that governments are not relenting in their efforts at addressing the challenge of providing adequate, affordable and sustainable housing. This is probably in recognition of the fact that housing plays a key role in achieving sustainable development by the year 2015 and vision 2020. Achieving sustainable development through effective public housing provisioning entails judicious use of local quality resources, appropriate materials and technology in creating residential environment that has the potential of accelerating poverty reduction and maintaining ecological balance. This implies that cutting-edge knowledge and techniques be engaged in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of housing programmes in Nigeria.

Howbeit, several research studies (Ali, 1996; Ukoha and Beamish, 1997; Ilesanmi, 2005; Olatubara and Fatoye, 2007; Fatoye and Odusami, 2009; Jiboye, 2009; 2010) had evaluated aspects of public housing programme in Nigeria, most specifically the level of housing and residential satisfaction. Regrettably, certain inadequacies which bear upon the focus and usefulness of findings of these studies for factual assessment of impacts of public housing programmes on sustainable development exist. Evidence in literature suggests that there is inadequate evaluation research on public housing programmes and that proper evaluation tools and frameworks are rarely engaged in monitoring and evaluating programmes in Nigeria. For instance, the 1991 Nigerian National Housing Policy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 19991) noted that lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation of housing policy implementation had contributed to the failure of public housing programmes in this country. This was corroborated by Obashoro (2002) who observed that proper programme evaluation was rarely done in Nigeria, and as a result, it was very difficult to assess the real outcome of programmes in this country. The consequences of this are paucity of empirical data on the actual outcomes of housing programmes, and the use of inappropriate data, information and techniques in the design, planning and implementation of public housing programmes in this country.

Against this background, this paper argues that public housing programmes encompasses the provision of housing units and associated amenities as well as establishing appropriate framework for monitoring and evaluating the impact of such programmes on social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to develop a broad-based theoretical and conceptual framework for evaluating the impact of public housing programmes on sustainable development in Nigeria. The proposed framework lends itself to assessment of the relationship between the input, output, and impact of public housing programmes. It also allows for examination of the outcomes of different housing delivery strategies in public housing programmes as a means of generating vital input in housing policy formulation, programme design and implementation.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper is to present a theoretical and conceptual framework for evaluating the impact of public housing programmes on sustainable development in Nigeria. This paper proposed a new direction on evaluation research in public housing that goes beyond the traditional enquires on housing and residential satisfaction and the realm where one theory or discipline would have the upper hand in developing a comprehensive approach to evaluating public housing programmes. The proposed framework draws heavily on a new paradigm of research that crosses the boundaries of different disciplines and allows for investigation into the relationships between inputs, process, outputs and outcomes, as well as sustainability of gains of public housing programmes. Also in the research process, the framework links all aspects of the research including problem statement, aim, objectives, literature review, methodology, data collection and analysis as well as the interpretation of findings. This theoretical and conceptual framework although represents a structured method for investigating public housing programme, it is open and flexible for assessing the social, economic and environmental impact of public housing provisioning on sustainable development in Nigeria.

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