

Delivering Quality at Scale: Managing Complex Housing Projects in Emerging Economies – A Case Study of Bwari Municipal Council, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria - 2023

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ABSTRACT

As cities in developing countries grow quickly, there is a lot of pressure on governments and builders to provide enough good-quality housing. In Nigeria, places like Bwari in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) are facing big challenges, a lot of people are moving in, there is not enough funding, basic infrastructure is lacking, and building standards often aren't followed. This review looks at practical ways to manage large housing projects in such environments, focusing on Bwari Municipal Council. It discusses common issues like poor project planning, lack of quality control, weak involvement of key players, poor policy direction, and outdated local building methods. Using lessons from around the world and successful local examples, the paper highlights the need for better planning, trained workers, modern construction methods, and stronger policies. These are all essential if we want to meet the growing need for housing without cutting corners on quality. The goal is to give useful guidance to government officials, developers, and city planners working in areas with limited resources.

Keywords: Affordable Housing, Emerging Economies, Sustainable Urban Development, Project Management in Construction, and Bwari Municipal Council

INTRODUCTION

Cities in developing countries are growing faster than ever before. This rapid growth is being driven by population increases, people moving from rural to urban areas, economic reforms, and globalization. According to the United Nations (2022), more than 90% of the world's new city dwellers between 2020 and 2050 will be in Asia and Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, over 800 million people are expected to move to urban areas. This puts huge pressure on basic infrastructure, public services, and especially on housing.

In many of these countries, the need for housing is growing faster than it can be provided. Nigeria is a good example, with a housing shortage of over 17 million homes (Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, 2021). This problem is even worse in cities like those in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), where places like Bwari are seeing rapid population growth but little progress in housing and infrastructure (Nduka and Udeh, 2016).

Bwari Municipal Council, one of six in the FCT, has become heavily populated due to its closeness to Abuja's city center and its relatively low cost of living. But Bwari struggles with several issues: unplanned housing, land disputes, poor road systems, bad drainage, and weak enforcement of building standards (Olotuah and Bobadoye, 2009). These problems make it difficult to plan and complete major housing projects properly.

However, managing big housing projects in such areas is also complicated by other challenging factors such as poor access to funding, shortage of skilled workers, systemic corruption, and inflating prices of construction

materials (Ameh et al., 2017). Additionally, confusion over who regulates what and weak city planning often slow things down even more (Oluwatobi and Ayoade, 2019).

With all these challenges, Nigeria have real opportunities to improve. There are local building materials that can be used more efficiently, the private sector is showing growing interest, and there is global support for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Hence, these factors can help create better, and more affordable housing solutions.

Furthermore, this review considers what makes major housing projects succeed in places like Bwari. It focuses on smart planning, involving the stakeholders, using modern technology, and having supportive policies in place. The aim is to show how developing countries can meet growing housing needs, while still building quality homes and to offer practical ideas that other cities in Africa can learn from.

Understanding Housing Challenges in Developing Countries

The building of large housing projects in developing countries comes with a lot of difficulties. These challenges are worsen by fast-growing cities, limited resources, poor government policies, and the differences that exist among people's income. Unlike in wealthy nations, where housing is backed by solid plans and steady funding, projects in places like Nigeria often vary, due to factors such as size, quality, and success (UN-Habitat, 2020).

Poor urban planning is one major problem. Because building rules are often outdated or not enforced, cities grow in unorganized ways, with poor roads, water, and electricity. In many African countries, including Nigeria, different government bodies at the federal, state, and local levels often clash or duplicate efforts, which create delays and confusion (Ezeabasili et al., 2014; Olotuah and Adesiji, 2006).

Moreso, corruption plays a major role. The process of getting land, choosing contractors, and distributing project money is often not transparent. As a result of this, many projects are over-priced, poorly built, or left uncompleted. For example, in Nigeria, it is common to see half-completed housing estates that were never finished because of mismanagement of funds (Ameh et al., 2017).

According to Oluwatobi and Ayoade, (2019); another challenge is the lack of good building materials and skilled labour force (workers). Many developers depend on expensive imported materials, because local ones are either poor in quality or unavailable. At the same time, there are not enough trained workers, most especially in modern building methods including green construction and sustainable design, because technical training has not meet up with demand.

Also, housing projects are often disconnected from the country's bigger plans for jobs, transportation, and the environment. Houses are sometimes built far from where people work or in areas with no clean water, power, or transport, thereby; making them hard to live in for the long term (Ajanlekoko, 2001).

Despite these problems, some progress is being made. For instance, countries like Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Nigeria are trying out new ways to build houses that better fit their local needs. One example is Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), where the government partners with private companies to build affordable homes. This helps share the cost and reduce the risk for the government (World Bank, 2021). for example, in Rwanda, the government is working with developers to build affordable housing in the capital city of Kigali.

Furthermore, some cities are also encouraging people to build their homes slowly, in steps, with support from community groups or NGOs. This method allows low-income families to build according to what they can afford while getting help with designs and safety. It also helps strengthen the community and gives people a sense of ownership (UN-Habitat, 2019).

Conclusively, housing in developing countries is complex. Therefore, solving the problem means more than just building houses, it requires better planning, smarter use of money, strong policies, and solutions that reflect the local context.

The Case of Bwari Municipal Council, FCT

Bwari Municipal Council is one of the six local government areas in Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT). It is located in the northwest part of the FCT, and has developed rapidly from a quiet, rural area into a busy town. This is mostly because Abuja city has expanded and pushed people into nearby places like Bwari. The council is home to major institutions including the Nigerian Law School, Veritas University, and the JAMB headquarters. Many people, especially those with lower or middle incomes, move here from nearby states because land and housing are more affordable than in central Abuja areas (Nduka and Udeh, 2016; FCT-ADP, 2019).

However, Bwari's population has grown more rapidly than the infrastructure needed to support it. Like many growing regions in Africa, Bwari struggles with building and managing proper housing for its residents.

Poor Infrastructure

According to Akinyemi (2017), one of Bwari's biggest problems is the lack of basic infrastructure. Roads are either bad or does not exist, drainage systems are poor, electricity is unreliable, and many people do not have access to clean water. These problems make it difficult and expensive to build houses, especially big housing estates. Also, without good transportation links to central Abuja, many estates become hard to live in for people who work in the city.

Weak Enforcement of Building Rules

Despite the fact that there are building and planning rules, they are not properly enforced in Bwari. Some developers build without approval, and as a result, many buildings do not meet safety or quality standards. Ezeabasili et al., (2014) reported that agencies (the Development Control Department) that should monitor and control this do not have enough staff or clear authority to do their job well, thereby; leading to poorly built areas, which are overcrowded, and faced with environmental issues.

Rise of Informal Settlements

In various parts of Bwari, like Dutse, Mpape, and Ushafa, informal settlements are rapidly growing. These are places where people build homes on land that has not been officially planned for housing, and often without legal permission. These areas usually do not have basic services like clean water, toilets, waste disposal, or healthcare. As these informal communities grow, it becomes difficult for the government to plan and provide services in the future (Olotuah and Bobadoye, 2009; UN-Habitat, 2020).

Land Disputes

Another problem is land ownership. In Bwari, customary (traditional) land systems exist alongside government-managed land systems, which often leads to conflict. According to Nduka and Udeh, 2016, disagreements between local chiefs, residents, and government officials slow down development. It is also difficult for people to get official land documents like Certificates of Occupancy (C of O) or building permits, which discourages both private developers and individuals from investing in housing projects.

Government and Private Housing Efforts

Despite these challenges, both the government and private sector have started some housing projects in Bwari. These include the Bwari Housing Estate, cooperative housing schemes for workers, and houses financed by the Federal Mortgage Bank. Some of these projects have succeeded by offering decent homes, but others suffer from poor quality, bad maintenance, or high prices that ordinary people can not afford (Ajayi et al., 2015).

Furthermore, building proper housing in Bwari is not just about putting up buildings. It involves dealing with planning, politics, money, and community needs. There is real potential to provide better housing in Bwari, but it will require careful planning, teamwork with local communities, and a commitment to long-term solutions.

Managing of Quality in Large-Scale Housing Projects

Building many houses at once in fast-growing places like Bwari in Nigeria is not easy. It is more difficult to make sure every house is well-built, safe, and meets the needs of the people who will live in them. However, to do this right, we need good planning, strong teamwork, smart construction methods, and clear quality checks. Without these, projects can end up poorly built, hard to access, or even unsafe.

Planning the Project in the Right Way

Planning is the first and most important step. In most parts of Bwari, houses are built before roads, water, electricity, or drainage are put in place. This causes issues for people living there. However, good planning means thinking about everything at once, including land, roads, schools, hospitals, water, and the environment.

Moreso, when planners work together using maps, data, and input from the community, they can avoid mistakes like building in flood-prone areas or cutting off neighborhoods from the rest of the town. For instance, some estates in Bwari were flooded or poorly connected because this kind of teamwork and data sharing did not take place. (Ezeokoli et al., 2015). hence, to solve this problem, experts should use tools like GIS mapping, and form planning teams from different departments who share responsibility and work closely from start to finish.

Maintaining High and Consistent Quality

One major challenge in Nigeria's housing projects is the lack of consistency. At times, poor-quality materials are used, or construction teams do not abide to building codes. This can lead to poor buildings that fall apart within a short time frame.

In order to avoid this, builders should follow official quality standards like ISO 9001, which guides how to manage and check every step of a project. However, regular checks on materials, supervision by trained engineers, and using only approved building materials are ways to ensure quality. (Ameh et al., 2017).

Furthermore, in Bwari, some housing projects have failed because these standards have not been met. Hence, regular inspections during building can resolve these problems early and help cut down on costly repairs later.

Working With the Community

Building homes is not just about bricks and cement, it is also about people. When the community is involved in the planning and design of their homes, they are more likely to support and take care of the finished project.

(Olotuah and Bobadoye, (2009) reported that in Bwari, some successful housing cooperatives allowed future residents to help choose designs, pick their precise locations, and plan how the money would be spent. This have made people feel more connected and reduced the chances of complaints or resistance.

Furthermore, to do this well, project leaders should organize community meetings, create advisory groups, and let residents have a real voice, not just ask for opinions without following up.

Adopting New Building Technologies

We need to move beyond old-fashioned building methods in order to build faster and better. New technologies like prefabricated materials, interlocking bricks, and modular housing can save time, reduce waste, and produce stronger homes.

For instance, in Bwari, some major projects have tested precast slabs and steel-wood frame houses with good results. New tools like Building Information Modelling (BIM) can also help by creating 3D designs and helping teams spot problems early. (Akinyele and Rayudu, 2014).

There are still challenges because these technologies cost more upfront. However, not enough people know how to use them, and some builders are slow to change. Therefore, more training and trial projects will help show how these tools can save money and deliver better homes in the long run.

Problems in Expanding Quality Housing in Bwari

Despite the fact that both the government and private developers have tried to build more houses in Bwari, the goal of delivering good-quality homes has not been achieved as expected. This is because of problems associated with policy, money, land, skills, and building materials. Hence, some of the challenges slowing down housing development in Bwari as discussed below:

Confusing Policies and Overlapping Roles

One major problem is that a lot of government agencies are involved in housing, and they do not always work together. For example, the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA), AGIS, Development Control, and Bwari Area Council all have roles in land and housing, but they do not coordinate well. Hence, this causes delays, mixed messages, and confusion for developers.

Furthermore, many a times, developers have to obtain approval from more than one office, and each one has different rules and timelines. Hence, there is also no clear policy for places like Bwari, which makes planning difficult and slows progress.

Lack of Funding and Financial Support

Getting affordable loans for building or buying homes is very difficult in Nigeria. Though the Federal Mortgage Bank offers loans through the National Housing Fund, only a few people actually benefit from it, and the process is slow as well.

Moreover, private developers also struggle to get loans because interest rates are high, often ranges between 18% and 25%; and loan periods are often too short. On top of that, many people in Bwari do not qualify for mortgages, because they do not have formal jobs or strong credit records. Therefore, this makes it difficult to match the demand for affordable housing with the affordability.

Issues of Land Ownership

Land disputes are very common in Bwari. Even though the federal government officially controls all land in the FCT, traditional chiefs and communities still claim ownership of certain lands. This results in conflicts that delay projects and increase costs. Also, getting proper land titles like Certificates of Occupancy is difficult and expensive, especially for smaller developers. Without secure land documents, developers can not get loans or legal protection, which stops many from moving forward.

Lack of Skilled Workers

There are not enough trained workers in the construction industry, most especially in new building methods (green housing or prefabrication). In Bwari, many builders and artisans were trained informally and still apply old techniques, which can lead to poor infrastructures or unattractive buildings.

Therefore, training centers exist, but they are poorly funded and not connected to what the industry actually desires. Unless more is done to train people in modern construction, it will be difficult to build better-quality homes.

Problems Obtaining Building Materials

It is difficult to get building materials at stable prices in Bwari. However, prices for cement, steel, and roofing sheets keeps fluctuating because of inflation and the high cost of imports. While some local materials are available, they are not always good enough for large housing projects. Also, transporting materials to

construction sites is another problem. Therefore, poor roads and a lack of storage facilities delay deliveries, increase costs, and delay building work.

Conclusively, all these problems, unfavourable policies, money issues, land disputes, lack of skilled workers, and material delays show how difficult it is to build quality homes in Bwari. However, to make real progress, the government and private sector must collaborate on better planning, easier financing, training programs, clearer land processes, and proper supply chains. Without this, building good homes at a large scale will remain a problem.

Potential Opportunities and Recommendations

Even though Bwari faces many housing challenges, these issues also create a chance to do things better. With the right changes in policy, better training, new ways to finance homes, and a focus on sustainability, Bwari can become a model for how to build affordable and quality homes, not just for Nigeria, but for other developing areas too.

Fixing Policy and Government Problems

One major problem is that too many government agencies are involved in housing, and they often do not work well together. According to Nduka and Udeh, (2016), to fix this issue, a single housing body should be set up for the FCT, bringing together groups like FCDA, Bwari Area Council, and land authorities.

This would help everyone work together better and avoid delays. Also, building codes should allow for flexibility and encourage new ways of building instead of sticking to outdated standards. Making land titles and building permits easier and faster to get, most especially through online systems will reduce delays and make it easier for private companies to invest in housing.(World Bank, 2021).

Building Skills and Capacity

Good housing depends on having well-trained workers from engineers to bricklayers. To improve this:

Project managers should be trained in sustainable construction and modern planning.

Local artisans should learn new building techniques, especially eco-friendly ones.

Government inspectors should also be trained to properly enforce quality and safety rules. (Ameh et al., 2017).

Furthermore, groups like the Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB), and COREN can lead these efforts by offering workshops, certificates, and updates to what is taught in schools. This would not just improve construction quality, it will also create jobs and encourage innovation.

Making Housing More Affordable

Getting money to build or buy a home remains a big issue for most people in Bwari. However, new and flexible ways to finance homes are needed, including:

Housing cooperatives, where people join together to buy land and build gradually.

Small mortgages with easy repayment plans for people in informal jobs.

Government programs that help pay part of the interest on loans for low-income buyers.(UN-Habitat, 2019).

Furthermore, the government can also work with banks and international development agencies to create programs that reduce the risk for lenders, thus; making it easier for more people to qualify for loans. For instance, countries like India and Kenya have used similar ideas successfully (World Bank, 2021).

Supporting Local and Green Building Solutions

Since imported building materials are expensive and often harm the environment, Bwari should focus more on using local and eco-friendly resources. For example:

Builders can use local materials like laterite, bamboo, or treated wood.

New houses can include features like solar panels and rainwater tanks.

Prefabricated and modular homes can save time, reduce waste, and lower costs.

Also, schools, research centers, and building professionals can help by testing materials, thereby creating simple guidelines, and setting up major projects to show what is possible (Akinyele and Rayudu, 2014).

Furthermore, if Bwari takes these opportunities seriously, improving policy, building skills, making housing finance easier, and promoting local innovation; it can create a smarter, more organized way to grow. This will not only help people find better places to live, but will also support Nigeria's long-term development goals and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

CONCLUSION

Bwari Municipal Council shows the real challenges many growing towns face when trying to provide good-quality housing for everyone. As a fast-developing area in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Bwari struggles with a growing population, poor infrastructure, and economic inequality. These problems are not unique to Bwari, they are common in many developing cities, where there is far more demand for affordable housing than supply.

Moreso, Bwari also shows that these problems can be solved. With smart planning, better coordination between government bodies, improved training for workers, creative financing options, and the use of sustainable building methods, real progress is possible. But it takes teamwork, government agencies, private companies, local communities, and professionals all need to work together. That is the only way to enhance housing delivery, while also improving its quality and making it more inclusive.

Housing is not just about putting roofs over people's heads. It plays an important role in people's access to jobs, their well-being, and how we care for the environment. In places like Bwari, housing should be seen as part of a broader plan for responsible urban growth. This means designing homes that suit the local context, using eco-friendly materials, involving communities in decisions, and abiding to high quality standards.

In the end, what we learn from Bwari can help other areas in Nigeria, and even other countries build better housing. If we focus on quality, fairness, and sustainability, we can close the housing gap and create cities that are better for everyone.

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