

# Assessment of the Effect of Government Interventions in Improving Residential Housing Conditions in Waterfront Communities in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

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**Abstract -** The study assessed the effectiveness of government interventions (housing policies and programmes) in improving residential housing conditions in waterfront communities in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, with a view to addressing housing inadequacy. Through a stratified random sampling method, 399 respondents were surveyed. The results were analyzed using frequency count, mean score and relative index while Kruskal Wallis H-test was conducted to test the significance of the effect of government housing policies and programmes in improving residential housing conditions in Port Harcourt. The study revealed that government housing programmes have improved access to basic infrastructure (4.15), government improves waterfront areas through redevelopment programmes with mean of (4.10) and government regulations have improved compliance with building standards (4.06). The results also showed that government intervention has a huge influence on residential housing conditions in Port Harcourt waterfronts. However, the effectiveness of housing policies and programmes was found to be moderate, with improvements recorded mainly in infrastructure provision and building quality. The study concludes that while government interventions have contributed to improvements in residential housing conditions, more coordinated, adequately funded, and effectively implemented strategies are required for a sustainable and better housing quality in Port Harcourt waterfronts. The study recommends that government should strengthen policy implementation and intensify slum upgrading programmes to ensure effective monitoring, enforcement, and sustainability of housing programmes in waterfront settlements.

## INTRODUCTION

Housing is generally viewed as a basic human need. Besides the physical shelter, it encompasses both the infrastructure and amenities necessary for comfortable living; such as roads, waste disposal systems, and water supply (Yoade, Adeyemi and Yoade, 2018). Globally, housing units particularly in waterfront areas are known to be inadequate, deficient in basic amenities and generally found to be situated in inappropriate locations (Bramley, Pawson, White, Watkins and Pleace, 2010). The areas are characterized by poor infrastructural facilities, poor building quality and insufficient environmental facilities (Addo, 2013). In spite of this ugly situation, housing remains an indispensable basic need in every society and serves as the foundation of household assets for low-income households. And at the same time housing is constantly becoming very important largely due to the surge in demand for ownership, hence serving as a means of protection against inflation and also as a form of savings (Di, 2001). In Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State, the housing sector has experienced significant pressure over the years as a result of increasing population and rural-urban migration. This rapid urban expansion has led to the emergence of informal settlements, particularly in waterfront areas, where a large proportion of low-income residents reside (Omirin and Keleoso, 2012; Tipple and Speak, 2009). Waterfront communities in Port Harcourt are typically located along creeks and riverbanks and are characterized by substandard housing structures, overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate infrastructure and environmental vulnerability (Douglas *et al*, 2008), as a result, residents of these communities face numerous socio-economic and health challenges (Chant, 2013).

In recognition of these challenges, the Nigerian government has initiated multiple policy responses aimed at improving residential housing conditions. These include the establishment of data-driven frameworks like the National Housing Data Initiative to strengthen evidence-based planning, as well as targeted housing schemes such as Renewed Hope Estates and Renewed Hope Cities, which seek to increase housing production in partnership with private developers and state authorities (FMHUD, 2025). Such initiatives represent efforts to address both the scale and quality of housing provision, though critics argue that implementation bottlenecks, funding limitations, and affordability issues persist. Despite these efforts, the housing crisis in Nigeria remains a critical

development issue, particularly in the most vulnerable areas such as waterfront communities. The role of government—at federal, state, and local levels—in designing, financing, regulating, and delivering effective housing interventions is therefore central to understanding how residential housing conditions can be improved. Maintaining quality and adequate houses are critical in improving inhabitants' health, comfort, satisfaction, safety and security. Furthermore, quality housing affords the individual the opportunity to renew his strength and rest well so that in the final analysis it raises labour productivity. Bonnefoy (2007) opined that the characteristics and conditions of housing constitute the basic factors that influence occupants' health. He further stressed that the quality of housing play significant role in determining the health status of an occupant. This study in same view aims to determine the effectiveness of government interventions (housing policies and programmes) in improving residential housing conditions in waterfront communities in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, with a view to addressing housing inadequacy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW:

### Housing Quality and Components of Housing Condition

Housing quality significantly affects residents' satisfaction and well-being, encompassing factors like structural integrity, access to amenities, and overall liveability. In urban areas, high-quality housing enhances living standards and health outcomes (Rolfe, *et al.*, 2020). Essential facilities such as ventilation, potable water, electricity, and sanitation are crucial, while substandard housing can lead to negative health and productivity impacts. Thus, inadequate housing amenities adversely affect long-term health and well-being. Housing quality encompasses factors affecting the adequacy and functionality of residential units (Wimalasena *et al.*, 2022). The physical condition of housing, including construction materials and resilience to environmental hazards, influences structural integrity and safety. Proper spacing and ventilation are essential to mitigate health risks, such as respiratory diseases linked to overcrowding.

Poor quality dwellings can trigger multiple diseases to residents, including infections, injuries, chronic diseases and psychological problems (Krieger and Higgins, 2002). Evaluation of housing quality enables construction stakeholders, policymakers and research organizations to evaluate the conditions of existing and new houses and then provide some recommendations/ improvements. Secondly, it guides homeowners, tenants, and council agents to make an informed decision on housing management. Housing problems in rural areas are often caused by poor-quality homes and a lack of affordable housing options. This can lead to overcrowding and poor living conditions, as well as a feeling of isolation from the rest of the country. Ajayi, Olotuah and Ayanlola (2020) explains that rural housing is inadequate because social services especially in the urban areas (Mukhtar, Abdullah and Sahad, 2015). The provision of housing has always been of a great necessity to man. It is very important to the existence of human as it ranks among the top three needs of man. It is accepted universally as the second most important essential need after food. It reflects cultural, social and economic value of a society and could be seen as one of the best historical pieces of evidence of the civilization of a country (Olotuah, 2000). Despite the importance of housing needs, most developing countries including Nigeria are to meet these housing needs.

### Effectiveness of Government Housing Policies and Programmes in Improving Residential Housing Conditions

Omelchuk (2016) carried out a study on effectiveness of the housing policy: a comparative analysis. The study proposed four-level model of the state housing policy allows maximally consider the complexity and ambiguity of the problems which must be solved in housing sphere and takes into account market development (economic efficiency) and performance of the government non-market tools (social efficiency). Using this approach, the effectiveness in 2015 only 14.29% (maximal value 100%) and decreasing trend of the housing policy in Ukraine within 2011-2015 have been received (the effectiveness was 35.7%). The main problems in housing policy in Ukraine were determined as increasing the gap between building activities and possibilities to use of the market and non-market tools to solve housing problems by citizens. Basing on received results concluded that housing policy in the UK has the higher effectiveness than in Ukraine.

Ondola, Odundo and Rambo (2013) evaluated the Kenya Government housing policies and strategies for housing the urban poor in Kenya, and how the citizen has benefited from the scheme/plan. The study adopted quantitative survey research design. Primary data was collected through structured interviews/interview guide, self-administered questionnaires (Delivery and collection questionnaires), observation and check list. Secondary data was collected from Kenya government national housing policies, national development plans, research publications, internet among others. Quantitative data was summarized, categorized, interpreted and analyzed using Tables and percentages. Simple random sampling was used in this study. The researchers' target population of 218,766 and sample size of 384 was ideal for this method of sampling. Statistical package of social sciences (SPSS)

was used to analyze the data collected from the field. Correlation analysis was done on both dependent and independent variables with supply of electricity as the control group. Findings revealed that housing has never been a core area of government interest, the government does not drive and guide regional and local action on housing, lack of attempt by the government to broaden focus on housing policy and integrate it with wider economic, social and environmental goals, lack of good policy/subsidy mix and balance, lack of effective implementation strategies, poor promotion of Security of Tenure, inadequate supply of affordable land and infrastructure, inadequate housing finance system, poor utilization of local building materials and technologies, lack of support to small scale – construction activities/contractors, inappropriate standards and legislation and inadequate participation of communities in low-cost housing development, poor research and lack of public/private partnership on low-cost housing development.

Theme, Effiong, and Ekung (2015) conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of government housing policies on low-income housing delivery in Port Harcourt. Their aim was to determine whether government interventions translated into improved access to housing for the urban poor. They used a quantitative survey of 400 residents across multiple communities, with data analysed using SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that less than 15% of respondents benefited from government housing schemes, largely due to poor targeting, low awareness, and weak implementation. Most households continued to depend on informal rental markets, indicating that while policies existed on paper, they were largely ineffective in practice.

### METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey design and was carried out in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. This study focuses specifically on three selected waterfront communities (Abonnema, Marine-base and Elechi waterfronts) in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, rather than the entire city. The targeted population for this study consists of selected key professionals in the construction industry, development control officers and selected heads residing in residential buildings in Port Harcourt. To ensure representativeness, a stratified sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 399 respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire of closed-ended questions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, mean score and relative index while Kruskal Wallis H-test was conducted to test the significance of the effect of government housing policies and programmes in improving residential housing conditions in Port Harcourt.

### RESULT

**Table 1: Effectiveness of Government Housing Policies and Programmes in Improving Residential Housing Conditions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State**

S/N	Variables	$\bar{x}$	RII	Rank
1	Am aware of government waterfront redevelopment programmes in Port Harcourt	3.94	.57	6 <sup>th</sup>
2	Government housing programmes are accessible to the residents in the area	3.86	.53	8 <sup>th</sup>
3	The procedures for benefiting from government housing schemes are transparent and fair.	3.55	.59	15 <sup>th</sup>
4.	Government housing programmes are affordable to low- and middle-income earners.	3.78	.67	10 <sup>th</sup>
5.	The cost of renting or purchasing government housing units is reasonable.	3.40	.56	17 <sup>th</sup>
6.	Government housing policies have improved the structural quality of residential buildings.	4.10	.62	2 <sup>nd</sup>
7.	Government interventions have reduced overcrowding in residential areas.	3.78	.51	9 <sup>th</sup>
8.	Government regulations have improved compliance with building standards	4.06	.54	3 <sup>rd</sup>
9.	Government housing programmes have improved access to basic infrastructure (water, roads, drainage and electricity)	4.15	.62	1 <sup>st</sup>
10.	Public housing estates are adequately provided with essential services.	3.74	.68	11 <sup>th</sup>
11.	Drainage and environmental sanitation have improved due to government intervention	3.66	.62	13 <sup>th</sup>
12.	Government housing projects are properly maintained after completion.	3.90	.64	7 <sup>th</sup>
13.	There's effective monitoring of housing development by relevant government agencies.	4.02	.66	4 <sup>th</sup>
14.	Government housing policies have significantly improved residential housing conditions in Port Harcourt.	3.36	.58	18 <sup>th</sup>

15.	Government has made housing loan/ mortgage facilities accessible to residents.	3.70	.70	12 <sup>th</sup>
16.	Government housing policies are effectively implemented	3.98	.54	5 <sup>th</sup>
17.	Approved housing projects are always completed	3.60	.73	14 <sup>th</sup>
18.	Residents are generally satisfied with Government housing programmes.	3.48	.61	16 <sup>th</sup>

Table 1 ranked the overall mean scores of the respondent's opinion on the effectiveness of government housing policies and programmes in improving residential housing conditions. Firstly ranked from the table was; Government housing programmes have improved access to basic infrastructure with mean of (4.15), this was followed closely by; government improving waterfront areas through redevelopment programmes with mean of (4.10, 2<sup>nd</sup>). Government regulations have improved compliance with building standards was ranked third with mean of (4.06), there's effective monitoring of housing development by relevant government agencies was ranked fourth with mean of (4.02), while government housing policies are effectively implemented was ranked fifth with mean of (3.98).

**Table 2: Mean Rank of Respondents on effect of Government housing policies and programmes on improving housing in Port Harcourt**

Variable	Rank sum (R)	Mean rank (R)	Rank (O <sup>2</sup> R)	variance (X <sup>2</sup> )	H <sub>cal</sub>	H <sub>critical</sub>
Building Professionals (A)	24544.3	160.4	22.68	2.94	5.991	
D.C.O (B)	3307.9	150.4	19.47			
Household Heads (C)	25994.7	172.2	24.13			

n= 326

Table 2 represents the ranking statistics, which indicates that Household Heads(C) has the highest mean rank of 172.2, followed by Building Professionals(A) with a mean rank of 160.4, while Development Control Officer(B) recorded the lowest mean rank of 150.4. This suggests that Household Heads(C) perceived the effects of government housing policies slightly higher than the other groups.

**Table 3: Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistics**

Test Parameter	Value
Kruskal-Wallis H (X <sup>2</sup> )	2.94
Degree of Freedom (df)	2
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)	0.230
Level of Significance (α)	0.05
Decision Rule	Reject H <sub>0</sub> if H <sub>cal</sub> > H <sub>critical</sub>
Decision	Accept H <sub>0</sub>

Table 3 presents the Kruskal-Wallis H-test conducted to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the responses of building professionals, development control officers, and household heads regarding the effects of government housing policies and programmes in improving housing conditions in Port Harcourt. However, the calculated Kruskal-Wallis H value of 2.94 is lower than the critical H value of 5.991 at 0.05 level of significance with 2 degree of freedom. Based on this decision rule, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted. This implies that there is no statistically significant difference in the response of respondents regarding the effects of government housing policies and programmes on the provision of adequate and affordable housing in Port Harcourt, River State. Their responses are significantly the same, that government housing policies and programmes has effect in improving housing conditions.

## DISCUSSION

This research looked at the effectiveness of government housing policies and programmes in improving residential housing conditions in Port Harcourt. From Table 1, it can be deduced that government housing programmes have improved access to basic infrastructure along with improving waterfront areas through redevelopment programmes. Government regulations have also improved compliance with building standards, the structural quality of residential buildings and has ensured effective monitoring of housing development by relevant government agencies. This implies that government housing policies are effectively implemented. The findings from Kruskal-Wallis Test as depicted in Table 3 highlight that there is no statistically significant difference in the response of the three categories of respondents regarding the effects of government housing policies and programmes in improving housing conditions in Port Harcourt waterfronts, River State. Their responses are significantly the same, that government housing policies and programmes has effect in improving residential housing conditions in waterfront communities.

This is in accordance with the study, UN Habitat (2018) which revealed that government intervention in housing aims to correct market failures, expand housing supply, improve housing quality, basic infrastructure, ensure effective monitoring of housing development and affordability for low- and middle-income households. FMHUD (2024) also revealed that at the federal level, initiatives such as the Renewed Hope Housing Programme were introduced to accelerate housing construction, improve the quality of residential housing and promote affordable homeownership, and leverage public private partnerships. Despite these policy intentions, Olotuah and Adedokun (2007) indicate that the effectiveness of these interventions is limited by urban population growth, housing demand and affordability. As revealed by Levy (2009), unless redevelopment integrates affordable housing and livelihood consideration, it can generate spatial and social exclusion. Inclusive waterfront planning and redevelopment must therefore balance economic opportunity with livelihood preservation and community heritage.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that government housing programmes improves access to basic infrastructure along with the structural quality of residential buildings and these policies/programmes have effect in improving housing conditions in waterfront areas. And although these programmes have enhanced access to infrastructure and improved building quality, their overall effectiveness in improving housing for all residents in waterfront settlements remain moderate.

The study recommends that government should increase funding and investment in housing development with specific emphasis on waterfront settlement upgrading and redevelopment projects to address housing inadequacy. Government should intensify slum upgrading programmes, including provision of basic infrastructure such as potable water, sanitation, drainage systems, and waste management in waterfront areas. Government should strengthen policy implementation and institutional coordination to ensure effective monitoring, enforcement, and sustainability of housing programmes in waterfront settlements.

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