

---

## HOUSING THE URBAN POOR IN NIGERIA THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION USING LESSONS FROM NAIROBI KENYA

**Adedayo Olatunde Folaranmi**

*Department of Architecture, School of Environmental Technology  
Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.*

---

**ABSTRACT:** *Migration of people to urban areas from the rural areas usually comes with its challenges in terms of infrastructural requirement and housing to cater for growing population. One of the challenges for the urban dwellers in Nigeria is that of adequate housing. The inability of the government to meet this demand has seen the people concerned seeking alternative solutions to housing need. The resulting settlements are usually unplanned hence becoming a challenge for government to manage in terms of providing infrastructure facilities. With the growing incidence of global warming and the attendant increase in flooding in most urban areas of Nigeria, especially between year 2000 and 2013, the safety of the people who live in slums have become a concern to the state governments due to issues of flooding and collapsed buildings. Government usually evicts such people and clear the settlement; however the people simply relocate to another area. The aim of this paper is to examine how community participation can be used to provide housing for the urban poor based on their living requirement, drawing from the experience of selected case studies from Kenya. The research method adopted for the study is a qualitative research method using case studies of selected communities in Kenya and selected communities in Nigeria. A comparative analysis is drawn with these communities. The research concludes by proposing how community participation process should be incorporated into provision of housing for the urban poor.*

**KEYWORDS:** community participation, housing, infrastructure, settlement, urban poor

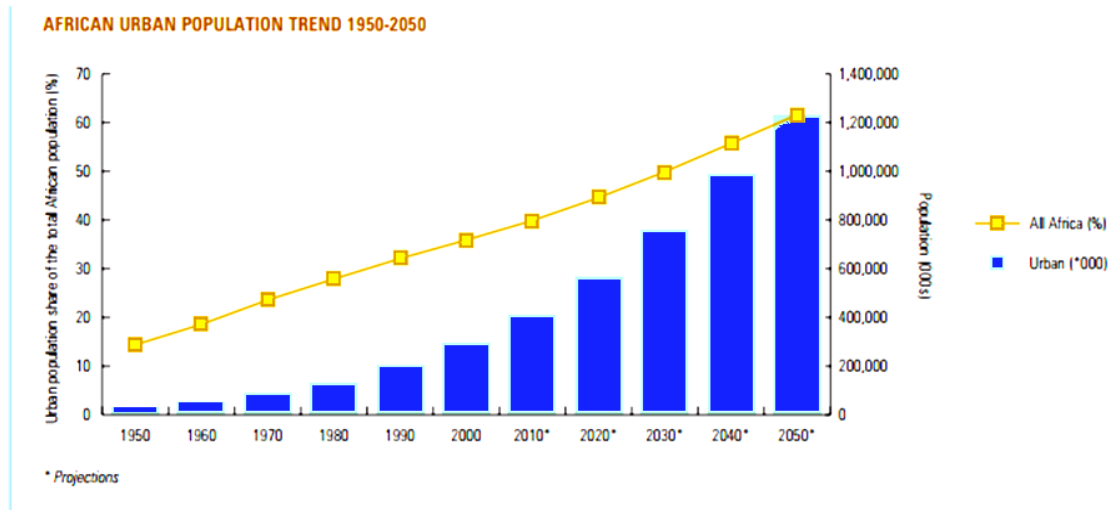
---

### INTRODUCTION

Infrastructural development in the urban centres in Nigeria is a continuous activity and includes provision of new roads, widening of existing roads, and provision of new office complexes, shopping malls, housing estates, recreational parks and stations. The major requirement for achieving these goals is the access to land within specific locations which in many cases are not available. The government is left with the option of acquiring the land from original owners and pay them compensation. This usually is the case when the land has been developed and the property owner has the titles to the said land. In cases where the development involves the provision of a new estate the government usually seeks for land that is at the peripheral of the urban centre. Unlike the case of city centre development the people usually found in these peripheral areas are usually the urban poor who had hitherto purchased the land from the local chiefs of the area or who just simply occupied the empty land and had stayed there for a long period which has now led to the growth of a settlement. The government in this type of case usually evicts these people and take possession of the land by invoking sections of the Land use Act (Plessis 2005, Amnesty International Report 2010). The people are then forced to relocate to other slums within the vicinity or are forced to newly designated areas by the government. Such areas are most often not provided with infrastructure. The people most affected are the urban poor who have come to the city in search of better means of livelihood.

These category of the urban poor, who operate in the informal sector, are major contributors towards running of the city however, they are the most neglected.

Urbanisation is believed to be on the rise within the last decade particularly in Africa (UN-Habitat, 2014), as shown in the figure below.



Africa's urban population in 2009 was 395 million – **40 %**.

In 2040 it is projected to 1 billion and to 1.23 billion in 2050 - **60 %**

Source: UN-Habitat, 2014

The infrastructure required to support such an increase in population is grossly inadequate. It is common to find people who hitherto were doing well in the rural areas based on the trade they were practicing who have financial difficulties when they relocate to the urban centres. The major problem that faces the urban poor is that of shelter (house), the options available for a new migrant to the urban area is to either squat with a family member, friend or live in a public space pending when he can afford to pay for an accommodation. According to Watson and McCarthy (1998) the number of people living in rental housing in developing countries is on the increase. This is a challenge for many developing countries government hence the formulation of different housing policies, UN-Habitat Report (2003).

The urban poor usually are found in areas referred to as slums or informal settlements which in most cases lack tenure, adequate infrastructure and structurally sound and safe houses. Whenever the city grows to meet these settlement the government begins to think of either relocating the settlement or upgrading it. In the cases of relocation of such settlement dwellers, the government builds a new estate and forces the people to move there or it provides a site and asks the people to move there. According to Angel (2000), developing countries during the 20<sup>th</sup> century usually constructed houses and got people to occupy them before the provision of infrastructure, this trend has been carried to the 21<sup>st</sup> century with private land owners doing the same.

The people at the receiving end of these actions are the urban poor, hence you find that quite a number of them usually bound together in any new settlement and provide housing that is neither safe nor properly planned as evident by the number of community groups they form within the settlements, Amnesty International Report (2010). The actions of these urban poor have negative effect to the city because their settlements usually pay less attention for

infrastructure provision in terms of road and drainages. With the experiences of the effect of climate change of which flooding is a major evidence, these settlements are usually worst hit in many developing countries. The places where the urban poor are found residing are places usually considered as inhabitable by governments hence considered cheap by the urban poor since oftentimes they do not pay for the land. According to Marcuse (2009), everybody has a right to the city and that the neglect of this right for some would lead to this group of people pushing for their right to the city to be recognised. A key issue in the right to city is that of right to housing which is not usually guaranteed for the urban poor. The continuous migration of rural-urban movement continues to ensure that the urban poor population increases and their housing need does not abate, while the solutions being provided do not solve the problem

### **Nature of Urban Poor Housing and Infrastructure in Nigeria**

In understanding the nature of urban poor in Nigeria, there is a need to examine the poverty level progression. It can be observed from Table 1 that there has been a steady increase in the population of those categorised as poor people in Nigeria and when this is compared with the 17 million housing deficit: it would be safe to conclude that the poor are the most affected in terms of housing needs.

Table 1: Relative Poverty Headcount from 1980-2010

<b>Year</b>	<b>Poverty Incidence (%)</b>	<b>Estimated Population (Million)</b>	<b>Population in poverty (Million)</b>
1980	27.2	65	17.1
1985	46.3	75	34.7
1992	42.7	91.5	39.2
1996	65.6	102.3	67.1
2004	54.4	126.3	68.7
2010	69.0	163	112.47

Source: National Bureau of Statistics. HNLSS 2010

The houses built by the urban poor are usually not processed through the planning authorities in Nigeria because oftentimes they simply begin construction with the concept of a temporary building. The nature of the area these urban poor live are usually referred to as slums or squatter settlements. According to Jibril (2009) little sympathy is shown to squatter settlements and by extension slums by government of different countries because they perceive such areas as being areas for crime and many social vices.

These areas in Nigeria usually have poor access road, little or no drainages, poor houses and lack basic social infrastructures, (Olotuah & Taiwo 3013). Omirin (2003), stated that many cities in Nigeria can be described as squalid owing to the fact that they are restricted to areas without service and infrastructure and in many cases the dwellers are left to seek alternatives in providing these services. It concluded that the lack of access to land within the city for the urban poor has led to the development of this type of settlements. According to Bello (2009), as the city population grows and the demand for land increases the poor are left with no other option than to occupy the poor areas of the city such as marshy sites, dumpsite and areas considered unsafe. An example of how some of the streets appear during the dry season is shown in Plate I where the waste water is emptied direct on the road and hence creating a channel.

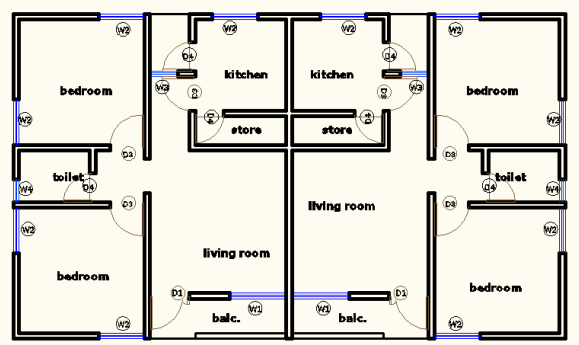


**Plate I:** Unplanned drainage cutting through the road Barkin-Sale area of Niger State, Nigeria  
Source: Author's fieldwork 2013

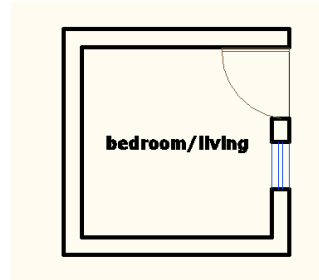
The demand for land in the urban centres in Nigeria is one that is quite high and the land cost in Nigeria is one that oftentimes does not favour the poor, (Anugwom, 2001). Whenever there is demand for land as the cities grow the area of attraction is usually the urban poor settlements. The Governments usually invokes “overriding public interest” clauses to enable it claim the land where the poor live to develop. This action usually forces the urban poor to seek new lands or in some cases revolt against the system. Their housing need is always a challenge for those involved in city planning especially when it involves resettlement, upgrading, relocation or creation of new housing schemes. The housing schemes provided in the name of housing the urban poor never get to them or in some cases they just meet their needs.

### **Housing Urban Poor schemes in Nigeria**

The approaches to housing the urban poor in Nigeria by several Governments in the past both at the State and Federal levels have been at slum and squatter settlements clearance and the provision of supposed better houses for the initial occupants even though the poor might not have access to the new houses. According to Asojo (2010) it cited slum clearance redevelopment for the slum dwellers in Lagos which was not accessible to the original slum dwellers because the cost of acquiring the new houses was high. This is probably why the urban poor do not believe they would be considered in any housing development that seeks to cater for them by the government. Slum Upgrading is a tool that many Nigerian governments have claimed to have used to cater for the housing need of the urban poor to the improvement of infrastructure such as roads and provision of pipe-borne water. According to Alagbe (2006) Site and Services has been another way of meeting the demand of housing by the urban poor. The problem is that the end recipient is usually not the targeted people because of the cost of acquiring it. The common scheme that is found in many States of Nigeria is the ‘Mass Housing Scheme’ which is often geared towards the poor people of the society on paper, however in practices it is still out of their reach, (Adedayo 2013). The cost of some of these houses range between 3 Million Naira to 5 Million Naira depending on the location, in many case cases these urban poor do not have access to housing finance. The design of the houses is usually more grandiose than the ones they currently occupy hence the lack of interest in some cases. Figure I.0 shows an example of the type of housing unit design usually provide for someone considered as urban poor by Government, as compared to figure 2.0 which is what they usually occupy.



**Figure 1.0:** Example of Floor Plan of a housing Unit in a Mass housing Estate in Kwara State Nigeria. Source: Adedayo (2013)



**Figure 2.0:** Example of by a typical urban poor. Source: Author's fieldwork (2014)

The approach of both State and Federal Government towards housing the urban poor has been Top-Down approach with little or no input from the supposed urban poor. The Top-Down approach is one that the government decides what the people need and provides for it. The people are left out of the process and are left to accept it while adapting to the house. In the case of Bottom-Up approach the scheme is driven by the target group in conjunction with the housing provider or government representative. The Top-Down approach has been the problem overtime and has created a high level of distrust between the urban poor and the Government. This is why an examination of the methods applied in selected case studies from Nairobi Kenya will aim at providing solutions that can be adapted to the Nigerian environment.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study examines the approaches used in Nairobi, Kenya towards providing housing for the Urban Poor through the use of Literature review and Direct Observation using the Case study method Approach. A field trip was undertaken to Nairobi in June 2013 and three slums were studied and four government agencies involved in housing provision for the urban poor were visited. One Non-governmental agency involved with the slum dwellers housing issues was also visited. Questions were asked regarding the various schemes in practice and pictures of some of the housing schemes were taken to support the observation. The results of the research are presented and discussed based on a comparative view with the Nigerian case and deductions are based on how they could be implemented in the Nigerian environment. The discussion is also based on selected case studies of the housing schemes and the Participatory approach adapted by some of the government agencies.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Kenya is a country that shares similar characteristics with Nigeria in terms of the period at which it got its Independence. In terms of housing urban poor, the country has large populations that live in slums and squatter settlements and land is also quite expensive. This is similar to the situation experienced in many cities in Nigeria however the difference is that their land tenure system is quite different from that of Nigeria but the approaches towards solving housing needs of the poor can be adapted.

**Kibera Case Study**

The Kibera slum is a very popular slum in Africa and around the world and it is known to house the urban poor who cannot afford the cost of either renting or owning a house in the good part of the city. The environment is quite poor and the basic infrastructures are not readily available. The need to improve the condition of the slum necessitated the clearance of the slum and replacement with newer houses that are stronger within a well planned environment. The approach in achieving this was not the regular method of serving people eviction notices and bringing in the bulldozers to clear the settlement. A community approach method was adopted to solve the problem of housing the inhabitants.

**Community Participation Approach:**

The different groups within the community were identified and based on the groupings representatives were selected by the people. The authorities engaged the community members through their selected representatives and several meetings were held to discuss the situation and also proffer solutions to the problems that were to arise. The leaders usually reported back to the people about the discussions with the government representatives hence the people felt they were being carried along. The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were also part of the committee and their function was to ensure that both sides did not short-change the other. The inhabitants agreed for the community to be zoned into groups with the understanding that the redevelopment was going to be done in phases. They also agreed to participate in the enumeration that was carried out within the settlement to determine the status of the residents. The community ensured that the results were published and displayed public for the people to verify. The location of the Scheme's office was at the settlement site hence there was access to the people and the meetings were held at this office venue.

**Lesson from community approach:**

The method adopted was a Bottom-Up approach which was quite different from the Top-Down approach as practiced in Nigeria hence the people readily accepted the findings and participated in the scheme. The verification process showed that the programme was fair, while the use of NGOs helped remove the suspicion of distrust from the inhabitants. The office location helped to gain the trust of the people. The enumeration ensured that only those who were members of the community could access the house when completed

**Decanting Site Option**

The nature and house types in the settlement were usually bungalows of either single room or two rooms connected with a door. The houses in the settlement were in row arrangement and they had toilets at the communal level or at the end of the row of rooms. This was responsible for the crowded nature witnessed in the settlement and the lack of availability of land to provide infrastructures that would have improved the settlement. In order to provide land for the infrastructure and improve planning of the settlements the option of high-rise buildings was adopted. A decanting site was provided for the people whose zone was being redeveloped to go and live in for the period of the redevelopment. The house type at the decanting site was five floors as shown in plate II while plate III is the redevelopment at the Kibera settlement. The concept was to allow for the people to begin to get acquainted with high rise form of living which would allow for a change of cultural behaviour regarding housing.



**Plate II:** House types at Decanting site for Kibera settlement  
Source: Author's fieldwork 2013



**Plate III:** House type at Redevelopment site for Kibera settlement  
Source: Author's fieldwork 2013

### **Lesson from Decanting Site approach:**

The decanting site buildings offered the inhabitants to opportunity to adapt to living in high-rise buildings; this would give them the opportunity to change their living pattern. The decanting site also ensured that while their initial settlement was being redeveloped they were not left homeless. The decanting site ensured that the housing provision for the poor could be achieved in phases hence removing evictions/homelessness.

### **Kambi Moto Settlement Case Study**

The Kambi Moto settlement housing scheme is quite similar to the Kibera case study the difference however is that in Kambi Moto the housing provision was by the people of the settlement. In this case study there was need to provide basic infrastructure and also improve the houses and provide new ones, the approach followed was for the community to meet and agree on the need for people to give up parts of their land and hence change their house type. This was achieved because they had existing local community group that met regularly and they took decisions as it affected the community, the involvement of the NGOs was to help coordinate them and assist with access to funds from the government as loans. The maximum height allowed for the house types was three (3) floors based on the construction method adopted.

### **House Type Developed:**

The inhabitants of Kambi Moto live in bungalows that were made of galvanised roofing sheets and these were built in row format. There were situations where some of the inhabitants owned a row of houses, in order to create space for the infrastructure, they agreed at one of their meetings to come up with an acceptable design that would suit everyone. The design that was adopted was one that had the living room, dining and kitchen combined as a single space on the ground floor, the first floor served as the bedroom while the second floor served as another bedroom which could be rented out to generate income to pay back the loan. Each house had a spiral staircase that is used to access the higher floors. The roof was concrete slab that allowed for them to use as area for outdoor activities such as washing and drying of clothes. The development of the house was on incremental basis as the house owner had the financial resources.



**Plate IV:** Finished House type at Kambi Moto settlement  
Source: Author's fieldwork 2013



**Plate V:** House type under construction at Kambi Moto Settlement  
Source: Author's fieldwork 2013

**Lesson from Incremental vertical housing solution:**

The house design was developed by the inhabitants using the Indian approach in the construction. The vertical nature of living ensured that the people were able to free up land for the provision of infrastructure. The incremental approach to the construction of the house meant the house could be built at the convenience of the house owner. The use of the community group to access loan and provide skilled labour for the construction ensured that the community participated fully in the housing provision. On The additional floors provided helped the house owners generate income through rent to pay back the loan on the house.

**Muungano Slum Dwellers Federation and Muungano Support Trust Partners to Claim Land Rights in Mukuru Slums - Railway Relocation Action Plan**

The case was a case of the community coming together to form the slum dwellers federation to ward off any form of forced eviction. The need for eviction of some of the settlement was that they built their houses within the buffer zone for the railway line. The set-back was put at Thirty metres (30M) but over the years the community had grown to meet the railway. The government decided to clear the slum and the people resisted. The case was taken to court and the community had to seek help from a Non-government agency. The NGO in working with the Federation of the slum dwellers came up with a redesign of the layout of the community and redefining of the set-backs. They developed new layout based on the data obtained from the field work that made use of the slum dwellers for enumeration. They also made use of satellite images to determine the spatial image of the settlement. There was also a forum for the verification of the data obtained from the field by the settlers. The NGO was able to broker a solution that saw to the reduction of the set-back for the railway line from 30M to 10M and this had a drastic effect on the number of houses that were required to be cleared and the amount needed to be paid out in compensation. The nature of the houses in this area hence changed as people could now develop without the fear of eviction.

**Lesson from Negotiations of Building Set-backs:**

The laws that require minimum setbacks and certain standards regarding the house types and property development were examined and they agreed that they could be reviewed to accommodate the present challenges. The reduction of the set-back from 30M to 10M was quite significant in the case. It implies that if the people could be organised into community base organisation or the existing community based organisations are given due recognition,



and with the right help from an NGOs or related civil society organisations, the impact of the any forced eviction or slum improvement can be minimized.

### **Integrating community participation in the process of housing urban poor**

In every community particularly the urban poor there is always a close knit level of organisation within them. In many of these communities they have been able to organise themselves into groups to either protect the community, provide social safety nets and also serve as a force for negotiation. This was apparent in many of the case studies examined in Nairobi. In Nigeria these community units also exist and perform similar functions. In meeting their housing needs the housing provider simply has to ensure that the NGOs and the community groups are carried along during the discussion for the provision of the housing. The NGOs will serve as arbiters between the government/housing provider and the community urban poor.

The urban poor have to be identified as individual communities or collective group, they require to be organised into a structured organisation to come up with agreed designs that suit their needs. In cases where community based organisations exist, they should be accorded due recognition and treated as stakeholders to the project. The architects that work in these types of schemes should be made to develop focus group sessions to discuss the various schemes available for the target group and seek the approval of the target group. The development of a feedback system between the urban poor and the housing developer or the government should be provided. Access to funding and repayment of the housing loan should be treated as organised community grouping as was the case in Kambi Moto settlement where the inhabitants had created a contributory system. The same "Adashi" scheme system operational in many urban poor communities could be used to provide collateral for the housing schemes.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The research has examined the experience of the urban poor communities in Nairobi Kenya with regards to housing provision. The study showed that the urban poor are usually located at the slum areas in urban centres since they provide them affordable accommodation and pier groups of similar ethnic group or are engaged in the same informal sector activity, and that they are consistently under threat of eviction. The people have developed workable housing schemes that suit their needs. It was discovered that community participation is key to the development and improvement of the housing situations in these settlements. The vertical form of building individual houses ensured that land became available for the provision of infrastructures to the settlement. The approach when compared to that of Nigeria where it is Top-Down approach without any form of input by the urban poor is an opportunity to meet the housing demand by the populace. The Planning standards in Nigeria have remained too high with a minimum plot size of 450m<sup>2</sup>. The redefining of set-backs for buildings is an approach that could be used to improve the quality and quantity of houses for the urban poor.

The paper recommends the following:

1. The concept of community participation is imbibed in the provision of housing the urban poor as this would afford them the opportunity to make significant input in the nature and type of design being provided for them.
2. In cases where there is a significant change from the format by which the people live from bungalow to high-rise then a transition process be put in place like the decanting site.

3. The urban poor should be encouraged to developed community based organisations or the existing ones given due recognition so as to present a common front in decision making and in liaising with NGOs and civil society organisations.

### References

- Adedayo, O.F. (2013). Customization of Housing Units on Mass Housing Estates on Nigeria: A Case Study of Kwara State. An unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to the Department of Architecture Federal University of Technology Minna, Niger State.
- Alagbe, O.A., 2006, Combating the Challenge of Rise in Urban Slums in Cities in Developing World: a Case Study of Lagos State. An International Conference on The Built Environment: Innovation Policy & Sustainable Development, Covenant university, Ota, Ogun State.
- Amnesty International Report (2010), 'Just Move Them' Forced Evictions in Port-harcourt, Nigeria.
- Angel, S. (2000), *Housing Policy Matters A global Analysis*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Anugwom, E.E. (2001). Privatization of workers' housing provision: the National Housing Fund (NHF) Scheme in Nigeria. An article Centre Africain de Formation et de Recherche Administratives pour le Developpement. Retrieved from <http://www.unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/CAFRAD/UNPAN017696.pdf> on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009, 21:35pm.
- Asojo, A. (2010). Sustainable Strategies for Housing the Urban Poor: A Case Study of Lagos, Nigeria. *edra41 Policy & The Environment*
- Bello, M.O. (2009). Squatter Settlement, Accessibility of Land and the Urban Poor FIG Working Week 2009 Surveyors Key Role in Accelerated Development Eilat, Israel, 3-8 May 2009
- Jibril, I.U. (2009). Squatter Resettlement/Relocation Programme in Abuja, Nigeria and the Issue of Land Title Security FIG Working Week 2009 Surveyors Key Role in Accelerated Development Eilat, Israel, 3-8
- Marcuse, P. (2009). From critical urban theory to the right to the city. *City Vol. 13, Nos. 2-3*, DOI: 10.1080/13604810902982177
- National Bureau of Statistics, (2010). Harmonised Nigeria Living Standard Survey.
- Omirin M M. (2003). Issues in Land Accessibility in Nigeria, *Land Management and Property Tax Reform in Nigeria*. Proceeding of National Workshop; organized by Department Of Estate Management, University of Lagos. 49-70
- Olotuah, A.O. & Taiwo, A.A. (2013). Housing the Urban Poor in igeria Through Low-Cost Housing Schemes. *International Journal of Physical and Human Geography, Vol.1, No.3, 1-8*
- Plessis J.D. (2005). The growing problem of forced evictions and the crucial importance of community-based, locally appropriate alternatives. *Environment and Urbanisation Vol17, No.1, 123-134*
- Watson, V. & McCarthy, M. (1998). Rental Housing Policy and the Role of the Household Rental Sector: Evidence from South Africa. *HABITAT ITNL, 2(1), 49-56*
- UN-Habitat, (2003). Rental Housing: An essential Option for the Urban poor in developing Countries. Retrieved from [www.unhabitat.org/housing/pub](http://www.unhabitat.org/housing/pub) on 11/04/2013
- UN-Habitat, (2013). UN4HABITAT Global Activities Report 2013. Retrieved from [www.mirror.unhabitat.org/pmss/getElectronicVersion.aspx?nr=3454&alt=1](http://www.mirror.unhabitat.org/pmss/getElectronicVersion.aspx?nr=3454&alt=1) on 12/05/2014