Eradicating Homelessness and Improving the Living Standards of the Poorest of the Poor in Greater Port Harcourt City, Nigeria

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Abstract:
Homelessness and poverty are significant challenges facing Greater Port Harcourt City in Nigeria. This paper discusses these issues and proposes a solution through the development of an inclusive and sustainable agropolitan residential housing project. The project aims to provide affordable housing for young unmarried, newly married, and married individuals with young children, falling within the income groups of 'No income,' 'Low Income,' and 'Lower Medium Income' as defined by the 2012 National Housing Policy Document (NHPD) of Nigeria. It will create sustainable, mainly agro-based livelihoods through integrated farming and other activities, such as real estate, power generation, waste management, and recycling. This will enable beneficiaries to take care of their housing and other needs while generating employment and revenue. The proposed housing project aligns with the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan and will complement the city's proposed beautiful townscape. The paper concludes that eradicating homelessness and improving the living standards of the poorest in Greater Port Harcourt City requires sustainable and inclusive housing solutions that provide access to employment and income-generating activities. A comprehensive and collaborative approach involving various stakeholders such as the government, private sector, and non-profit organizations is necessary to address this complex issue.

Keywords: homelessness, poverty, affordable housing, agropolitan housing, sustainable development.

Introduction
Homelessness and poverty are pervasive issues affecting millions of people globally, including in Nigeria's urban areas such as Greater Port Harcourt City. The region's high level of poverty and homelessness is primarily due to the lack of affordable housing, access to basic services, and job opportunities. According to the International Trade Centre (ITC, 2006), small-scale farmers and their rural and peri-urban communities are stuck in a "cycle of equilibrium" that limits their ability to invest and take risks, resulting in low productivity and low market orientation, which perpetuates poverty and hinders access to sustainable housing and good quality of life.

This need for sustainable and affordable housing across a range of incomes has become a global
concern, with residents, businesses, elected officials, and community stakeholders all affected. The shortage of housing can impact economic development, education, health, the environment, transportation, and other aspects of the community.

In Nigeria, formal intervention in the housing sector dates back to the colonial administration after the outbreak of the bubonic plague in 1928 in Lagos. This led to the establishment of the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB), which initiated public housing programmes (Onibokun, 1975; Aribigbola, 2000). The policies at that time focused on the provision of expatriate quarters and housing for selected indigenous staff in the Railways, Marine, Police, and Armed Forces (Aribigbola, 2000). Efforts were made to construct senior civil servant quarters in the capital city of Lagos and regional headquarters like Kaduna, Ibadan, and Enugu, while providing some rent subsidies and housing loans (Bello, 2019). However, these policies were modest and aimed at addressing the housing problem at a national scale rather than at the state or local government level (Omange & Udegbe, 2000).

As highlighted by Onyike (2012), the Nigerian government has struggled to deliver sustainable and affordable housing to a majority of its citizens, particularly those in the “No and Low income” groups. Ademiluyi (2010) notes that housing policies have not met targets for affordable housing delivery to low-income groups, and the high population growth rate and unemployment exacerbate the housing deficit. Ibem and Amole (2010) identify factors such as the non-availability of mortgage loans, high interest rates, inadequate infrastructure, and difficulties in obtaining building plan approvals and Certificates of Occupancy (C of O) as responsible for the failure of housing policies and programmes to deliver affordable housing.

According to Choguill (2007), sustainable and affordable housing aims to improve the quality of life of individuals and promote stability, safety, and a healthy environment with basic services. To be sustainable, housing initiatives must consider the needs of households whose incomes are insufficient to access appropriate housing in the market without assistance. Sustainable housing must also be economically feasible, socially acceptable, affordable, technologically feasible, and environmentally friendly. Choguill (2007) emphasizes that sustainable development must help the poor, ensure cost-effective development that does not reduce productivity in the long term, address disease control issues, food security, clean water, and shelter for all, and encourage community participation.

According to Bonnie and Kelsey (2015), the creation of sustainable housing communities requires the collaboration of innovative thinkers, recognized leaders, policy makers, philanthropists, developers, business leaders, nonprofit organizations, financiers, city officials, attorneys, and many more who are driven by a collective desire to transform communities, improve the lives of residents of under-served neighborhoods, end a cycle of intergenerational poverty, and set a new course for cities across countries.

Agropolitan Housing Development, a concept proposed by Friedmann and Douglass (1978), has become a means of sustainable housing provision that meets the objectives of social housing provision and poverty alleviation. It involves housing development associated with agro-based development and demands the collaboration of key stakeholders such as individuals, developers, business leaders, government, non-governmental organizations, and other interest groups who are driven by a collective desire to transform communities and improve the lives of residents of under-served neighborhoods.

Building on this goal, the Rivers State government of Nigeria embarked on a vision in 2008 to build a thriving, economically vibrant and diverse world-class competitive and attractive model Garden cum Tourism city that will improve the lives of its residents, promote sustainable development, security, and good health, and enhance viable economic global integration (Ede et al., 2011). The Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan was therefore
prepared by a South African firm called Arcus GIBB to co-ordinate and integrate a number of projects in the direction of the overall vision, addressing the need for urban renewal and transformation of the older city and the building of a new city for the 21st century with high urban quality and planned open spaces (GPHCMP, 2008). The Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) was then established to facilitate the implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan and build the New City. The GPHCDA was established as a regulatory body to ensure the development of sustainable housing communities that are inclusive and self-sustainable (Ede et al., 2011). One of the projects under the GPHCDA is the Public Private Partnership arrangement for the creation of an all-inclusive and sustainable agropolitan residential housing development. The project is to be operated on a private sector model and will successfully engage even the poorest of the poor, providing access to decent affordable housing, employment, and revenue generation through conscious involvement in agriculture, light support industries, real estate activities, power generation and distribution, waste management, and recycling. This study is poised to discuss this possible strategy for eradicating homelessness and improving the living standards of the poorest of the poor in Greater Port Harcourt City.

![Figure 1. Map of the Study Area](source: GPHC Master Plan, 2019)

**Statement of Problem**

In Nigeria, the implementation of the 2012 National Housing Policy Document’s Social Housing program has not been successful. The allocation of ‘low-cost housing’ or ‘mass housing’ has been inefficient and manipulated; resulting in a majority of units being allocated to medium and high-income groups (Samson & Según, 2019). Despite several attempts by the
Rivers state government to reduce homelessness, efforts have been insufficient and only targeted towards government workers. As a result, the bulk of the population comprised of low-income earners, still lack adequate, affordable, and acceptable housing accommodations. This issue has proven to be a challenging task for various tiers of government in Nigeria. The Greater Port Harcourt City is not an exception with a high level of poverty and homelessness, which is a significant challenge today. Many families and individuals are struggling to find affordable housing, access basic services, and secure stable employment. This has led to a cycle of poverty, where individuals and families are unable to meet their basic needs and improve their living standards. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop and implement strategies that address these issues.

**Aim of the Study**

The aim of this paper is to explore possible strategies for eradicating homelessness and improving the living standards of the poorest in Greater Port Harcourt City.

**Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To identify the root causes of homelessness and poverty in Greater Port Harcourt City.
2. To examine successful strategies implemented in other regions to address homelessness and poverty.
3. To discuss possible strategies for eradicating homelessness and improving the living standards of the poorest in Greater Port Harcourt City.
4. To highlight the role of various stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and non-profit organizations, in addressing homelessness and poverty in the region.

**The Study Area**

In 2008, the Rivers State Government of Nigeria developed a master plan for the contiguous communities surrounding the old Port Harcourt. This master plan encompasses eight Local Government Areas of Rivers State, including the entire Port Harcourt Municipality and parts of Obio/Akor, Ikwerre, Etche, Oyigbo, Eleme, Ogu/Bolo, and Okrika Local Government Areas (as shown in Fig. 1). The main objective of the plan was to provide housing for a projected population of about two million people (Ede et al., 2011).

**Literature Review**

**Concept of Homelessness**

Homelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue that affects individuals and families worldwide. At its core, homelessness refers to the state of not having a safe, stable, and appropriate place to live. Homelessness can result from a variety of factors, including poverty, job loss, mental illness, substance abuse, and systemic inequalities.

Here are some definitions of homelessness:

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (2019) defines homelessness as ‘an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence’.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2021) defines homelessness as ‘a state of being in which a person lacks safe, stable, and appropriate nighttime residence’.

Dennis Culhane, a homelessness researcher, defines homelessness as ‘a lack of access to adequate housing that is affordable, safe, and secure’ (Culhane, 2003).

The United Nations (2020) define homelessness as ‘a person or household that does not have access to, or the ability to acquire, safe, secure, habitable, and affordable housing on a consistent basis’.
Barbara Poppe, a homelessness policy expert, defines homelessness as 'the absence of a place to live' (Poppe, 2011).

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2017) defines homelessness as 'the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means, and ability of acquiring it'.

These definitions highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of homelessness. Homelessness is a problem that can have profound negative effects on individuals and communities. People experiencing homelessness may face a range of challenges, including poor health outcomes, limited access to basic services, and social isolation. Homelessness can also contribute to social problems such as crime, drug use, and public health concerns.

While homelessness is often thought of as an urban problem, it is also prevalent in rural areas. Rural homelessness can be particularly challenging due to the lack of available resources, including housing and social services.

The Concept of Poverty

Poverty refers to a condition in which individuals or households lack the resources, income, and capabilities necessary to meet their basic needs and enjoy a minimum standard of living. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon characterized by a severe lack of resources that prevent individuals and households from meeting their basic needs, including food, water, shelter, healthcare, education, and information. Poverty also represents a denial of choices and opportunities and is a violation of human dignity.

Here are some definitions of poverty:

The World Bank (2020) defines poverty as 'a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information'.

Amartya Sen, an economist, defines poverty as 'the deprivation of basic capabilities to function effectively as a human being' (Sen, 1999).

The United Nations (2018) defines poverty as 'a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity'.

The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2021) define poverty as 'a deprivation of those things that are necessary for human well-being, including health, education, and living standards'.

Peter Townsend, a sociologist, defines poverty as "an insufficiency of resources to meet material and cultural needs or to participate fully in the social life of the community (Townsend, 1979).

These definitions highlight the multidimensional nature of poverty and emphasize the importance of meeting basic human needs and promoting human dignity. Poverty is not just a lack of income, but a lack of access to essential goods and services that enable individuals to participate fully in society and lead fulfilling lives.

There are different types of poverty, including absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to a lack of resources that is severe enough to endanger life or health, while relative poverty refers to a situation in which a person or household is poor in comparison to the broader society in which they live.

Poverty can result from a variety of factors, including limited access to education and job opportunities, social inequalities, discrimination, and economic policies that favor certain groups over others. Poverty can have severe negative effects on individuals and communities, including poor health outcomes, limited access to basic services, social isolation, and vulnerability to violence and exploitation.

Strategies Defined

Strategies refer to a set of actions, plans, or tactics designed to achieve a specific goal or objective. In other words, strategies are the intentional and systematic plans put in place to achieve a desired outcome. Strategies can be developed for various purposes, including business, marketing, education, health, and social development.

Strategies have been defined in various ways by different authors. Here are some definitions:
Chandler and Werther (2010) define strategies as ‘plans or designs for the allocation of an organization's resources to pursue its goals and objectives’.

Mintzberg and Waters (1985) define strategies as ‘patterns in a stream of decisions’.

Porter (1996) define strategies as ‘a broad formula for how a business is going to compete, what its goals should be, and what policies will be needed to carry out those goals’.

Ansoff (1991) define strategies as ‘a common thread, a consistent pattern, a unifying theme that gives coherence and direction to the actions and decisions of an individual or an organization’.

According to Jick and Peiperl (2011), strategies are ‘actions taken to achieve specific long-term goals that have been formulated to achieve a stated mission’.

These definitions highlight the importance of having a plan or pattern of actions designed to achieve a specific goal or objective. Strategies involve the allocation of resources, decision-making, and policies that guide an organization or individual towards their desired outcome. Strategies involve identifying the current situation or problem, setting specific and achievable goals, identifying the resources and capacities needed to achieve those goals, developing a plan of action, and monitoring progress towards the goals. Successful strategies require a deep understanding of the context, stakeholders, and potential barriers that may impede progress towards the desired outcome.

In social development, strategies can be developed to address poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, among other challenges.

**Concept of Agropolitan and Housing**

Saefulhakim (2004) introduced the term ‘agropolitan,’ a combination of the Latin words ‘agro’ and ‘metropolis,’ where ‘agro’ refers to agriculture and ‘metropolis’ refers to a linkage of different community activities. Essentially, the agropolitan concept delivers essential agro-based economic centers to either rural or urban areas. The term ‘agropolitan’ is commonly used with other words to convey specific meanings related to linkages and agriculture, such as agropolitan development, agropolitan housing, agropolitan districts, and agropolitan economy.

The agropolitan concept was originally proposed by Friedmann and Douglass (1978) as a strategy to meet the basic needs of communities. Friedmann identified three necessary conditions for successful agropolitan development. Firstly, rural communities must be integrated and territorially closed. Secondly, communal ownership of land and water resources is essential. Finally, access to social power must be equally distributed.

Friedmann believed that agropolitan centers are the smallest units capable of providing for the basic needs of all inhabitants with few resources imported from outside the center. An agropolitan center can have a population density of 200 persons per square kilometer of cultivated land and a total population as low as 2,000, as seen in South Vietnam. For rural areas, the population of an agropolitan center can range from 15,000 to 60,000, depending on the country’s definition of rural areas, while maintaining a face-to-face governance of agropolitan affairs (Friedmann, 1985; Ikiriko & Edmund, 2021).

Agropolitan housing delivery is aimed at creating affordable and sustainable housing developments that are closely integrated with agro-based activities. This concept combines social housing provision, as described by Burkey (2005), with self-help and independent agricultural development, as proposed by Friedmann (1985). The aim is for agro-development to create employment, generate revenue, and provide affordable housing.

**Methodology**

Research Design: The research design adopted for the study was a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods.

Population and Sampling: The study population consisted of professionals in the built
environment, including the Director of Development Control at the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority, Directors of the Ministry of Urban Development and Physical Planning, Housing and Property Development Authority, and managers of selected Primary Mortgage Institutions. The study had four target populations: members of occupational sub-groups for Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), development professionals for Key Informant Interviews (KIIIs), household heads in selected communities of GPHC, and relevant public officials for Individual Depth Interviews (IDIs). FGDs were conducted with 40 members across all occupational sub-groups in each of the eight selected communities, totaling 320 participants. For KIIIs, two members were judgmentally selected from each of the following development professions: urban and regional planners, architects, estate surveyors, land surveyors, quantity surveyors, and engineers. A stratified multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for Population 3, which involved household heads in selected communities of GPHC. Stage 1 involved obtaining a 10% sample of component communities in each stratum, and Stage 2 involved obtaining the appropriate number of households to be studied using the Taro Yamane formula at a precision level of 5%. Participants of the self-sustainable agropolitan residential housing development must fall within the income groups of “No income” (less than the minimum wage of N30,000 monthly), “Low Income” (N30,000 to N60,000 monthly) and “Lower Middle” (N61,000 -90,000 monthly) adopting thirty thousand Naira as the national minimum wage. The percentage for which analysis was made is respondents with monthly household income of less than N100,000 which includes the ‘no income’, ‘low income’ and ‘lower middle income’ brackets.

Data Collection
Quantitative Data Collection: The study uses a structured survey questionnaire to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was administered to the sampled households, and collected information on demographics, housing conditions, income, employment, education, health, and access to social services.

Qualitative Data Collection: The study relied on desktop reviews of relevant literatures, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to collect qualitative data. The interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with individuals and families affected by homelessness and poverty, as well as with relevant stakeholders such as government officials, representatives of non-profit organizations, and private sector actors. The interviews and focus group discussions explored the experiences of participants, as well as their perceptions of the root causes of homelessness and poverty, and potential solutions to these issues.

Data Analysis: The data collected through the survey, interviews, and focus group discussions were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS, while the qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results and Discussions
The Root Causes of Homelessness and Poverty in Greater Port Harcourt City
Homelessness and poverty in Greater Port Harcourt, Nigeria are complex issues that have multiple root causes. Several authors in related literatures have looked at the root causes of homelessness and poverty in Greater Port Harcourt. The points they raised are as follows:

1. Lack of Affordable Housing: The lack of affordable housing is a major contributor to homelessness and poverty in Greater Port Harcourt. Many people are unable to afford the high cost of housing, particularly in urban areas, and end up living in informal settlements or on the streets (Ogundele, Ojo & Adenuga, 2020).

2. Unemployment and Underemployment: Unemployment and underemployment are major drivers of poverty in Greater Port Harcourt. Many people are unable to find stable employment or are employed in low-paying jobs
that do not provide a living wage (Okoye & Onyebuchi, 2019).

3. Inadequate Social Services: Inadequate social services, such as healthcare, education, and social welfare, can contribute to poverty and homelessness in Greater Port Harcourt. Many people are unable to access basic services and lack the resources they need to improve their economic situation (Adeboyejo, 2016).

4. Conflict and Displacement: Conflict and displacement can also contribute to homelessness and poverty in Greater Port Harcourt. People who are forced to flee their homes due to conflict or other reasons may end up living in informal settlements or on the streets (UNHCR, 2020).

5. Corruption and Poor Governance: Corruption and poor governance can exacerbate poverty and homelessness in Greater Port Harcourt. Resources that are intended to support social services and poverty alleviation programs may be misappropriated, and government policies may not effectively address the needs of the poorest populations (Akindele & Oyebisi, 2020).

6. Lack of Access to Credit: Lack of access to credit can also contribute to poverty in Greater Port Harcourt. Many people are unable to access loans or other financial services, which limits their ability to start businesses or invest in their own economic development (Ogbokor, Uche & Ukpere, 2017).

7. Gender Inequality: Gender inequality is a major driver of poverty in Greater Port Harcourt. Women are often more vulnerable to poverty due to limited access to education, employment, and financial resources (Onah & Amadi, 2017).

8. Environmental Degradation: Environmental degradation can also contribute to poverty and homelessness in Greater Port Harcourt. For example, natural disasters such as flooding have severely displaced millions of populations and destroyed homes and infrastructure, exacerbating existing poverty (Ezebilo & Nwokoro, 2019).

9. Cultural Practices and Beliefs: Cultural practices and beliefs can also contribute to poverty and homelessness in Greater Port Harcourt. For example, stigmatization of certain groups may limit their access to education or employment opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty (Ikeanyiibe, 2019).

10. Inequality and Marginalization: Finally, inequality and marginalization are important root causes of poverty and homelessness in Greater Port Harcourt. Populations that are marginalized or excluded from mainstream society, such as people with disabilities or ethnic minorities, may face additional barriers to accessing social services and economic opportunities (UNDP, 2020).

Successful Strategies Implemented in Other Regions in Addressing Homelessness and Poverty

Here is some related literature on successful strategies implemented in other regions to address homelessness and poverty:

1. Housing First: Housing First is an approach that provides homeless individuals with immediate access to permanent, affordable housing, followed by supportive services. This approach has been implemented successfully in several regions, including Utah, where it led to a 91% reduction in chronic homelessness (Tsemberis, 2010, Tsemberis, Gulcur & Nakae, 2016).

2. Conditional Cash Transfers: Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) are cash payments provided to low-income households on the condition that they fulfill certain requirements, such as ensuring that their children attend school or receive regular medical check-ups. CCTs have been implemented successfully in several countries, including Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia, and have been shown to have positive impacts on poverty reduction and health outcomes (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009).

3. Microfinance: Microfinance is a financial service that provides small loans and other financial services to low-income individuals and communities. Microfinance has been implemented successfully in several regions,
including Bangladesh, where the Grameen Bank has provided microfinance services to millions of poor households, leading to significant improvements in household income and poverty reduction (Khandker, Samad & Ali, 2010).

4. Community-led Development: Community-led development is an approach that empowers local communities to identify their own development priorities and implement their own solutions. This approach has been implemented successfully in several regions, including Cambodia, where community-led development has led to improvements in health, education, and economic opportunities for poor communities (Chambers, 1997).

5. Social Protection Programs: Social protection programs, such as social pensions and universal health coverage, provide financial support and access to basic services to poor and vulnerable populations. These programs have been implemented successfully in several countries, including Brazil, where the Bolsa Familia program has led to significant reductions in poverty and inequality (Barros, Ferreira & Vega, 2010).

6. Public-Private Partnerships: Public-private partnerships (PPPs) involve collaboration between government and private sector entities to address social and economic challenges, including homelessness and poverty. PPPs have been implemented successfully in several regions, including India, where PPPs have been used to deliver affordable housing and basic services to low-income communities (Kundu, 2016).

7. Education and Skills Development: Education and skills development are key strategies for addressing poverty and homelessness by providing individuals with the tools they need to succeed in the labor market. Programs that provide vocational training and job placement services have been implemented successfully in several regions, including Kenya, where the Youth Enterprise Development Fund provides financing and training to young entrepreneurs (Adekanye, Gertler & Ssewamala, 2014).

8. Empowering Women and Girls: Empowering women and girls is another important strategy for addressing poverty and homelessness. Programs that provide education and economic opportunities to women and girls have been implemented successfully in several regions, including Bangladesh, where the BRAC Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents program has provided vocational training and financial support to adolescent girls (Chowdhury, Alamgir & Hossain, 2016).

9. Participatory Budgeting: Participatory budgeting is an approach that involves local communities in the decision-making process for public spending. This approach has been implemented successfully in several regions, including Porto Alegre, Brazil, where participatory budgeting has led to improvements in social services and infrastructure in low-income communities (Avritzer, 2009).

10. Community Land Trusts: Community land trusts (CLTs) are nonprofit organizations that acquire and hold land in trust for the benefit of the community. CLTs can provide affordable housing and other community amenities, while also promoting community development and empowerment. CLTs have been implemented successfully in several regions, including the United States, where they have been used to provide affordable housing to low-income communities (Davis, 2010).

The list of successful strategies may be many but these are germane among them. Successful strategies often involve a combination of social, economic, and environmental interventions that address the root causes of poverty and homelessness, empower local communities, and provide access to basic services and financial resources. These successful strategies highlight the importance of community engagement, collaboration between government and private sector entities, and investments in education, skills development, and empowerment to address homelessness and poverty in a sustainable and effective manner.
Possible Strategies for Eradicating Homelessness and Poverty in the Study Area

There is a growing body of literature on strategies for eradicating homelessness and improving the living standards of the poorest of the poor. Based on the related literature, here are some possible strategies for eradicating homelessness and improving the living standards of the poorest of the poor in Greater Port Harcourt City:

1. Affordable Housing: Building and providing affordable housing for low-income families and individuals is a key strategy for addressing homelessness and improving living standards. This can be done through public-private partnerships, community land trusts, or other innovative models.

2. Job Creation and Skills Development: Implementing job creation and skills development programs to help individuals acquire the skills they need to secure employment and increase their income. This can be done through vocational training, job placement services, and entrepreneurship programs.

3. Social Protection Programs: Implementing social protection programs, such as cash transfers, food assistance, and health insurance, to support the poorest of the poor and reduce their vulnerability to economic shocks.

4. Empowering Women and Girls: Implementing programs that provide education and economic opportunities to women and girls, who are often the most vulnerable to poverty and homelessness.

5. Community Participation and Engagement: Engaging and empowering communities to participate in the development and implementation of poverty reduction strategies, including participatory budgeting and community-driven development initiatives.

6. Access to Basic Services: Ensuring access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare, which are critical for improving living standards and reducing poverty.

7. Policy and Institutional Reforms: Implementing policy and institutional reforms to address the root causes of poverty and homelessness, such as land tenure issues, inadequate social safety nets, and limited access to finance.

These strategies could be implemented in a coordinated and comprehensive manner to ensure their effectiveness in eradicating homelessness and improving the living standards of the poorest of the poor in Greater Port Harcourt City. This paper argues that an inclusive and self-sustaining agropolitan residential housing development implemented through a public-private partnership arrangement anchored on a private management model will deliver the solution.

The Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan was designed to address two important objectives: firstly, to revitalize the older city through urban renewal, and secondly, to develop a new city from the available land spaces that have not yet been developed. The plan aimed to create a modern, 21st-century city with good roads, ample open spaces, and a healthy environment, which could serve as a model for other African countries to follow. The Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) was established therefore in 2009 to facilitate the implementation of the plan and to build the new city.

Many proposals for development programs and projects have been put forward since the establishment of GPHCDA, all of which focus on utilizing available land space. One of these proposals is the creation of an inclusive and self-sustaining agropolitan residential housing development through a public-private partnership arrangement. This model will provide affordable housing, employment, and revenue generation through conscious involvement in agriculture, light support industries, real estate activities, power generation and distribution, waste management, and recycling.

This agropolitan residential housing development is envisioned as an all-inclusive and sustainable community that will accommodate...
low, middle, and no-income individuals and families. It will create employment opportunities through agro-based activities, while also contributing to the overall aesthetic of Greater Port Harcourt City. The development is expected to attract energetic individuals and families who are willing to engage in integrated farming, livestock production, poultry farming, pig farming, snail farming, rabbit farming, beekeeping, aquaculture, and floriculture.

A field investigation was done to see how possible it would be able to deliver homes to the homeless and jobs to the jobless. Its output was interesting. First was government demand for land from individual communities.

**Percentage Distribution of Respondents’ Monthly Household Income Bracket**

The Agropolitan Housing Development project is designed to be inclusive, targeting individuals and households with "no income", "low income", and "lower middle income". As a result, only those respondents (and households) falling into income brackets 1 to 4 in Table 1, which adds up to 258, are eligible for further analysis concerning their opinions and perceptions of the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No.</th>
<th>Income Bracket (₦)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Less than 30,000</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30,000 - 49,999</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>50,000 - 69,999</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>70,000 - 99,999</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>100,000 - 129,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>130,000 - 159,999</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>160,000 - 189,999</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>332</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Enwin & Ikiroko, 2020

**Tenure Status**

Table 2 presents the percent distribution of tenure status among the survey respondents. The majority of respondents (56.9%) indicated that they were renters, while 19.1% were home owners. A significant percentage (16.0%) reported living with others and not paying rent or mortgage, and only 0.4% reported living with others and joining in the payment of rent or mortgage. There were also 7.6% missing cases.

This table provides valuable information on the housing tenure status of the survey respondents. The high percentage of renters (56.9%) suggests that there may be a lack of affordable housing options in the area. It also indicates that a significant proportion of the population may not have access to the benefits of homeownership, such as building equity and stable housing costs.

The percentage of individuals living with others and not paying rent or mortgage (16.0%) could be an indication of overcrowding or shared living arrangements, which could impact the quality of housing and living conditions. The low percentage of individuals living with others and joining in the payment of rent or mortgage (0.4%) may indicate a lack of shared housing options or a preference for independent living arrangements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Home Owner</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Renter</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Living with others and not paying rent or mortgage</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Living with others and joining with payment of rent or mortgage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows the distribution of the number of bedrooms in the homes of respondents. The majority of the respondents (42.4%) reported having one bedroom in their homes, while 29.8% reported having two bedrooms, and 20.6% reported having three bedrooms. Only a small proportion of respondents (3.4%) reported having four bedrooms in their homes, while no respondents reported having five bedrooms. The missing data was only reported by 3.6% of the respondents.

### Table 3. Number of Bedrooms in Respondents’ Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-Bedroom</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2-Bedrooms</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3-Bedrooms</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4-Bedrooms</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5-Bedrooms</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Missing Data</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4. The Reasons Why Current Home Does Not Meet Household Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Residents home condition</th>
<th>First Mention (N=258)</th>
<th>Second Mention (N=258)</th>
<th>Third Mention (N=258)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Accommodation is too small</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unsuitable to physical needs</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>House Needs major repair</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Accommodation is too large</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Temporary accommodation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Need to live close to employment</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Need to live close to relatives /family</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Need to live closer to career or to give care</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Want to live independently</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Being harassed</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>No space</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Missing Cases</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This data provides insights into the housing conditions of the respondents. The fact that the majority of respondents reported having only one or two bedrooms in their homes suggests that they may be living in small or overcrowded spaces. This could be an indication of a lack of affordable housing options, particularly for low-income households. The low proportion of respondents reporting four or more bedrooms...
also suggests that larger homes may be less common in the area surveyed.

**Fit Between Home and Needs**

Table 4 presents the results of a survey on the reasons why current homes do not meet household needs. The data shows that the most commonly cited reason is that the accommodation is too small, with over half (52.3%) of respondents mentioning this as their first choice. This suggests that a significant number of households may be experiencing overcrowding, which can have negative impacts on health, well-being, and quality of life.

The second most common reason cited was that the home is unsuitable to physical needs, with 6.9% of respondents mentioning this as their second choice. This highlights the importance of designing homes that are accessible and adaptable to the changing needs of occupants, such as those with disabilities or aging-related needs.

The third most common reason cited was that the home needs major repair, with 14.1% of respondents mentioning this as their second choice. This suggests that a significant number of homes may be in a state of disrepair, which can have negative impacts on health, safety, and well-being.

Other reasons cited included the need to live close to employment or family, the desire to live independently, and being harassed. Interestingly, a relatively small proportion of respondents mentioned the need to live closer to their career or to give care, which may suggest that these factors are less important to households when considering their housing needs.

**Satisfaction with Living Arrangements**

Table 5 presents the reasons why residents are not satisfied with their current living arrangements. The data shows that the top reasons are related to the physical condition of the housing unit and its surroundings. The most frequent reason cited by residents is that their house needs major repairs that they cannot afford (22.5%), followed by landlords not caring for maintenance (17.2%). These two reasons suggest that there is a need for more affordable and well-maintained housing options.

The third most cited reason is low property value (3.8%), indicating that residents are concerned about the value of their property and its potential appreciation over time. This suggests that there is a need for more investment in the area to increase property values and attract more residents.

Rude neighbors and high crime rates in the community were also cited as reasons for dissatisfaction (5.3% and 3.1% respectively), indicating that social factors play a role in residents’ perceptions of their living arrangements. Overcrowding was only cited by 1.9% of respondents, suggesting that this is not a major issue in the area.

**Table 5. Residents Reasons for Not Been Satisfied with Current Living Arrangements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>First Mention (N=258)</th>
<th>Second Mention (N=258)</th>
<th>Third Mention (N=258)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>House needs major repairs that I cannot afford</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Landlord do not care for maintenance</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Low property value</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rude neighbours</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>High crime rate in the community</td>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Overcrowded neighbourhood</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Apartment is small</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I need my own accommodation</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Family house</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Missing Cases</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preferred Kind of Accommodation

Respondents were asked to state their preferred kind of accommodation. The modal kind of accommodation was ‘Three-Bedroom Flat’, accounting for 43.9% of the distribution (Figure 2).

Supports for Development of Agropolitan Residential Housing Estate

Table 6 shows the respondents' support for agropolitan housing development. The data indicates that the majority of respondents (78.7%) supported agropolitan housing development, while only 21.3% opposed it. This suggests that a significant portion of the respondents recognized the potential benefits of agropolitan housing development.

Agropolitan housing development refers to the creation of housing units in rural areas close to urban centers, which allows residents to enjoy the benefits of both urban and rural living. Some potential benefits of agropolitan housing development include access to larger and more affordable housing units, access to employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas, and a better quality of life due to the proximity to nature.

The high level of support for agropolitan housing development in this survey could be attributed to the perceived benefits of this type of housing development.

![Figure 2. Percent Distribution of Preferred Kind of Accommodation](image)

**Table 6. Respondents Support for Agropolitan Housing Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Respondents Support for Agropolitan Housing Development</th>
<th>Respondents (N)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>258</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Enwin & Ikiriko, 2021
Residents Reasons for Supporting of Agropolitan Housing Development

Table 7 presents the percentage distribution of residents' support for the proposed Agropolitan housing development. The data was gathered through a survey, and the responses of 203 residents who supported the project were analyzed.

The most common reason for supporting the project, mentioned by 27.3% of the respondents, was that the community people would have better homes. This indicates that the residents were looking for better living conditions and were optimistic that the project would bring about this change. The second most common reason, with 25.7%, was that the housing challenge would be a thing of the past in the community, which is also in line with the desire for better living conditions. Other reasons cited for supporting the project included that it would assist the low-income group (15%), enable individuals to own their personal homes (10.2%), and deliver affordable houses for all (4.3%). These reasons show that the residents were concerned about the affordability of the houses and the possibility of home ownership, especially for those in the low-income group.

Table 7. Percentage Distribution of Residents Support for Proposed Agropolitan Housing Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No.</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>% First Mention (N=203)</th>
<th>% Second Mention (N=203)</th>
<th>% Third Mention (N=203)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Project will not work</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Project will assist the low-income group</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Project will enable individual to own their personal house</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Project will enable me provide accommodation for my children</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Project will create employment</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Community people will have better homes</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Project will deliver affordable houses for all</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Project will lead to reduction in rent by landlords</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Community people will only engage in payment for their personal homes from their work</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Housing challenge will be a thing of the past in the community</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The project will help me move to a cleaner neighbourhood</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The project will decongest the neighbourhood</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Residents loves installment payment plan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The project will employ the unemployed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Enwin & Ikiriko, 2021

The project's potential to create employment was also mentioned by some respondents (2.7% in the first mention and 5.7% in the third mention), indicating that the community's economic development was also a factor in supporting the project. Some residents also mentioned that the project would lead to a reduction in rent by landlords (2.7% in the first mention and 11.4% in the third mention), which suggests that the current high rent was a concern for some residents.

Overall, the data shows that the majority of residents (78.7%) supported the proposed Agropolitan housing development. The reasons
for this support were largely centered on the potential for better living conditions, affordability, and economic development in the community.

**Length of Time to Work in Order to Own their Building**

Some respondents said they were willing to work for up to 10 years (17.2%). On the average, respondents were willing to work for 9 years. The maximum number of years suggested by respondents was 20 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Time (in years)</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5 years</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Enwin & Ikiriko, 2021*

The majority of respondents (43.9%) preferred a three-bedroom flat as their ideal accommodation, with some willing to work for up to 10 years (17.2%) to own their homes. The average willingness to work was 9 years, with a range of 18 years (from 2 to 20 years). Respondents showed positive attitudes towards the concept of the proposed agropolitan housing development, citing benefits such as more people owning better homes, personal ownership of houses (18.2%), and the potential to solve the housing problem in the area (16.3%). The top three perceived benefits of agropolitan housing development were an easy/installment repayment plan (9.9%), better neighbors (6.9%), and a well-planned estate (4.6%).

However, a few residents had negative attitudes towards the development and did not support its implementation, mainly due to concerns about the length of time required to own the house (4.9%), the estate being far from the city (2.7%), and the lack of choice in building design (2.7%). Overall, respondents preferred an architectural design and building of a three-bedroom flat.

From the forgoing investigation, it was seen that a majority of the respondents (56.9%) were renting apartments in their community, with 42.4% of them staying in one-bedroom apartments. Most respondents (68.3%) reported that their current home did not meet their household needs due to small accommodation (52.3%), major repairs needed (14.1%), and a desire for independent living (4.2%). Additionally, most respondents (76.3%) expressed dissatisfaction with their current living arrangements due to various factors, such as unaffordable repairs (22.5%), bad neighbors (7.6%), and living in a family home (9.8%).

**Different Stakeholders and their Roles in Addressing Homelessness and Poverty**

The eradication of homelessness and poverty in Greater Port Harcourt City will require the collective efforts of various stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and non-profit organizations. Here are some of the roles that these stakeholders can play:

1. **Government:** The government can play a critical role in addressing homelessness and poverty by providing funding for poverty reduction programs, implementing policies and regulations to promote social inclusion and economic growth, and providing basic services such as healthcare, education, and housing. The government can also collaborate with other stakeholders, such as the private sector and non-profit organizations, to implement poverty reduction strategies. Corruption is a major obstacle to eradicating poverty and
homelessness. Therefore, the government could take steps to combat corruption and ensure that resources are allocated fairly and transparently.

2. Private Sector: The private sector can contribute to poverty reduction by creating jobs, providing financial resources for poverty reduction programs, and supporting social enterprise and entrepreneurship initiatives. The private sector can also collaborate with the government and non-profit organizations to implement poverty reduction strategies.

3. Non-Profit Organizations: Non-profit organizations can play a critical role in poverty reduction by providing social services, advocacy, and capacity building to support the poorest of the poor. Non-profit organizations can also collaborate with the government and private sector to implement poverty reduction strategies.

4. Community-Based Organizations: Community-based organizations can contribute to poverty reduction by engaging with communities and providing social services and advocacy. They can also help to build the capacity of communities to participate in the development and implementation of poverty reduction strategies.

5. Individuals and Families: Individuals and families can contribute to poverty reduction by taking steps to improve their own economic and social well-being, such as seeking education and training, participating in community initiatives, and advocating for policy changes that support poverty reduction.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Increase affordable housing: One of the main causes of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. Therefore, the government and private sector could collaborate to build more low-income housing and apartments for families and individuals. These housing units could be subsidized or made available at a reduced cost to those who cannot afford market-rate housing.

2. Provide access to basic services: Access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare is crucial to improving the living standards of the poorest of the poor. Therefore, the government and non-profit organizations could work together to provide these services to those living in poverty in Greater Port Harcourt City.

3. Create job opportunities: Poverty and homelessness are often linked to unemployment. Therefore, the government and private sector could collaborate to create job opportunities in Greater Port Harcourt City. This could involve supporting small businesses and providing training programs to help individuals develop skills that are in demand.

4. Offer social assistance: The government and non-profit organizations could provide social assistance to those living in poverty. This could include food assistance, cash transfers, and subsidies for basic needs such as education and healthcare.

5. Provide education and training: Education and training are important tools for breaking the cycle of poverty. Therefore, the government and non-profit organizations could provide education and training opportunities to those living in poverty in Greater Port Harcourt City. This could include adult education programs, vocational training, and apprenticeships.

6. Combat corruption: Corruption is a major obstacle to eradicating poverty and homelessness. Therefore, the government could take steps to combat corruption and ensure that resources are allocated fairly and transparently.

From the forgoing, it is noted that the eradication of homelessness and poverty in Greater Port Harcourt City require a collaborative effort from various stakeholders, including the government, private sector, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, and individuals and families. Each stakeholder has a unique role to play in addressing poverty and homelessness, and by working together and implementing a comprehensive set of strategies, it is possible to
make a positive impact and improve the lives of the poorest of the poor in the study area. Cumulatively, the paper portrays that agropolitan housing project is germane in eradicating homelessness and improving the living standards of the poorest of the poor in the study area.

References


