

# ACCESS TO RESIDENTIAL LAND AND ITS IMPLICATION IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

BY

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## **Abstract:**

This paper examined access to residential land and its implication in Sokoto Metropolis. Most challenges confronting cities in Nigeria could be attributed to how land is accessed, managed and governed and these have implication on the nature of the built environment. Data for this study were obtained through administration of structured questionnaire to 344 respondents' selected using systematic sampling technique. Data were analyzed and presented using tables showing frequencies and percentages. Investigation into whether respondents applied for land allocation from the government reveals that 84% of the respondents claimed that they never applied for land from the Government and 16% claimed they did. Out of those who claimed to apply for land allocation, only 40% were successful. The study also revealed that purchase is the major means of land acquisition among 79% of the respondents while only 4% of respondents acquire land through inheritance. Most of the areas are not government designated layouts and are characterized by land fragmentation, dearth of infrastructure and poor planning and environmental quality. The study recommends among others, the need for a holistic approach to ensure that land as a vital tool in urban growth and development is properly distributed and managed using efficient tools of land administration and planning.

**Key words:** Access, Implication, Residential land, Sokoto metropolis

## **INTRODUCTION**

Urban areas in Nigeria are growing at a very fast pace. Cities and towns are expanding rapidly due population growth and redistribution of activities (UN-HABITAT, 2003). Hundreds of thousands of people now live in cities being centres of production and opportunities (Revi, 2017). Nigeria is witnessing a remarkable change in demographic and settlement patterns and cities are becoming drivers of transformation of economies of the country. It is expected that close to 60% of the population of Nigeria will be residing in urban areas by 2030 according to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. This calls for a holistic approach to ensure that land as a vital tool in urban growth and development is properly managed using efficient tools of land administration and planning with a view of making our cities inclusive, productive, safe, resilient and ultimately sustainable in accordance with the aim of Sustainable Development Goal number 11 focusing on Sustainable cities and communities (Revi, 2017).

In most Nigerian cities it is difficult to provide the minimum social services such as land, housing, water supply etc. especially in the rapidly growing urban areas, or to absorb an ever expanding labour force into struggling urban economies (Fekade, 2000; Bello, 2007). In most Nigerian cities there is no clearly recognizable structure or satisfactory layout. Most cities are

built haphazardly resulting in a random character that confuses the identity of city communities, creates chaos in the pattern of land use, wastes resources and prohibits coherent patterns of any kind (Beauregard, 2001). Furthermore, cities in Nigeria experience challenges associated with access to land and affordable housing resulting in the emergence of unplanned and informal settlements such as slums (Oluyede, Osmond and Ayedun, 2011; Kuma and Ighalo, 2015).

Most challenges confronting cities in Nigeria could be attributed to how land is accessed from the first instance. Expansion of cities and the nature of the built environment relies heavily on how land is accessed, managed and governed (Rakodi, 2007, Durand-Kasserve, 2005, Dankani, 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b). The vast majority of Nigerians presently find it extremely hard to acquire land for development from the government through statutory allocation (Onokerhoraye, 2010). The 1978 Land Use Decree laid down procedures and guidelines for acquiring the right of occupancy in areas designated as urban as stipulated in the provisions of 1978 Land Use Decree and implemented by the state governments through their agencies is statutory right of occupancy. The Decree vested all rights in land in urban areas in the state Governor and only the governor or his assigned representative can allocate land in an urban setting. It went further to state that all lands in urban centres shall be under the control and management of the Governor of each state (FGN, 1978). Also, all land holdings in urban centres are now considered as statutory holdings and hence holders can only apply for certificates of occupancy if they so wish. By this assertion individuals and organizations can apply for land allocation from the government through its agencies. The way and manner land is allocated and the rules governing its management and control fall within the premise of Land Administration (Bichi, 2008).

Similarly, over the years, the implementation of the law (1978 Land Use Decree) has strayed from its main objectives. Provisions which require procurement of Certificate of Occupancy and granting of governor's consent to alienate (transfer ownership), among others, have been cumbersome and have adversely affected economic and business activities (Onokerhoraye, 2010). Also, there has been an absence of an efficient administrative mechanism for the implementation of the law in many states. Apart from failing to eliminate speculation and uncertainties in securing title to land, there is the problem of inadequate and untimely compensation for acquired land (Bichi, 2008). Thus, land allocation has become another means of patronage in the hands of governors who use their powers to favour cronies and dispossess political opponents and peasants of their lands. The process of land allocation by the state nowadays is entirely tortuous, lengthy, expensive and full of so many bottlenecks which often compel individuals to resort to the informal land market in order to acquire land (Mamman, 1996; Abubakar and Dankani, 2013).

The emergence of the informal land market was borne out of the failure of the government to provide sufficient land for development and the increasing pressure and demand for land (Onokerhoraye, 2010). Home (1986), stated that informal development accounted for up to two-third of all development in most of our cities. This led to the growth of the informal land market as more people patronized it than the statutory allocation process. Unfortunately the government failed to put a halt to its operation despite its prohibition by the 1978 Land Use Decree. The implication of the operation of the informal market to our cities is that some area of the city are characterized by squatting, increased density in the built up environment, shortages of open spaces, mass cutting of trees to provide space for building, land use conversion and proliferation of fragmentary plots of land (all these are detrimental to the emergence and development of

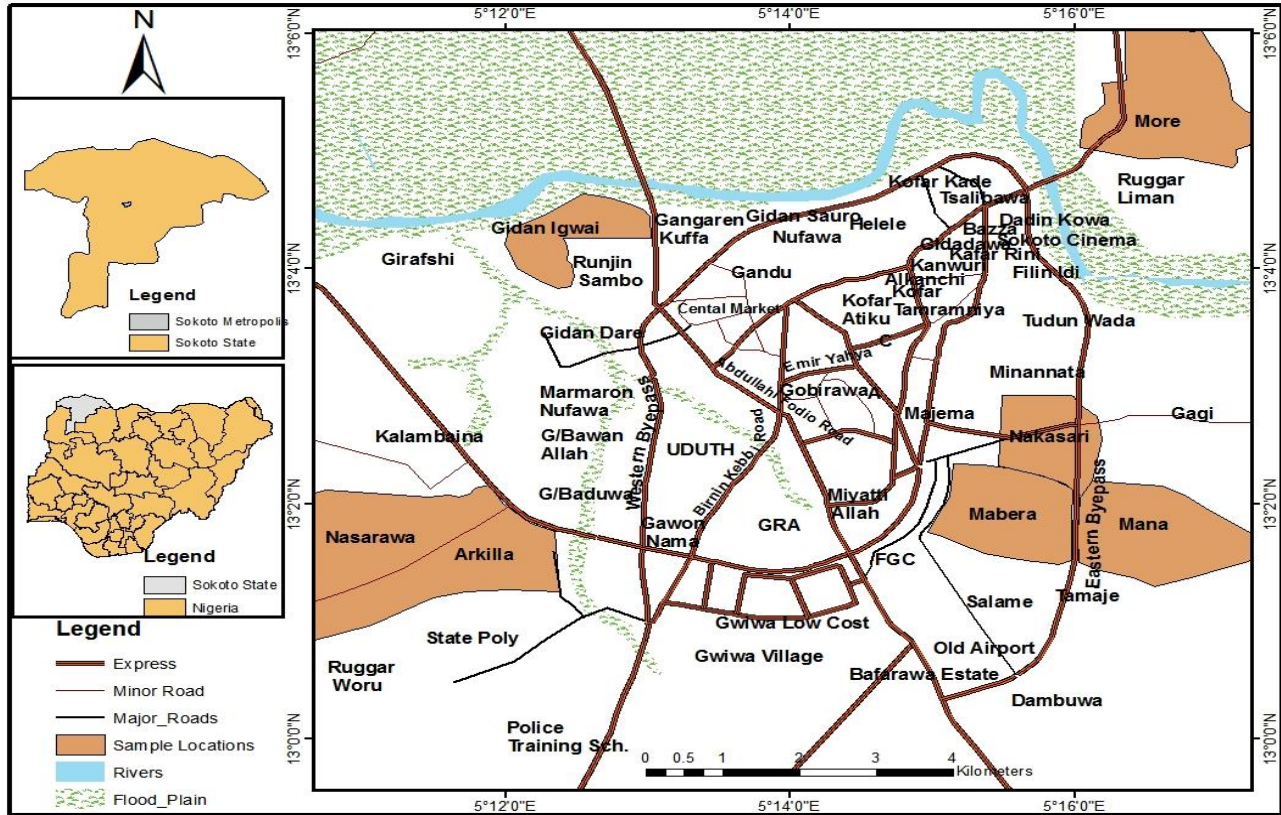
sustainable cities). However, it is important to state here that it has increased both accessibility and affordability to land among the urban poor and low income earners (Olayiwola and Adeleye, 2006).

Sokoto metropolis is one of the fast growing urban areas in Nigeria. A cursory look at the growth of Sokoto metropolis in terms of increase in developed land shows that as at 1986 the total developed land in the metropolis was 26.3 square kilometers, 32.2 km<sup>2</sup> in 2002, 40.9km<sup>2</sup> in 2005 and the growth is projected to be within the region of 80-82 square kilometers by the year 2020 (Eniolorunda and Dankani, 2012). Over the years, there is increased demand for land to accommodate the ever increasing urban populace and activities. This increase did not come without a consequence. The spillover effect of this manifest in poor planning and infrastructural provision which ultimately affects the outcome of the built environment. The rate at which fringes of Sokoto are growing poses serious planning challenges to government and urban managers.

Studies by Dantuni (2012) on implementation of Sokoto Master plan; Jagaba, (2015) on analysis of urban sprawl in Sokoto metropolis and Dankani, (2017) on uncontrolled urban growth and perennial flood hazards have all shown the unplanned nature of fringe settlement of Sokoto metropolis and the nature of the settlements could not be unconnected with the way and manner the people access land. It is on this premise that this study seeks to examine the likely synergy or nexus between means of access to land and its implication on the built environment in Sokoto metropolis. Emphasis was placed so much on areas inhabited by the urban poor who could not afford to acquire land in planned neighborhood prepared by the government. The objectives are to identify the dominant means of land acquisition in Sokoto metropolis, determine the nature of lands acquired formally and informally and examine the likely implication of means of land acquisition on the built environment.

## **THE STUDY AREA**

Sokoto metropolis is located between Latitudes 12° 46'N and 13° 08'N, Longitudes 5° 14'E and 5° 30'E and at average elevation of 272m above sea level. The total population of the area is estimated at 1.1 million people as at year 2016 with an average annual growth rate of 2.6%, and an average density of 500 persons/km<sup>2</sup>. However, a density of over 1000 persons/km<sup>2</sup> is obtainable inside the metropolis (NPC, 2007; Shamaki and Dankani, 2012). Local inhabitants comprise mostly of Hausa/Fulani and other groups such as Gobirawa, Zabarmawa, Kabawa, Adarawa, Arawa, Nupes, Yorubas, Ibos and other migrants (Mamman, 1989). The predominant language is Hausa and occupation of city dwellers includes trading, commerce, domestication of animals with a reasonable proportion of the population working in private and public sectors. Population of farmers is on a decline (Mamman, 1989). Sokoto metropolis comprises mainly of two local government (Sokoto South and North local government areas) and portions around frontiers of four other local government areas (Kware, Wamakko, Dange Shuni and Bodinga). (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Sokoto Metropolis**  
 Source: Adapted from Dankani, 2017

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Data for this study was obtained through administration of structured questionnaire. The questionnaire instrument was devised to elicit data from city dwellers regarding the process through which they access land, the challenges they encountered and consequences on the built environment. Information for the study was also obtained from land dealers and officials of Sokoto Urban and Regional Planning Board (SURPB) and State Ministry of Lands and Housing.

For the purpose of this study, six morphological units within the metropolis were selected purposively. The decision to choose these 6 areas was informed by the fact that these areas are among the fastest growing areas in the metropolis experiencing high incidences of land transaction and development. These areas are, Mana, Mabera, Nakasari, Arkilla, Gidan Igwai and More. Respondents for the study were Land and property owners within the areas selected. Systematic sampling techniques was employed in the selection of land and property owners within the study areas. The procedure adopted here involves identifying the first property owner on a particular street of the sampled area and such property owner was selected and administered with questionnaire. From there, every 8<sup>th</sup> property owner was selected and administered with questionnaire. Through this sampling technique, a total of 344 land and property owners were selected and administered with questionnaire. The breakdown of the respondents based on sampled areas are Mana 48, Mabera 87, Nakasari 54, Arkilla 71, Gidan Igwai 45 and More 39.

Data collected from the field were presented in the form of tables showing frequencies and percentages and following each table is the descriptive analysis and discussion of the findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the socio-economic characteristics of the sampled respondents.

**Tables 1: Socio- Economic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Socio-Economic Characteristics	Frequency	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	313	91
Female	31	09
<b>Educational Background</b>		
Islamic	148	43
Primary	41	12
Secondary	63	18
Tertiary	92	27
<b>Occupation</b>		
Business/Trading	183	53
Civil Service	107	31
Others (specify)	54	16

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2018

Analysis of data with respect to the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents reveals that majority of the respondents were males (91%) while females constituted only 9%. This is not surprising considering the fact that the society is patriarchal in nature and men are often the providers of shelter or dwellings. Educationally, 43% of the respondents had Islamic education, 27% and 18% attended tertiary institution and secondary school respectively. Most of them (53%) are Business men/Traders, Civil servants constituted 27% of the respondents and 16% were those who were into other occupations such as plumbing, building, transportations, etc.

### Access to Land and Nature of Land Acquired

Data in Table 2 is on the whether respondents applied for land allocation and whether they are successful or not. The table also examined why some respondents do not bother to apply for land allocation from the state.

**Table 2 Respondents who have applied for Land Allocation from the Government**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Have you ever applied for land from the Government</b>		
No	291	84
Yes	53	16
<b>If Yes, were you successful?</b>		
Successful	21	40
Unsuccessful	32	60
<b>If No, why?</b>		
No hope of getting	163	47
It's a waste of time and resources	128	53

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2018

Investigation into whether respondents applied for land allocation from the government reveals that 84% of the respondents claimed that they never applied for land from the Government and 16% claimed they did. Out of those who claimed to apply for land allocation, only 40% were successful. On the other hand those who claimed that they have never applied for land allocation from the government stated that they have no hope of getting the land even if they apply and this category of respondents accounted for 47% of the respondents. About 53% of those who claimed they never applied for land from the government felt that it is a waste of time and resources and an exercise in futility.

Going by this finding it is obvious that majority of the respondents did not have confidence in the government to provide them with land. This study corroborates the findings of Abubakar and Dankani (2013), Dankani (2012; 2013b) which shows that majority of Nigerians hardly get land allocation from the Government. Those who mostly benefit from land allocation from the state are usually the rich, politicians and friends of those in government.

Due to the inability of the government to provide enough land to the populace, majority resort to other means of land acquisition. Table 3 shows other avenues through which the respondents acquire land and the nature of the land acquired. Investigation into means of land acquisition by the respondents in Table 3 shows that majority (79%) acquire land through purchase, 4% through inheritance, 6% through leasehold and 11% through gifts. The increasing rate of purchase was necessitated by the high population growth culminating to shortages of land, competition for farmlands between developers/and speculators on one side and public acquisition on the other. In essence, land acquisition particularly through purchase have been on the increase over the years and it occurs as a result of demographic and socio-economic growth which corroborates the findings of Mamman (1989), Jagaba (2015) and Dankani (2017).



**Table 3: Means of Land Acquisition and Nature of the Land**

	Frequency	%
<b>Means of Land Acquisition</b>		
Purchase	273	79
Inheritance	13	04
Leasehold	21	06
Gift	37	11
<b>Size of Land</b>		
Less than 50x50ft	183	53
50x50ft	76	22
50x75ft	38	11
Above 75x75ft	47	14
<b>Nature of Plot</b>		
Government Designated Layouts	56	16
Neighborhood	318	84

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2018

Table 3 also reveals that 53% of the respondents acquired plots that were less than 50 x 50ft and 22% acquired 40 x 50ft plots. What is obvious here is that land owners tend to fragment their land plots to attract more money from land sales. Also, most prospective land buyers who could not afford bigger and more expensive land resort to buying fragmented plot because of their affordability. The cumulative effect of this action is the emergence of unplanned building often devoid of basic infrastructure. The nature of properties developed on such sites do not in any way conform to the building regulations of the state government. Buildings are often built without adequate ventilation, drainages, service areas, designated refuse dumps and houses are usually accessible through a very narrow alley typical of the one in the traditional cities rendering the area inaccessible in the event of fire outbreaks and other health related hazards. Furthermore, the results in Table 3 shows that 84% acquired land outside the government designated layouts. These areas are often referred to as landowners or farm owners designated layouts or what is locally called '*awon igiya*'. These plots are carved out by farm owners often without seeking government's consent or intervention though the sale of the land is usually with the consent of the Local Traditional Authority contrary to the provisions of the 1978 Land Use Decree which states that all land holding within the urban areas are under the control and disposition of the state Governor (FGN, 1978).

Land owners are by law required to own a right of occupancy to ascertain their right over land. It is important to note that land within urban areas are expected to have statutory rights of occupancy while those in rural setting should have a customary right of occupancy (FGN, 1978). Table 4 shows the valid documents held by respondents and whether the respondents sought for building permission before developing their property.

**Table 4: Valid means of ownership and whether respondents sought planning consent**

Response	Frequency	%
<b>Valid means of ownership possessed</b>		
Certificate of Occupancy	86	25
Letter of Grant	109	32
Purchase Agreement Letter	149	43
<b>Those who sought for Building Permission</b>		
Yes	142	41
No	202	59

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2018

Data in Table 4 reveals that 43% of the respondents had only purchase agreement letter as a means of land ownership. 25% of the respondents claimed they have certificate of occupancy and 32% claimed they have letter of grants. The implication of this finding is that majority of the land owners did not register their land in accordance with the provision of the 1978 Land Use Decree section 34(1 &2) which requires all land owners to register their land with a view of being issued with either customary or statutory right of occupancies.

It is a common knowledge that most of the fringes of our towns or cities are devoid of basic infrastructure except is certain designated areas referred to as site and services plots which are in most cases beyond the reach of ordinary Nigerians particularly the urban poor. Table 5 shows the available infrastructure in the study areas.

**Table 5: Assessment of Available Infrastructure**

Infrastructure	Poor	Fair	Good
Water Supply	268 (78%)	76(22%)	00(00%)
Electricity	238(69%)	59(17%)	47(14%)
Access Road	283(83%)	43(12%)	18(5%)
Drainage	298(87%)	46(13%)	00(00%)
Waste Disposal Facilities	302(88%)	42(12%)	00(00%)
Fire Service	290(84%)	34(10%)	20(06%)
Health Facilities	243(71%)	75(22%)	26(07%)
Security	285(83%)	34(10%)	25(07%)

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2018

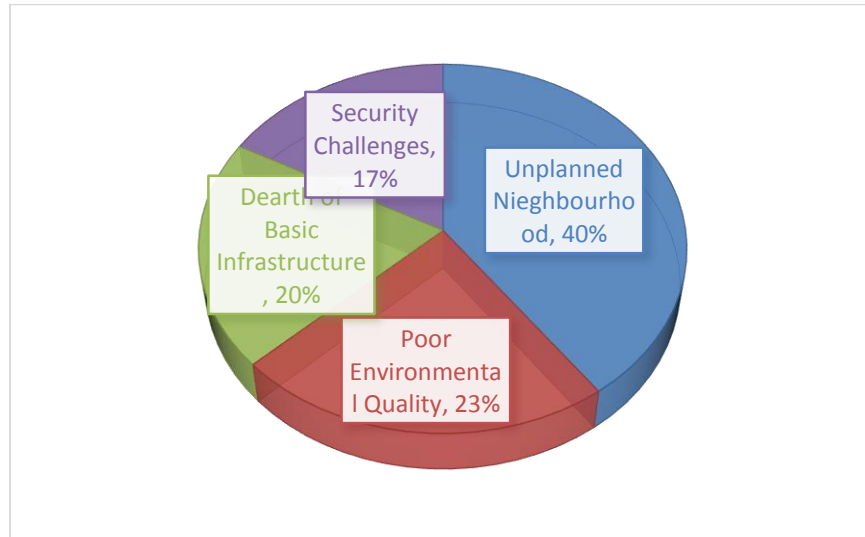
Table 5 shows that 78% of the respondents rated water supply as poor, 69% and 83% rated electricity supply and accessibility as poor. Same goes to other infrastructural facilities. This signifies that the infrastructure in these areas are inadequate, poorly provided and of low quality. Most often, residents are the ones providing facilities for themselves particularly facilities like water, electricity etc. It is noteworthy to state that there is the dearth of site and services plots in the state and this hampers the sustenance of planning ethics and policies in the state (Dantuni, 2012). The inadequacy of basic infrastructure in our societies coupled with badly managed



planning policies creates many environmentally related problems such as waste disposal and a range of chronic health impact.

### Implication of means of Land Acquisition on the Built Environment

Figure 2 presents the implications of access to land on the built environment in the study areas.



**Figure 2: Implication on the Built Environment**

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2018

Respondents view into the implication of means of land acquisition on the built environment shows that 23% of the respondents stated that it resulted in poor environmental quality characterized by indiscriminate waste disposal, flooding particularly during the rainy season due to absence/poor drainage network and health risks. Similarly, 40% of the respondents claimed that the means of land acquisition renders the area unplanned this is manifested by fragmented land lots, lack of layout, poor accessibility and poor housing quality. Similarly, the fact the most of the lands are outside the government designated layout made the areas to have dearth of basic infrastructure according to 20% of the respondents. 17% of the respondents cited security challenges as the implication of means of land acquisition on the environment. It is important to note that most unplanned areas are prone to crime and insecurity and this have semblance with poor quality of the environment, lack of security personnel and facilities and the ability of criminals and hoodlums to blend with the residents who are mostly migrants without easily being detected (Dankani, 2013c).

### CONCLUSION

It is the desire of all household or members of the community to access residential land easily due to its vital importance to livelihood and wellbeing of the society. It is obvious from the findings of this study that the inability of the Government or rather the state to make land readily available to the vast majority of the populace has compelled the low income households to seek for land particularly along the fringes of Sokoto metropolis mostly through the informal land market. Most often than not these land are devoid of any form of physical planning and any form of layouts. There is also dearth of physical infrastructure which ordinarily will make decent

living easy and sustainable. The way land is acquired, used and managed will determine the sustainability or otherwise of the built environment. It is the contention of this study that land designed and allocated by the government are often of standard size, planned and provided with infrastructural facilities than those obtained through other means particularly through the informal market. On the basis of this, it could be argued that access to land should be the first and foremost imperative for the creation of sustainable cities.

The study therefore, recommends that access to land should be made easier than is presently the case. This is by way of increasing allocation of land to the urban poor by the government. This will promote orderly urban development and discourage patronizing the informal land market. Government should undertake a strategic review of existing network of infrastructural facilities in each urban centre so as to establish deficiencies, gaps and inadequacies. This will surely enhance provision of infrastructure to areas around the urban fringe. Government should enhance the provision of sites and services plots. This is by making sure basic infrastructure are provided on a parcel of land before commencement of development upon the land. This will reduce the burden of infrastructural provision on the urban poor and improved environmental sustainability. Finally, there is a need for a holistic approach to ensure that land as a vital tool in urban growth and development is properly distributed and managed using efficient tools of land administration and planning.

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