

Introduction

The Town and Gown workshop on Housing Challenges and Collaborative Solutions, held at the University of Lagos, organized by the Centre for Housing and Sustainable Development in collaboration with the Research Management Office, brought together stakeholders from academia, government, industry, and the community to address pressing issues in housing and urban development. The event aimed to foster collaboration between researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and community representatives to develop evidence-based solutions for sustainable urbanization.

Dr. Osagie and Dr. Iniobong John, the workshop anchors, promptly began the session at 10:30 am, extending a warm welcome to all attendees and emphasizing the importance of punctuality. They initiated the proceedings by leading the audience in standing for both the national anthem and the Unilag anthem. Additionally, they welcomed esteemed guests to the high table, including the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, represented by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academics and Research, Professor Bolanle Olufunmilayo Oboh, along with the Director of Research Management Office and the founding director of the Center for Housing and Sustainable Development, Professor Timothy, and co-director, Professor Taibat Lawanson. Following this acknowledgment, they handed over the microphone to the audience for self-introductions, promising further recognition of dignitaries as they arrived or inviting them to introduce themselves.





Dr. Osagie invited Professor Bolanle to the podium to give the welcome address. Professor Bolanle Olufunmilayo Oboh welcomed attendees to the town and gown meeting at the University of Lagos. She expressed gratitude for everyone's presence and emphasized the importance of community

engagement and collaboration. Professor Oboh acknowledged the topic of the meeting, "fostering community engagement and collaboration," and highlighted the significance of the event in bringing together academia and the community. Additionally, she recognized the efforts that led to the creation of the meeting's theme and invited the Director of Research and Management at the University of Lagos to shed more light on the purpose of the gathering. Professor Oboh's opening remarks set a positive tone for the event and underscored the university's commitment to engaging with the community for mutual benefit.

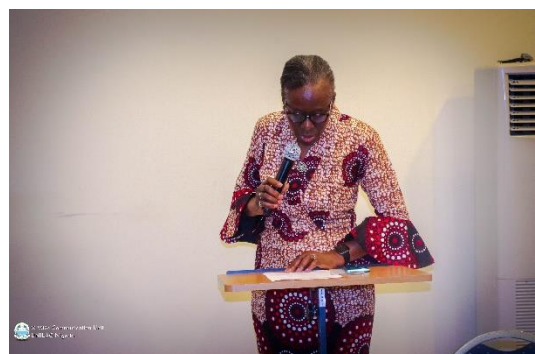
To provide further context for the event's purpose, Dr. Osagie invited Professor Timothy Nubi to address the audience. Professor Nubi underscored the crucial role of evidence-based research and collaboration between academia and various stakeholders. He emphasized the importance of research centers within universities collaborating closely with those who utilize their research findings to jointly develop solutions. Professor Nubi stressed the necessity of governance grounded in empirical evidence to facilitate informed decision-making for societal advancement. Furthermore, he highlighted the gap between academic research and its practical application in Africa, emphasizing the imperative of evidence-based decision-making to propel progress. Professor Nubi also discussed the challenges encountered by academics and stressed the

significance of bridging the divide between research and government policies for effective implementation.

Dr. John invited Prof Lawson to discuss a brief overview of what the research cluster does at the Centre for Housing and Sustainable Development. Professor Lawson started by stressing the importance of collaboration between academia and industry for societal development. She emphasized the need for research to be translated into tangible outcomes that benefit the community. Prof. Lawson highlighted the role of industry in implementing research findings and how policymakers, the private sector, and practitioners play a crucial role in translating academic thinking into actionable programs. She underscored the significance of understanding the political context, migration, and community development in driving collaborative efforts. Additionally, Prof. Lawson raised the question of what industry requires from academia and stressed the need for research to be aligned with practical development goals.

Cluster Presentations

Following Professor Lawson's brief overview of the research cluster's activities, Dr. John proceeded to invite the cluster managers and leads to present, aiming to facilitate interaction with the audience. The first presenter called upon was Dr. Adelopo, who focused on the Urban Livability Cluster's research endeavors and partnerships. Dr. Adelopo highlighted the cluster's approach, which involves integrating multidisciplinary teams to tackle key aspects of urban life, such as access to light, windows, and hills. He emphasized the significance of collaboration between academia and the community to enhance urban livability, citing ongoing projects related to climate change impacts, sanitation, and community health. Dr. Adelopo stressed the





importance of inclusive and participatory approaches to project development, mentioning symposiums and workshops organized by the cluster addressing environmental health challenges, solid waste management, and air quality in urban areas. Overall, his presentation

underscored the cluster's dedication to enhancing urban livability through collaborative research and community involvement.

Dr. Victor Ilechukwu's presentation centered on the Sustainable Cities and African Urbanization Dynamics Cluster's research focus. He highlighted the cluster's research areas, including African city resilience, environmental changes, land use dynamics, smart housing solutions, sustainable transportation, and city development policies in Africa. Dr. Ilechukwu emphasized the importance of collaboration with research management offices and government entities to advance their research agenda. He discussed the cluster's interest in environmental changes and youth mortality in African cities, linking these issues to global temperature rise and its impact on youth health. Dr. Ilechukwu underscored the urgency of addressing environmental factors affecting youth mortality and emphasized the need for evidence-based research to inform policy decisions for sustainable urban development in Africa.

Professor Modupe Omirin's presentation at the town and gown meeting focused on the Land Management and Administration Research Cluster's research initiatives. She highlighted the cluster's collaboration with researchers from various universities and its dedication to addressing urban problems stemming from land management issues. Professor Omirin emphasized the importance of proper land management in addressing housing, industrial advancements, and government revenue generation. She discussed the cluster's studies aimed at identifying key issues

in land management to improve city development and infrastructure provision. Additionally, Professor Omirin stressed the significance of research in guiding land governance policies to boost the economy and ensure equitable access to land resources.

Professor Dada's presentation at the town and gown meeting focused on the Built Environment Cluster's digitalization initiatives. He highlighted the cluster's goal of leveraging digitalization to enhance efficiency, economy, and anti-corruption efforts in infrastructure development. Professor Dada emphasized the irreversible nature of digitalization and its potential to transform processes, practices, and education in the built environment sector. He discussed the cluster's vision of digitalizing infrastructure lifecycle management to promote sustainable urbanization. Additionally, Professor Dada mentioned collaborations with international universities and emphasized the need for industry partnerships to achieve impactful digitalization outcomes in Africa. He underscored the importance of synchronizing intellectual capital to drive societal progress and highlighted the cluster's commitment to utilizing digital tools for positive urban development.

Oluwaseun Muraina's presentation at the town and gown meeting focused on the collaborative research efforts of the Housing and Regeneration Cluster. She discussed their work in both formal and informal housing sectors, with a specific emphasis on housing regeneration, housing finance, and housing market analysis. Muraina highlighted the importance of collaboration with partners to address issues such as underutilized resources in cooperative housing, undeveloped land leading to problems like land grabbing, and the need for data sharing platforms in housing and related sectors. Additionally, she mentioned their engagement in capacity-building workshops, scoping studies with key





stakeholders, and research projects on urban infrastructure, transit-oriented development, home improvement financing, and community resilience. Muraina also touched on webinars focusing on PropTech in African listing markets and creating an enabling environment for inclusive smart cities in collaboration with partner

universities in Uganda, Rwanda, and the United Kingdom.

Dr. Sesan Adeyemi's presentation at the town and gown meeting focused on the importance of integrating spatial data across various sectors of society. He emphasized the need for widespread adoption of geospatial technology to enhance public and private institutions' capacity. Dr. Adeyemi highlighted the significance of developing a well-structured digital baseline map to ensure standardized data collection and compliance with international standards. He stressed the importance of improving legacy databases to align with best practices and pragmatic policies. Additionally, Dr. Adeyemi underscored the role of geospatial information in promoting efficient decision-making and encouraged capacity building in geospatial technology for officials.

Dr. Iniobong John's presentation at the town and gown meeting focused on the research efforts of the Sustainable Urban Design and Infrastructure Cluster. She highlighted the cluster's activities, including capacity building workshops, scoping studies, and research on sustainable urban design and infrastructure issues in Lagos and other European countries. Dr. John mentioned collaborations with international universities and emphasized the cluster's expertise in urban design and sustainable infrastructure. She discussed the importance of innovative approaches in addressing urban challenges and highlighted the cluster's commitment to promoting sustainable urban development through research and collaboration.

Tea Break

After the tea break, Prof. Taibat Lawanson was called upon to do a quick recap of what was discussed during the first half of the workshop. Prof. Taibat Lawanson stressed that there are multidisciplinary research clusters and working groups within the Center for Housing and Sustainable Development at the University of Lagos. She highlighted the diverse clusters focusing on urban health, sustainable urban design, infrastructure, land management, sustainable construction, pro-poor development, governance, spatial data infrastructure, and digital built environment. Prof. Lawanson emphasized the collaborative nature of their work across the university, particularly within the Faculty of Environmental Sciences. She outlined the graduate-level programs offered by the center in various disciplines related to urban management and sustainable urbanization. Additionally, she underscored the center's focus on addressing urban poverty, global environmental crises, and economic challenges facing the nation through research and engagement activities.

After the brief recap by Prof. Taibat Lawanson, Dr. Osagie asked for feedback from the town for the town and gown to work collaboratively and to get the desired result for the state and country they want.

Bld (Mrs) Olaoye Ajanaku, representing the Ministry of Works & Infrastructure, provided a recap of the collaborations and discussions that took place at the University of Lagos Center for Housing and Sustainable Development. She acknowledged the ongoing collaborations between the ministry and the research center, emphasizing the importance of partnerships with private and government organizations to implement research findings





effectively. Mrs. Ajanaku highlighted the need to translate research outcomes into tangible solutions for the grassroots, promoting sustainable living and infrastructure development. She expressed the ministry's readiness to collaborate further and provide necessary support to advance research initiatives for the benefit of the community.

Architect Tolulope Akinyemi, representing the Ministry of Works & Infrastructure, addressed challenges in the built environment during the town and gown meeting. She highlighted issues such as non-adherence to approved government regulations in construction, the lack of engagement of professionals in building projects, and concerns about incompetent workmanship on construction sites. Akinyemi emphasized the importance of addressing these challenges to ensure quality construction and compliance with regulations. She also mentioned the need for collaboration between the government, academia, and the private sector to find solutions and improve the overall quality of construction projects.

Madam Bimbo Oshobe, representing the Nigerian Slum and Informal Settlement Federation, emphasized the need for inclusive and collaborative approaches to address the challenges faced by marginalized communities. She advocated for in-situ upgrades in informal settlements as opposed to forced evictions, promoting win-win solutions for residents and government authorities. Oshobe expressed gratitude for existing collaborations with the Center for Housing at the University of Lagos and called for further partnerships to tackle issues in informal settlements and advance sustainable urban development.

Prince Akintoye Adeoye, the President of the Real Estate Developers Association of Nigeria (REDAN), discussed the challenges faced by the real estate industry, particularly the rising costs

of building materials. He emphasized the importance of research in addressing material costs and creating opportunities in the industry. Adeoye highlighted the impact of monopolies on material prices and called for engagement to break these monopolies, promoting fair competition and affordability in the construction sector.

Architect Enyi Ben-Eboh, the immediate past President of the Nigerian Institute of Architects, started by discussing a failed project that incurred significant debt for Cross River state due to a lack of legal framework to support it. He highlighted the importance of research and collaboration in the built environment sector, emphasizing the need for stakeholders to work together effectively. Architect Ben also mentioned the consequences of inadequate research before embarking on projects, citing examples of white elephant projects that failed due to a lack of thorough planning. Additionally, he touched on the importance of initiatives like the Great Green Wall to address environmental challenges.

Engineer Emmanuel Akinwale emphasized the importance of collaboration among professionals in the built environment sector, including architects, engineers, and financial experts. He stressed the need to expand existing resources and knowledge to enhance the effectiveness of collaborations. Akinwale also suggested circulating meeting minutes to ensure all stakeholders are informed and involved in decision-making processes.

QS Olayemi Shonubi, the immediate past President of The Nigerian Institute Of Quantity Surveyors, highlighted the need for synergy between different sectors, such as architecture and research institutes, to improve building practices and materials. He mentioned the importance of utilizing research findings to create affordable housing solutions and control





temperatures effectively. Shonubi also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to bridge the gap between industry professionals and researchers, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in the built environment sector.

Mrs. Kemi Fosudo, representing the Ministry of Housing, expressed regret for arriving late to the program but acknowledged the importance of the event. She emphasized the readiness of the Ministry to collaborate with the University of Lagos and other stakeholders in the housing sector. Mrs. Fosudo highlighted the Ministry's current practices of receiving applications, reviewing presentations, and engaging in discussions to address housing issues. She mentioned challenges such as unoccupied buildings and abandoned properties that the Ministry is eager to tackle through research and collaboration with the academic community. Overall, Mrs. Fosudo's presentation conveyed a strong commitment to partnership and addressing housing challenges effectively.

Mrs. Tosin Ajose, a commercial lawyer with involvement in the academic and professional sectors, commended the Center for Housing for its insightful engagement. She stressed the importance of collaboration between academia and government to address real-world problems effectively. Mrs. Ajose emphasized the need for research to target current issues and for data collection and analysis processes to be modernized for practical solutions. She highlighted the importance of concise and actionable research outputs, urging researchers to consider the end-users' needs. Overall, Mrs. Ajose's presentation underscored the significance of bridging the gap between research and practical application in solving societal challenges.

Closing Remarks

After the comments and feedback from the town, Dr. Osagie invited the Director of Research Management Office, and the Director, Centre for Housing and Sustainable Development, Professor Timothy Nubi to give his closing remarks. Professor Nubi's speech emphasized the importance of evidence-based research for governance and decision-making. He highlighted the collaborative efforts of various university centers in producing research that can inform policy and drive national development. Professor Nubi stressed the need for empirical evidence to guide decision-making processes and grow the country effectively. He also touched upon the disconnect between academia and government, pointing out the underutilization of research products in policymaking. Overall, Professor Nubi's speech underscored the critical role of research in shaping evidence-based governance and fostering national growth.

Comments

After the closing remarks by Professor Timothy Nubi, the floor was open for the audience to ask questions or make comments. The Representative of the Director General Services of the Minister of Housing started by acknowledging his late arrival and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to address the audience. He discussed the Ministry's initiatives, including the plan to relocate sawmillers in Oko oba to Agbowa for redevelopment. The representative highlighted challenges such as logistics and the need for alternative construction materials to reduce costs. He also addressed concerns about abandoned projects due to rising material costs and emphasized the importance of finding solutions to overcome these challenges.

Mr. Adenugba, a senior special assistant to the governor of Ogun State on housing, shared insights as an observer and architect. He highlighted the significant housing deficit in Ogun State and the

challenges faced in addressing this issue. Mr. Adenugba emphasized the need for champions within government to drive policy and research solutions, advocating for collaboration between the government, academia, and the private sector. He shared his experience working on the Makoko Floating School project and emphasized the importance of pragmatic research approaches and the use of local materials.

Vote of Thanks

After the comments, Dr. Osagie called on Dr. Jimoh, a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Housing, to deliver the vote of thanks. Dr. Jimoh expressed gratitude to all participants, including professionals, ministry representatives, academia, and the hosting institution, UNILAG. He emphasized the collaborative nature of the event and the importance of working together to address housing challenges effectively. He highlighted the significance of collaboration between different stakeholders in the housing sector and thanked everyone for their contributions. He conveyed appreciation for the collective effort in advancing housing research and solutions.

