

13 December 2014

Lagos, Nigeria

PRESS RELEASE IN HONOR OF WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: LAGOS SLUMDWELLER FEDERATION CALLS FOR SECURITY OF TENURE TO ACHIEVE "HUMAN RIGHTS 365" IN LAGOS

On 13 December 2014, the Lagos Slumdweller Federation celebrates World Human Rights Day and demands security of tenure to ensure that its members can exercise and realize their human rights.

The Lagos Slumdweller Federation is inspired by the call to action in the "Human Rights 365" theme of this year's World Human Rights Day: the idea that all of us have a responsibility to work toward realizing human rights 365 days a year. According to the UN Human Rights Office, "The power of the Universal Declaration [on Human Rights] is the power of ideas to change the world. It tells us that human rights are essential and indivisible – **365 days a year**. Every day is Human Rights day: a day on which we work to ensure that all people can gain equality, dignity and freedom."

"Together, we must demand what should be guaranteed: our human rights, universal, indivisible, inalienable, for everyone, 365 days a year." – UN Human Rights Office

Sadly, 365 Human Rights is not the reality for so many living in slum communities across Lagos. Instead, in the year 2014, our communities have faced an uptick in threats to security of tenure. Recent months have seen violence and mass arson meted out on communities such as Otto Ilogbo in Ebute Metta (West) and Otodo Gbame in Lekki. Other communities, such as Ijora Badia East, face threats of eviction aimed at coercing them to pay extortionate "ratification fees." Behind both kinds of threat to security of tenure can be found the resurgence of land-owning families whose quest for control of increasingly valuable Lagos real estate knows no bounds.

The Lagos State Government, the police, and the judiciary have failed curb such threats, protect lives and properties, and ensure security of tenure for the State's most vulnerable residents. Indeed, we see that Lagos State Government and the police have too often been those carrying out forced evictions in our communities. Among many examples, we point to the tragic August 2008 demolition by fire of PURA settlement at NPA Quarters Bar Beach, the 2005 and 2010 violent demolitions at Makoko-Temidire, the July 2012 demolition of Makoko/Iwaya on Water, the March 2012 demolition of Otumara market, the October 2012 and July 2013 demolition at Agege, the March 2012 and February 2013 demolitions at Badia East, the December 2013 demolition at Atinporomeh. Of course, the mother of all demolitions was Maroko in 1990.

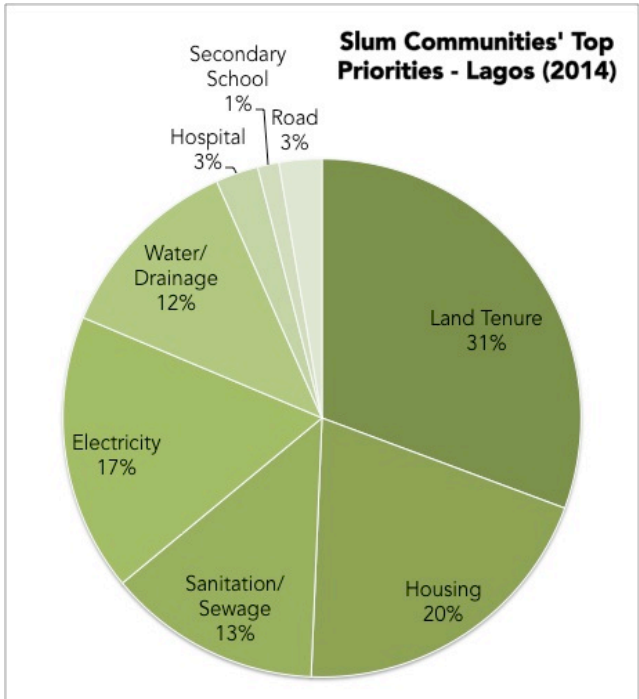
According to Lagos Slumdweller Federation member, Comrade Agbodemu Ishola Musbau, "We have come together to form a federation of slumdweller joined working in solidarity to face down such threats and promote our mutual goals of security and development. Together with our partners, Justice & Empowerment Initiatives (JEI) and Slum / Shackdwellers International (SDI), we

are helping the poor to form themselves into saving groups, receive soft loans and free paralegal training, do our own citywide slum profiling, and organize action for our shared priorities.”

Since August 2014, Lagos Slumdweller Federation member communities have embarked on a community-led, citywide slum profiling exercise, which captures key data from slums and helps them identify shared priorities. From the profiling completed thus far, “land tenure” has been the number one priority for 60% of slum communities. Overall, it ranked the highest priority over all other key issues, including electricity, housing, water/drainage, sewage/sanitation, schools, etc.

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing, “security of tenure” means occupation of land or housing in such circumstances as ensure a secure home and enable one to live in security, peace and dignity.

The Lagos Slumdweller Federation has been in forefront working to provide a forum for poor and marginalized communities in Lagos State to dialogue and take common actions in pursuit of empowerment of our members. Today the Federation is stronger and bigger than ever, but the challenges we face remain enormous. Still the Lagos State Government’s policies and practices too often disrespect and disregard the rights of the poor. With a population of over 22 million, an estimated 2/3s of which lives in slums, the scale of the problems are enormous. This is why the Federation’s work is and will remain so critical in coming years.



We therefore call on all the duty bearers to do their part to ensure that “Human Rights 365” is achievable for all residents of Lagos State, particularly those of us living in slums. The realization of our human rights begins with Lagos State policies and practices that guarantee us our security of tenure. We slum dwellers are ready to our part, but we cannot make this vision a reality alone.

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