



**WIEF'S POSITION & RECOMMENDATIONS
ON
UN HABITAT REPORT ON STRUCTURE PLANS
FOR AWKA, ONITSHA AND NNEWI & ENVIRONS (2009 -2027)**

Overview:

In spring 2009, Anambra State Government unveiled its structure plans for the Awka, Nnewi and Onitsha areas of the state. The plan was prepared with assistance of the United Nations HABITAT Program. This endeavor is one of the best things that have happened to Anambra state since it was created on August 27, 1991. WIEF commends the Obi Administration for, at least, taking the crucial step to recognize the importance of planning and orderly development of Anambra state. WIEF, however, regrets that with the enormous skilled human capital in the state and Diaspora, Anambra State Government had to seek outside help to do need assessment to determine that the state is beset with serious rural and urban ills and massive development maladjustment; and to prepare the plan.

The resulting plan is designed to address rapid urbanization in the state with a focus on the three major growth centers (Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi). Unfortunately, the intended outcome of integrated development in the state has been compromised by limiting the plan's coverage area to the major growth centers. The plan missed a prime opportunity for a coordinated planning initiative that would build partnerships between the state, local and federal governments, and the private sector.

The plan indicated that the population of Anambra State grew from 2,796,457 people in 1991 to 4,182,032 in 2006, up by 49.5% (National Population Commission, 1991 and 2006). This is an astronomical growth in 15 years. The state is the 8th most populous state in the country with an annual growth rate of 2.21%. At this rate of growth, WIEF estimates that the population of Anambra State could top or exceed 5 million by 2015.

Issues:

While WIEF believes that the preparation of the Structure Plans for major urban centers is a step in the right direction, we submit that the project missed a major opportunity for holistic approach to retract the disorganized and uncoordinated growth and development in Anambra State. There are several deficiencies in the plan and it is WIEF's position that if the plans are implemented based on its current format and structure, the effort would create a lot of confusion, discourage coordinated and integrated planning between state and local governments, neglect rural and sensitive areas in terms of development-environmental protection, neglect the need for transportation choices and development of effective and efficient transportation system; fail to recognize fishing and agriculture as major sectors of the economy, de-emphasize professional local government governance and administration, transparency and accountability, and make flexibility extremely impossible. In practice, any city

plan that has no room for flexibility and not grassroots-based cannot accomplish its goals. The following are major deficiencies in the plan:

1. The entire state should have been served better with a comprehensive statewide Growth Management Plan with recommendations designating Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi as major urban centers and special planning districts, and formulating development strategies for the non-urban centers and major urban centers.
2. Section 3.5 of UN Habitat Report: Local Economic Development indicated a need for adequate local government planning but failed to recommend mandatory local planning, as well as outlining minimum planning standards for all the local government to adhere to in completing their respective plans. This should be mandatory and would provide opportunity for local governments' consistency with the state plan; including respecting each jurisdiction's uniqueness and characteristics; helping them to identify prevailing local issues and plan accordingly to meet their identified needs. Furthermore, this would enhance the accomplishment of the state's vision of integrated development and outcome-based planning and administration. The plan called on the local governments to formulate and implement development control measures. But, to do this without a comprehensive plan to act as a road map would be a disaster and a blatant disregard for smart growth and rational planning. Development controls are tools for implementing comprehensive plans; therefore, we have to have a plan and base our development controls/regulations on the recommendations in the plan.
3. The plan failed to include agriculture as one of the categories under the existing and proposed land use sections. This is a gross error because Anambra State is blessed with fertile soils and the Onitsha region of the state is known for agriculture and fishing, among other economic sectors. For example, there are two major farm settlements in the Onitsha region - the Igbariam and Nkwelle Ezunaka. Additionally, Oyi local government, Nsugbe, Ogbaru, Anambra East Local Government are all major agricultural areas. These areas are known major producers and suppliers of food. The failure to include agriculture as a major land use category flies in the face of sustainable development. By excluding agriculture and fishing as components of the economic development element and land use category, the plan assumes that these sectors of the economy and land use elements are irrelevant and they would remain under developed as a result.
4. To have a good plan and adequately implement the plan, there is a need to have a uniform data collection and reporting system to support planning activities and informed decision making process. This plan failed to require a mandatory uniform data collection system by all the local governments and state departments. As a matter of fact, WIEF believes that the plan implementing department should have a major division for data management.
5. The plan failed to mandate Open Local Government Meetings practices for all government decision making process in order to achieve public trust and accountability, as well as enhance citizens participation in government. Indeed, **transparency and accountability are what we cannot do without.** The only exception to this mandate

would be personnel issues, land and property acquisition which requires certain confidentiality in order to get the best deal for the public. WIEF believes that there must be a legislation regarding conflict of interest, open meetings and disposal of government property at both state and local government levels.

6. The plan indicated that the government has no money. Well, no government has money. Professional budgeting system is designed to solve government's money problems, resource allocation and management. Budgeting is planned allocation of resources among competing demands. The state gets allocation; however, the problem is - lack of planned and prudent management of resources to accomplished state and local government goals and objectives. The local governments – **each** also gets a **minimum** allocation **of N50 million per month and N600 million every year; collectively, the State of Anambra receives, on behalf of the twenty-one (21) local governments, approximately N1.55 billion per month.** There is no reason why community, regional and/or state plans cannot be developed and implemented to meet local needs with an aim to spur community and economic development. Deficient technical and financial management capacity building, bureaucratic incapacity and of course, leadership lapses are at the center of the problem.
7. The institutional structure for implementation has a major flaw. It relegated the oversight of plan implementation to the Ministry of Lands, Survey & Town Planning, excluding the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs which, by right, should be playing a lead role in assisting local governments to plan and implement plans in accordance with the state requirements. There is a need to restructure and re-organize the following state ministries in readiness for growth management planning and implementation – Environment, Lands and Survey & Town Planning, Environmental Protection Agency, Local Government and Chieftaincy affairs. This measure would help the state to accomplish a coordinated and integrated sustainable development.
8. The plan proposes reserving land for everything but failed to recommend strategies to preserve agricultural lands and geotechnical sensitive areas like marshlands, wetlands, forests, aquifer or groundwater recharge areas, flood-prone and erosion areas as well as river systems. The leap service mention of Heritage Sites is grossly inadequate.
9. The plan discussed upgrading slums; this is inappropriate and inconsistent with planning practices. Upgrading a deplorable living condition is an insult to the inhabitants. You don't upgrade slums; you redevelop them to bring the areas back to livable and viable neighborhoods/environment. The redevelopment process may require government declaration of the areas as slums thereby giving the state and local authorities the power to redevelop the designated slums, including dictating how development and redevelopment activities would occur and under what conditions.
10. There were several recommendations in the plan for the development of a Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan for each urban center; however, a statewide plan is necessary to determine the feasibility of an integrated system with regional landfills reinforced by transfer stations. This approach would eliminate proliferation of landfills and potential threat of underground water contamination and air pollution.

11. There was no mention of developing Onitsha as a seaport for movement of goods. WIEF believes that any planning and redevelopment of Onitsha without consideration for port facility limits the city's potential as a dominant commercial center in the nation and the West African sub region.
12. Section 5:14 of the UN HABITAT Executive Summary recommended the designation of greenbelts around the surrounding communities of 500 meters wide to prevent environmental pollution and outward growth of the communities to merge with surrounding communities. Within the greenbelt, development would be limited to whatever is related to agriculture, forestry, sports and recreation, and perhaps cemeteries. Currently the City of Onitsha and Awka are already encroaching into other political jurisdictions unchecked. The plan failed to acknowledge that for this greenbelt strategy to work, all the local governments must have a comprehensive plan and those adjoining the major urban centers, must delineate the "greenbelts" boundaries and develop appropriate regulations to control what can, and what can't be allowed within the greenbelt. This "greenbelt" concept can be best achieved through a statewide Growth Management Legislation that WIEF is recommending as part of its position.

WIEF Recommendations:

- Revise the plan and make it a Statewide Growth Management Plan to include major considerations for agriculture and fishing, re-evaluation of solid waste management and environmental provisions, and framework for local government planning.
- Mandate a comprehensive plan development by all the local governments. Each local government plan must be consistent with the minimum planning elements established by the state "Enabling Legislation." Integrated growth, orderly development and a quality sustainable livable environment rest not only on legislative reform but on grassroots approach to the planning process.
- Reform the local government and professionalize the management of local council administrations. The legislation to reform planning and local government system should address challenging community problems and aspirations by giving local government greater local control over the planning and development process as well as governance. This is based on the belief that planning and the development of major urban centers and rural areas can best be accomplished by the people who live at the local level. All problem solving are best done locally.
- Mandate uniform data collection system for local governments, state departments and agencies for informed decision making process, planning for the future, for resource allocation and budgeting.
- With greater responsibility, planning and control delegated to local government, it is important that local accountability and transparency are also enhanced. Additional reforms should include enactment of Open Local Government Meetings, legislation to achieve public trust, make local government

representatives more accountable, through legislative changes related to open meetings, open records, public noticing, conflict of interest and disposal of public properties; with exception for property acquisition.

- Re-organize the framework and institutional structure for plan implementation.
- Work to actualize development of Onitsha as a seaport. Collaborate with Delta state and other impacted parties in pursuit of the goal of developing Onitsha as a seaport.
- Create a Coastal Development Commission or related agency to oversee the protection and regulation of the stretch of River Niger within Anambra state, including other rivers, lakes, wetlands and related critical areas. The Commission would dovetail its activities with that of federal agency. If there is an existing agency, its powers should be strengthened and adequately funded and professionally staffed.
- Develop strategies to preserve designated “greenbelts” agricultural lands and geotechnical sensitive areas like marshlands, historic and cultural sites, wetlands, forests, wild life habitats, aquifer or groundwater recharge areas and river systems. These areas should be identified, mapped, and legislation enacted to protect them and establish the conditions under which development can occur in or close to these areas.
- Require all the local governments to adopt both operating and multi-year Capital Improvement Budgets. The budgets must be tied to the implementation of the local comprehensive plan. The reform must include adequate emphasis on resource allocation and financial management.
- The state should develop Local Government Certification program designed to recognize a local government that has completed and adopted a comprehensive plan in accordance with state requirements. This certification status should have an expiration date and renewable. Renewal should be based on plan update and demonstrating acceptable progress in implementing the adopted plan.
- “Slum” condition devalues human dignity. This menacing problem is evident in the three major urban centers with Onitsha having the most undesirable deteriorated neighborhoods. Efforts to address the slum conditions must be based on redevelopment planning and a dedicated local authority must be created to oversee the redevelopment efforts.
- Establish a Conservation and Environmental Protection Trust Fund. The initial fund can be raised through a grant application to the federal government with matching money from the state. Thereafter, part of state end of year fund balance can be earmarked for the trust fund. About 1 or 2% of the state annual budget can be set aside annually for the trust fund. This funding mechanism should not be done through policy initiative or Executive Order; it must be created through legislative process and the legislation must be clear in terms of what the fund can be used for (i.e. acquisition of erosion-prone lands, environmental disaster compensation and public education/studies on environmental protection etc). The legislation must be statutory in mandating that

no governor can use the funds for any other purpose other than for which it was created.

- The UN HABITAT report showed that Anambra State does not have adequate and qualified staff to implement the cities' structure plans and therefore, recommended that the state should hire an **International Chief Technical Adviser** to oversee the implementation process. WIEF advocates that Anambra State should hire Anambra professionals in the Diaspora with the training, education, skills, talents and experience to help the state implement the plan as well as to assist the local governments in developing capacity building and strength necessary to plan accordingly and implement the plans well. It makes little sense, if at all, for Anambra state to hire foreign experts where there are many capable indigenes with the needed expertise and experience.

Conclusion

The built shared living space - the development where we live, work, do business or trade, play, worship, receive education and play politics – has both direct and indirect effects on the natural environment. Therefore, thoughtful planning and smart development approaches are needed for clear environmental benefits, including improved air and water quality, natural resource protection, livable environment and better quality of life. The Anambra Structure Plans and proposed recommendations by WIEF would represent major changes to the way planning and development are carried out, including how the local government and grassroots are involved in determining their own destiny and what they want to be when they grow. WIEF is confident that the structure plan, WIEF recommendations and proposed reforms would not only lay the foundation for innovation in the planning process in Anambra State, but they would also help the state, local governments and town unions to achieve many of the environmental, socioeconomic and community development goals of Ndi Anambra.

WIEF believes that the attainment of these goals and local aspirations can be realized if all the people involved in planning and determining the future of Anambra State – politicians, professional planners, engineers, architects, developers, environmentalists, community activists, grassroots town unions – work together to make it happen. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "A hundred years after we are gone and forgotten, those who never heard of us will be living with the results of our actions". So, we must ask ourselves this important question; what would the result of our actions be – a quality livable environment in Anambra State that is prosperous with protected environment, great employment opportunities, well designed and built public infrastructure, empowered, efficient and responsive local governments and a state that attracts people and investment or maintenance of the unacceptable status quo? It is WIEF's mission to collaborate closely with the government and civil society in building a safe, clean and healthy living space for all citizens of Anambra state and elsewhere throughout the foundation's primary target area.

WIEF 2010 (www.wief.net)

UN HABITAT REPORT (http://www.wief.net/cityplans_anambra.pdf)