

# Sokoto Journal of Geographical Studies (SJGS)



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# **Sokoto Journal of Geographical Studies (SJGS)**

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**Department of Geography, Sokoto State University, Sokoto  
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Secretary Editorial Board,  
Sokoto Journal of Geographical Studies  
Department of Geography  
Faculty of Social and Management Sciences  
Sokoto State University, Sokoto  
P.M.B 2134, Along Birnin Kebbi Road, SokotoState-Nigeria

Tel: 080-6950-1786 (Secretary Editorial Board)

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## CHALLENGES OF SLUMS DWELLERS IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS: TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE CITY

Rufa'i Abubakar<sup>1</sup> & Usman Abdulkadir<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Geography, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Sokoto State University, Sokoto, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Sokoto State University, Sokoto, Nigeria



Corresponding Author's Email: [rufai.abubakar@ssu.edu.ng](mailto:rufai.abubakar@ssu.edu.ng)

### Abstract

*This study identified challenges of slum dwellers in Sokoto metropolis and also assessed its track towards becoming a sustainable city. The study employed both the quantitative and qualitative method of data collection. One hundred and twenty (120) respondents were surveyed through purposive sampling techniques. Open ended questionnaire was administered to head of household and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was conducted in each of the six slum areas identified in this study. These include: Gidan Sauro, Gidan Rana, Sagin Lemu, Sabon Garin Mai-kwabo and Mabera (Kantin sani) and Nufawa. The method for data analysis used was simple descriptive statistics using SPSS version 20 and report on FGDs. The responses from the questionnaire were deduced and classified into six major themes: inadequate social amenities and infrastructure, crimes and social vices, congestion and low level of human capital development as well as environmental challenges and indiscriminate dumping of waste. The study therefore concludes that there is inadequacy of basic amenities and infrastructure with very poor environmental condition. The study therefore recommends among other things, that government should embark on massive urban renewal of the study area so as to provide them with basic facilities, utilities and infrastructure.*

**Keywords:** *Slum Dwellers, Sustainable Cities and Sokoto Metropolis.*

### Introduction

Rapid urbanization, one of the greatest socio-economic changes during the last five decades, has caused the burgeoning of new kinds of slums, the growth of squatter and informal housing all around the rapidly expanding cities of the developing world. Urban populations have increased explosively in the past 50 years, and will continue to do so for at least the next 30 years as the number of people born in cities increase and as people continue to be displaced from rural areas (UNDESA, 2020).

At the time of the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in 1976, there were over 3.5 billion people in the world. Two decades later, when the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements took place, there were already 6 billion people worldwide. The world's urban population had doubled in only two decades. The developing world has been predominantly rural but is quickly becoming urban. In 1950 only 18 per cent of people in developing countries lived in cities. In 2000 the proportion was 40 per cent, and by 2030 the developing world is predicted to be 56 per cent urban. Future urban growth in developing countries will be absorbed by urban centres, which have a high average annual urban population growth rate of 2.3 per cent, in contrast to the developed world's rate of 0.4 per cent (UN-Habitat, 2003).

The major concern is the growing challenge of slums, in the context of institutional and legal failure and failure of governance. Slums must be seen as the result of a failure of housing policies, and delivery systems, as well as of national and urban policies. The most important factor that limits progress in improving housing and living conditions of low-income groups in informal settlements and slums is the lack of genuine political will to address the issue in a fundamentally structured, sustainable and large-scale manner (Jones, 2017). There is no doubt that the political will to achieve long lasting and structured interventions constitutes the key to success, particularly when accompanied by local ownership and leadership, and the mobilization of the potential and capacity. Equally, the urban poor are trapped in an informal and 'illegal' world in slums that are not reflected on maps, where waste is not collected, where taxes are not paid and where public services are not provided (Zohoori, 2017).

Many of these slum dwellers have no property rights, nor security of tenure, but instead make whatever arrangements they can in an informal, unregulated and, in some respects, expensive parallel market. Since its first appearance during the 1820s as part of the London Cant, the term 'slum' was used to identify the poorest quality housing and the most unsanitary conditions; a refuge for marginal activities including crime, and drug abuse; and a likely source for many epidemics that ravaged urban areas a place apart from all that was decent and wholesome (Kim *et.al.*, 2019).

The world's rural population has essentially reached its peak, so that almost all further population growth will be absorbed by urban settlements. An increasing number of urban dwellers tend to enriched land for settlements of restricted urban area to form slums (Sutiarsi *et. al.*, 2019). In Nigeria the failure of successive administration has neglected the plight of the poor for a very long time which has made the poor to look for cheap accommodation where available hence, most of the cities suffers social exclusion, unemployment, homelessness, lack of paid income and vulnerability to environmental risks and poor health (Sheuya, 2008). The ill effects of poverty, unhealthy environments, and marginalization from the formal sector have continued to ruin the living condition of slum dwellers and have become one of the major challenges of slum dwellers.

Sokoto metropolis has been the capital of Sokoto state since 1976. It is the administrative, socio-cultural, political and economic hub of the state (Eniolorunda & Dankani, 2012). While maintaining slow growth rate since inception, the growth became accelerated with the reintroduction of democratic rule in Nigeria from 1999 up till today. Between 1986 and 2002, the metropolis grew by 1.4%. It also grew by 8.9% from 2002 to 2005. The Master Plan of the city is said to have been altered (Eniolorunda & Dankani, 2012). This has posed serious challenges in the urban space of the study area.

### Literature Review

Majority of slum dwellers exist outside the law where they live and work. They are not able to access most of the formal institutions of society, and lacking a legal address they are often unable to access social services such as subsidized health care or education, which are largely used by the more affluent. Governments, in many cases, refuse to provide them with services on the grounds that their settlements are not legal, even though these may have been in place for over 50 years and comprise a majority of the population. Rather than helping them or trying to provide for them, governments actually bound them and restrict them in their attempts to provide the fundamentals of life shelter and livelihood and they live in a state of permanent insecurity and illegality (Paul, 2017).

Slum dwellers' 'life chances' are low; they are rarely able to obtain formal-sector jobs because of their lack of social capital, including lack of education, and a general exclusion from 'regular society' that is mediated by signifiers of social class and a lack of empowerment. Slum dwellers

are also not able to access regular sources of finance to develop their own businesses. Banks do not usually have branches in slums, and if they do, the lack of legally registered collateral will exclude all but the most well-off slum dwellers from obtaining loans. Slum entrepreneurs are forced to draw on informal sources of finance at exorbitant rates and very short repayment periods (UN-HABITAT 2003).

UN-HABITAT (2009), defined a slum as “a highly populated urban residential area consisting mostly of closely-packed, decrepit housing units in a situation of deteriorated or uncompleted infrastructure, inhabited primarily by impoverished persons.” A slum lacks basic amenities such as lack of electricity, clean water, sanitation services etc. According to UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) and WHO (World Health Organization), 2023, over 4.5 billion people live without a household toilet. 862 million people still defecate in the open, while 1.8 billion people have no good source of drinking water and one third of the world’s populations have intestinal worm infections. About 8% of global wastewater is recycled back into the ecosystem without being treated and 1800 children under the age of five die from diarrhea because of lack of hygiene, sanitation and safe water. Their study showed that access to these three basic amenities (hygiene, sanitation and safe water) could lead to the reduction in 842,000 deaths yearly (WHO/UNICEF, 2023). According to UN-HABITAT (2009), about a third (32%) of the world’s estimated population dwell in slums or places characterized as one; due to shortcomings such as lack of sanitation, poor housing structure and insecurity of tenure.

Nigeria has hundreds of slums in the country; this is because at least every state has an average of five slums with Lagos having as much as ten slums such as Makoko, Ajegunle, Bariga, Badia, Mushin etc (Adekole & Afolabi, 2017). Makoko, has a population of over 85,000 people and the numbers keep rising, they use makeshift pit latrines while some go to the water to relieve themselves (Adekole & Afolabi, 2017). He further describes slums dwellers as citizens who suffered from Political exclusion from nation building, elections, urban development and other state functions, inaccessibility to basic amenities, social exclusion from carnivals, celebrations and other events, increased crime rate, Poor education systems and increased illiteracy, Increased disaster rate, Increased mortality rate, Prevailing poverty and Substandard housing.

In summary, the conditions faced by slum dwellers highlight a deep-rooted failure in urban management, social integration, and the protection of basic human rights. Although they make up a large segment of city populations, they are often excluded from political processes, marginalized in society, and denied access to essential services. Without legal recognition, they are stuck in a cycle of poverty and vulnerability, unable to benefit from healthcare, education, or financial systems that could improve their lives.

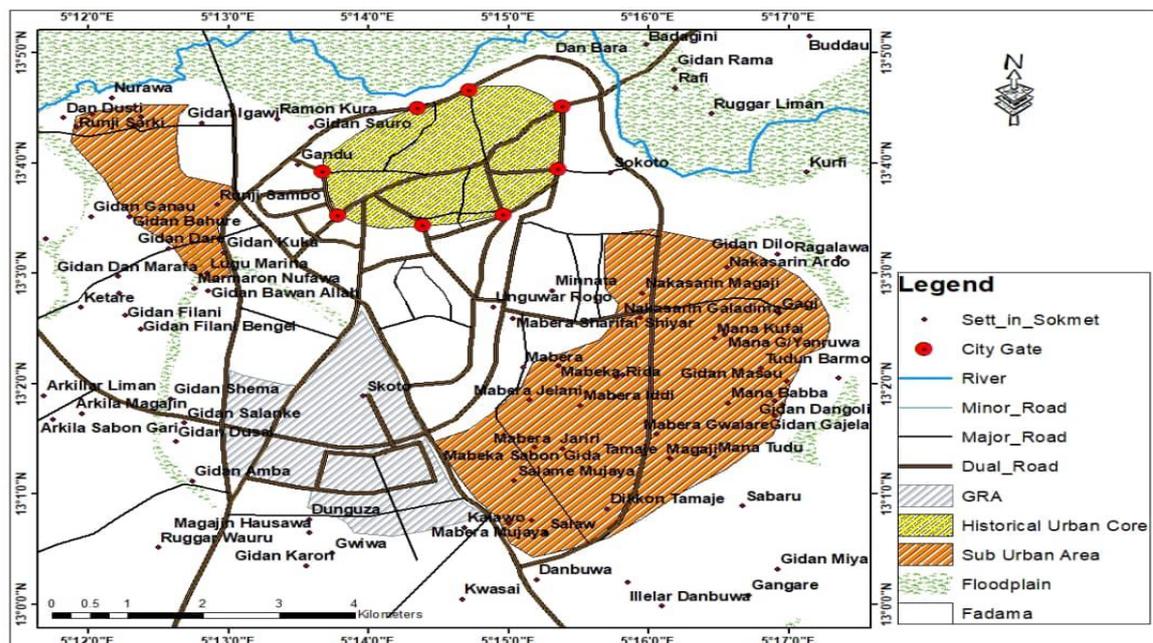
## **Materials and Methods**

### **Study Area**

Sokoto Metropolis is located between Latitudes 12<sup>o</sup>46’N to 13<sup>o</sup>08’N and Longitudes 5<sup>o</sup>14’E to 5<sup>o</sup>30’E and at an average elevation of 272m above sea level (Dankani, 2017). The total population of the area is estimated at 641,249 people as at year 2020 and projected figure for the year 2035 indicates that Sokoto metropolis will have a population of 1,082,496 (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division [UNDESA, 2020]). However, a density of over 1000 persons/km<sup>2</sup> is obtainable inside the metropolis (NPC, 2007; Shamaki & Dankani, 2012). The Sokoto metropolis covers a radius of 16km from the Gingiya memorial stadium (Dankani, 2017 and SURPB, 2019). Local inhabitants comprised mostly of Hausa/Fulani and other groups such as Gobirawa, Zabarmawa, Kabawa, Adarawa, Arawa, Nupes, Yorubas, Igbos 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. Sokoto metropolis comprises mainly of two local governments (Sokoto South and North local government areas) and portions around frontiers of four other local government areas (Kware, Wamakko, Dange Shuni and Bodinga). Sokoto metropolis is situated in the e Sudan savannah vegetation belt (Adamu *et. al.*, 2017), Its annual rainfall stands at an average of 600mm which normally starts in June and ends in October while average daily temperature is about 36<sup>0</sup>C (Ifabiyi & Eniolorunda, 2012 and Umar, 2013).

Generally, the vegetation is in the form of short and stunted shrubs, grasses around the metropolis but the inner part and the precincts have vestiges, and patches of vegetation composed mainly of trees (Eniolorunda, & Dankani, 2012). In the north of the metropolis is the Sokoto-Rima River floodplain that prevents the city growth in that direction. Historically, Sokoto has an excellent regional location combined with a strategic defensive position. A common feature of cities in Northern Nigeria is a defensive wall, and a number of city gates denoting entry points from other neighboring areas. In fact, all the known gates have been preserved in their original locations which show an indication of how rapidly the city grew.



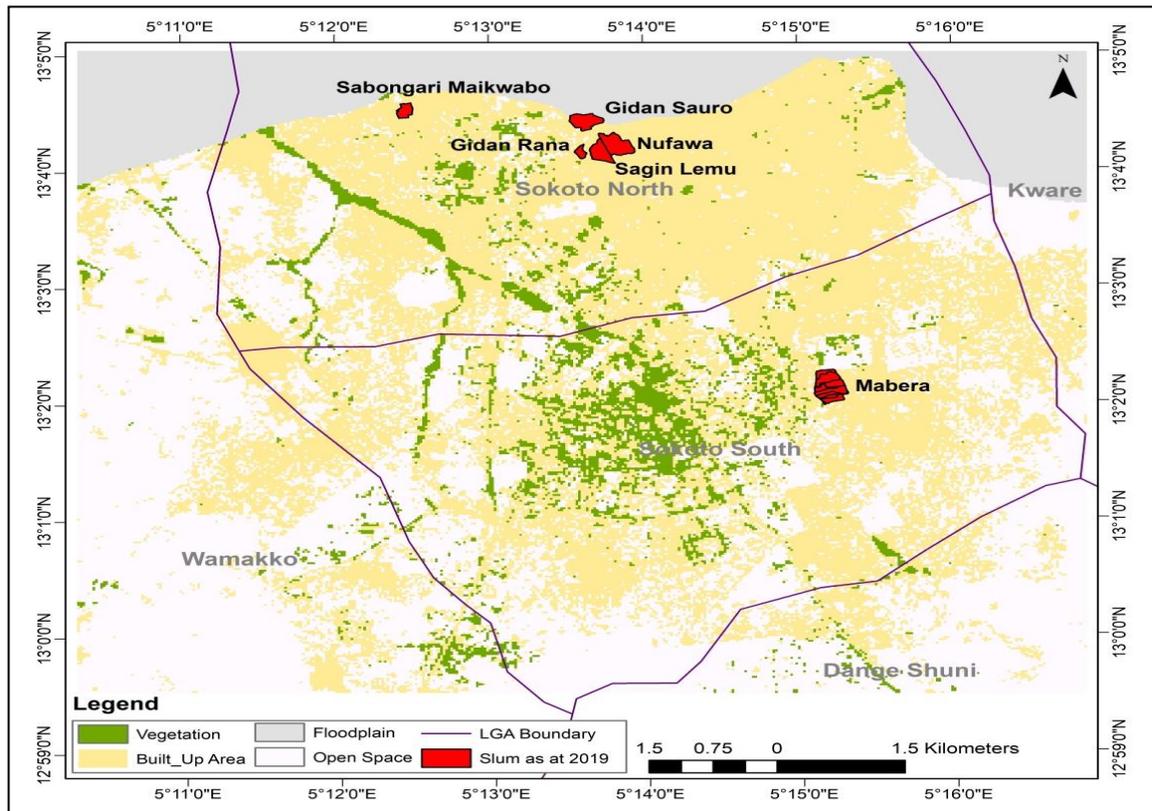
**Figure 1: A Map, Showing Morphology of the Study Area**

Source: Author's, 2024

Figure 1 shows the map of the study area. It classified the study area into three zones: Government Reservation Areas, historical urban core areas delineated by city gates and the sub-urban areas depicting its proximity to Fadama land.

### Data Source

Data for this study were obtained by administering open ended questionnaire and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to head of household. The FGD was done to augment and validate whatever information obtained from questionnaire. It was organized to give respondents chance to express challenges faced in the study area. In this study, six slums were identified, which includes Gidan Sauro, Gidan Rana, Sagin Lemu, Sabon Garin Mai-kwabo and Mabea (Kantin sani) and Nufawa. and as such six persons (6) from each slum aged 18 years and above were selected to seek information from them.



**Figure 2: Slums in the study Area**  
**Source: Author's Fieldwork 2024**

One hundred and twenty (120) respondents were surveyed through purposive sampling techniques. According to Umeh, (2018) researcher using non-probability sampling method is at liberty to pick its number of respondents. The data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics.

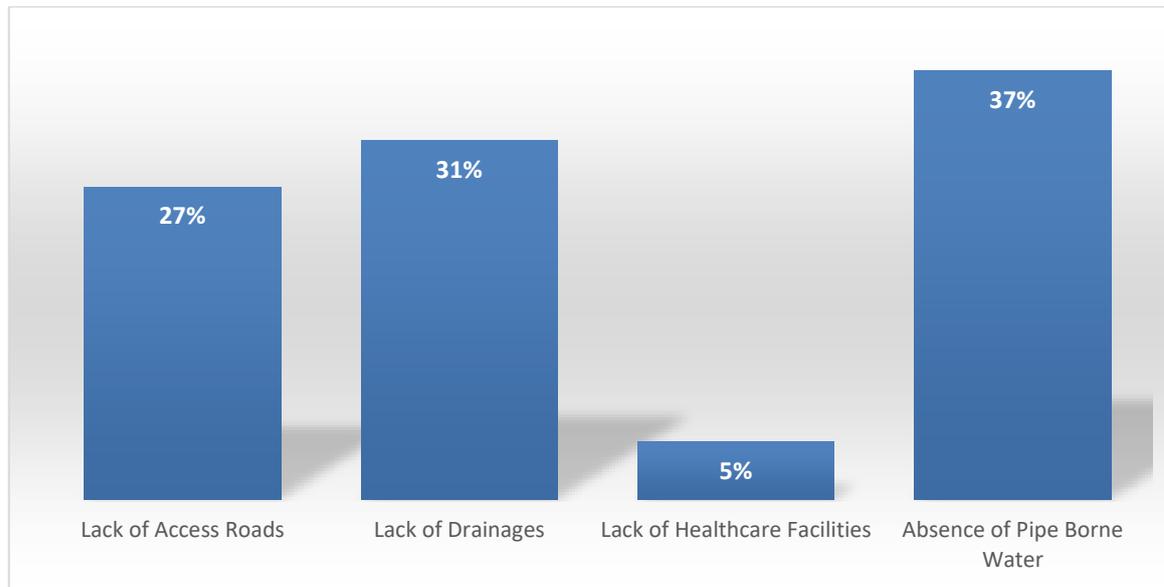
### Results and Discussions

Data collected using questionnaire elicited many responses about the challenges faced by slums dwellers. As such, these responses were classified into six (6) major themes, which include:

- i. Inadequate social amenities and infrastructure
- ii. Crimes and social vices
- iii. Congestion
- iv. Low level of Human Capital development
- v. Environmental Challenges
- vi. Indiscriminate Dumping of waste

#### Inadequate Social Amenities and Infrastructure

The study findings reveal a severe deficiency in the provision and quality of social amenities and infrastructure in the slum areas of Sokoto metropolis. Data collected from slum communities highlight the extent to which residents are marginalized in terms of access to basic services essential for human well-being and development.



**Figure 3: Inadequate Social Amenities and Infrastructure**  
**Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024**

Figure 3, pointed inadequacy of social amenities and infrastructure as one the major challenges in their neighborhoods. These infrastructures include access roads, drainage, health facilities and pipe borne water. The table indicates that 27% of the respondents highlights lack of access roads, as their challenges while 31% of the respondents pointed out lack of drainage, 5% opted for lack of health facility and 37% goes to absence of pipe borne water as some of the major challenges facing their neighborhoods.

Aliyu & Amadu (2017) identified poor road networks and inadequate drainage as major causes of urban flooding and poor mobility in Kano and Kaduna's low-income areas. Ogunleye et al. (2019) found that over 60% of people in Bauchi lacked access to safe drinking water, similar to the 37% in this study concerned about the absence of pipe-borne water. Ibrahim *et al.* (2020) highlighted unequal distribution of primary healthcare centers in Northern Nigeria, reflecting the 5% here who cited lack of health facilities as a problem. Yahaya & Adamu, (2018) noted chronic underinvestment in drainage and water supply in Zaria, which aligns with the 31% and 37% of respondents worried about drainage and water scarcity. These consistent findings indicate that infrastructural challenges in this study are part of a widespread issue across Northern Nigeria, underscoring the need for integrated policy and urban planning interventions.

Commenting on the above challenges, an FGD had this to say:

*"We are faced with numerous challenges, but what are more disturbing are inadequate social amenities, crimes and social vices. We lost more than half of our youth to drug abuse and thuggery".*

The statement highlights serious social and infrastructural problems in the community, including a lack of basic amenities and a rise in crime and drug abuse among youth. It reflects a breakdown in social support systems, driven by poverty, unemployment, and limited opportunities, leading to a major public safety and health concern.

**Table 1: Crimes and Social Vices in the Study Area**

Variable	Percentage
Youth involvement in drug abuse, sales of illicit drugs and thuggery	32%
Prevalence of hawking among girls	2%
Criminal hideout	4%
Rampant cases of dumping new born in the refuse	2%
Theft	1%
Prostitution base	3%
Cases of unwanted pregnancy	2%
Unsecured Environment	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024**

Crimes and social vices also constitute some of the major problems of slum dwellers in the study area, and it reveals that youth involvement in drug abuse, sales of illicit drugs, theft, and thuggery represent 33%, while those who describe the environment as unsecured represent 54% of the respondents. Moreover, those who pointed prostitution, hawking, rampant cases of dumping new born babies in the refuse, and that, there areas are serving as criminal hideout represent 13%. Low level of human capital development represents another set of major challenges facing the neighborhoods of slums in the study area. However, 42% of respondents consider lack of children enrolment in schools as some of the major problems facing their neighborhood, while youth unemployment constitutes 44% perception on marginalization and exclusion by government represent 8% of the responses. However, 6% of respondents hold that there is a challenge of increasing number of destitute children.

An analysis on environmental challenges reveals that that 97% of the respondents have expressed fear of flooding particularly during the rainy season, while 3% of respondents have confirmed the existence of erosion activities particularly in Sabon Garin Mai-Kwabo. This indicates that most of the slums in the study area are vulnerable to flood due to the nature of their structural plan, lack of drainage and man's activity resulting to blockage of drainages (where available) or water-ways.

Muggah, (2012) found that slums in Latin America often become centers of criminal activity due to social exclusion, which parallels this study's finding that 13% of respondents reported issues like prostitution, street vending, and criminal hideouts signs of social decline in slums. The study also revealed that 42% of children were not in school and 44% of youth were unemployed, supporting Agbola & Agunbiade's, (2009) observation of limited education and high youth unemployment in Nigerian slums. Feelings of marginalization (8%) and concern for destitute children (6%) align with Bapat & Agarwal's (2003) findings on exclusion from basic services worsening poverty in Indian slums. Additionally, 97% of respondents feared flooding, echoing Adelekan's, (2010) research on flood risks due to poor infrastructure and drainage in Ibadan. Lastly, 3% expressed concern about erosion, consistent with Douglas et. al., (2008), who linked unregulated urban growth to environmental degradation in vulnerable urban areas.

**Table 2 Congestion in the Study Area**

Variable	Percentage
Congestion	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024**

Congestion is another major challenge facing the slum dwellers in the study area; data analysis reveals that 100% of respondents consider congestion to be one of their major challenges. Table 6 analyze Indiscriminate dumping of waste, and reveals that 53% of respondents outlined dirtiness of the area as one of the major challenges facing their neighborhood, while lack of

proper disposal site represents 47% of responses. The study reveals that congestion is a major issue among slum dwellers, with all respondents identifying it as a challenge. This finding aligns with other research in Northern Nigeria, such as studies by Aderamo & Magaji, (2010), which link overcrowding to unregulated urban growth and rural migration. Additionally, indiscriminate waste dumping is a significant problem, with 53% citing area dirtiness and 47% pointing to the lack of disposal sites. Similar issues were documented by Abdu & Ibrahim, (2015) in Zaria and by Aliyu & Amadu (2017) in Bauchi. These problems are interconnected, as congestion worsens sanitation issues. Without proper urban planning and intervention, these challenges are expected to persist, as emphasized by Yahaya *et. al.*, (2014).

Another FGD added that;

*“Housing deterioration and poor building practice have continued to be the reason for the dirtiness of our environment and congestion. Our houses are grossly inadequate to accommodate our large family sizes”.*

*“Most of our people are young and unemployed because of lack of education and government failure to help our business men and women in order to be out of this poverty and deprivation”.*

The statement highlights how poor housing, unemployment, and poverty are interconnected in underserved communities. Overcrowded and substandard housing contributes to environmental and social issues, while lack of education and government support fuels youth unemployment and ongoing poverty.

**Table 3: Low level of Human Capital Development in the Study Area**

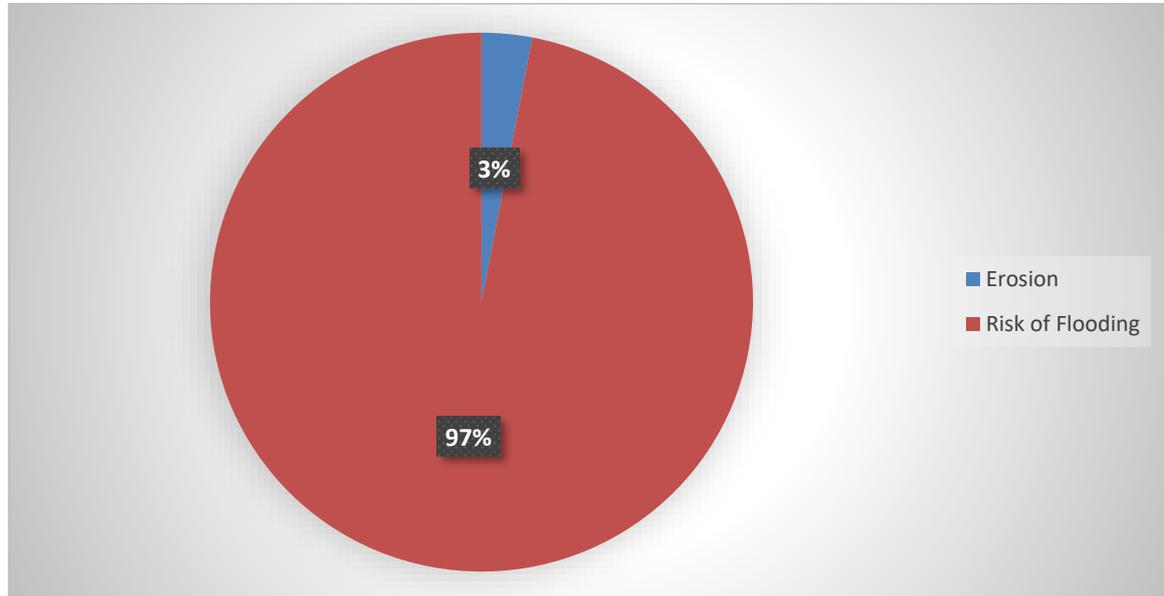
Variable	Percentage
Lack of children enrollment in schools	39%
Youth unemployment	43%
Marginalization and exclusion from Government	5%
Lack of School	3%
Marginalization and lack of children enrolment in schools	3%
Lack of children enrolment in school and unemployment	1%
Increase in the number of Destitute children	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Author’s Fieldwork, 2024**

Agbola and Agunbiade, (2009) observed that many children living in Nigerian urban slums is denied access to formal education, largely because of poverty, limited educational infrastructure, and the expectation to support their families financially. This aligns with the current study's findings on low school enrollment among children. Furthermore, the issue of youth unemployment, as identified by 43% of respondents, is consistent with the observations of Aliyu & Amadu, (2017), who attributed the problem in states like Kano and Kaduna to poor vocational training, scarce employment opportunities, and fragile urban economies. The 5% of respondents who reported feeling excluded from government initiatives reflect similar sentiments captured by Yahaya & Adamu, (2018) in Zaria, where residents of informal settlements expressed dissatisfaction with governance and inadequate access to basic services. Additionally, the concern raised by 6% of participants about the rise in destitute children is in line with Babatunde, (2025) findings, which highlight the increasing number of street children in Northern Nigerian cities, driven by poverty, family instability, and government neglect. Collectively, these findings suggest that the issues uncovered in the study area are part of a broader pattern of social marginalization, economic hardship, and child neglect affecting much of Northern Nigeria.

### Environmental Challenges faced by Slum Dwellers in the Study Area

The results of the study reveal that slum dwellers in Sokoto metropolis face numerous environmental challenges that adversely affect their health, safety, and overall quality of life.

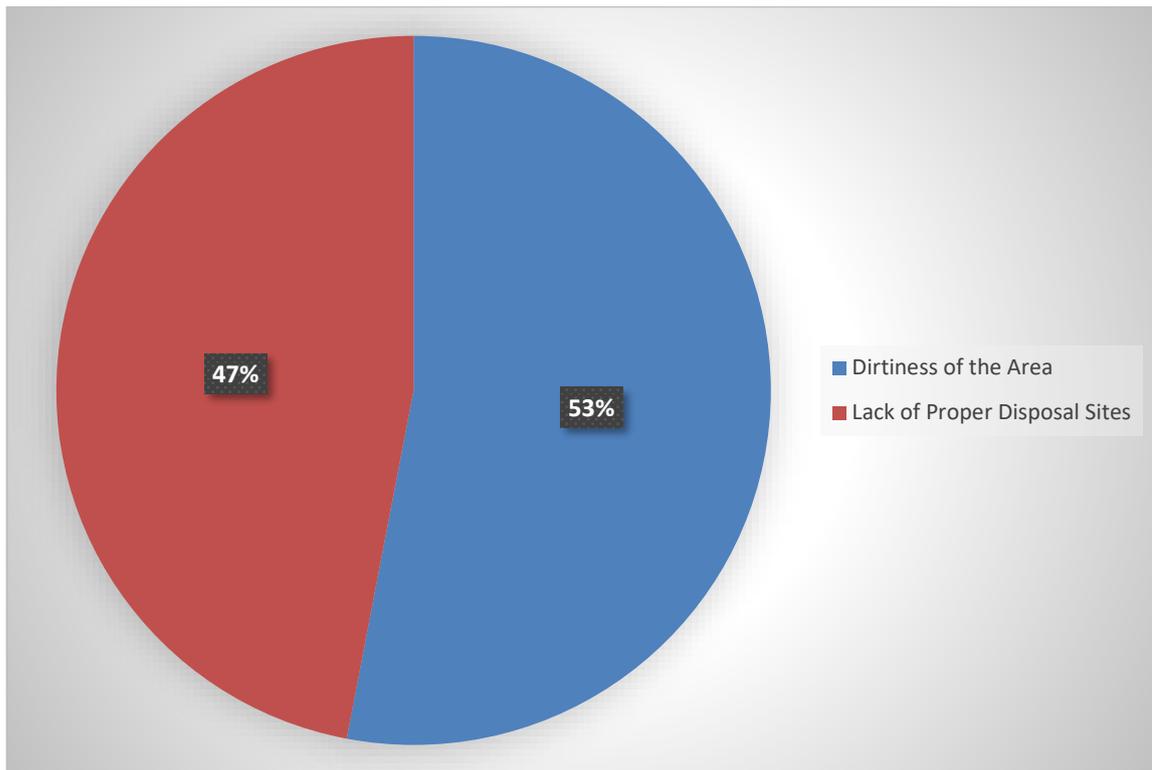


**Figure 4: Environmental Challenges faced by Slum Dwellers in the Study Area**  
Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

Figure 4 reveal that 97% of respondents are with the risk of flooding while only 3% are faced with erosion. This overwhelming exposure to flooding underscores the urgent vulnerability of slum communities in Sokoto metropolis to seasonal climate events, particularly during the rainy season. The spatial layout of these settlements characterized by unplanned housing, inadequate drainage, and location in low-lying or waterlogged areas exacerbates this condition. These findings align with previous studies across Nigeria. For example: Adelekan (2010), in her study of urban slums in Ibadan, found that over 90% of households in low-income areas experienced seasonal flooding, primarily due to poor drainage infrastructure and encroachment on natural waterways. Similarly, Douglas *et al.* (2008) emphasized that informal urban settlements across Africa are disproportionately exposed to climate-related hazards, especially flooding, as a result of unregulated urban expansion and weak municipal governance. In a recent urban environmental assessment by the World Bank (2021) on Nigerian cities, flooding was cited as the leading environmental risk for urban poor communities, ahead of air pollution and erosion.

### Indiscriminate Dumping of Waste in the Study Area

The study findings reveal that indiscriminate dumping of solid waste is a widespread and deeply entrenched environmental problem in the slum areas of Sokoto metropolis (Figure 5). Field observations and household surveys show that the majority of residents dispose of their waste in open spaces, drainage channels, and nearby bushes, due to a lack of formal waste management services.



**Figure 5: Indiscriminate Dumping of Waste in the Study Area**

**Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024**

The Global Burden of Disease Study undertaken by the World Bank indicates that 15% of all deaths in children fewer than 5 years of age in low- and middle-income countries are directly attributable to diarrheal disease due to unsafe environment. In a review of pro-poor sanitation technologies, Narayan *et al.*, (2021) argued that decentralized simplified small-bore sewerage, connecting small groups of homes and facilities, is, to date, the only technically feasible and economically appropriate sanitation option available for low-income, high-density urban areas. However, there are significant obstacles to adopting this concept in slum areas. In addition to the lack of public funds to support installation, the lack of in-house water supply yields a lack of flush required to drive these water-based systems. These shared connections invoke additional challenges in slum areas, where the transient nature of the population contributes to difficulties of shared responsibilities.

Another FGD added that:

*“Our area has continued to remain a dirty place because, even when government want to evacuate refuse as you can see there is no way for heavy trucks to come in and there is no any vacant land to dump our refuse and even more disturbing is the attitude of people dumping refuse on the little minor roads we have”, thus, causing serious health hazards.*

The statement reveals that poor waste management in slum areas is caused by both structural issues, like inaccessible roads and lack of dumpsites, and behavioral factors, such as residents dumping waste on minor roads, leading to unsanitary conditions.

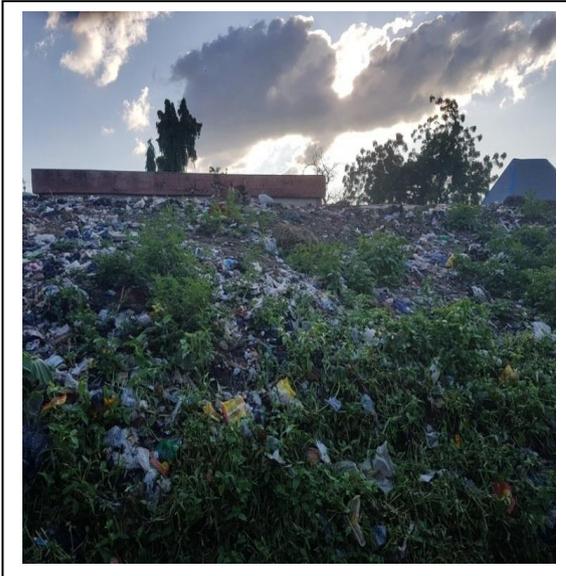


Plate 1: Indiscriminate Dumping of Waste in the Midst of Houses at Gidan Rana  
Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

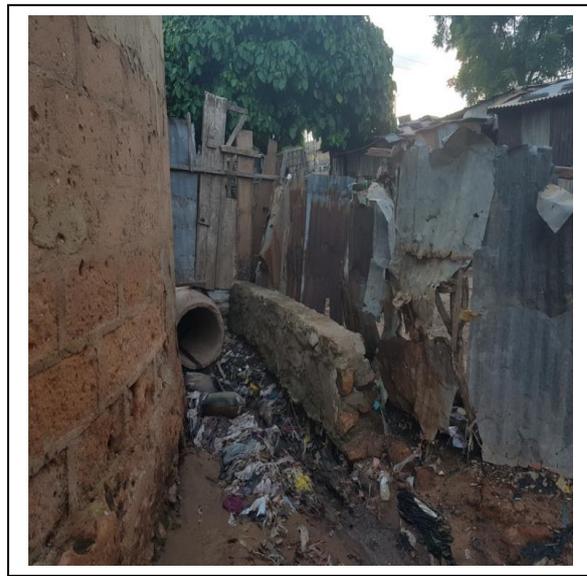


Plate 2: Scene of Some Houses at Gidan Rana  
Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

### Conclusion and Recommendations

It is sufficed to conclude that, availability of basic social amenities is inadequate and inefficient in the study area. The general condition of the environment was considered to be very poor and unsecured. The crime rate is alarming and frightening. The areas (slums) have become safe haven for criminals (criminal hideout) with a high number of youths involved in drug abuse, thuggery, sales of illicit drugs and high number of girls involved in hawking and prostitution. With this situation in the study area, the quest for the emergence of sustainable cities and communities by the year 2030 as enshrined in goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and communities) of the Sustainable Development Goals will be a mere pipe dream that will never be actualized.

The study therefore recommends the following:

- i. Most of the slums identified in the study area are old city deterioration and as such has heritage value, therefore, in the event of upgrading, wholesale clearance should be avoided.
- ii. Government should provide soft loan for the slum's dwellers in the study. The level of their income necessitated this in order to sustain their existing business.
- iii. Government should embark on massive urban renewal of the slums areas so as to provide them with basic facilities, utilities and infrastructure for healthy living, by so doing will go a long way in reducing their suffering and expenses.
- iv. Sokoto Urban and Regional Planning Board (S.U.R.P.B) should impose building restriction in Gidan Sauro because of their proximity to flood prone area.

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