

The Expansion of Affordable Housing in Accra, Ghana: Implications for Arable Land and Sustainable Development

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Abstract- *The expansion of affordable housing in Accra, Ghana, has become imperative due to rapid urbanization and a growing population. However, this development often comes at the cost of arable land, posing challenges for food security and sustainable development. This paper examines the implications of affordable housing projects on arable land, explores sustainable solutions, and presents case studies illustrating the tension between urban development and agricultural preservation. Recommendations are offered for balancing housing needs with environmental sustainability and food security.*

Indexed Terms- *Affordable housing, arable land, sustainable development, urbanization.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Urbanization in Ghana, particularly in the Greater Accra Region, has led to increased demand for affordable housing. The population of Accra, currently estimated at 5.5 million, continues to grow due to rural-urban migration and natural population growth. This has led to informal settlements, overcrowding, and increased pressure on land resources. In response, the government and private developers are investing in affordable housing projects. However, much of the land used for these developments is farmland, raising concerns about food security, environmental sustainability, and long-term economic impacts.

This article examines these challenges and highlights the conflict between the need for

affordable housing and the preservation of farmland.

II. AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS IN ACCRA

According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2021), Accra has a housing deficit of over 1.8 million units.

This deficit affects low- and middle-income families who struggle to find adequate and affordable housing. The government's efforts, including initiatives such as the Saglemi Housing Project and public-private partnerships, aim to close this gap. However, these projects often extend to peri-urban and rural areas where fertile land is readily available and more affordable for developers.

A. Case Study: The Saglemi Affordable Housing Project

Located near Prampram, the Saglemi Housing Project has been designed to provide over 5,000 housing units. While the project aimed to alleviate the housing shortage, its location on fertile land previously used for agriculture displaced agricultural activities, impacting local farmers and food production.

III. THE IMPACT ON ARABLE LAND

The conversion of arable land to residential use has significant implications:

1. **Food Security:** Ghana's agriculture sector employs over 30% of the workforce and contributes significantly to GDP. Loss of

farmland reduces food production capacity, increasing reliance on food imports and affecting food prices.

2. Livelihoods: Many peri-urban communities rely on farming for their livelihoods. Displacement due to housing projects leads to loss of income and social disruption.
3. Environmental Consequences: Loss of green spaces exacerbates urban heat, reduces biodiversity, and increases soil erosion.

A. Case Study: Kasoa and Its Surroundings
The rapid expansion of affordable housing in Kasoa, located on the outskirts of Accra, has led to the conversion of vast agricultural lands. Farmers in the area have been forced to relocate or switch professions, while food supply chains have been disrupted.

IV. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), call for sustainable urban development and the preservation of ecosystems. In Ghana, it is difficult to reconcile these goals due to:

1. Policy Gaps: Inconsistent land use policies lead to uncontrolled development.
2. Weak Enforcement: Regulations protecting agricultural land are often ignored due to corruption and rapid urban growth pressures.
3. Limited Infrastructure: Concentration of economic opportunities in Accra forces people to migrate, increasing housing demand.

V. STRATEGIES FOR BALANCING HOUSING AND ARABLE LAND PRESERVATION

To address these challenges, a multi-faceted approach is necessary:

1. Urban Infill Development: Prioritize the redevelopment of underutilized urban land rather than expanding into rural areas.
2. Vertical Housing Solutions: Increase the density of housing projects through multi-story

- developments to minimize land use.
3. Zoning Regulations: Implement and enforce strict zoning laws to protect agricultural lands.
4. Agricultural and Housing Co-Existence: Develop agro-urban models where urban housing coexists with small-scale farming.
5. Sustainable Design Principles: Incorporate green building technologies and eco-friendly practices.

A. Case Study: Rwanda's Green City Initiative
Rwanda's Kigali Green City Project demonstrates sustainable housing that integrates green spaces, rainwater harvesting, and energy-efficient designs. A similar approach in Accra can mitigate the environmental impact of housing projects.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government Policy Reforms: Strengthen policies protecting arable land and promote sustainable land use planning.
2. Public Awareness Campaigns: Educate communities about the importance of preserving agricultural land.
3. Investment in Infrastructure: Decentralize economic activities to other regions to reduce migration pressure on Accra.
4. Public-Private Partnerships: Encourage partnerships that prioritize sustainability in affordable housing projects.

CONCLUSION

While affordable housing is crucial for Accra's growing population, it must not come at the cost of arable land and sustainable development. By adopting innovative planning strategies, enforcing land use policies, and promoting sustainable urban development, Ghana can address its housing deficit without compromising food security and environmental integrity.

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