

# Understanding policy framework for slum governance in a developing country

Policy  
framework  
for slum  
governance

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Slum discourse has attracted significant research interest among scholars. The study examined the policy framework for slum governance in Ghana with the goal of offering recommendations to structure slum management.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Anchored on exploratory qualitative methodology, the study utilized a purposive sampling technique to select 18 respondents from the major ministries for in-depth interviews.

**Findings** – The results showed an absence of a central national policy for slum governance because slums development has received less national priority. It also revealed a lack of coordination among the sector ministries in policy formulation, which tends to create a blame game among them. Further, it was found that slum programs are driven by media-political and non-governmental actors.

**Research limitations/implications** – The conclusion and the outcome of this study cannot be generalized as to represent the whole ministries in Ghana in the space of slums management due to the qualitative approach. A recommendation is offered for the creation of a separate authority to take charge of the slums in Ghana.

**Practical implications** – This study elucidates a context-specific understanding of the policy framework for slum governance, which tends to shape public knowledge and policy landscape.

**Originality/value** – As a novelty, the findings of the study advanced the sparse literature in the domain and, at the same time, helped politicians and policymakers understand the need for a dedicated policy for slums.

**Keywords** Governance, Government, Policies, Institutions, Slums

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

The field of slum policy and governance within the public administration discourse has received significant research interest among academics in developed economies (Patel and Killemssetty, 2020; Sulistyaningsih *et al.*, 2021; Sandoval and Sarmiento, 2020) and developing countries (Adamtey *et al.*, 2021; Appiah-Kubi, 2018; Roberts and Okanya, 2020; Takyi *et al.*, 2020). While these studies contribute to knowledge and management of slums, a critical review of the extant literature reveals a lack of a clear policy framework for slum governance. The phenomenon is largely due to the absence of a strong policy agenda for slums (Marx *et al.*, 2013), and divisions among institutions for the management of slums (Kusters *et al.*, 2018; Malik *et al.*, 2021; Saharan *et al.*, 2018). While the above research has indicated pointers accounting for a void in slum governance, the issue of a policy framework for slum governance is missing, leaving a gap in the literature. The purpose of the study is to investigate the government policy framework for slum governance in Ghana through an incremental model (Lindblom, 2020).



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A study by [Kusters et al. \(2018\)](#) indicates that institutional collaboration is characterized by overlapping mandates, competing interests and a lack of resources. Existing studies (see: [Adamtey et al., 2021](#); [Khalifa, 2015](#); [Oteng-Ababio and Grant, 2019](#); [Ren, 2017](#); [Sandoval and Sarmiento, 2020](#); [Saharan et al., 2018](#)) reveal divisions between slum policies and institutional practices. The studies point to the fact that the absence of institutional coordination affects the effective inclusion of slum dwellers into policy and governance. They proposed future examination of slum policies and institutional practices ([Ren, 2017](#); [Saharan et al., 2018](#)) on the one hand, and how slums are integrated into policy planning and management processes ([Sandoval and Sarmiento, 2020](#)) on the other hand. Similarly, there has been a suggestion by [Malik et al. \(2021\)](#) for studies to analyze broader institutional stakeholder collaboration instead of the two models of institutional interactions regarded as the traditional style of engagement in developing countries. Anchored on exploratory qualitative research, the study fills the gap by paving the way for more studies into how institutional collaboration supports slum governance through an incremental model ([Lindblom, 2020](#)). The study specifically sought to answer the following questions: what are the government's policy priorities for slum governance; to what extent does institutional collaboration support slum governance; and what drivers inform slum intervention programs available in slums?

Importantly, the study expands the boundaries of knowledge in the realm of slums within the public administration literature. Not only will such an enterprise enhance theoretical knowledge in the field of management, but it will also help shape the policy landscape for the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda ([UN-Habitat III, 2016](#)). The study contributes to the growing field of research on slums in twofold: First, the paper empirically showcases a policy framework for slum governance from a developing economy, which could serve as a guide for other developing countries. Second, the outcome of the study sheds light on the path to understanding the steps undertaken by the government towards the achievement of SDG-11 and the New Urban Agenda. The paper proceeds as follows: the theoretical background and literature review, followed by the methodological approach. The next section provides the method and tools used for data collection. The next section reports the results of the study, followed by a discussion of the results and a conclusion.

### Literature review

Several models have been used to explain slums policy and governance, such as incrementalism ([Lindblom, 2020](#)). In the domain of slums management, there appears to be limited application of incremental model creating a gap in the extant literature. Incrementalism emphasizes the variety of actors involved in the policy-making process and predicts that policy-makers will build on past policies, focusing on incremental rather than wholesale changes to the existing ones. Developed in response to the then-prevalent conception of policy making, incrementalism is a process of rational analysis culminating in a value-maximizing decision. According to [Lindblom \(2020\)](#), when undertaking policy formulation, policy-makers never engage in “root and branch” assessment of policy alternatives, but rather work through a process of successive limited comparisons. Policy diffusion is thus tied to incremental policy processes; one government's policy choices influence and affect the choices of other governments ([Shipan and Volden, 2012](#)). [Bender's \(2015\)](#) article on the topic “dead yet flourishing”, reaffirmed that difficult problems are impossible to tackle using conventional problem-solving techniques. When faced with intricate quagmires of public issues, such as slums, policymakers “muddle through” [Lindblom \(2020\)](#), which tends to defile conventional wisdom in policymaking.

*“Incremental decision-making is criticized as incoherent approach to problem solving, but more plausible as a toolkit of heuristics that can be deployed separately and combined in various ways.”* Its dominance in decision-making is explained by information problems, limited

attention and risk aversion. Policy-makers rarely have the time needed to pay close attention to policy problems. As rightly put by Jones (2017), slum expansion requires policies that conform to sustainable urbanization to achieve long-term slum development. Sustainable urbanization concept means slums policies that are free from party politics (Muchadenyika and Waiswa, 2018). The study maintains that the prevalence of slums may largely be influenced by the incremental approach to policy that neglects the voices of slum dwellers and a clear commitment of policy actors. This is so because slum management and policies have rarely witnessed a shift from the past approaches necessary to upgrade the existing ones and minimize the recurrence of new ones. In the view of Adusei *et al.* (2018), slum policies and programs designed to be incremental should include slum dwellers as partners and drivers of the upgrading process. Sulistyarningsih *et al.* (2021) find a lack of coordination among institutions concerned in city without slums policy. The authors recommend broader collaboration of institutions from regional government, private sector and the people living in slums. Park *et al.* (2019) suggested a revisit of incremental slum housing policy through a combination of community empowerment, a training center, empowering self-reliant communities and a temporary shelter for incremental housing schemes in slums upgrade. Similarly, lack of institutional collaboration and exclusion of slum dwellers in urban governance has constrained city managers to enforce policies of city resilience (Adamtey *et al.*, 2021). Evidence of the studies above indicate a lack of institutional collaboration limits the governance and achievement of slum policies. Inclusivity of slum dwellers through incremental policy and programs could serve a great deal in slums governance.

Slums governance driven by incremental approaches are often short-term and based on outputs. Incremental policy makers may not only be bounded rationally, they may also be fixated with short-term policy outcome for political expediency. A study by Patel and Killemsetty (2020) reveals that despite several policy interventions to improve the lives of slum dwellers, most programs are short-term, focused on outputs and tend to ignore long-term sustainability. According to Sandoval and Sarmiento (2020), residents of informal settlements are excluded from formal development processes, making it difficult for them to access services and trapping them in a cycle of poverty and precariousness. The authors further report a lack of evidence to improve governance systems that foster resilience in the context of urban informality and a lack of inclusion of slum dwellers into urban planning and management processes. The sustainable policy framework for slum governance is not limited by incremental policy models but also due to the changing mandates of policy actors. Saharan *et al.* (2018) find that shifting political coalitions, policy discourses and dominant slum practices contribute to a vogue slum-free agenda in the context of India. It further reveals cleavages between slum policies and institutional practices, building a case for further studies into slum policies and policy intervention by national and international development.

Overall, it can be seen that scholarly works (see e.g. Adusei *et al.*, 2018; Park *et al.*, 2019; Patel and Killemsetty, 2020; Sulistyarningsih *et al.*, 2021), among others, have extensively researched slum policy-related issues. These studies have focused mainly on the policy impact on the lives of slum dwellers and perspectives on the involvement of slum residents in policies. However, there are few empirical studies on policies that show how the government prioritizes slum management. There are a plethora of studies on institutions and multi-stakeholders in slum management (Kusters *et al.*, 2018; Malik *et al.*, 2021; Ren, 2017; Sandoval and Sarmiento, 2020). It is worthwhile to indicate that the above studies examined perspectives for effective stakeholder collaboration in governance. Despite this, none of the research looked into how institutional collaboration affects slum governance. The current study fills this gap in knowledge by looking into how government entities collaborate to improve slum management and prevent new slums from forming. Additionally, studies on slum upgrading have surged (Jones, 2017; Khalifa, 2015; Muchadenyika and Waiswa, 2018; Sulistyarningsih *et al.*, 2021). However, studies about what informs slum intervention

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programs or projects have been overlooked by earlier scholars. This study attempts to shed light on the issue by investigating some of the drivers that inform slum intervention programs and projects. Ultimately, the findings of the research are expected to make a significant contribution to knowledge by helping to understand government policy priorities for slum governance, the extent to which institutional collaboration supports slum governance and further exploring some of the drivers informing slum intervention programs in a developing country, Ghana. The study is one of the few that examines policies of city resilience for slum dwellers holistically, in contrast to many other studies that focused on slum-related issues in a disjointed manner. This is significant because slums in Sub-Saharan Africa exhibit similar characteristics, and the findings and policy implications of this study may have substantial contextual relevance for other developing countries. This research comes from a developing nation environment, an area where issues of slum development and expansion appear to be a problem, but where empirical studies on the extent to which government policies contribute to slum governance are sparse. As a result, our research is expected to add to knowledge by thoroughly studying the government policy framework for slum governance with the goal of shaping policy for the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

### Method

The study adopted an exploratory qualitative methodology focused on investigating a phenomenon that has not been thoroughly explored. In particular, it seeks to offer a better appreciation of how a phenomenon is manifest, and to uncover the full nature of a little-understood problem (Polit and Beck, 2010). The choice of the design is to explore deeper meanings rather than to quantify and generalize results (Catalano and Creswell, 2013; Walsh, 2002). Also, the study was interested in understanding government policy priorities for slum management and how institutional collaboration supports slum governance. In that regard, career bureaucrats who constitute the institutional policy actors participated in the in-depth interview. The choice of purposive technique was based on participants' ability to elucidate specific themes, concepts or phenomena relating to the issue (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The main disadvantage of the purposive method is that it cannot be considered a statistical representation of the target population (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the results of this study do not represent the entire sector ministry in Ghana.

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) were the main sources of data assembled for the study. The two techniques were employed because while the former gives meaningful and insightful appreciation of the issues, the latter aids the opportunity to elicit common ideas, thoughts and experiences about the subject matter among the whole group at once. Participants were drawn from the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR), the Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization and Rural Development (MLGDRD), the Ministry of Works and Housing (MWH), the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP). The ministries constitute the highest policy-making public sector organizations created to serve the interests of the public. Within the chosen ministries, the study focused on only the career bureaucrats, namely the Chief Directors and the Planning Officers, as respondents for the study. This is because the researchers were interested in understanding the policies targeted at slum management from a non-political sense, hence, the inclusion of such participants. In all, 18 interviews were conducted, comprising 12 one-on-one interviews and one FGD made up of six respondents, who were in their mid-thirties to early forties. Studies have evidenced that a sample size of between 10 and 15 is considered appropriate for a homogenous population (Boddy, 2016; Creswell, 2011). The participants are homogenous because they are chief directors and ministry planning officers in the various sectors considered the highest public sector organizations.

Therefore, the sample size used is adequate for a qualitative study as recommended by O'reilly and Parker, 2013, Walker (2012).

The interviews, which were mainly conducted in English, were open-ended questions guided by an interview protocol. The English language was used for the conduct of the interview because the respondents speak English frequently and write very well. The interviews, which lasted between 45 and 55 min on average, were audio-tapped, transcribed and thematically analyzed, with the emerged themes becoming the products of discussion (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis commenced with a thorough examination of the data to find repeated patterns. This was done by getting familiar with the data, coding the data, searching for themes, recognizing relationships and refining themes (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). For the data coding, the investigators read the transcripts over and over, highlighted and annotated the relevant portions. Additionally, for the cluster descriptive codes, the researchers interpreted the meaning of clusters relative to research questions and applied the interpretive codes to the dataset. There were instances where the participants were contacted via phone calls to crosscheck or confirm some of the transcriptions, particularly those relating to direct quotations. In line with COVID-19 protocols, social distancing of at least 2 meters apart, use of a facemask, avoidance of handshakes, handwashing and use of hand sanitizers as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) were maintained during the entire period of the field research.

## Results

This section objectively presents the findings of the study. First, data about the first research question concerning the understanding of government's policy priorities for slum governance was analyzed. In that regard, the emerging themes were "absence of specific national policy for slums" and "management of slum receives less national priority".

### *Absence of specific national policy for slums*

The study's findings revealed that there is no central national policy for slum governance. This is due to the belief that the emergence of slums is unintentional and hence does not warrant national policy. Aside from that, the most of slums are located in areas that are not designated as habitable. It is also a well-known fact that slums develop over time; as a result, less attention is usually paid to this, resulting in difficulty in identifying them. This phenomenon may contribute to the lack of a slum policy document. It was discovered that aspects of slum issues are not unified under a single ministry, but rather span across the policies of numerous sector ministries. For instance, while issues relating to housing fall under the MWH, water and sanitation are situated in the MSWR, environmental issues fall under the domain of MESTI, etc. In this regard, while the sanitation ministry is focusing on an aspect of the slums issue, the works and housing ministry, the local government ministry, and the environment ministry may be contributing in parts. The individualistic approach may result in duplication of efforts and programs. The piecemeal method to slum administration, according to the participants, has made it difficult for a single ministry to oversee the activities of the slums in ways that improved their predicaments. The respondents' voices are represented in the following quotations.

A Director narrates:

Slum development is unintended, I am sure, not only in Ghana. The word "informal settlement" technically connotes an unlawful area that is not zoned for habitation. For instance, the Old Fadama area's soil type and the nature of the topography do not support the construction of buildings. It is an area zoned for recreational activities. It is happening because we are handicapped, and until we have resources, it will be difficult to resolve their issues (*Govt. Official-1*).

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A similar view was expressed by a participant:

As we speak, we do not have a specific policy document for slums. However, we do provide interventions from time-to-time where every ministry tackles part of the slum issue. So, while the sanitation ministry is solving a problem in the slums, the environment or the local government may also be doing their part to contribute to the issue. Maybe, bit-by-bit, we shall have one in the future (*Govt. Official-04: FGD*).

Another respondent stated:

We, as a ministry, do not make provisions in our policies for slums because their development is unintentional. However, we have monitored their activities over the years, and once their challenges attract public attention, the ministry provides intervention. So even though there are no specific policies for them, we assist them from time-to-time (*Govt. Official-03*).

Despite the lack of a specific policy, many forms of structural interventions for slum management exist, as evidenced by the aforementioned voices. However, the researchers conclude that the situation is unsatisfactory because the lack of a specific policy document, and the government's reactionary approach do not reflect a strong commitment to tackling slum concerns in accordance with SDG-11. For instance, a situation where it is the voices of the slums' challenges that trigger some of the government interventions, validates the researchers' assertion of the low commitment of government toward slums.

#### *Slums' management receives less priority*

The study established varied perspectives from participants, which indicate that slum management has received less national priority. Indeed, a developing country like Ghana is confronted with a diversity of issues and challenges. In particular, in the face of economic and other constraints challenging the nation, it is not uncommon, if not a difficult task, to give priority to slums whose settlement status is considered unlawful. Other interviewees indicated that the entire nation is facing problems ranging from roads, schools, water and sanitation, among others. The narration suggests that the authorities could not do anything about the slums because development across the board is lacking. Consequently, this means the surge in slums will continue to be a bottleneck until there are enough resources to combat the menace. Furthermore, it has been discovered that treating slum management as a specific situation rather than addressing bigger societal issues might lead to the growth of more slums. This is because individuals in other sections of the region would see such an initiative as the government endorsing the so-called illegal settlements.

For instance, a Government official says:

You know, a third-world country like Ghana obviously has many developmental challenges in the areas of water, roads, sanitation, employment, and many more. This has made it difficult for slums to be given priority because they constitute the bigger problem in the nation (*Govt. Official-3*).

Another respondent adduces:

Slum management is very dicey. It is a fact that the nation lacks the resources to upgrade them, but if care is not taken, we will end up inviting more people into the slums. For instance, if priority is given to the slums, it will mean the government has endorsed their settlement areas, which are not meant for settlement (*Govt. Official-5*).

It is worth emphasizing that in the face of not deliberately prioritizing slum management, the fact that they are overlooked until the problems reach the public eye can be inferred. Furthermore, according to another government official, slum expansion is unavoidable since people cannot be prevented from living in areas where the government does not provide housing.

A participant laments:

It is difficult to prevent people from living in the informal areas. This is because it is the responsibility of the government to provide accommodation. If that is not done and they have managed to find places for themselves, it will be difficult to evict them (*Govt. Official-01*).

Second, in response to the second research question, the extent to which institutional collaboration improves slum governance was investigated. Lack of sector ministry cooperation; lack of inter-sector coordination; sectoral slum management “blame game” are among the emerging discoveries. Slum governance has largely been blamed on a lack of ministries and inter-sector coordination, according to the research participants. The subsections that follow elaborate on the themes.

#### *Lack of sector ministries’ coordination*

Unfortunately, the findings imply that not only is slum governance undervalued, but there is also no well-defined or coordinated policy among the many sector ministries. While slum issues were somewhat addressed in various sector ministries’ policy frameworks, the study showed that there was no cross-ministry coordination. As a result, while one ministry worked to address specific issues, the other may have followed suit, implying a fragmented strategy. This development could result in program duplication. The study was unable to come up with a defined slum policy that could be utilized as a guide to addressing slum issues. A program named slum upgrading and prevention was designed in the past, but it was never introduced or implemented, according to participants. The participants did, however, mention the different intervention programs provided by various sectors. Government Official-01 indicates:

As it stands now, we do have a single document that defines how slum issues are handled. The various sector ministries are trying to address a part of the slum challenge. The bigger challenge is how all the sectors can coordinate to address their problems. If we do not exercise caution, we are likely to have duplications of efforts (*Govt. Official-01: FGD*).

Similarly, another respondent remarks:

Hmmm a slum upgrading program was proposed years ago, but it was never implemented. There are various interventions for slums. Our challenge is a lack of cross-sector coordination. For now, every sector claims credit for helping the slums. That will not address the problems facing the slums until we have a holistic sector coordination (*Govt. Official-02*).

#### *Sector ministries “blame game”*

Another problem with institutional collaboration for slum administration is the “blame game” between sectors. Interviewees explain that the growth of informal settlements takes place within communities governed by local assemblies. In that regard, it is outside a ministry’s jurisdiction to dissuade residents from settling in areas other than those designated by local assemblies. They stated that the slums would not have evolved into slums if the assembly had been vigilant in prohibiting residents from settling in the locations. It is important to note that while ministries are in charge of policy formulation, local assemblies, departments, and agencies are in charge of policy implementation. The flip side of the blame game discussion is the issue of conflicting mandates. Interestingly, the study discovered that the blame game is also caused by a lack of clear ministry boundaries and responsibilities. Some of the duties and mandates of the ministries in charge of slum management have been identified as lacking defined borders, demarcations and points of confluence. For example, one respondent claimed that the development has led to several sectors abdicating their responsibilities in

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slum issues in the hope that other ministries will take over. As a result, it appears that this phenomena is impeding slum management.

A Director states:

Let me state that the development of informal settlements occurs within the jurisdiction of the local assemblies. The sector ministry will not know or does not have the authority to identify and take action. The local authorities are supposed to keep settlers from settling in those areas and turning them into slums (*Govt. Official-01*).

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Another official supports that:

The argument is that slum issues do not fall under the purview of any single ministry. The majority of local assemblies are unaware that they are responsible for the implementation of the policies and the enforcement of rules and regulations. They are to ensure people do not live in unauthorized areas in the first place (*Govt. Official-03*).

On the issue of about the lack of clarity on roles and mandate, a Director reiterates:

The blame game is due to the conflicting roles and mandates of the ministries. Sometimes, we occasionally receive complaints from people requesting the ministry's intervention in the slums. Meanwhile, such an issue is supposed to be addressed by this sector, but it falls outside our mandate (*Govt. Official-01*).

Similarly, another Director states:

We have had conflicting mandates not only in the affairs of slums. For example, our ministry is in charge of natural resources. When there is pollution in the water body, who is responsible? When the trees in the forest are destroyed, who takes charge? Is it the forestry commission or the environmental protection agency? It makes institutions irresponsible (*Govt. Official-04: FGD*).

The approach to slum management may simply be described as administrative void, based on the foregoing study. The occurrence is regrettable, according to the researcher, because nothing can be done and no one can be held responsible when policies are not coordinated.

Third, interesting views emerged in response to the third study question about the drivers of slum remediation programs. Media-political-driven slum interventions and non-government-driven slum interventions are also featured in the analysis. The data show that while there were many types of slum interventions aimed at alleviating their problems, the majority of the initiatives were not formally planned and were heavily influenced by either the media or political or non-governmental agendas.

#### *Media-political-driven slum intervention programs*

The study reveals that several intervention programs are being implemented to bring some form of relief to the slums. Some of the interventions include water supply, desilting, sanitation, electricity, among others. However, the interventions, according to respondents, are by far the media-political influence. Media influence in this pursuit is seen as useful for slums, in particular those with national reach who produce documentaries to highlight the slum's appalling conditions. Politicians, in such instances, stand accused of doing nothing to address the problem. This is largely reflected in political calculations, in which politicians estimate the impact of slum concerns on their political careers. In such cases, media-political influence can be blamed for the interventions into the slums. Considering media-political interventions are reactive in character, respondents believe they do not provide solutions to slum problems.

A Chief Director states:

The importance of the media, particularly those having national reach, cannot be overstated. For instance, those with national reach, when they air a documentary about slum issues, it is big news. Politicians stand accused of doing nothing to address the crisis. Sometimes, when they calculate the

impact of such issues on their political careers, they provide intervention. That approach will not provide a solution to the problem facing the slums, because it is reactive (*Govt. Official-02*).

In addition, respondents stated that in developing economies, democracy and politics are inextricably linked. As participants pointed out, politics and development are two sides of the same coin. However, it was noticed that political machinations in the slums have a negative impact on the city's smooth management. This is because it serves as a foundation for preventing squatter camps from becoming slums. It should be recognized that the leaders of all institutions are political actors who are continually looking for methods to align their political interests with their plans. It's a precarious situation, according to respondents. When it comes to relocating slums or enforcing the law, for example, political support is crucial.

An official from the government narrates:

Development and politics are two sides of the same coin . . . so politics is neither good nor bad in terms of slums governance. Note that all the institutional heads are political appointees who always want to plan around political scenario. Sometimes due to excessive political pressure, we find it difficult to move certain unapproved constructions or decongest the area. But, we require a balance because we need politicians to push certain agenda (*Govt. Official-05*).

### **Non-governmental-driven slum intervention**

The study further finds that apart from media-political-driven intervention, some of the programs are also non-governmental-driven. Indicated in the earlier submission, the words "squatter," "informal and or "slums" connote illegality that should not be countenanced. The study discovered that despite the lack of specific plans or policies to confront the influx of slums, certain programs and interventions were provided. According to the participants, most of the slum programs predominantly sponsored by donor organizations face their own set of obstacles. For instance, issues such as, but not limited to, desired community for project implementation, technical handlers or consultants to the projects, and standardized models for the project came to the fore. Notably, programs such as Participatory Slum Upgrading and Prevention (PSUP) and the Ga-Mashie Development Agency (GAMADA) were the two cooperative slum programs. PSUP is a program aimed at raising the living standards of people in the city, especially the poor and the vulnerable. It seeks to provide and maintain basic services and facilities in the areas of education, health, sanitation and other social amenities.

It is important to stress that, while these initiatives are positive steps in the right direction, their long-term viability cannot be assured. This is because slum growth appears to have become the new normal and a major issue across the continent. Thus, considering that there is no specific policy for slums, intervention projects such as the ones mentioned above cannot be sustained. This is due to the fact that the PSUP and the GAMADA are predominantly donor-funded projects, and their long-term sustainability cannot be guaranteed. Ghana has signed on to international treaties prohibiting the eviction of slum dwellers by force. Therefore, relying on benevolent organizations for slum projects rather than having a particular policy to upgrade the existing slum upgrades can only be considered as backward to accountable governance.

A Respondent states:

Slums are undesirable, so we don't even plan for them at all. You will not even find them featured in our budget lines. The reality is that when there is a need to provide interventions, depending on how the directive comes for the intervention, we depend on other non-governmental agencies for resources to provide those interventions. In that case, sustainability is not built into them (*Govt. Official-03; FGD*).

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Similarly, a participant remarks:

I believe no country will set out with the intention of allowing slums to develop in urban areas. Because of a lack of resources, the UN-Habitat provides technical expertise and financial support for the PSUP. Our biggest problem is financial support. Now we have managed to finish some of the pilot programs. But how to sustain the plan and move to other slum areas has become a major concern (*Govt. Official-05*).

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Another government official reiterates:

We have personnel that have received slum housing training of a sort. For capacity and manpower, we are on course. Our primary deficit is technical and financial support. That's why the UN-Habitat has always become our point of contact with funding and a checklist of how similar projects have been implemented in other nations (*Govt. Official-01*).

### Discussion

The study analyzed the policy framework for slum governance in Ghana. In particular, we examined government policy priorities for slum government, institutional collaboration for slum governance and motivations for slum intervention programs. First, with regards to policy priorities for slum governance, the study found no evidence of specific national policy for slums and also that slum management has received less national priority. This finding aligns with [Marx et al. \(2013\)](#) in India, who found that a limitation to slum governance is linked to a lack of a strong policy agenda. Similarly, [Sandoval and Sarmiento's \(2020\)](#) study in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean is also relevant. They established that the challenges of informal settlements are complex and precarious because governance policies are scarce in existing urban development discourses in the region. Policies denote a purposeful action that indicates a commitment of the policy-maker to responding to the concerns of society. Slum dwellers, considered a minority group in society, are known to be poor and vulnerable. While the dwellings in the slums are mostly categorized as areas not conducive to habitation. Others also squat in areas that are sentenced to eminent eviction and demolition by the government ([Stacey and Lund, 2016](#)). Probably, no country is insulated from the phenomenon of slums. A dedicated national policy that details the roadmap to slum management indicates a starting point of efforts to ensure the upgrade of existing ones, and measures to contain the recurrence of new slums.

This finding further supports [Patel and Killemsetty \(2020\)](#) in the USA, who discovered that most slum policies are short-term, output-focused and ignore long-term sustainability. A policy framework is important in guiding the practical steps of slum upgrading. Ad hoc programs that lack funding and are not interwoven into the mainstream urban development agenda are unfortunate ([Muchadenyika and Waiswa, 2018](#)). A study by [Roberts and Okanya \(2020\)](#) in the context of Nigeria points to the fact that slum evictions are both a cause and consequence of poverty. The authors recommend the adoption of a deliberate policy that targets slums, the poor and the most vulnerable people in society. It was evident from the research that the lack of specific policy for the slums confirmed the fact that it is not a national priority. This development is unfortunate because it could potentially constrain the achievement of SGDs and the New Urban Agenda.

Second, in the case of the second research question—the extent to which institutional collaboration supports slum governance—it has been widely cited in literature that there is a lack of institutional collaboration ([Kusters et al., 2018](#); [Malik et al., 2021](#); [Saharan et al., 2018](#)). The authors' asserts that the pursuit of management of any endeavor requires a diverse set of stakeholders whose interests and objectives present complex processes referred to as administrative conjunctions ([Frederickson and Matkin, 2005](#)). As a result, there is a need to integrate stakeholder interests through strong institutional collaboration that enables

discussions and joint planning between stakeholders from various sectors in governance. The findings of the research established that there is a lack of sector ministry coordination on one hand, and a sector ministries' blame game on the other. It emerged that, apart from the disconnection between the sectors to effectively tackle the affairs of slums, there is also a blame game among the authorities. This finding confirms an exciting study that, in the space of slum management, there is administrative conjunction (Frederickson and Matkin, 2005). However, since jurisdictions matter to public officials, jurisdictional self-interest can, under the right circumstances, lead to regional cooperation. It further agrees with Saharan *et al.* (2018), whose study reveals cleavages or divisions between slum policies and institutional practices in each of the four cases. Strong coordination among institutions serves as a foundation and a framework for developing multi-stakeholder collaboration necessary to achieve policy outcomes (Malik *et al.*, 2021).

It is worthwhile to state that the ministries constitute the main institutions in charge of policy formulation and governance of slums. In line with their work, they are required to engage wider stakeholders and ensure the interests of each stakeholder group are represented in policy formulation and implementation. From the analysis, it was seen that there is a dearth of coordination among government institutions born out of the absence of a dedicated slum policy. The development can only be described as unwelcoming because slums are part of the larger society and need to be catered for just like any urban area. The finding relating to institutions' blame games in the governance of slums aligns with Patnaik *et al.* (2014). The authors discovered that most political parties use the slums as vote banks and prefer to play the blame game rather than accept responsibility for slum management issues. It is worth noting that the absence of specific policies for slums has led to cleavages among various sector ministries as each of them tries to tackle bits and pieces of slum issues. The piecemeal approach to slum governance does not only create coordination problems, but it also creates a blame game among the various actors in the value chain of slum management.

Third, in terms of drivers for slum intervention programs, issues of media-political influence and non-governmental motivation for slum intervention could not be overlooked. Results from the field revealed that despite the absence of dedicated slum policies and a lack of institutional coordination, some intervention programs have been administered to the slums. Most of the interventions are not deliberate but largely tend to be driven by media-political and non-governmental interests. These discoveries corroborate with Muchadenyika and Waiswa (2018) to the effect that tension in party-politics tends to undermine slum upgrading programs. In instances where there is an apparent absence of roadmaps for slum governance, as evidenced in this study, the dwellers' vulnerability deepens. In this regard, political clientelism is what guarantees their access to the state, basic services and public goods. Deuskar (2019) demonstrates that while clientelism provides the poor with some access to the state, it also prevents them from participating fully in democracy and hinders the long-term provision of public goods.

Additionally, the findings resonate with Matamanda (2020) study to the effect that politicians are responsible for the emergence and existence of informal settlements in the context of Harare. The author reported that politicians take matters into their own hands and disregard the formal planning system as a way to reward their supporters and sympathizers. Against this background, it is imperative for policy actors to make significant strides targeted at slum management. Commitment to ameliorating the challenges confronting the slums should be seen by governments, particularly in developing countries, as equally important. Having a policy framework targeted at slums will not only increase coordination among government institutions and stakeholders, but will also reduce political clientelism for sustainable slum governance. These steps are necessary to shape the landscape of policies toward the achievement of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

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## Conclusion and implications

Several intervention programs have been undertaken by government to mitigate slum challenges in Ghana. However, little has been achieved with regards to having the sustainable policy framework necessary to improve living conditions for the vulnerable poor in the slums. The study attempts to unpack this nuance and further explore policy frameworks for slums and institutional collaboration that support slum governance in Ghana. The result of the study has been objectively presented in the following: One, it shows the absence of a specific policy framework for slum governance and that slum management receives less national priority. Two, it reveals a lack of coordination among the sector ministries and a blame game among them. Three, the study establishes media-political influence and non-governmental-driven characteristics defining slum projects and programs. In particular, the findings validate the incremental model, as most programs and projects for slums are built upon existing models and frameworks from other programs.

So far, this research has uncovered the nuances surrounding slum governance in developing countries, focusing on Ghana. The findings ignite a significant issue within public administration and governance literature that is still understudied. In terms of context, this is the first study that attempts to examine the government's policy framework for slum governance from the perspectives of stakeholders. The findings of the study have implications for policy and practice. Firstly, from a practical point of view, the absence of a dedicated policy for slums may be a recipe for achieving SDG-11. Therefore, the researchers recommend that MLGRD make a conscious effort to develop a policy framework for slum governance. This will enhance synergistic and coordination among the key institutions and stakeholders in the area of slum management.

Again, considering the blame game and the surge of people settling in unauthorized areas, we suggest that a separate authority be established with clear jurisdiction and mandate. This will ensure that issues relating to the shed of responsibility and conflicting mandates among the sector ministries are put on the back burner. Second, from practice, it is the recommendation of the authors that local government authorities and city administrators take practical steps to safeguard and prevent people from occupying areas considered inhabitable. Possibly, they can put notices around those areas indicating signs of eminent danger to human lives. This measure could, in a way, ward off people from living in those areas. The study has some limitations. One, the findings of the study do not reflect the entire sectors connected with slum management due to the qualitative methodology. Future studies are welcome to explore this phenomenon quantitatively. Two, the study focused mainly on top-level ministries. It will be interesting to explore and understand how the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies manage the slums. Future studies in this regard will be significant in pushing the frontiers of research in that direction.

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