

# Maiduguri: City research brief

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The African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC) is a collaborative research programme, seeking to tackle complex urban development challenges in the continent's rapidly changing cities. ACRC aims to generate robust insights and evidence that will help improve the living conditions and urban services for all city residents, especially disadvantaged communities.

ACRC's research integrates political settlements thinking with city systems analysis, to understand the dynamics underpinning infrastructure and service challenges in cities. Targeted analysis of specific urban development domains provides deeper insights into how sectoral shortcomings can be overcome and residents' needs addressed.

Maiduguri is one of 12 African cities in which ACRC is engaging community organisations, researchers, practitioners, key state actors and non-state agencies, to co-produce knowledge and evidence to advance urban transformation.

## Research highlights

- > In Maiduguri, **power is decidedly concentrated in the hands of political office holders and civil servants at the city and national levels**, with the city-level power balance dominated by the All Progressive Congress (APC).
- > **Connective infrastructure is a key determinant of land and property values**, with security and conflict-driven displacement also playing a major role in affecting land prices.
- > **Young people face many challenges** including lack of access to high quality education, unemployment, drug abuse and exclusion from formal decisionmaking processes, but most remain optimistic about graduating from school and gaining decent employment.
- > Despite many safety and security interventions over the last decade in response to the insurgency, **the city has experienced a rise in crime levels and the proliferation of crime enclaves**, forcing residents in low-income areas to resort to locally mobilised self-defence.
- > Our proposed strategic interventions to address complex challenges in the **youth and capability development** and **land and connectivity** domains align with the state government's priorities to address poor education quality, tackle drug abuse, transition to environmentally sustainable transportation, leverage local entrepreneurship and innovation, and increase government revenue.
- > To tackle complex challenges in the **safety and security** domain, we advocate for bottom-up approaches that centre residents of low-income communities – those most affected by crime – in devising context-sensitive responses in each target community and providing them with greater oversight of vigilante groups.



## Research summaries

### Political settlement and power balance in the city

Since the All Progressive Congress (APC) became the ruling party in Borno state in 2011, and then the ruling national party in 2015, Maiduguri has become increasingly central to national politics. A large electorate and experienced politicians make Maiduguri a political powerhouse, which has contributed to the APC winning the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections.

In Maiduguri, power is decidedly concentrated in the hands of political office holders and elected civil servants at the city and national levels, who are mostly Muslim and male. The Maiduguri city-level power balance is unequivocally dominated by APC. The power is highly concentrated in the state governor – the political leader of the state statutorily – who controls and influences affairs from budgetary allocation to appointment into offices, as well as approval of developmental projects in the city, including those of all other Local Government Areas that make up Maiduguri city.

The electorate has relatively limited influence in decisionmaking, particularly women, people with disabilities, youth, migrants, non-Kanuri and non-Muslim citizens, who are perceived as a weak group. Again, it is difficult for ordinary residents to access political leaders. Hence, residents in Maiduguri take advantage of traditional media when it is not election period to voice their concerns, primarily via call-in radio programmes and social media postings.



## Domains

### > Land and connectivity

Maiduguri is one of Nigeria's fastest developing cities. The city grew in terms of population from only 50,000 in 1950 to over a million in 2022, and from a small settlement to an area of about 189 sq km. Road and drainage connectivity stands out as the most important determinant of land and property values in Maiduguri, with government investments in roads significantly impacting on valuations. At the peak of the Boko Haram conflict – between 2012 and 2014, when safety became the overriding consideration of the government and the people – security overshadowed connective infrastructure as a factor influencing land value and conflict-driven displacement increased land prices. While accessing land informally might be the only recourse for low-income residents, the practice of selling customary titles often leads to land conflicts and the emergence of informal settlements in flood-prone areas, with poor sanitation, adverse health outcomes and limited access to transportation.

### Potential land and connectivity interventions

1. **From customary to systematic land registration:** The informal land business lacks proper oversight, leading to land conflicts and the emergence of informal settlements in flood-prone areas.

We propose **leveraging on the state government's existing efforts to seamlessly align the role played by Borno State Geographical Information System (BOGIS), local government councils and traditional leaders in the registration of land.** BOGIS is already leading a systematic land registration process that involves digitising all parcels of land/buildings with owners' details. Additionally, establishing a system that will ensure inclusive access to land administered by the state government would further boost revenue as well as increase budgetary provisions for the construction of roads and drainage in low-income communities.

2. **From a restriction on tricycles to a transition to a green alternative:** Since the ban of motorcycles during the Boko Haram insurgency, *keke* transport has become the dominant means of transport, especially among unemployed youths. However, the uncontrolled rise of registered *keke* resulted in a series of problems, including chaotic traffic, lawlessness of riders, on-board theft and increased carbon emissions.



A government ban on *keke* importation to the city has led to decreased mobility for low-income residents and the loss of livelihood for many youth, resulting to a spike in crime within the city.

To address this problem, we recommend **determining the optimum number of *kekes* required to transport the population of Maiduguri and focusing on how this transport modality can be made environmentally sustainable** – through transitioning to solar power, and eventually replacing *kekes* with solar powered minibuses.

3. **From inadequate roads and drains to improvements through participatory budgeting:** Most low-income neighbourhoods suffer from inadequate roads and drainage, but lack political voice and a strong sense of community engagement. This results in poor access to transport services in the underserved areas, including *keke* services, as well as a higher prevalence of transmissible water-borne diseases, especially during the rainy season when streets become inundated.

To address this problem, **an assessment of the extent of deprivation within the city is needed to guide prioritisation.** This can then be leveraged by civil society groups to influence policy and included in a Citizens' Charter of Demand – a tool that has reportedly already led to interventions targeting needs expressed by communities.

## > Youth and capability development

Youth in Maiduguri are in a state of perpetual “waithood”, as they struggle to achieve the markers of maturity associated with modern life – a job, a life partner and homeownership. Largely excluded from formal decisionmaking processes at the state and local government levels, many young people feel that youth interventions are primarily used as a tool to gain their political support. However, many proactively participate as Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) volunteers and within other local structures – such as registered youth-

led organisations, community development associations and informal neighbourhood clusters “Majalisa” to contribute to community and city development processes. Despite facing challenges including lack of access to high quality education, unemployment and drug abuse, most young people are optimistic that their dreams to graduate from school and transition to productive and decent employment are achievable.

## Potential youth and capability development interventions

1. **Reactivating the multi-stakeholder drugs control committee to prevent drug trafficking and deter addiction:** Some young people – mostly unemployed and displaced youths and teenagers, including women – have turned to dangerous illegal drugs and substances. While under the influence, they engage in political thuggery and criminalities, and are vulnerable to violent extremism.

To address this problem, we propose **reactivating the Drug Control Committee – first set up by the Government in 2016 to implement sensitisation activities on drug abuse in internally displaced people (IDP) camps.** In addition to the military, National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), police, civil defence and other humanitarian and non-governmental organisations, we recommend involving more stakeholders, such as youth groups, religious leaders and traditional leaders, and expanding the operation city-wide.

2. **Addressing low-quality of primary and secondary education through teaching service reform:** The state government has built many free government schools and school enrolment has increased since 2016. Many children and youth now have free education, but it is of poor quality due to a lack of qualified teachers.

Our proposed approach is to **reform teaching services through screening and recruiting qualified teachers and improving working conditions.**



## > Safety and security

Residents of low-income neighbourhoods define safety in terms of access to basic needs – including food, shelter, water, education and health services – and security in relation to the presence of security agents and checkpoints and the absence of crime. In response to the insurgency over the last decade, Maiduguri has seen an avalanche of programmes and interventions aimed at engendering safety and security. However, the city has also experienced an increase in reported cases of periodic clashes among youth groups in communities, mobile phone snatching and burglary. Once concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods, crime has been increasingly spreading to middle and high-income neighbourhoods in the last two years.

Residents of low-income neighbourhoods are excluded from decisionmaking around safety and security. The effectiveness of intervention programmes that seek to empower residents of low-income neighbourhoods is undermined by a lack of transparency in their implementation and the exclusion of those they are targeting. A weak relationship with government institutions has forced residents of low-income areas to resort to self-help, leading to the proliferation of locally mobilised self-defence and anti-crime vigilantism that lacks institutional regulation and can sometimes turn predatory.

### Potential safety and security interventions

1. **Tackling street gangs and criminal enclaves in low-income neighbourhoods:** For most residents of low-income neighbourhoods, the most urgent security problem is the increase in armed robbery, burglary, theft, drug trafficking and gang fights, as well as rape and other forms of sexual violence. A key element of the increase in crime levels is the growing prevalence of criminal enclaves – urban spaces associated with drug trafficking, drug use and other criminal activities – which are also sites of turf wars between rival gangs.

Our proposed approach for addressing criminal enclaves is to **understand the factors shaping their emergence and**

**expansion, and work with local communities to find sustainable solutions to tackle them,** by setting up local special task forces made up of community leaders, vigilantes, youth leaders, women leaders and other residents to recommend steps towards tackling criminal enclaves within their communities.

2. **Increasing CJTF recruitment transparency and mandate definition:** Maiduguri residents applaud CJTF operatives for the pivotal role they played in dislodging Boko Haram from the city, but there are many complaints about “their misconduct, abuse of power and taking the laws into their hands” as noted by a resident of Shuwari. Although the CJTF continues to provide security in local communities, many residents and stakeholders are concerned about the group being gradually politicised and exploited during elections.

We propose **making the recruitment process more transparent and inclusive to address this issue**, by including community leaders and local residents as well as youth groups, women groups and IDPs in a bottom-up nomination and screening process for vigilantes. Further, **the mandate of CJTF should be clearly outlined, omitting participation in political events** to avoid the tendency of associating the group with politics or politician.

## About this brief

This brief was produced by ACRC's Maiduguri team to outline research findings and potential interventions, in preparation for the final city uptake workshop in the programme's Foundation Phase (2022-23).

**Photo information (by order of appearance):** 1. Maiduguri Bama Road - Borno Geographic Information System (BOGIS); 2. Waste pollution outside Maiduguri market - BOGIS; 3. Ibrahim Sani Abatcha Way - Babakura Bukar; 4. Civil volunteer security operatives - Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) Maiduguri Sector Headquarters.



ACRC is funded by UK International Development. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the UK Government's official policies.

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