

Lagos needs effective, coherent approaches to tackle migration

Lagos is Nigeria's largest city and attracts the highest number of migrants seeking a better life. Internally displaced people (IDPs), fleeing Nigeria's northern region as a result of climate induced conflict as well as insurgency, are migrating southwards. Many of them end up in Lagos, attracted by the city's economic opportunities.

Lagos is struggling to manage migration effectively and efficiently. While the actual number of migrants is unknown (because of poor documentation), it is estimated that over 600 people come into the city every day with less than 50% of them subsequently returning to the homes they left¹.

This wave of IDP migration will continue into the foreseeable future because the forces (climate change, insecurity, violent conflicts) that determine the scale of migration are intensifying every day in Nigeria.

IDP migrants in Lagos are vulnerable to homelessness, extreme poverty, exploitation, marginalisation and discrimination. They make up a significant proportion of the city's homeless and out-of-school child population.



¹ [Business Day Nigeria](#) (paywall)

They often work in precarious and dangerous working conditions, and are excluded from health, education and other social welfare benefits of the city because they lack documentation.

Their penchant for enclaving is also exacerbating the rate of new informal settlements springing on the city's peri-urban axis. This makes them vulnerable to forced and/or violent eviction. In addition, the arrival of large numbers of displaced people into Lagos communities results in greater competition for scarce jobs, housing/land, and basic services, and even gives rise to tensions in host communities.

The sheer number of undocumented people in the city can also portend a security threat. Public perception is that irregular IDP migration may provide channels for potential terrorists to invade Lagos.

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Policy and practice approaches are required to mitigate the impacts of undocumented migration in Lagos. These approaches should address the valid concerns of the city government, the fears of citizens and also protect the rights of migrants. Strategies must cut across security and welfare sectors.

Understanding migrant settlements and integration practices, and the implications of these for city-level functioning, is a good place to start. Our research across various [domains](#) and city systems sheds some light on this emerging urban dynamic.

Issues relating to migration, politics, and urban governance in Lagos are further discussed [in this podcast](#).

Research in progress

City of systems

City of systems (CoS) research explores the functioning of interrelated city systems by focusing on nine key sectors in Lagos State: transportation; water and sanitation; waste management; food distribution; law and order; finance and ICT; energy; education; and healthcare.

Initial research findings revealed political contestation in the sectors; incapacitation of the local government system; state government playing the roles of both actor and regulator; different civil society resistance, especially to water reforms, and many other issues.

Political settlements group completes preliminary work

The [political settlements](#) group has completed a preliminary round of fieldwork and desk research, as well as developing and revising its political settlements note. The group has crafted and administered a survey, for domain and CoS researchers, on how political issues shape their areas of research.

A [political settlement](#) is “an agreement or common understanding among a society’s powerful groups about the basic rules (or institutions) of the political and economic game, which, by providing opportunities for those groups to acquire a minimally acceptable level of benefits, prevents a descent into all-out warfare”.

One of the underlying theories of the African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC) project

is that sustainable urban reform is only possible when reform constituencies develop a concrete grasp of the political settlement, as well as how it shapes development in key areas of urban life.

Further work will focus on deepening engagement with the domain and CoS teams, for example looking at the political influence and leverage of informal transport and waste sector workers.



Housing domain to reflect on accessibility, affordability, sustainability and resilience

[This domain](#) study investigates the peculiar challenges in the city, the resilience of existing communities to climate change, alternative housing suppliers, and eco-friendly new housing. It also explores how uncoordinated urban expansion shapes housing accessibility and affordability across the city. The research amplifies the political undertones of housing needs and provision, seeking to interrogate the questions of who produces housing, how and for whom is it produced, and implications of these for social justice and ecological safety in an intensely heterogeneous city.



Neighbourhood and district economic development (NDED) domain investigates home-based enterprises in low-income areas

The [neighbourhood and district economic development domain](#) focuses on household microenterprises (HMEs). These are mainly sole entrepreneur informal businesses in low-income residential and commercial districts in Lagos. Although informal employment accounts for the majority of urban employment in Lagos, due to various constraints, HMEs' productivity is limited. This domain fundamentally seeks to investigate how the productivity of HMEs can be enhanced, while providing a solid basis for developing policy reforms to expand decent job opportunities, and strengthen the city and national economies.

The research approach of this domain includes semi-structured interviews which were conducted with HME operators in Lagos Island, Ikorodu and Yaba market areas, officials of the Lagos State government ministries and agencies in charge of wealth creation, poverty alleviation, commerce and cooperatives; Federation of Informal Workers Organisations of Nigeria (FIWON), microfinance banks, and micro-lenders. Key

gaps in knowledge that the domain research seeks to fill include an examination of HMEs in the context of their value chains, HMEs' housing and land tenure, and access to and cost of infrastructure services.

Growing population engenders safety and security concerns

There are concerns among Lagos residents about the enforcement of law and order in the foreseeable future, due to growing population and associated infrastructure deficit. While crime and insecurity are widespread and endemic in Lagos, incidences of building collapse and flooding are also common safety and security issues. People feel insecure, due to the risk of personal and communal harm and loss/damage to properties.



The [safety and security domain](#) is researching measures that would reduce violent crime, as well as disasters, and address the perception and fear of harm in the face of insecurity. Ongoing studies have produced some systemic analyses and further study will pull together various themes and areas that are vulnerable to safety and security threats across Lagos – transport, housing, policing and law enforcement, among others.

The domain moves away from dominant discourses of safety and security as control, towards an understanding of safety and security according to the experience of Lagos residents. While [various actors](#) have been noted in the existing literature, our research has attempted to delineate the relatively powerful from the powerless, the safety and security interests that unite and divide them, and their relationship to multi-level governance – federal, state and local governments.

How political power interactions affect structural transformation

The aim of this [research domain](#) is to understand the evolution of commercial and economic activities in Lagos, and how political power interactions between the state and national governments – as well as between political stakeholders within the state – affect the city's structural transformation (ST).

Preliminary findings include sectoral data on value added, employment share, productivity, economic activities in Lagos, and spatial distribution of business enterprises.

The research team deployed quantitative techniques, including city mapping of economic activity, estimation of the productivity of business enterprises, and analysis of correlates of firm productivity at the city level. They examined the political and economic factors that determine the spatial distribution of economic activity. They also used qualitative techniques, including analysis of the configuration of power at both national and city levels and within institutions, to analyse the complex problems of structural transformation in Nigeria's economic and financial hub.

Learn more about the preliminary findings from ACRC Lagos research [in this brief](#).

News brief

Lagos team runs masterclass on political economy

On 17 August 2022, the ACRC Lagos team held a masterclass on political economy, facilitated by Dr Damilola Agbalajobi, head of the political science department at Obafemi Awolowo University.

The key message from the masterclass was that political economic analysis is important to understand the power dynamics that promote or hinder urban change. Political settlements analysis helps in explaining the relationship between powerful groups and institutions at different levels, and should be considered when designing urban interventions.



It is also important to consider the issue of gender and cultural/societal norms that reinforce power relations. However, political economy analysis can be hindered by low human capacity and over-centralisation.



Safety and security domain meets stakeholders

Researchers from ACRC's safety and security domain engaged key stakeholders in a one-day workshop at the Arthur Nbanefo Digital Research Centre, University of Lagos on 13 October 2022.

The aim of the workshop was to facilitate information gathering and co-production of knowledge, to discuss and contribute to a better understanding of how safety and security relates to urban policies that increase residents' trust in their public officials, delivering basic services, and designing urban plans that are flexible in the face of continued local emergency and insecurity.

Relevant stakeholders included key informants in media, built environment professionals, community leaders, government ministries, departments and agencies, the criminal justice system, safety and emergency management organisations, academia, organised private sector, non-

government organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs).

The stakeholders considered perceptions and drivers of insecurity in Lagos. They provided valuable insights around safety and security issues in the city and within prevailing local, state and national government main concerns. The meeting was also helpful in identifying critical opportunities for collaboration, where facts and figures from ACRC research could be applied to justify policy and practice interventions within the safety and security domain in the city.



NDED domain stakeholder meeting

The NDED domain held a stakeholder engagement workshop on 2 December 2022. Stakeholders in attendance included activist groups (Federation of Informal Workers of Nigeria – FIWON), the government (Small and Medium Scale Development Agency of Nigeria – SMEDAN), community groups (Community Development Association – CDA), and representatives of HME associations.

The stakeholder workshop provided additional data to clarify findings from in-depth interviews and added context to previous findings from the research domain.



Housing domain

Researchers from ACRC's housing domain held a stakeholder meeting with members of cooperative societies in Lagos on 20 December 2022.

Participants were executive members of cooperative societies and officials of the Lagos Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives.

The objective of the meeting was to explore opportunities for amplifying the role of cooperative societies as major providers of affordable housing in Lagos low-income earners.

They acknowledged opportunities for uptake in the National Housing Fund products, which some of them have already taken advantage of. However, while many of them had purchased land, they were limited by the activities of *omo-onile* (traditional landowners), who often encroach on their undeveloped land. They recounted having to repurchase land from *omo-onile*, leading to double payments, and dissuading their members from active land purchase.

They also lamented the state's slow pace of perfecting title documents. Participants called for a reform in land titling and building permit

processes in the city, emphasising the need for a special cooperative window to catalyse massive housing supply in the state.



Media coverage

City of systems – Dr Basirat Oyalowo was interviewed about health systems on the [Rethinking Lagos Radio Show](#) on 29 November 2022.

Priority complex problems (PCPs) – [The Guardian](#) newspaper covered the Lagos PCP workshop on 18 December 2022.