

# CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN GOMBE METROPOLIS, NORTH EAST NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The development of infrastructure has long been recognized as critical to economic growth and development as it facilitates economies of scale, reduces costs of trade, and is thus central to specialization and the efficient production and consumption of goods and services. This informed efforts at provision of infrastructure at both national and sub national levels. However, there are evidences to show that infrastructure provisioning is often characterized by numerous obstacles. It is against this backdrop that this paper examined these constraints within the context of Gombe Metropolis in North Eastern Nigeria using both primary and secondary sources. The result showed that weak political will, corruption, financial, institutional, and topographical constraints constitute some of the major challenges faced in developing a viable infrastructure in Gombe. Nevertheless, the paper went further to demonstrate that depoliticization of infrastructure projects, Alternative sources of infrastructure financing, government diversification policy, new infrastructure policy and reforms constitute the prospect for developing a robust infrastructure for sustainable economic development in Gombe and by implication, North Eastern Nigeria.*

## KEYWORDS

*Corruption, Development, Infrastructure, Political Will, Reforms*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Development of viable infrastructure has been identified as one of the essential ingredients for engendering sustainable economic growth and development in Nigeria. This could be gleaned from first National Development Plan, 1962-1968 where infrastructure was recognized as a potent tool for laying a solid foundation for the development of the then newly independent Nigeria (Braji, 2014). The significance attached to infrastructure continued even with the creation of state structure from 1967 to 1996. There are evidences to show that infrastructure provisioning was placed on the development pedestal after the creation of Gombe State on Tuesday, 1st October, 1996 (Usman, 2009). The aim has been to facilitate economies of scale, reduce costs of trade, and enhance specialization and the efficient production and consumption of goods and services. Thus infrastructure is a vital ingredient to economic growth and development, which is the key to raising living standards. (Henckel, and McKibbin, 2017) Given the importance of infrastructure, the World Economic Forum (WEF) in its 2011 Global Competitiveness Reports placed infrastructure as the second pillar of competitiveness. No wonder one of the key factors that contributed to the rapid industrialization of emerging economies was their investments in basic infrastructure, including roads, schools, water, sanitation, irrigation, clinics, telecommunications and energy. However, evolution and development of infrastructure is inherently faced with diverse challenges which are often shaped and moulded by historical peculiarities, political

setting, economic space and even environmental factors. It is on this basis that this paper examined, first the challenges and thereafter the prospects of infrastructure development in Gombe metropolis in North East Nigeria.

Gombe metropolis is located between Latitude  $10^{\circ} 15'0''\text{N}$  –  $10^{\circ}20'00''\text{N}$  and between longitude  $11^{\circ}05'00''\text{E}$  –  $11^{\circ}15'05''\text{E}$ . It shares common boundary with Akko Local Government Area in south and west, Yamaltu-Deba L.G.A. to the east and Kwami L.G.A to the north. It occupies a total land area of 52Km<sup>2</sup>(Lazarus, 2017). Gombe metropolis is strategically located in the centre of the North East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The Gombe State Designation of Urban Areas Order of 2nd August, 1998 as amended by the Order of 11th November 1999 designates the urban centers; with Gombe having radius of 15 kilometres from its geographic centre. This therefore defines the legal planning Area of Gombe Metropolis (Gombe Master Plan, 2030, 2003). However; this order was revoked on 13th July, 2020 when executive order number 4 came into effect. The new order stipulates that all land within 20 kilometres radius of Gombe Local Government Headquarters has become an urban area (Tribune Newspaper, 2020)

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1. The Concept of Infrastructure**

The word infrastructure is a combination of the Latin prefix "infra", meaning "below", and "structure". It is an umbrella term for many activities referred to as "social overhead capital" by such Development economists as Paul Rosenstein Rodan, Ragnar Nurkse, and Albert Hirschman (World Development Report, 1994). Prud'homme defines infrastructure as capital goods which are not consumed directly rather they provide services only in combination with labour and other inputs (Prud'homme, 2004). This term refers to large and complex systems, in which multiple actors and artifacts, that are often geographically spread, are acting in combination in a structured and a highly complex manner. It should also be pointed out that these systems are increasingly computerized and coupled with technology (Schneider and Jäger, 2001). There are two types of infrastructure, "Hard and Soft-core infrastructure. The former refers to the large physical networks necessary for the functioning of a modern industrial nation, whereas the latter refers to all the institutions which are required to maintain the economic, health, and cultural and social standards of a country, such as the financial system, the education system, the health system, the governance system, and judiciary system, as well as security (Kumar, 2005).

### **2.2. Challenges and Prospects of Infrastructure Development in Nigeria**

Based on the PESTLES Analysis, challenges of infrastructural development can be: political, economic, social, technology, legal, environmental and safety (Oyedele, 2012). Political environment has to do with the political stability, policy formulation and politics of the project environment both within and without. Economic environment deals with issues like interest rate, inflation, currency exchange rate, price fluctuation etc. Social environment has to do with workforce diversity including cultural difference, age difference etc. Technology environment deals with the machineries which are used for the execution of projects. Physical environmental issues like site topography, geology and climatology is also essential. Safety issues have to do with health and safety and security of resources on site, that is, human, material and financial

In addition to the above, Infrastructure development projects in Nigeria suffer from capital flight, capital sink and capital stagnancy. A lot of materials and managerial services are procured outside the country. The contracts are full of loop-holes that allow leakages of funds. In some cases, projects are over-design for the designers to earn more professional fees which are

percentage of the contract sum. Capital stagnancy due to abandoned projects is also rampant (Oyedele, 2012). Estache (2006) also notes that politics matter: politicians are reticent to give up control of infrastructure sectors that buys in votes or generates a lot of corruption money (Estache, 2006). (Braji, 2014) notes that Obasanjo administration earned about ₦27 trillion from crude oil sales from 1999-2007 but squandered among others, over \$16 billion on electricity and ₦450 billion on roads without any tangible results. Additional \$800 million was wasted on rehabilitating the refineries and about ₦200 billion spent on non-existent ecological projects (Braji, 2014). No wonder (Samuel and Ekeng, 2013) observed that the failed power reform of the obasanjo's administration was much of a case of weak political will as it was of corruption and impunity.

One of the recurring issues in the development of infrastructure across the world is that of financing and the appropriate method of financing (York, 2007). Public provision was (and remains) the majority source of funding for infrastructure; (Antonio, 2006) estimates that the public sector accounts for 70%, the private sector 20% and aid 10% of funding. For instance, there are about forty five (45) policy documents relating to industrial development in Nigeria as listed in the publication titled Industrial Policy of Nigeria. This implies that there has not been want of policies but challenge of poor implementation (Abubakar, 1993).

Olufemi (2012) also observes that the challenges also include international requirements of project to be sustainably developed. Projects must meet the carbon emission standard set by international organizations; communities must be bio-diversified and emit as little greenhouse gases (GHGs) as possible, natural environment must be preserved in tandem with the concept of Eco-Industrial Development.

However, (Sagagi ed, 2017) noted that challenges of infrastructure development are surmountable with good governance; active private sector involvement, conception and implementation of integrated infrastructure master plan, commercialization of infrastructure facilities as well as harnessing multiple financing options. Together rather than in isolation, these developments could accelerate the pace of economic growth and development. Because numerous studies have revealed that one percent increase in infrastructure stock translates into one percent increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Development Report, 1994).

### **3. CHALLENGES OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN GOMBE METROPOLIS**

Gombe Metropolis is not insulated from the challenges bedeviling the development of infrastructure at both national and sub national levels. However, this section examines the challenges within the context of Gombe with a view to understanding certain peculiarities (if any) based on the historical evolution of Gombe region.

#### **3.1. Weak Political Will**

The notion of Government being a dominant player in infrastructure provisioning also applies to Gombe Metropolis. Because from the first republic through the defunct North Eastern State to former Bauchi State, and now Gombe State, government has been a major provider of infrastructure. However, many infrastructural projects have been stalled due to absence/ weak political will. For instance, a proposal for the development of industrial estates in all the eleven Local Government areas of the State as captured in the 1997 maiden budget of vision and the report of the Industrial Policy Formulation Committee which comprised recommendations on industrial infrastructure development have also been ignored (Interview, 2018). In the case of the

latter, no white paper was issued on the report since its submission on 22nd November, 1999(Industrial Policy Report, 1999). In addition to this, successive administrations in Gombe state have also been paying lip service to the implementation of the Gombe Master Plan, 2000-2030(Interview, 2018). The only infrastructure provided was road as connectivity witnessed an increase from 56.9% in 1996 to 57.9% and 60.0% in 2005 and 2014 respectively (Hashidu, 2015)

One of the implications of this weak political will is that it breeds crisis of confidence between stakeholders in the infrastructure supply chain. For instance road infrastructure suffered from faulty designs, lack of drainage and very thin coatings, which was easily washed away, excessive use of the road network, given the underdeveloped nature of waterways and railways, which could serve as alternative means of transport, absence of an articulated road program and inadequate funding for road maintenance (Hamza, 2016). More so, many states embarked on construction of industrial layout, but most are lacking in electricity supply, water, good road network and telecommunication (Abubakar, 1993).

### **3.2. Politicization of Infrastructure Projects**

Although traditional accounts of urban politics have too often relegated infrastructures to an apolitical context, increasing evidences have shown that politics plays a decisive role in the development of infrastructure (McFarlane and Jonathan, 2008). This could be seen in project identification; award of contracts, timing and execution of the projects where political considerations take precedence over due process. Evidences have shown that road has been the dominant infrastructure provided in Gombe since 1963, the year when Gombe was identified as a new industrial area. And over these years, road projects were used to reward and punish political loyalists and opponents respectively (Interview, 2020). The implication of this trend has been negligence of other critical infrastructures in favour of roads due to their immediate economic and political externalities.

### **3.3. Financing Issues**

One of the recurring issues in the development of infrastructure across the world is that of financing and the appropriate method of financing. Infrastructure provisioning is capital intensive and evidences have shown that government has been a dominant player in infrastructure financing. But globally government spending on infrastructure decreased considerably over the last 20 years, starting with 9.5% in 1990, decreasing to 8% in the mid-1990s and being at a low of 7% of GDP in 2005 (York, 2007) But in developing regions, public provision was (and remains) the majority source of funding for infrastructure; Estache 2006 estimates that the public sector accounts for 70%, the private sector 20% and aid 10% of funding (York, 2007).

### **3.4. Corruption**

It is almost an intellectual treason to discuss challenges of infrastructure development without factoring the phenomenon of corruption. This is because; menace of corruption has permeated all aspects of life in Nigeria in which Gombe is found. For instance, the installation of required turbines necessary to generate hydro electric power from Dadinkowa Dam has been delayed fundamentally because of corruption (Interview, 2018). In addition to this, employment of incompetent hands to handle contracts is another dimension of corruption in the development of infrastructure because the menace of corruption prevents professionals from handling projects.

### **3.5. Capital Flight, Capital Sink and Capital Stagnancy**

Infrastructure development projects in Nigeria suffer from capital flight, capital sink and capital stagnancy (Olufemi, 2012). This is typified by the fact that a lot of materials and managerial

services are procured outside the country partly due to low technological base of the state. More so, the contracts are full of loop-holes that allow leakages of funds. In some cases, projects are over-design for the designers to earn more professional fees which are percentage of the contract sum. Capital stagnancy due to abandoned projects is also rampant.

### **3.6. Physical Constraints**

Topographical difficulties present another challenge to developing a viable industrial infrastructure in Gombe metropolis. Studies have revealed that the steep slopes as well as streams, ravines and gullies in the southern and north eastern parts of the Gombe metropolis, the Liji Hills, at the north east and the Akko escarpment pose serious physical constraints. For instance figure 2 shows that about 14.2% of the land within six kilometers radius from the old market cross junction is topographically difficult. Because the Liji hills and the sandstone outcrops alone occupy an area of about 16 hectares of poor development land. Added to this, is the fact that areas of shallow ravines are also susceptible to flood as in the case of areas along deep valley. This implies that the flood of 20th August, 2004 in Gombe metropolis apart from being a product of what Mabogunje called “spontaneous housing” (Akin,1996) and poor drainage system was also exacerbated by topographical features of Gombe metropolis. This physical constraint does not present any engineering impossibility, but rather, it raises the cost of construction, especially when standard requirement are carried out.

Another form of physical constraint is the geological limitations. Because the sandstone/shale formation which dominate the geology of Gombe and associated soils, cause structural problems to building. Specifically, modern high-rise structures built of inflexible materials often register cracks in many parts of Gombe (Abba, 1997).

### **3.7. Institutional Constraints**

One of the constraints in this respect has to do with land administration. According to the Gombe Master Plan document, the built-up area of Gombe is not mainly within Gombe Local Government Area, but extends to Akko, Kwami and Yamaltu Deba Local Government areas. This implies that State government administers Gombe urban Land in collaboration with the aforementioned local government areas. Therefore absence of a well coordinated framework made the process of land administration prone to conflicts and abuse by unauthorised groups; and consequently constraining controlled and orderly physical development.

Closely related to the above challenge is the poor organization of the Planning system. The Gombe State Urban Development Board (GSUDB), which carries out the development control function, is a directorate in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. Other planning functions are within the Lands Ministry. The status and location of the State Development Board is neither consistent with the provisions of Decree No.88 of 1992 nor fulfill the requirement of proper coordination with the Ministry (Gombe Master Plan, 2000-2030, 2003).

Above challenge has also given birth to lack of a well coordinated approach to infrastructure development in Gombe State. The multiplier effect of which is the absence of high impact project and misplacement of priorities. For instance instead of developing Dadinkowa Dam to generate hydro electric power, the state government spent about four (4) billion constructing an International Conference Centre (Interview, 2018). Closely related to this constraint is the Lack of reliable and sufficient data for planning, designing and development of infrastructure. The multiplier effect of this is that some facilities are located on sites that are rather small and or/ incompatible with the adjoining land uses. Example grain market and other areas designated for

development have been ignored. For instance Science Incubation Centre sited behind Bauchi Motor Park is virtually neglected (Interview, 2013)

Demographic Pressure poses another constraint to the development of infrastructure in Gombe metropolis. Many factors contributed to this development. The first was the population increase due to reproduction, migration and forced migration as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency in the neighbouring states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. The implication of this development could be seen in the situation whereby the existing infrastructure has been overstretched. Secondly, the Boko Haram insurgency itself presents a challenge to the development of infrastructure as Foreign investors and funding became increasingly difficult to come by. For instance, in the wake of the insurgency, United States of America warned her citizens of the risks of coming to Nigeria, with particular emphasis to Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers, Abia, Edo, Imo, Jos, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe and Borno states; and the Gulf of Guinea (Eme O.I and Jide, I, 2012)

#### **4. PROSPECTS OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN GOMBE METROPOLIS**

In spite of the challenges highlighted above, this section contends that the development of sound infrastructure in Gombe metropolis is a historical possibility given that the political economic and socio-cultural potentials for such exist as discussed below.

Renewed political commitment in coordinating the provision of infrastructure in Gombe State constitutes a ray of hope. This could be seen in the establishment of Gombe Geographical Information System (GOGIS) to coordinate the administration of land. This has the potential of addressing most of the institutional constraints highlighted before.

The availability of Alternative Sources of energy presents another prospect for infrastructure development in Gombe metropolis. This helps to complement the electricity infrastructure which has virtually collapsed. This alternative is critical especially now that the production and provision of electric power from renewable energy (wind, solar, biomass, etc) is now a global focus. For instance, studies have shown that, Gombe State has an effective wind area of 17,428 KM capable of generating 2290 MWh (Abubakar et al, 2012)

Furthermore, Cluster concept provides a ray of hope for infrastructural development. The implementation of this strategy was to be based almost entirely on Public-Private-Partnership (PPP). It is predicated on the notion of creating a community of businesses located together in which members would seek enhanced environmental, social and corporate performance towards effective global trade competitiveness. It is argued that the strategy would enable government to concentrate infrastructure and other amenities necessary for the smooth operation of business in identified locations (Iwuagwu, 2012). According to the policy, the Cluster Concept would operate on five planks: Free Trade Zones; Industrial Parks; Industrial Clusters; Enterprise Zones; and, Incubators. It is pertinent to note that Gombe metropolis has Nassarawa Industrial Cluster courtesy of this strategy. Recently, Gombe was selected as one of the seven new industrial parks approved by President Muhammadu Buhari on Wednesday, 19 September, 2019. The remaining six include Lekki in Lagos, Makurdi in Benue; Benin, Edo State; Ilorin Kwara State and Abakaliki in Ebonyi (Premium Times Newspaper, 2019). Furthermore, the completion of Dadinkowa Hydroelectric power project (See Fig 1) has the potential for accelerating the development of the proposed industrial park but also encourage the development of more infrastructures in Gombe Metropolis.



Fig 1: Newly completed but not yet commissioned Dadinkowa Hydro Electric Power Project

#### 4.1. Source: Field Work, 2020

Furthermore, there are models of infrastructure financing ranging from overseas finance such as the Official development finance (ODF) is a major source of infrastructure financing in LIDCs. Detailed data obtained from OECD show that LIDCs received nearly \$17 billion in project finance from MDBs and OECD members in 2014 (Gurara,2017).China, in particular, committed billions of dollars of infrastructure investment under the “Belt and Road” initiative, an ambitious plan to boost trade and global development, strengthening the links between Asia, Europe, and Africa. According to the data on Chinese development assistance published by Aid Data, between 2000 and 2013 almost 60 percent of Chinese-funded projects were infrastructure ones. Furthermore, Waqf (endowment) is also been increasingly identified as one of the better ways of financing infrastructure (Chukwuka, 2016).

Studies have also revealed that human capital development is critical in industrial infrastructure development. This allows for indigenous knowledge and skills acquisition in the course of developing an infrastructure. According to the Jakarta plan has established that a country’s human capital accounts for 64 percent of its wealth, while its physical capital and natural capital (natural resources) account for 16 percent and 20 percent of its wealth, respectively. This shows that human capital is the most productive capital and is to be developed through adequate provision of social infrastructural facilities. Discussions on infrastructure, in developing countries like Nigeria, are usually being skewed to physical or economic infrastructure, neglecting almost completely the need to develop social infrastructure. This has formed one strong basis of criticism of the World Bank development efforts in the developing countries. Such efforts are concentrated on the development of physical capital (which constitutes just 16% of a country’s wealth) and neglected the development of human capital (social infrastructure) as observed by Dandago, 2014)

The Federal Government reconstruction programmes in the North East and other policies of economic diversification constitute another avenue for infrastructure development. For instance, According to the National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan (NIIMP) covering 2014 to 2043, the priorities of the Nigerian government for infrastructure development are largely centred on two critical sectors particularly, the Energy and Transport sectors which account for 33 percent and 25 percent of proposed investment shares, respectively (Chukwuka et al, 2016) therefore, the ability of the Gombe State Government to key into this opportunity could translate into developing infrastructure not only in Gombe Metropolis but also the entire state. However, this could be an illusion without a genuine Civil service reform. This shows that an efficient civil

service with a good implementation record, which also operate free of pressure-group politic (Eric and Hezron, 2000) is needed in infrastructure development.

Furthermore, the reconstruction programmes of the post Boko Haram era also involves massive infrastructure development, some of which have a direct connection with the industrial sector. Therefore, metropolitan Gombe stands to gain from the activities of the newly established North East Development Commission.

Cultural infrastructure, when properly harnessed could provide the software for infrastructure development in Gombe metropolis. For instance, Confucius ideology, which its emphasis on honesty, education and skill acquisition among others contributed in the emergence of China as industrial and technological power. Only people who are known very well and trusted within a Chinese-owned company are invited to be shareholders and directors in the firm (Amira, 2008) Francis Fukuyama defined Trust as the mutual acceptance among two or more entities (persons, organizations) that regular day-to-day behavior will be honest, cooperative, and predictable based on shared norms. Also, that parties to markets transaction will not exploit others vulnerabilities (Fukuyama, 1995) In Gombe metropolis, the slogan of Gombawa Iban Fari (Interview, 2020) (people of Gombe are first among equals) could be developed from its trading and commercial antecedent to the level of ideology based on trust, honesty, patriotism and integrity and knowledge acquisition. This implies that development thrives on the platform of sound psychological infrastructure just as underdevelopment is a state of mind, a way of expression, and a collective personality marked by chronic infirmities and forms of maladjustments. (Amira, 2008)

## 5. CONCLUSION

The development of robust infrastructure in Gombe metropolis is a historical possibility, but it is riddled with numerous challenges as shown in this paper. These constraints include weak political will and corruption, absence of coordinated approach to infrastructure development and problems of funding. Other challenges include topographical, geological, and problem of land administration. However, it has been shown that in spite of these constraints, prospects for having a sound infrastructure development in metropolitan Gombe exist. This could be gleaned from increasing advocacy for good governance and strong political will, alternatives sources of energy, new models of infrastructure development and financing, human capital development and the opportunities in the Federal Government Boko Haram Reconstruction Programmes in the North East geo political zone and effective use of culture to promote the values of honesty, patriotism, trust and hardwork.

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