

TRANSFORMING NIGERIA'S URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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In Collaboration with

**CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (CHSUD)
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, MINNA, NIGERIA**



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October 30TH - 1ST November, 2025

Association of City Managers in Nigeria

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Forward

Sustaining African Cities in the 21st Century Global Urbanization

Africa is not new to urbanization as large and successful urban settlements of pre-industrial era have been reported in many African works. However, the present rate of uncontrolled rapid urban growth on this continent calls for deeper re-evaluation of her potentials to effectively harness resources in every sphere of today's world frontier of global human population growth and survival endeavours. This is aside the often over indulged issues of the burden of underdevelopment, hunger, malnutrition, and civil unrest in recent times (Adewumi & Akintayo, 2022; Bayramov, Viltres, & Doubre, 2023; Dutta & Cavanagh, 2025; Jimmy et al., 2025; Li, Chen, & Hu, 2016; Tekdemir, 2025). With child birth rapidly declining in the global north, sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries will soon become the main sources of labour to run factories and farms at the required efficiency to retain and keep awake many global markets (Scholvin, Turok, Visagie, & Diez, 2022; Yeung, 2022). That is on the economic and social aspects, the physical environments in which many yet unborn populations will reside to carry out many new and evolving livelihood activities is also another avenue in need of deeper assessment. How we built, develop, and manage the environment has a lot of input on how we define what could be done in terms of peace and peace building in the era of increasing adversaries from nature and fellow humans far and near.

The ACMAN 8th Annual Conference was convened to highlight on the state of African cities in the different aspects of the 21st century urbanization. Taking the main theme of *Transforming Nigeria's Urban Infrastructure for a Sustainable Future*, the conference was able to draw contributions from a wide range of perspectives. Although many of the contributions were first-timers to a forum of this kind, the message many conveyed calls for action and further actions even where there are plans, programmes or projects already set in place and running. The need to act and the scale of the activities to act on are so enormous that one group, community or government cannot shoulder everything successfully. In many instances, those already empowered and expected to confront these increasingly important environmental and socioeconomic issues are often distracted by other engagements (Ahmad, Afolabi, Nda, & Daura, 2018; Darazo & Kawu, 2026; Isunju, Orach, & Kemp, 2016; Omoegun, 2025; Squire & Alozie, 2023). In many instances, these submissions have shown what should concern sub-Saharan African development today (The Urban Century) – that is: uninterrupted development and management of human settlements. A common message is that Africa should not underplay or miss the opportunities of urbanization in 21st century as it happened in the 20th century that the continent was largely dominated by over-bearing colonial powers. Opportunities abound today than in the immediate past or as never before – one of such is large scale urbanization and the far-reaching advantages that usually comes with it.

Many contributors highlighted building and re-building sustainable housing and urban environment as an entity in order to shelter life and livelihood activities in a much more dignified way than we have today. This trend, if followed, will meet global and regional goals of building and retaining sustainable communities and environments (Ameer & Ghannam, 2025; Arabi, Toloo, Yang, Zhang, & Xu, 2024; Okoye et al., 2025). An environment that is resilient, thriving with developments at every facet of life and does not deprive future generations, in any conceivable way, the ability to have their own development (Brundtland et al., 2012; Cecchin, Salomone, Deutz, Raggi, & Cutaia, 2021; Chatterjee, 2011). The environmental assessments presented here are what many have studied to further highlight the established aspirations of individuals and communities committed to building dignified living in a world ecosystem of sustainability as against the option of suppressing the mother earth by the untethered indulgence of just few of us (Chen, 2025; Guillen-Royo, 2019; Kernaghan & Sturgeon, 2024; Kubiszewski et al., 2013; Zheng, Chen, Zhang, Zhu, & Jin, 2026).

Many of the authors have shown how liveable environment, in urban and rural environments, can be achieved by individuals, groups, communities and governments through different but mutually reinforcing commitment to sustainability at all levels. For example; Musa, Aremu and Shuaibu, as the opening chapter brought to the fore the main hindrances to desirable socioeconomic wellbeing in many Nigerian homes and also a major contributor to negative environmental impacts - 'Urban and Residential Power Outage' and the many different ways urban dwellers navigate the menace in order to eke out living in decent environment. This is followed by Olanipekun and Owofe who, still, drew attention to the roles of functional urban infrastructure and what residents can achieve through its effective development and management. These two portray solutions to the present urban Africa's main hindrance to self-reliance and achievement of the SDGs and similar global or regional development agenda. And, as many of these works rightly show, far from being unsurmountable, these are not issues that cannot be effectively addressed to entrench the needed self-dependent sustainability, rather, they are, in most cases, the crucial stage of infrastructure development that the government and city managers have relegated to the background.

However, the people who are daily facing widening limitations of infrastructure deficiencies in both rural and urban areas in 21st century Africa, are using every opportunity available to mainstream life, living and livelihood opportunities in this naturally endowed continent. This was shown by the works of: Olowere and Kawu – in addressing urban security challenges in many residential neighbourhoods of Minna largely peopled by the low-income groups, but with the least police presence; Panti et al - in highlighting visible cultural values amidst the vagaries of environmental changes; and, Dowell, Shaba and Ayuba – who documented elements of psychological wellbeing through effective landscape design. These works showcased people and communities' resolve to address increasingly peculiar growing urban vulnerabilities of this clime and time expressed through dwindling infrastructure performance and epileptic services. Again, while Eya et al; Attah et al; and, Bello and Isah; emphasized on efforts towards environmental wellbeing; Iornumbe and Zubairu, and, Orugun and Bala enlisted social and environmental considerations to be inculcated into building and developing facilities meant for the wellbeing of people through healthcare service provisions and the sustenance of enabling environment for comfort, healing and recovery.

These are works that further portrayed not only the growing challenges of the urban century, but, the main people, groups, communities and institutions left in the seemingly lonely field to walk through the woods. This is the engulfing characteristics portrayed in many urban centres in sub-Saharan Africa – a situation where urban and regional authorities too often leave those with the least resources to confront daunting and life threatening environmental and disaster events even when quick intervention can avert dangers and could usher in positive development to the environment, the cities and the region at large (Elorduy, Sinha, & Marx, 2024; Kawu, 2022, 2025; Kawu & Owoyele, 2008; Lu, Alahmari, & Mohammed, 2026; Messmer et al., 2021; Spaling, Brouwer, & Njoka, 2014). In this compiled work – ‘Transforming Nigeria’s Urban Infrastructure for a Sustainable Future’, emphasis is placed on results of human survival and growing transformational approaches to the challenges of the time by investing in participatory activities where every person’s action counts toward self-reliance, resilience and overall sustainability of cities and town – man’s dominant settlement type in today’s world. Perhaps, this way, and through the results of these efforts, the scenario of lagging behind infrastructure and facilities would cease to be attributed to Africa’s main socioeconomic trait, but, rather the larger resolve by the people, despite mounting hurdles, to have and retain pro-active and responsive populations. This, like many other interventions, also have the overwhelming capacity to keep the people and the continent together and focused on social and economic self-determination in a desired direction.

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