


## Urbanization and Developmental Challenges in Birnin Kebbi, 1991-2019

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<p><b>Abstract:</b> This paper examines the processes, dynamics, and challenges of urbanization and development in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, from 1991 to 2019. It explores how successive military and civilian administrations contributed to the transformation of Birnin Kebbi from a local government headquarters into a full-fledged state capital with growing economic, social, and infrastructural importance. Using both primary and secondary sources, including oral interviews, government records, and official documents, the study analyzes developmental initiatives such as the provision of housing, roads, electricity, water supply, markets, and public institutions that enhanced the city's urban profile. Despite these achievements, the study identifies persistent challenges including inadequate infrastructure, poor urban planning, population pressure, waste management problems, unemployment, and environmental degradation. The paper concludes that while government interventions significantly accelerated urban growth, issues of continuity, corruption, and policy implementation hindered sustainable urban development in Birnin Kebbi.</p>	<p><b>Review Paper</b></p> <p><b>*Corresponding Author:</b>  <b>Ahmed Ibrahim</b>            Department of History and International Studies, Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria</p> <p><b>How to cite this paper:</b>            Ahmed Ibrahim &amp; Abu-Ubaida Sani (2025). Urbanization and Developmental Challenges in Birnin Kebbi, 1991-2019. <i>Middle East Res J. Humanities Soc. Sci</i>, 5(5): 167-176.</p> <p><b>Article History:</b>              Submit: 15.09.2025                Accepted: 16.10.2025                Published: 20.10.2025  </p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Urbanization, Development, Governance, Infrastructure, Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, Nigeria.</p> <p><b>Copyright © 2025 The Author(s):</b> This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution <b>4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)</b> which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p>	

## INTRODUCTION

The overriding concern of this paper is an investigation of "Urbanization and Developmental Challenges in Birnin Kebbi Town, 1991–2019," specifically focusing on the plethora of contributions made by each distinct (military and civil) administration. For better comprehension, these landmark periods are compartmentalized into two epochal trajectories, notably the military and civilian administrations. The precision of the study lies in the fact that no serious efforts have been made toward a nuanced understanding of their contributions to the phenomenon under investigation. However, the creation of Kebbi State in 1991 added another face value and dimension to the annals of the political and urban transformational history of Birnin Kebbi town up to 2019. By this status, the position of Birnin Kebbi town has been enhanced politically, socially, and economically, as it joined the ranks of other important urban centres in Nigeria.

There are quite a number of public institutions established during the period under review. These include educational, health, and other urban development projects carried out by the Kebbi State Government. The

developmental expansion of the town, in terms of population growth and economic activities, has reached a remarkable level of progression as a result of flexible government policies meant to improve the standard of living of the people in the study area. In fact, the creation of Kebbi State in 1991 attracted a large number of people from all parts of the country and beyond, mainly because of the employment opportunities provided by the government, commercial institutions, as well as the receptive nature of the people.

By and large, Birnin Kebbi town has been considerably transformed into a vibrant commercial and urban centre with an effective administrative apparatus, its strategic location to two neighbouring states, and the receptive and accommodative nature of the host community. It could be reiterated that from the creation of Kebbi State in 1991 up to 2019, which are the starting and terminating periods of the study, eight governors had administered the state, specifically, four (4) military administrators and four (4) civilian governors. It is apposite to note that these governors created strong, indelible marks in the phase of urbanization and development, elicited through good governance. For better clarity, Table 1.1 below discernibly illustrates the

names and periods of military and civil administrations in Kebbi State, ranging from 1991 to 2019.

**Table 1.1: List of Governors of Kebbi State, 1991-2019**

S/N	Names	Period	Form of government
1	Col. Patrick N. Aziza	1991-1992	Military
2	Alhaji Abubakar Musa	1992-1993	Civilian
3	Col. Salihu Tunde Bello	1993-1996	Military
4	Col. John Paul Ubah	1996-1998	Military
5	Col. Sama'ila Bature Chamah,	1998-1999	Military
6	Alhaji Mohammad Adamu Aliero,	1999-2007	Civilian
7	Alhaji Saidu Usman Nasamu Dakingari	2007-2015	Civilian
8	Alhaji Atiku Bagudu,	2015-2019	Civilian

**Source:** Field Work

It is worthy of note that the effectiveness of administrative institutions and the soundness of politics are acknowledged as catalysts for the development of Birnin Kebbi town since it was made a state capital. In addition, democratic governance created the enabling environment through which policy choices are subjected to the control of free and responsible citizens capable of holding the government and state institutions accountable for their implementation. It is based on the above analysis that the paper deems it necessary to interrogate urbanism and good governance in Birnin Kebbi town. The paper is divided into seven (7) different segments. Apart from the introduction, which sets out the general overview, it explores the conceptual exposition consisting of urbanization and development. It also discusses urban development in Birnin Kebbi town from 1991 to 2019, the government's efforts in the provision of offices and residential accommodation as well as its challenges, and finally, the conclusion of the paper.

### **Conceptual Exposition: Urbanization and Development**

The understanding of the exposition of urbanism in its conceptual discourse has defied a number of analyses, as there is no specific or generally accepted meaning. Though it is appropriately more described that its conceptual analysis has been given by a number of scholars. Therefore, urbanism is about what happens inside cities, the form and function of cities, and how cities relate to rural communities.<sup>[1]</sup> It often refers to the study of how inhabitants of urban or urbanising areas interact with the social and built environments of cities.<sup>[2]</sup> In other words, urbanism is a mode of inquiry, a way of analysing and understanding cities. Again,

urbanism has the patterns of behaviour, relationships, and modes of thinking that characterize urban dwellers.<sup>[3]</sup> Planetary urbanism, for its part, concentrates on an attempt to reformulate the relationship between 'concentrated' and 'extended' forms of human settlement, land use, and spatial development by assimilating both of them into a theoretical urban landscape that is nothing less than global.<sup>[4]</sup> In this situation, urbanism deals with the degree of robust interaction between the urban and rural communities toward the advancement of social and economic relations.

The term 'development' has elicited a number of discussions, particularly in arriving at a cogent, definitive interpretation and meanings. However, development has many-sided phases, seeing it as advancement in physical structure, growth in human development, especially per capita income, and the distinction from what is in extant with the past accretion in human society. Conceptually, 'development' is increasingly understood as a general improvement of the 'quality of life' for the majority of the population, and as such, it includes Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, but also the effective fulfillment of human rights, including civic and political rights.<sup>[5]</sup> Again, development would also be more sustainable by strengthening domestic accountability through the consolidation of democratic institutions and processes of electing the political leaders into power.

<sup>1</sup> N. Anderson, "Aspect of Urbanism and Urbanization," in *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. iv, No. 2, 1963, P. 1. Also see V. I. Raplis, *Urbanism in the Making: A Handbook of Survival*, ... P.2

<sup>2</sup> Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 44, No. 1, Chicago, Chicago University Press, July 1938, P. 2

<sup>3</sup> William Fulton, *The New Urbanism: Hope or Hype for American Communities?* Cambridge, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1996, P. 10

<sup>4</sup> Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," ..... July 1938, P. 5

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, *Democracy and Development: The Role of the UN*, ...PP.7-8 also see P. V. Nared and A. Z. Lamovsek, "Public Open Space as a Contribution to Urban Development in Small Slovenian Cities," *Urbani Izziv (JSTOR)*, Vol. 26, 2015 PP. 115-116

## Understanding the Nexus between Urbanization and Development

Urbanization and development are two indispensable phenomena that each defines the other in the evaluation of growth and advancement of any given society. It is very complex and subtle to achieve development without implementing meaningful projects within a particular realm. Therefore, urbanization, which appears as the growth of cities and societies, has to be measured by the value of the increasing impact recorded through developmental inputs. In the context of this study, urbanization cannot be separated from development, as the increasing rate of urbanization determines the degree and propensity of development accrued in a particular socio-economic and political milieu.<sup>[6]</sup> For instance, the provision of social infrastructural development projects that proportionally meet or exceed the needs of citizens could be attributed to development. Invariably, when such provisions fail to satisfy these needs, underdevelopment becomes evident in the area. In addition, urbanization and development work hand in hand, as the achievement of the former is determined by the latter in terms of transformational changes over a given period within a society.

### Urban Development in Birnin Kebbi Town, 1991-2019

The stride by the Federal Government of Nigeria to address the minority question of marginalization in the country, as exhibited by other major ethnic groups, necessitated the need for the creation of more states to alleviate the fears of the minority groups. These conundrums resulted in the birth of a balance of equilibrium through which a number of states were created in 1991, of which Kebbi State was a component part. Following the creation of Kebbi State on 27th August 1991 by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, Birnin Kebbi town remained one of the historic towns in Kassar Kabi, which thus became its headquarters in the same year.<sup>[7]</sup> For its administration, Colonel Patrick Newton Aziza was sworn in as the administrator of the newly created state (Kebbi) by President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. During his inaugural speech, the President ordered all the administrators of the newly created states to immediately report to their respective jurisdictions.<sup>[8]</sup>

To ensure proper occupation and governance of the state, however, the military administrators appointed heads of technical teams made up of technocrats from among the civil service. These were members who were not to be encumbered by an Executive Council made up of political appointees or overburdened by politics. <sup>[9]</sup> It could be understood that Birnin Kebbi town, being the headquarters of the Local Government Area as well as the Gwandu Emirate under the aegis of the defunct Sokoto State, assumed a new dimension of governance. This transformation assisted in no small measure in brokering the control and administration of the new state and its capital city, as a number of strategies were devised for the smooth running of governmental affairs.

However, the alarming growth of the urban population and the poor response of the Nigerian government are factors that partly contribute to the high rate of physical development mishaps in Nigerian cities. These cities play increasing roles in infrastructural and economic change, poverty reduction, and environmental development, <sup>[10]</sup> as is the case in Birnin Kebbi town. It is noteworthy that the position of cities in the global economy varies, as their window of opportunity for development arises from domestic and foreign direct investments in the area and their contributions to human development. In developed countries, for example, there are cities offering good networks and benefits to the rest of the world, and their impacts are felt in several cities in Nigeria. In this situation, infrastructural development, however, remains the lifeline of activities in cities like Birnin Kebbi and its outlying communities and villages. As may be described, adequate infrastructure and efficient city management help to broaden the perspectives of city dwellers and foreign investors, as they enhance the quality of life of individuals as well as the city as a whole. <sup>[11]</sup> It is noteworthy that improved urban infrastructure, as well as effective delivery of public services, is a necessary condition and element for alleviating poverty in both developing and developed countries. Besides, as part of good governance, improved accessibility to employment, education,<sup>[12]</sup> health, and other public services is also important for the welfare of the people and the city itself. <sup>[13]</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Elton Chan, et al, "Social Infrastructure: The Regeneration of Somers Town," in *Infrastructural Urbanism*, City Design Research Studio, 2015, P. 58

<sup>7</sup> A. Shehu, *Kebbi State: Yesterday and Today*, Nigeria, Multinational Concepts Limited, 2014, P. 2

<sup>8</sup> Kebbi State: The Land, History and Governance, *Kebbi at 25*, A Publication in Commemoration of Silver Jubilee, of the Creation of Kebbi State, 2016, P. 19

<sup>9</sup> A. Shehu, *Kebbi State*, ... 2014, P. 30

<sup>10</sup> Satterthwaite D., "The Contribution of Cities to Global Warming and Their Potential Contributions to Solution, Environment and Urbanization," *ASIA* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2010, P. 8

<sup>11</sup> Oral Interview with Mallam Sodanji, Age 57, School Teacher, at Nasarawa Birnin Kebbi, on 15<sup>th</sup>-04-2024

<sup>12</sup> Sani, A.-U., Dahiru, L. B., Hassan, S., and Bushira Abdullahi. "Fisher Folk and the Need for Developing Their System of Education for Sustainable Development: A Survey of Yauri Emirate in Kebbi State." *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2017, pp. 71–74.

<sup>13</sup> Bhattacharya J., "Poverty, Food Insecurity and Nutritional outcomes in Children and Adults," *Journal of Health Economics*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 2004, PP. 840-843

In line with the foregoing, Birnin Kebbi town fits into the description of a city, as is evident in other places, due to the impact of governance injected since its creation in 1991. It has the demographic characteristics, notably the infrastructural capability and socio-economic diversity, which qualify it to be regarded as a city. Birnin Kebbi town has a large human population, which has continued to grow over the years since its assumption of state capital status in 1991. The estimated human population of the town was over 366,200,<sup>[14]</sup> occupying a vast area of land that has been utilized for several purposes, fundamentally to meet human needs. By and large, it is economically considered a city because it provides opportunities for people and supports numerous socio-economic activities apart from agricultural practices, which remain the major economic matrix in the state. Due to the receptive nature of the host community and political stability, Birnin Kebbi town accommodates a large number of people from different ethno-cultural backgrounds and beliefs, which is a key requirement for city classification.<sup>[15]</sup>

### Government and the Provision of Offices and Residential Accommodations

It is worth noting that the extant modern social amenities, such as potable drinking water, electricity, and roads in Birnin Kebbi town, could not withstand the new status as a state capital. Based on this backdrop, the bid for accelerating the urbanization of the pristine state became imperative, hence the intervention of the Federal Government during the first military administration of the state. This development, henceforth, prompted the administration to earnestly begin the state administrative office from a temporary one situated along the Birnin Kebbi–Jega Road. <sup>[16]</sup> Fundamentally, the immediate task of the administration was to find residential as well as office accommodation for civil servants in the state. The urgent need necessitated the rapid solicitation of buildings for government occupation and activities from individuals, traditional rulers, and philanthropists, among others.<sup>[17]</sup> This was systematically achieved, and the urbanization bid commenced without much hindrance, as people were willing to donate their properties for the development of the state.

Besides, from 27th August 1991 to 2nd January 1992, the military government established an administrative machinery that oversaw the sharing of assets between Sokoto and Kebbi States. This was, no

doubt, a herculean task, as taking inventory of what joined them together required absolute documentation and physical assessment of what was made available. The need to address this made the governor and his aides ensure equitable justice in the distribution and coordination of what belonged to Kebbi State during the period.<sup>[18]</sup> It could be reiterated that the state encountered the problem of insufficient social infrastructure and accommodation for the new administration to function smoothly. In this situation, the government contacted quite a number of people, leading to the donation of their houses to the new military administration for use as offices or residential accommodations. In addition, as part of efforts toward democratic transition, the military administration prepared a sound base and framework for state elections to be held simultaneously with all other states of the federation in Nigeria.<sup>[19]</sup> In assessing the new state, the military governor did not relent in his efforts, as developmental processes remained a continuous exercise.

In the actualization of governance in the new state administration and urban development, the government ensured the consolidation of heterogeneous groups for effective administration. This factor ensured the smooth running of the state's polity toward the institutionalization of peace, security, and harmonious relations within Birnin Kebbi town, its outlying communities, and beyond.<sup>[20]</sup> In fact, the effort of the state government was undoubtedly not solely on face value but essentially to ensure that all machinery and apparatuses of the state were put in place for meaningful urban development. Through this, the government of Kebbi State assuaged the people's confidence in the new settlement areas, as the host community also remained receptive in accommodating the heterogeneous population.

As a matter of fact, the newly created state, through its urbanized city of Birnin Kebbi, attracted people from the neighboring nations of Benin and the Niger Republic, who gave their strong support for the growth of the town. This was because the state encouraged their direct investments, especially in trade, settlement, and marital relations, which were strengthened through strong cultural and linguistic conviviality.<sup>[21]</sup> This action resulted in the acculturation of the new state, largely due to the strong inherent

<sup>14</sup> National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2016

<sup>15</sup> Olujimi J., "Evolving a Planning Strategy for Managing Urban Sprawl in Nigeria," *Journal of Human Ecology*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2009, P. 6

<sup>16</sup> A. Shehu, *Kebbi State*, ... 2014, P. 30

<sup>17</sup> Oral Interview with Garba Hamisu, Age 67, retired Permanent Secretary, at Gesse Phase 1, on 21<sup>st</sup>-06-2024

<sup>18</sup> Oral Interview with Abubakar Udu Idris mni, Age 67, Former Head of Service Kebbi State, at Gesse Phase 1 Extension, on the 30<sup>th</sup>-06-2024, he was a member of

assess sharing committee between Sokoto State and Kebbi State

<sup>19</sup> Kebbi State: The Land, History and Governance, *Kebbi at 25*,... 2016, P. 21

<sup>20</sup> Kebbi State: The Land, History and Governance, *Kebbi at 25*, ....2016, PP. 19-30

<sup>21</sup> The Digest Magazine, *Attracting Investments: The Myths and The Realities*, Vol. 2, No. 7, October, 2000, PP. 8-9



sympiotic relations arising from the unrestricted movement and migration of different people who later settled in Birnin Kebbi town.

Highly essential to the foregoing phenomenon, coupled with its indigenous nature of governance carried out by traditional rulers in the respective emirates within the pristine state, a landmark paradigm shift was ensconced in Birnin Kebbi town. This resulted in the establishment of administrative machinery in the state, bolstered by some pre-existing local government areas inherited from the defunct Sokoto State. With this attempt, the sole administrators were empowered with new commitments and responsibilities toward peaceful coexistence and the extension of equitable and effective governance to rural communities in Kebbi State.

As part of the efforts of the Kebbi State government to strengthen the state's administrative mechanism and apparatus, the government set up a formidable coordinating committee in 1991 that produced a blueprint for the development of the state at large. The committee essentially concentrated on the urbanization agenda of various areas to capture the needs and aspirations of the newly recruited and migrated workers from the old Sokoto State and beyond. [22] Through this, nearby communities and villages in proximity to the state capital were integrated as part of the capital to serve the needs of the increasing population.

Nevertheless, the attempt to transition to a nascent democratic government was put in top gear by the newly created Kebbi State government. In 1991, this was initiated to acknowledge the general needs of the country, aimed at extricating it from the military junta and dictatorial rule of the time. By this new arrangement, the government prepared Kebbi State for the 14th December 1991 general election, which was to usher in a new civilian administration. By this development, the election was conducted, and Alhaji Abubakar Musa Garkuwan Yauri emerged as the winner and became the first executive governor of Kebbi State.[23] First and foremost, he was saddled with the responsibility of addressing workers' conditions, particularly in the area of urbanization, which the state lacked at the time. However, the country's instability, among other factors, seemed to have been responsible for the truncation of government activities. Although the new administration was short-lived, the state was able to enjoy dividends of

democracy, such as the building of Gwadangaji Housing Estate, Gesse Housing Units, the construction of complexes for the state polytechnic, and the provision of water supply in Birnin Kebbi town.[24] This development was not limited to the metropolis of the state but was also evident in outlying villages and communities.

Essentially, accessibility to safe and proper shelter is vital for human existence and survival. In response to this, the government of Kebbi State, in its efforts to provide housing, impacted positively, especially on the economy, by creating jobs, promoting socio-cultural integration, improving healthy living and life expectancy, all of which foster inclusive economic growth. The government strove to stimulate construction by building affordable houses and overcoming critical constraints in the housing sector. The establishment of the Kebbi State Urban Development Authority (KUDA) in 1995 [25] was charged with the responsibility of overall supervision, including monitoring and management of urban development and planning across the state. This development assisted in bridging gaps and preventing unwanted slumps within the state capital and other urban centres.

In addition, to overcome the housing challenges faced by the Kebbi State government, it introduced the owner-occupier scheme as a deliberate policy to enable its citizens to own houses of their own. As a mark of commitment, the government continued to pursue the programme vigorously and ensured that the objective was achieved in due course. The scheme had already been implemented for one hundred and fifty-one (151) intermediate quarters at Gwadangaji, one hundred and twenty-one (121) junior staff quarters at Gesse Phase I Housing Estate, and one hundred (100) senior staff quarters at Gesse Phase II.[26] In addition, a number of similar houses owned by the state government within the GRA, Birnin Kebbi, were sold to deserving members of the public. In a related development, seven hundred and fifty (750) housing units of the Federal Government within Birnin Kebbi town were purchased by the state government and also slated for the owner-occupier scheme in 2004.[27]

In addition, township roads were constructed within Birnin Kebbi town and many other link roads to improve accessibility to the state capital by promoting orderly development within the Birnin Kebbi metropolis. From 1999 to 2003, a total of 35 kilometres of township

<sup>22</sup> TPL Abubakar A. Yalli, Age 58, Former Director Town Planning, Kebbi Urban Development Authority (KUDA), at Badariya Area, Birnin Kebbi, on 28<sup>th</sup>-06-2023

<sup>23</sup> A. Shehu, *Kebbi State*, ... 2014, P. 31

<sup>24</sup> Kebbi State: The Land, History and Governance, *Kebbi at 25*,... 2016, P. 22

<sup>25</sup> Official Document, *Kebbi State Urban Development Authority, Building Regulations*, 1995, P. 3

<sup>26</sup> Kebbi State, *Transformation, The Journey so far*, Kebbi State Ministry of Information, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2004, PP. 38-39, also see for more details Kebbi Bulletin, *Democracy: Kebbi Reaps Dividends*, a monthly Publication of Ministry of Information, Youth, Sport and Culture, February, 2001, PP. 4-7

<sup>27</sup> Oral Interview with Bello Zaki, Age 58, Deputy Director Town Planning Department KUDA, at KUDA office Zoromawa Birnin Kebbi, on 28<sup>th</sup>-06-2024

roads were initially embarked upon and were provided with streetlights and road furniture.<sup>[28]</sup> For easy movement and improved aesthetics, major roads in the town were dualized, thereby eliminating traffic congestion.

In order to forestall flooding, especially during the rainy seasons, and to minimize the suffering of city dwellers, the government constructed a giant drainage network in Birnin Kebbi town.<sup>[29]</sup> This project assisted in draining the water that caused the destruction of buildings, especially the already weak ones. The new developmental projects are evident in the series of military and civilian administrations of the state spanning from 1991 to 2019.

For instance, there was the construction of the first bye-pass in Birnin Kebbi town in 1994, the establishment of the Science and Technical Education Board, Kebbi Television, and the expansion of Kebbi Radio Station.<sup>[30]</sup> Hence, the establishment of the Kebbi State Library Board improved learning ability and information dissemination in the state. The military administration made its impact known; for instance, there was the construction of city gates at the state capital, the establishment of the state newspaper Equity, and the conversion of Haliru Abdu Trade Fair Complex into the Birnin Kebbi Multi-Purpose Stadium in order to promote sports, physical exercise, and youth development programmes. Likewise, the establishment of the Ministry for Women Affairs and Social Welfare, with a modern women's development centre and a motherless babies' home, was noted as part of the urbanization bid of the military administration. Following this was the construction of a new High Court complex, the upgrading of Birnin Kebbi Airport to international standards, and the construction of many link roads connecting the capital city with outlying communities.<sup>[31]</sup>

Through the state's relentless efforts to urbanize the town, there was the construction of an ultra-modern government house, an ultra-modern market and motor

park, and the establishment of the Family Support Programme (FSP), maternity, and children's hospital in the state capital. In the stride toward ensuring food sufficiency for the state's growing population and beyond, there was the completion of the Kebbi Fertilizer Blending Plant at Bulasa Industrial Layout in 1998.<sup>[32]</sup> This company facilitated manufacturing and distribution to farmers at subsidized rates, essentially to boost agricultural production for food security in the state and beyond. Again, the contributions of the civilian administrations can never be overemphasized, with the establishment of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Birnin Kebbi. There was the construction of a presidential lodge and banquet hall, a new wing in the government house, and a new secretariat to provide more offices.<sup>[33]</sup> This reduced bottlenecks and enormous bureaucracy in the discharge of duties as delegated.

One of the cardinal objectives of every administration is to provide adequate and efficient healthcare facilities in every nook and cranny of the state, which the government has been doing. In addition, the military and civilian state governments placed emphasis on staff training and welfare in order to improve medical manpower through various training programmes within and outside the state. In 2000 alone, the state government expended ₦776,000,500.00 on the health sector,<sup>[34]</sup> primarily for the procurement of modern health equipment, medicines, and other health-related materials. The basic strategy adopted toward attaining health for all in the state was the standardization of existing healthcare facilities, as well as the promotion of preventive healthcare services. For instance, a series of rehabilitation projects was carried out at Sir Yahaya Specialist Hospital and community healthcare centres within Birnin Kebbi. Following sporadic complaints from state inhabitants, the military administration established the Vesico-Vaginal Fistula (VVF) Centre in Birnin Kebbi. Besides, in the process of improving rural health services, the Hafsat Eye Centre and the kidney dialysis centre were established, and free medical

<sup>28</sup> Oral Interview with TPL Abubakar A. Yalli, Age 58, Former Director Town Planning, Kebbi Urban Development Authority (KUDA), at Badariya Area, Birnin Kebbi, on 28<sup>th</sup>-06-2024, also see Kebbi State, *Transformation, The Journey so far*, Kebbi State Ministry of Information, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2004, P. 40

<sup>29</sup> Kebbi State, *Transformation, The Journey so far*, Kebbi State ..., 2004, PP 40, also see Kebbi State, *Giant Strides, The Achievements of a Visionary Leader: The Administration of Gov. Saidu Usman Nasamu Dakingari*, Ministry of Information, 2014, P. 6

<sup>30</sup> Kebbi State: The Land, History and Governance, *Kebbi at 25*,... 2016, P. 24

<sup>31</sup> Kebbi State, *Giant Strides, The Achievements of a Visionary Leader: The Administration of Gov. Saidu*

*Usman Nasamu Dakingari*, Ministry of Information, 2014, P. 6

<sup>32</sup> Kebbi State, *One Year Achievement of Col. J. I. P. Ubah in Kebbi, Land of Equity*, Ministry of Information Youth Sport and Culture, August, 1996-August 1997, PP. 24-25, also see Kebbi State: The Land, History and Governance, *Kebbi at 25*,... 2016, P. 27

<sup>33</sup> Kebbi State: The Land, History and Governance, *Kebbi at 25*,... 2016, P. 28 also see details on the establishment of School of Nursing and Midwifery in Kebbi State, *12 Months of Stewardship of Governor Adamu Aliero, in Kebbi State: The Beginning of a Promising Tomorrow*, Kaduna, Da'a Press Ltd, 2002, P. 18

<sup>34</sup> Kebbi State, "Redemption Budget, Year 2000 for Kebbi State," *Land of Equity*, 2000, PP. 8-9

services were offered by expatriates from overseas in 2004.<sup>[35]</sup>

Further to the urbanization of the town by both the military and civilian administrations, and to ease human and material movement, the government embarked on improving the transport system through various schemes. The government ensured the supply of commuter buses to shuttle between several places at highly subsidized fares, branded as the Kebbi State Transport Authority (KBSTA).<sup>[36]</sup> It also offered long-term loans to individuals to purchase buses and small vehicles, with the set objective of easing transportation from rural communities to urban centres. This was essential because the area is noted for its agricultural prowess and has been supplying food to the teeming population of the state and beyond. It is interesting to note that the transportation system is vital to every economy, as it enables the movement of people, goods, and services, resulting in the creation of viable economic value. It is also noteworthy that an efficient transport system underpins economic development, delivers improvements in quality of life, and enables effective governance of the state.<sup>[37]</sup> Aptly, the road construction and rehabilitation across the country followed a targeted and sequenced approach based on prioritised funding over the period under review. However, the improvement of the national road network has assisted in accommodating a diverse population and traffic growth, as well as facilitating economic and social development through the effective movement of goods, services, and people.<sup>[38]</sup>

The essentiality of electricity is critical to the overall economic development and industrialization ambitions of the government. Electricity plays a vital role in powering Nigeria's economy, enhancing competitiveness, and ensuring a good quality of life for its more than 200 million residents.<sup>[39]</sup> Both military and civilian administrations, through their urbanization efforts, decided to supply electricity to both urban and rural dwellers of Kebbi State. By this development, Birnin Kebbi became the centre of electricity distribution to Sokoto State and the Niger Republic.<sup>[40]</sup> The expanded electricity distribution made the existing infrastructure in Birnin Kebbi town, prior to the creation

of the state in 1991, more befitting than when it held only local government headquarters status. In order to give the town a proper facelift as a state capital, both military and civilian governors immediately embarked on serious rehabilitation and construction of roads and drainage systems. This development was aimed at completely stopping the annual flood menace during the rainy season, which had been a threat to the lives and properties of the people. By this, many skilled and unskilled labourers arrived in the town for employment opportunities and settlement, which was considerably bolstered by the electricity supply. However, despite the numerous achievements made by both the military and civilian administrations, there still exist a myriad of challenges faced within the period under investigation in Birnin Kebbi town, especially between 1991 and 2019.

### The Challenges

One of the main challenges of urban governance is how to make adequate infrastructure available and to ensure that the existing infrastructure is functional. As the urban population increases and urban areas expand, the social infrastructural needs of the dwellers have not proportionally increased with the growing population in Birnin Kebbi town. Besides, the prevailing infrastructure easily wears out and becomes deplorable due to the continuous pressure mounted on it by ever-increasing utilization.<sup>[41]</sup> This has dire consequences on the roads, resulting in their debilitating nature, which in the long run calls for new intervention.

The environmental and social impacts of the economic dynamism of informal actors have become a significant source of concern for urban governance. Aside from the challenge of providing appropriate dump sites, the government is also concerned about enforcing waste management regulations, especially in getting urban dwellers to use the approved dump sites.<sup>[42]</sup> It has not been easy tracking individual households, artisans, street traders, and even industries that dispose of their waste indiscriminately against government regulations. Other challenges include the practice of littering by motorists, alongside indiscriminate waste disposal, coupled with the smell from poultry farms and noise from entertainment stalls. All these have heavily degraded the environment with varying levels of

<sup>35</sup> Kebbi State: The Land, History and Governance, *Kebbi at 25*,... 2016, P. 25 and P. 29

<sup>36</sup> Oral Interview with Alhaji Shikau, Age 76, former NARTO Chairman Kebbi branch, Old Garage, Birnin Kebbi, on 30<sup>th</sup>-06-2024

<sup>37</sup> Oral Interview with Mallan Sule Tsini, Age 72, Commercial Bus Driver and Member of NARTO, at New Garage, on 27<sup>th</sup>-06-2024

<sup>38</sup> Oral Interview with Eng. Sani Ahmmad Gwadangaji, Age 54, Assistant Director Civil Engineering, Ministry of Works, Birnin Kebbi, at Haliru Abdu, on 28<sup>th</sup>-06-024

<sup>39</sup> African Development Bank Group, *An Infrastructure Action Plan for Nigeria: Closing the Infrastructure Gap*

and *Accelerating Economic Transformation*, Tunis, The Knowledge and Information Center (KVRC), 2020, P. 25

<sup>40</sup> Kebbi State, *One Year Achievement*, ..., P. 26

<sup>41</sup> Job Momoh, et al, "Challenges Facing Nigeria: The Abuja Case," in *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol. 20, No. 2, ISSN: 1520-5509, Pennsylvania, LSBU Research Open, 2018, P. 37 and P. 39

<sup>42</sup> Adesoji A. O. *Solid Waste Management Problem in Ibadan*, Ibadan, Wiser Publication Ltd, 2019, P. 46, more details on dumping of Waste in Nigerian cities see Adewole A. T., "Waste Management Toward Sustainable Development in Nigeria," in *International NGO Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 4, ISSN: 173-179, 2009

pollution, constituting health hazards and reducing the standard of living of urban dwellers.<sup>[43]</sup>

By and large, there has been indiscriminate erection of buildings, which has disfigured both permanent and temporary structures, leading to the expansion of slums in some parts of the town. As cities grow, the limited resources of the town are also stretched through proportional increases in infrastructural development, which in turn reinforce competing interests that arise to regulate the town and its resources. Oftentimes, tension and conflict of interest predispose struggles among contending groups to control lucrative areas of the city, such as markets, shopping malls, motor parks, and industrial zones, among others. However, such conflicts usually arise among government areas within the urban centre, between local governments, and consequently between states, sometimes resulting in boundary disputes.<sup>[44]</sup> This was evident in the conflict between Doderu in Kebbi State and Tambawal in Sokoto State over fishing rights in a river and market control.

Another challenge is that the more an area becomes highly urbanized, the more it becomes a competitive centre of attraction for many people seeking greener pastures. By this status, countless individuals, especially young school leavers, migrate from different rural communities to urban centres in search of job opportunities. At the initial stage of urbanization, employment opportunities exist within the government sector, but with increasing urbanization, the informal sector of the economy—such as industries and private organizations—employs more people, thereby making the town more congested and vulnerable to crimes and criminalities.<sup>[45]</sup> However, with the continuous influx of individuals over time, cities become saturated, and employment opportunities drastically reduce due to growing competition. This has become a challenge for urban administration, to either open up new employment opportunities to absorb the increasing population as state workers or create an enabling environment for the private or informal sector to accommodate them.

In other words, urban areas are perceived by many people as places where individuals can always engage in some form of activity to earn or eke out a living. Most people who cannot engage in any

meaningful economic activity, especially those without specific skills, tend to involve themselves in anti-social activities in order to survive.<sup>[46]</sup> Such behaviours are perpetrated either by individuals who are already criminally minded or by those frustrated by unemployment. There has also been an increasing rate of social vices perpetrated by hoodlums who engage in criminal acts such as theft, drug abuse, ritual killings, prostitution, and other despicable acts. These same groups are often instrumental in political violence during election periods in the state.<sup>[47]</sup> In fact, it is instructive to note that most of them are homeless, while quite a number live in uncompleted buildings and slum areas. These areas have become strong hideouts for hoodlums, as the impact of government urbanization efforts has not been felt adequately for their proper rehabilitation.

In a nutshell, the synthesized challenges of urbanization in Birnin Kebbi area include lack of commitment to continuity and sustainability, entrenched corruption, misplacement of priorities, contract inflation, poor bureaucratic systems, unqualified contractors, and low-quality project execution. These challenges, for many decades, have inhibited the pace of urbanization in Birnin Kebbi town, as numerous unqualified engineers have inundated the system due to widespread corruption and the government's inability to take the necessary actions required in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

The paper has examined “Urbanization and Developmental Challenges in Birnin Kebbi, 1991–2019,” and equally revealed how governance has the potential to promote a viable urbanization drive. Furthermore, it identified a number of challenges militating against developmental projects vis-à-vis urbanization under the series of civilian and military administrations within the period investigated. However, the provision of sustainable road networks, residential houses, electricity, potable water, viable markets, recreation centres, and motor parks, among others, catered for the increasing population in the study area. These developmental projects assisted the people in both rural and urban Birnin Kebbi to feel the impact of governance, which remains the cardinal principle of any administration in the State.

<sup>43</sup> Nurudeen M. M., “Waste Disposal Mechanism and Health Implication Among the Residents of Gusau, Zamfara State,” *B. Sc Project*, Sociology Department, Federal University Gusau, June 2024, P. 4 and P. 6

<sup>44</sup> Oral Interview with Bello Garba, Age 53, Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Birnin Kebbi, 20<sup>th</sup>-06-2024

<sup>45</sup> Khaliel A. S., “Challenges of Urban Governance in Nigeria,” in *World Journal of Research and Review*, Vol. 12, No. 6, ISSN: 2455-3956, 2021, P. 1

<sup>46</sup> Jamilu Shehu, “A Social and Political History of Katsina Metropolis 1960-2007,” *Ph.D. Thesis*, Department of History, Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto, 2013, P. 290

<sup>47</sup> A. Abba, “Violent Politics and Elections in Nigeria: The Example of the Northern States, 1951-2003,” *Gombe Studies Journal of Gombe State University*, Vol.1, No. 1, December, 2008, p. 179, see also Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*, London, Vintage Books, 2010, PP. 55-57



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S/N	Names	Age	Occupation	Place Of Interview	Date
1	Abubakar Udu Idris mni	67	Former Head of Service, Kebbi State	Gesse Phase 1 Extension	30 <sup>th</sup> -06-2024
2	Alhaji Shikau,	76	former NARTO Chairman, Kebbi branch	Old Garage Birnin Kebbi	30 <sup>th</sup> -06-2024
3	Bello Garba,	53	Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs	Birnin Kebbi	20 <sup>th</sup> -06-2024
4	Bello Zaki	58	Deputy Director, Town Planning Department, KUDA	KUDA office Zoromawa Birnin Kebbi	28 <sup>th</sup> -06-2024
5	Eng. Sani Ahmmad Gwadangaji	54	Assistant Director Civil Engineering, Ministry of Works, Birnin Kebbi	Haliru Abdu	28 <sup>th</sup> -06-024
6	Garba Hamisu,	67	retired Permanent Secretary	Gesse Phase 1	21 <sup>st</sup> -06-2024
7	Mallam Sodangi,	57	School Teacher	Nasarawa Birnin Kebbi	15 <sup>th</sup> -04-2024
8	Mallan Sule Tsini	72	Commercial Bus Driver and Member of NARTO	New Garage, Birnin Kebbi	27 <sup>th</sup> -06-2024
9	TPL Abubakar A. Yalli,	58	Former Director Town Planning, Kebbi Urban Development Authority (KUDA)	Badariya Area, Birnin Kebbi	28 <sup>th</sup> -06-2024

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