

# Inter-State Migration and Housing Development: A Focus on Rivers State, Nigeria

**OHOCHUKU, Chinwennwo Phillips & ADIBE, Nkeiruka Okwakpam**

Department of Architecture,  
Faculty of Environment Sciences,  
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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## **Abstract**

*There has been increased attention given to interstate migration by the Nigerian Government since the country's return to democracy in 1999, there has been very little concern for interstate migration and the level of housing development. Concerns for interstate migration, both in governmental and academic institutions, have weighed heavily on international migration with a focus on issues such as brain drain/gain, remittances and diaspora organizations. The majority of information and concerns for interstate migration is anecdotal and research findings, where they exist, are few and out-dated. This study focused on interstate migration and the level of housing development in Rivers State, Nigeria. Evidence indicates that there have been various housing development programmes in the state to bridge the housing deficit. The study recommends that stakeholders deserve to understand the benefits of housing development that is being initiated by the government and the private investors and the need to empower strategic institutions and decentralized control in different government parastatals that are directly involved in urban housing development and government should ensure proper policy management to eliminate barriers to government and private sector participation in housing development.*

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**Keywords:** *Inter-State, Migration, Housing Development, Rivers State, Nigeria*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Rivers State, also known as Rivers, is a state in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria (Old Eastern Region. Formed in 1967, when it was split from the former Eastern Region. Rivers State borders include; Anambra and Imo on the north, Abia and Akwa Ibom on the east, and Bayelsa and Delta on the west. The state capital, Port Harcourt, is a Metropolis that is considered to be the commercial center of the Nigeria oil industry (Wekepadia, 2022). The economy of Rivers State is dominated by the state's booming petroleum industry. Although the rise of the oil industry has led to increased revenue for the state government, mismanagement and corruption have prevented the state from rapid development and meaningfully tackling poverty. The above makes the state the inhabitant wish of many Nigerian. This does not only affect the population of the state but has a positive and negative effect on the state. From the positive effect, inter-state migration increases the revenue fortunes of the state in form of tax as most migrants engage in business activities and facilities urban development while from the negative side, inter-state migration results in a population explosion, increases the level of crime, increases the cost of housing and deficit in residential houses.

The 1999 constitution as amended gives citizens the right to reside in any part of the country. The movement of people, merchandise, and ideas from one location to another is a common phenomenon in both developed and developing nations. Historically, the inter-state movement can be traced to Bible teaching when the children of Israel moved to Egypt in search of greener pasture. For the different generations of inter-state migrants, regional differences in education, and socioeconomic and political developments play important roles in how internal migration impacts access to education and increases life expectancy and living standards.

The growth of Port Harcourt and its region has been phenomenal since its inception. Growth has been experienced in terms of population and physical space. Two years after its founding the population was 5,000. Census figures for the city throughout its history are 7,185 in 1921; 15,201 in 1931 and 71,634 in 1953. The 1963 census gave the city's population as 179,563 and in 1973 it was 213,443 (Ogionwo, 1979). The 1991 census fixed the population of Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas at 645,883. The projection for 1996 by the National Population Commission is 832,471 for the two local governments and the interim figures for the 2006 national census are over one million. Spatially too, Port Harcourt city has grown to cover much of the Upper Bonny River Basin. Originally the city covered a 25 km area between the UTC junction and the New Layout Market. In the land use and vegetation map of Nigeria (1975/76), the built-up area of Port Harcourt covered 17.4km<sup>2</sup>. Twenty years later, a similar map showed the extent of the city as 89.4km. This is a five-fold increase. By the 1976 Local Government Reform, the Port Harcourt Local Government Area Council stretched from Choba and Rukpokwu in the north, Iriebe in the east, and the main western channel of the Bonny River in the west. This is an area of over 239.6 km.

Port Harcourt is still growing very fast and therefore the need, recently, for the establishment of the Greater Port Harcourt City (GPHC) by the Rivers State Government. Port Harcourt, the capital of the Rivers State, is the fastest-growing city in the Niger Delta. Part of the need to control this rapid expansion is the creation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA). The GPHCDA was established by "The Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority Law" No. 2 of 2009, with a mandate to facilitate the implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt Master Plan and develop the 'New City'. The Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan is a holistic plan for the development of the Greater Port Harcourt City which spans eight (8) Local Government Areas namely; Port Harcourt City, parts of Oyigbo, Okrika, Ogu/Bolo, Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, Etche, Eleme local government areas respectively, with a population of approximately 2 million people. The Master Plan is for 50 years, it will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it continues to meet with changing realities of an emerging city. The key anchors of the New City are the Port Harcourt International Airport, the Old City, and the Onne seaport. The Greater Port Harcourt Area which comprises the whole of Port Harcourt and the aforementioned local government areas has a total landmass of 19,000km (Ede, Owei, and Akarolo, 2008). Below is a map showing the position of Rivers State:



**Figure 1: Nigerian map showing the position of Rivers State**

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Inter-State Migration**

Inter-state migration is defined as a movement of people from one area of a country especially one local government area to another area of the same country for the purpose or the effect of establishing a new residence (IOM, 2011, 2011a) either temporarily or permanently, is a complex and multidimensional process. With more than 140 million people (NPC, 2012c) and a growth rate estimated at 2.5 percent in 2010, Nigeria has a high urban growth rate (UNPD 2010). This urban growth, estimated at 3.84 percent for the period 2005–2010 (UNPD, 2009), cannot be dissociated from migration, especially internal migration.

Internal migration and its impact on regional development in Macedonia were investigated by Temova (2017) to analyze the causes of imbalanced growth in the region and Macedonia and to identify the conditions for their future growth. Statistical data were used to determine the trend of internal migration and the causes. It was discovered that with the implementation of decentralization policy, less developed areas can be further developed according to their geographical climate and natural characteristic.

Internal migration and its impact on the growth of Port Harcourt city of Nigeria is an interesting and challenging sustainable development problem that seeks a solution. Internal migration has been an issue in the city of Port Harcourt, following the fact that it is the only well-developed and industrialized city in Rivers state. This has brought about the continuous movement of people to the city to seek better jobs, schools, and modern social amenities that are not available in their localities. This movement can enhance the growth of the city if the rate of migration is very low. But being the only developed and industrialized city, the rate might not be known. It is therefore important to determine the impact of this migration on the city and the way forward to resolving the issue of internal migration to reduce its effect in Port Harcourt.

The earlier analysis of population growth and how demand for housing has affected land use in the city of Port Harcourt has involved the development of a mathematical model that defines the extent of the population growth and its implication. It is important to further determine the effect of this growth due to internal migration in Port Harcourt city of Nigeria. Port Harcourt is an industrialized city in Rivers state compared to other urban cities in the state. This industrialization attracts people from the urban and rural areas to Port Harcourt to seek jobs, education, and medical care. The issue of internal migration comes to bear as people migrate to Port Harcourt for greener pastures. Migration has its impact on the population of the city, infrastructures, social facilities, the economy, and the environment. Ayotamuno and Ekaka-a (2017) investigated the extent how which the variation of population growth and demand for housing can affect land use in Port Harcourt and urban areas in Nigeria. Two main methods were utilized to answer the research questions. These methods are called Geographic Information systems (GIS), remote sensing, mathematical modeling, and numerical simulation. One of the key results of this important study is stated as follows: the development of built-up areas needs to be controlled so that all the vegetation is not used up because the city needs some vegetation to allow the city to breathe.

Similarly, the proposed mathematical model compliment the relationship between population growth, housing demand, and land use in the city of Port Harcourt in Nigeria. Port Harcourt city is growing faster in population due to migrants in search of urbanization and industrialization which is on the increase. When there is an increase in the rate of migration, the demand for land increases to meet the increasing demand for food production, housing, and modern infrastructures. Also, there is increasing demand for jobs and social amenities, thus overstretching available facilities. It is this impacting factor that has prompted this research work, but for this work, we are considering the impact of internal migration on the growth of Port Harcourt city and how sensitive the population is to the parameter values of the population that changes over time. In this study, we are expected to determine the impact of internal migration in Port Harcourt city respectively and to show the effect of the variation of some parameters that affect the growth of Port Harcourt city. It is against this background we have considered the following expected outcome.

### **Housing in Port Harcourt**

2006, National Population Census statistics show the distribution of the households by type, a total of 126,010 households were recorded in Port Harcourt. The data shows that houses on a separate stand or yard were 49,115, traditional/hut structures made of traditional materials were

371, flat in a block of flats 27,676, semidetached house 8074, room/let in house 36,584, informal/improvised dwelling 2078 and others 2112. Also distribution by tenure in Port Harcourt there was a total of 126,010 households, owner-occupiers were 25,882, owned but not yet paid 1107, rented 90,412, occupied rent-free 7229, squatting 957 and others are 423. The 2006 Census data shows that most of the houses are privately owned (Owei, et al., 2008).

Port Harcourt's housing is mostly privately owned or rented and many families in Port Harcourt are inadequately housed because of low incomes or other circumstances such as high cost of land, lack of security of tenure, and high cost of rents, poor accessibility, and inadequate housing services. All of these prevent many families from competing successfully in the private housing market. For these families, the city or government has the obligation of improving their living conditions by providing adequate low and moderate-income housing or by administering state public programmes which create opportunities for improved housing (Ogionwo, 1979). Almost all public sector efforts to provide housing for the masses of low-income people in the city have either been hijacked by the rich or so poorly implemented as to have any significant impact (Oruwari, 1991).

A social survey of Port Harcourt by Ogionwo, (1979) undertaken in connection with the preparation of the Greater Port Harcourt Master Plan (1975), found that only 10% of Port Harcourt households owned the housing units in which they lived, while almost 90% were renters. It was also found that Port Harcourt possessed a mixture of residential types. In most neighborhoods, there were one, two, or three-family bungalows alongside two and three-story buildings, and traditional compound houses were found to be of the U-shaped type, incorporating a central courtyard, with the number of single rooms ranging from 6-to 24. Of the surveyed housing stock, 34.2% were considered standard (those with no defects, or only slight defects which would normally be corrected during regular maintenance); 37.8%, deteriorating (i.e. those that need more repair than would be provided in the course of regular maintenance); and 20.0%, deficient (those which do not provide safe and adequate shelter). A remarkable feature of the housing situation in Port Harcourt is the slow pace of replacement/refurbishment of the obsolescent stock.

Undeniably, some gentrification or cellular renewal is occurring in the Main Town and in Diobu; but certainly not at a pace to make any significant impression on the townscape or provide sufficient rental units of various kinds in the face of massive demand. The bulk of new housing construction is occurring on the city's periphery by (a) speculative developers providing largely rental flats and (b) the rich, building for owner-occupation. From all indications, it will be deduced that the various housing projects being undertaken by some of these institutions, whether through a partnership or otherwise were targeted at the higher income earners, who mostly have homes and are capable of acquiring more.

A middle or low-income earner might not see reasons for him/her to pay as much as 40 million Naira (about 235, 300 USA dollars) or 35 million Naira (about 205,900 USA dollars), at present-day exchange rates, for a four or three-bedroom flat, whether detached or semi-detached. Solving housing problems in Port Harcourt will not be feasible if the middle and low-income earners are not taken care of in the scheme of things. This is because they constitute the majority of residents that make a housing demand. The challenges of sourcing for funds or mortgage, land acquisition, and other bottle-necks in terms of getting the necessary papers that confer the right of ownership

or otherwise known as the Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) have posed many problems to middle low-income earners in the quest of owning a house.

### **Housing Development in Rivers State**

Since the creation of Rivers State in 1967 by General Yakubu Gowon's regime, several efforts have been made to provide decent and affordable housing for the teeming population of the city of Port-Harcourt (Nekabari & Aguiyi, 2012). The most significant of these efforts were made during the second Republic. HRM, King Dr. Frank Eke, (2004), who was the Deputy Governor of Rivers State at the time, opined that the State government took bold steps to construct a good number of social housing units for the low-income group, as a way of curbing the Urban, shelter deficit of the state.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The study used map analysis, interviews of key informants including government officials and community leaders; official documentation, and other research outputs to obtain data. The paper examined interstate migration and housing development in Rivers State. Another approach adopted for the study consisted of a review of previous housing deliveries and housing development programs in the state. Literature search, collection of data from some government agencies, and in-depth interviews with key informants in those agencies including the National Population Commission, Rivers State Ministry of Urban Development and Physical Planning, and Rivers State Geographic Information System (RIVGIS). The directors of the above government agency were those engaged in discussion and their responses were recorded. They stated the challenges and the progress they have made in their various agencies concerning building plan approval. Also, they willingly gave the necessary data which has been analysed and used for this research.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION



Figure 2: Picture showing Housing Development in Rainbow Town in Port Harcourt  
Source: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), 2022



**Figure 3: Picture showing construction work of housing development in Rainbow Town**

Source: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), 2022

Rainbow Town is a mixed-use development located in Trans Amadi, the industrial and commercial core of Port Harcourt. Conceived through a joint venture between the Rivers State Government and First Bank of Nigeria, the project will offer a mix of residential units including duplexes, terrace houses, apartments, and penthouses as well as many other commercials, recreational, medical, and social facilities. Rainbow World offerings include elegant duplexes, terrace houses, exquisite apartments, and penthouses among a myriad of recreational, medical, social, and business-support facilities. The range of housing options is the point block tower, the city block tower, terrace house, and detached house which are all built to world-class standard and luxuriously finished Ucheya added. Rainbow World is Nigeria's flagship urban renewal scheme that re-images and transforms a blighted neighborhood in metropolitan Port Harcourt, Rivers State, into a regenerated brand of a premium mixed-use community of residential, commercial, healthcare, and educational and recreational facilities set in a contemporary urban environment.





Figure 4: Rivers State Housing Development  
Source: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), 2022



Figure 5: picture showing Rivers State housing development in Agrey Road, Port Harcourt

According to Chief Prince Noble Amadi (2007), Rivers State Government under Sir Dr. Peter Odili had under another initiative completed 1,000 housing units in Port Harcourt which were ready to be sold to members of the public. He added also that, "the administration undertook the Urban Renewal programme and projects which led to the provision of ultra-modern housing units along Aggrey Road, Creek Road, Bende Street in Port Harcourt, the construction of 3 and 4 bedroom flats at Marine Base for senior civil servants and the acquisition of 253 houses from the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing at Eleme. Other housing projects of the government, he asserted are the completion of the Igbo-Etche, Housing Estate, the New Town Project at Iriebe, and the Rainbow Town Residential layout for low and medium densities (Nekabari & Aguiyi, 2012). There is also the Abuloma Housing Estate project. Some of these projects are still under construction. As noted by SERAC (op. cit), the attempt by the government to expand the people's access to adequate housing has been overshadowed by the government's horrendous record of violating the right to adequate housing through its practice of forced eviction, without adequate notice, consultations or provisions for legal or administrative remedies, which has to a great extent affected and aggravated the housing problems of the Urban Poor in the metropolis.

Sir Dr. Peter Odili, has been acknowledged for continuing with this scheme in the state through a housing program designed to provide a sustainable solution to the problem of acute shortage of accommodation in the state, which had in the past, resulted in arbitrary rent increases and forced eviction of tenants by desperate landlords and the development of slums or squatter settlements as cheap alternatives. The Social and Economic Rights Action Center (SERAC, 2007), in its report on the housing situation in Port Harcourt, argued that efforts by successive governments in the state to increase the Housing stock have been abysmally low, until the Dr. Peter Odili led administration in 1999, constructed about 6,000 houses across the state, that is across the 23 local government of the state (Nekabari & Aguiyi, 2012). This effort the center considered is comparatively laudable and spectacular in housing policy initiatives. The Rivers State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (RIVSEED, 2004), a draft document, implied that these 6,000 housing units were to be distributed thus 4,000 units for the local government outside the state capital and 2,000 for the Port Harcourt metropolis.



Figure 6: Picture Showing Greater Port City Master Plan  
Source: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), 2022

### **Discussion**

Nigerian Government through the National Housing Policy (NHP) of 1992 was formulated to ensure that all Nigerians own or have access to decent, safe and sanitary housing in a healthy environment with infrastructural services at affordable cost, with secure tenure (NHP, 1992). This positions the housing sector as one of the prime drivers of socio-economic development, including job creation and employment, as well as accelerated national transformation. The building of a house involves several stages such as acquiring land, registration of the land (certificate of occupancy), architectural and engineering design of the house and obtaining a Building Permit. Apart from policies of the federal government on housing development, the Rivers State government over the years has formulated various housing development programmes to bridge the housing deficit in the state and ensure proper accommodation of inhabitants.

Urban development is driven by population growth; therefore, Jcak and Cole (2016) noted that we cannot be talking about achieving sustainable housing development without understanding the mechanism of the population growth in urban areas. An increase in industrial and economic activities are major factors that have spurred an upshot in the number of people migrating to urban areas. Such a high level of migration fuels high demand for basic amenities, thus, natural, social, human, financial, and manufactured capitals are being used up. It is a fact that intensive housing development is a sustainable practice that is often seen as a major role of government and joint private investors. Port Harcourt in Rivers State, Nigeria is amongst other emerging economic cities that are expressing a massive inflow of people beyond the state borders.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The level of Industrialization in Rivers State spurred triggered mass interstate migration, which resulted to overpopulation in Port Harcourt and other parts of the State. The aftermath of such unprecedented population growth is urban decay, which poses overwhelming challenges in housing and housing development. Despite, several strategies that have been employed to ensure sustainable housing development; these strategies have been unsuccessful due to their inability to identify and address the root causes. The analysis of the research clearly shows that the government approaches of managing housing development projects are have not yield the needed requirement to as the housing deficit continue to increase as a result of the interstate migration into Rivers State. From the above, the study recommends that:

- i. Stakeholders deserve to understand the benefits of housing development that is being initiated on by the government and the private investors and aware of the benefits of such housing programmes and the government should make environmental policies that encourage private sector participation in the housing development.
- ii. there is need to empower strategic institutions and decentralized control in different government parastatals that are directly involved in urban housing development and government should ensure proper policy management to eliminate barriers to government and private sector participation in housing development.
- iii. It is also, very crucial to emphasis the adherence to best practices by different urban development practitioners in order to build a level of interconnectivity required in developing a sustainable urban area.

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