
Interrogating Access to Public Space for Peace, Security and Development of African Cities

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Abstract: Literature suggests links between urbanisation patterns that favour public spaces, development, peace and security. Even though urbanisation statistics in many cities of Africa are the fastest globally, the patterns exhibited highlight the inability of such cities to cope with the challenges of rapid urbanization. Consequently, attendant problems of environmental degradation, inequalities, increasing restiveness and escalating spate of internally displaced persons (IDPs) invasion, occasioned by violent clashes in surrounding rural areas challenge these cities. These effects are most visible in the public spaces of many cities of Africa. As such there is the need for all-inclusive and safe public spaces for all citizens most especially the internally displaced. Inclusive, accessible and safe public spaces contribute diverse benefits to cities. So much so, that the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number eleven (11) of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable targets mainly public spaces. However, the idea of a homogenous, universally accessible, all-inclusive space has been argued to be utopian. This study, therefore, interrogates the relationship between access to public space, development, peace and security. Specific objectives include; an analysis of the trend in public space accessibility in Makurdi for 32 years, a comparative analysis of accessibility in public spaces between years where there were increased presence of IDPs and an examination of how IDPs engage with public space. Public spaces used for recreation were documented and observed. Respondents resident in Makurdi and using parks within the study period were disaggregated into 2 age cohorts (<60 and > 60 years) and administered with questionnaires. Focus group discussions and interviews with IDPs were carried out. Student's t test and thematic analysis were used to make inferences. Findings indicate that places used for recreation by residents of Makurdi are more hybrid spaces like street corners and restaurants rather than traditional parks and gardens. Over the study period accessibility of public spaces has increased but there was no significant variation in accessibility between years where there were increased presences of IDPs in Makurdi. Engagement of IDPs with public space is poor on all indicators. The study recommended provision of places for recreation closer to the IDP camps as well as introduction of activates for all age categories and gender.

Keywords: Urbanisation, Public Spaces, Internally Displaced Persons, Inclusion

1. Introduction

The unregulated settlement of displaced persons and refugees in many cities has become an emerging concern [1]. Especially as violent conflicts have grown increasingly complicated and IDPs / refugee circumstances have become ever more prolonged. Literature shows an average period of 17 years before return to country of origin [2]. This means that IDPs /refugees require solutions in the intermediate term which allow them to integrate faster into their host communities. Against this background, a genre of urban

space called public space specifically parks, squares, gardens and streets has been touted to play a key role in social integration, community cohesion, sense of belonging and increase of people's perception of their rights to the city [3].

Public spaces have been hailed for the social, economic and cultural advantages they bring to cities, significantly, the potential to integrate marginalized and vulnerable segments of society [4-9]. On the contrary, the ultimate of an equal, universally accessible, all inclusive space has been argued to be utopian [10, 11]. Generally, scholars agree on declining 'access', 'publicness' and 'inclusivity' in public spaces [12-

17]. This decline is linked in literature to factors being experienced by African cities such as; rapid urban growth, privatisation, commodification, social transformation, rapid administrative and technological transformation as well as changes in mobility [18-20, 14].

Interestingly, the rising security challenges ensuing from increased global terrorism, as well as increased social and political movements/protests from public spaces also contribute to the decline of public space use [21, 22]. These Security challenges characterise many African cities which are perpetually in a state of crisis, conflicts, political instability, religious, social, racial and ethnic strife as well as highly volatile hot spots [23, 24]. Post-colonial Africa has witnessed increased conflict from over 85 successful coups d'état, 85 to 95 ethnic conflicts since 1945, out of which over 45 were civil wars [23]. West Africa has experienced 44 successful military-led coups, 43 failed coups, at least 82 coup plots, 7 civil wars, and many other forms of political and ethnic conflicts [25]. In Nigeria, similar security challenges have escalated since religious terrorism occasioned by the emergence of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria began [26-28].

1.1. The Relationship Between Environment, Development and Peace

Literature traces direct links between peace and security, and the creation of sound, competitive and equitable economic development as well as a necessary prerequisite to the realisation of basic human rights [29]. Consequently, Africa is a continent that is endowed with immense resources, great cultural, ecological and economic diversity, yet, lack of peace and security ensures that she remains underdeveloped and unable to compete on the same level with other less endowed continents [30]. As such, African cities constantly have the lowest scores on many indicators of development.

In recognition of the relationship between development, peace and security, a wide range of efforts by scholars and practitioners have directed research focus at peace building, peace-making and peace keeping. Resulting in a landmark study which established the link between the environment, sustainable development and peace called environmental peace building [31]. Environmental peace building (EPB) sees the natural environment as a meeting point with potential for cooperation among conflicting parties. It integrates natural resource management in conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery to build resilience in communities affected by conflict [32]. EPB has been used in many countries which are volatile to achieve peace and security. For instance, in Southern Africa, trans-boundary peace parks between Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana have been used. Environmental peace building has been criticised as being a pretext for environmental resource exploitation as well as romanticising environmental cooperation, thereby risking technical solution that hide wider political conflicts and expose socio-economic inequalities [33].

The novelty of the field of environmental peace building implies the need for a more cohesive research framework, and the buildup of a knowledge base that can better understand the linkages and context of natural resources and peace building in human settlements. Even though environmental peace building efforts worldwide have been occurring at the intra state and regional level, this study argues that the principles of environmental peace building can be applied at the interstate level using common environments within cities hit by conflict such as public spaces like parks which have the potential to accommodate the diverse multiplicity of city dwellers for an opportunity to build peace.

Conservatively, parks are so called because of their primary function as areas for recreation [34]. This paper however relies on a wider diversity and typology of places used for recreation common to African cities, described by [35] as hybrid spaces, they include; street joints, bars, restaurants, empty plots, under trees, on street corners, sports fields and community spaces in which people gather for recreation.. These spaces meet the need for social integration in cities. They do not strictly conform to scholarly description of parks as their amorphous spatial structure makes classification difficult. What is mutual among them is they accommodate agglomeration of people for the purpose of recreation. Recreation is just about anything done for fun outside of work; it is described in passive and active terms. Active recreation in terms of sporting activity and passive recreation which involves; board games, hanging out with friends, observation of people and nature.

The presence of public spaces in African cities though potentially a panacea for the mitigation of extant dangerous scenarios does not presuppose that they are accessible and being used accordingly by these vulnerable groups. Therefore, the nexus between the variables of public space, peace, security and development is hazy in literature. This is because there is a dearth in valuable base data on how accessible, inclusive and safe these spaces are, most especially for people who have been displaced by crisis.

1.2. Aim and Objectives of the Study

Therefore, there is a need for evaluative studies measuring the trend in access and inclusiveness of public spaces in African cities most especially for displaced persons. On this basis, the study interrogates IDP engagement with public space, it also evaluates the change in accessibility of public spaces over time in Makurdi, Benue State, specifically targeting the period of IDP inflow into Makurdi following farmer/herdsmen clashes in surrounding rural areas and hence the linkages between public space access, peace and security. Pertinent questions the study aims to answer include; how has access to public space been impacted by the emergence of IDPs in Makurdi's space? How do IDPs engage with public spaces? What activities do IDPs engage in for recreation? Objectives designed to meet the aims of the study include; an examination of the different dimensions of access to public spaces for a period of 32 years, a comparative analysis of accessibility between periods of no IDPs and periods when

there were IDPs in the town, an examination of IDP engagement with public space in Makurdi as well as a discussion of implications for planning and policy.

1.3. Study Area

The study area is Makurdi, the Capital of Benue State, Nigeria. It is a multicultural city with a high presence of internally displaced persons and immigrants and so provides a research context for critiquing social interaction, inclusion and integration. The town is located between latitudes 7°41' and 7°47' North and longitudes 8°29' and 8°36' East within Makurdi Local Government Area [LGA] which covers an area of 804.2 square kilometres. Figure 1 shows the location of Benue State within the context of Nigeria while Figure 2 shows the location of Makurdi within the context of Benue State. Makurdi LGA had a population of 300,377 [36] in 2006, which was projected to 426,535.64 in 2020. The town has a variety of landuses; including, residential, commercial and public spaces such as markets, transport terminuses, parks, streets, squares and gardens.

Makurdi has experienced different forms of violent conflict from as early as the 1960s, where violent conflicts were linked to political power contestation [28, 37]. Since then, the town and its environs has experienced series of violent conflicts for instance, 12 June 2001 witnessed a violent attack which left over 74 people killed with an inestimable value of properties destroyed [38]. Recently as from 2015, there has been an upsurge in Hausa-Fulani

Muslim herdsmen attacks against indigenous Christian communities in Benue State. The attacks have left many dead and large areas of Benue farmland have been abandoned. Beside the loss to life and property, the attacks have displaced many people from their ancestral homes in the rural areas into the city of Makurdi.

Cities are the primary destination for the majority of the world's migrants, refugees, and otherwise displaced populations [39]. The case is not different for Makurdi. For instance, in 2015, approximately 458 deaths and attacks on over 350 communities surrounding Makurdi were recorded with their inhabitants now living in refugee camps in Makurdi. The Local Government Areas most badly affected was Guma, Gwer-West, Logo and Makurdi. In Makurdi LGA alone, there were ten different camps for internally displaced persons in 2016. Available records for the years 2014-2016 show that there were 542 family households, with a population of 4804 persons sharing 12 blocks of classrooms, meant to accommodate at most 50 pupils per class [40].

In response to the increasing and continuous IDP problem, many governments often situate camps on the outskirts of cities or in rural areas. These camps exist for accountability of number of IDPs/refugees for attracting international attention and assistance [2]. In such camps, the refugees are fed, sheltered and provided with primary education. However, the oblivion, limbo or sense of idleness that pervades such atmosphere ensures that the capacity for self-sufficiency is virtually non-existent.

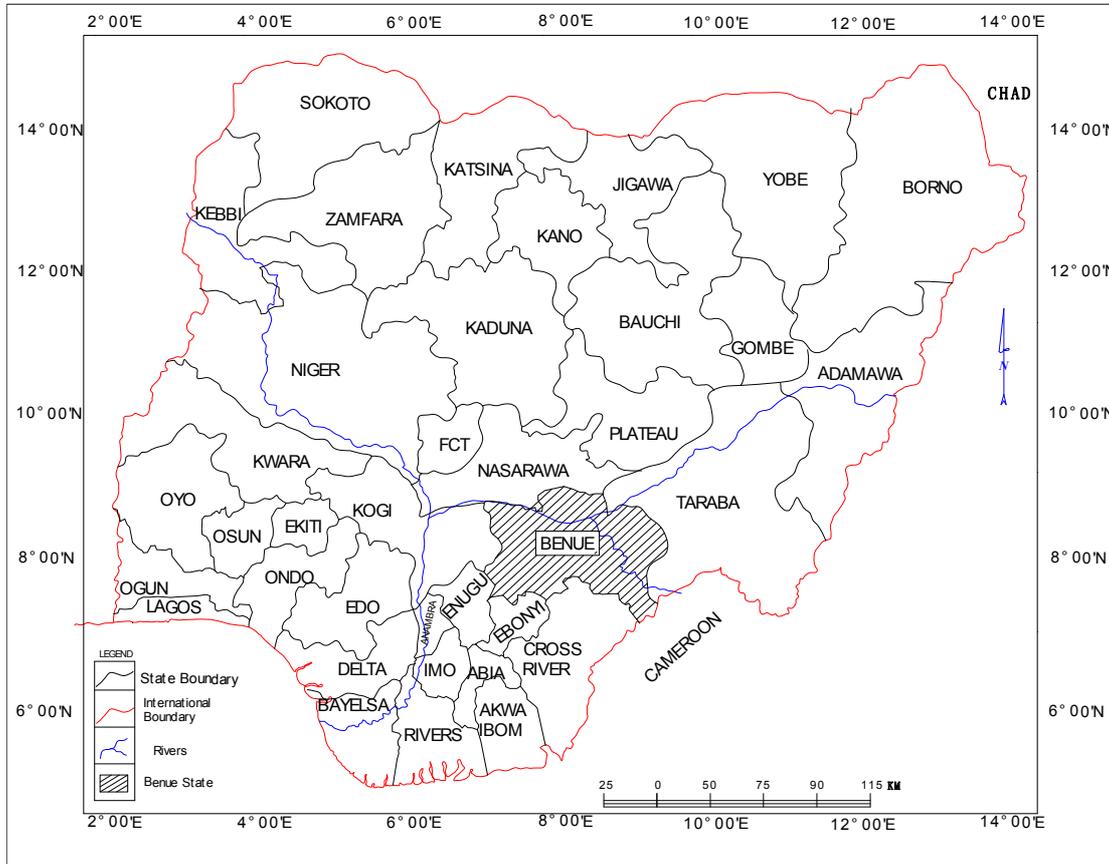


Figure 1. Benue State within Nigeria.

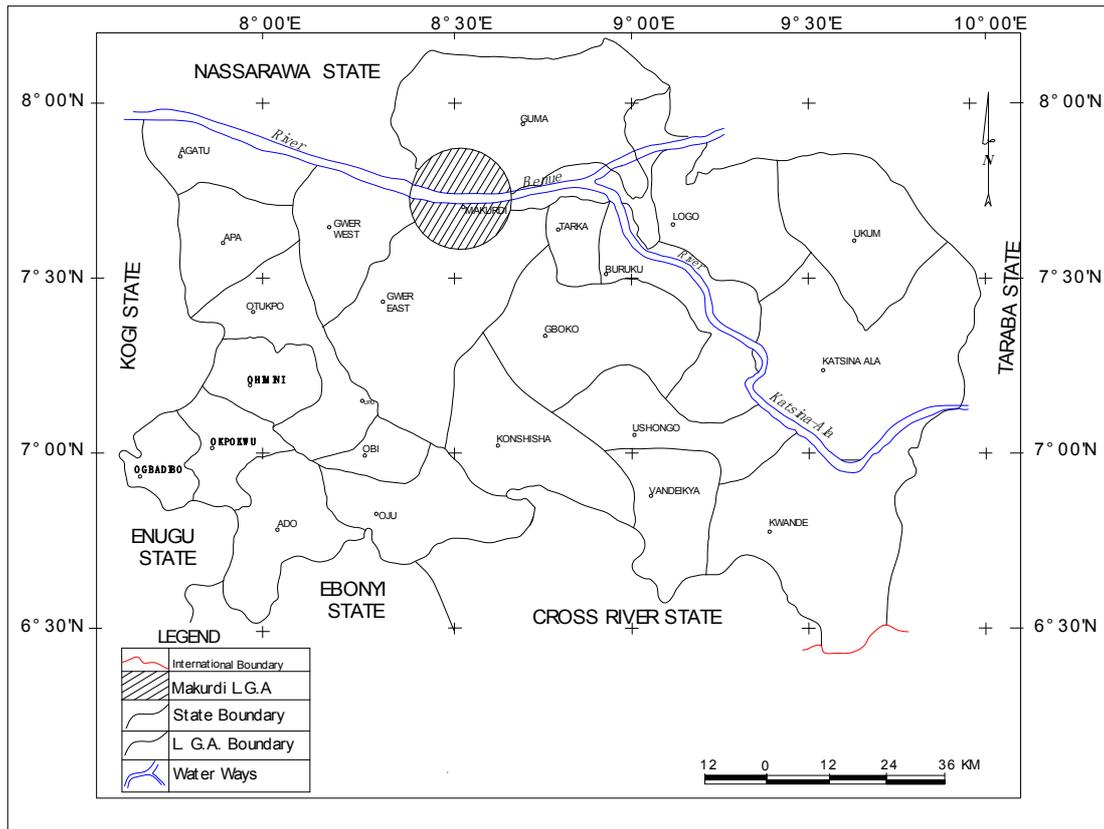


Figure 2. Map of Benue State Showing Makurdi Local Government Area (LGA). Source: Ministry of Lands and Survey, Makurdi, 2018.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualisation of Public Spaces

Public spaces as the name implies are sites of open communication and deliberation, where people of all religious, ethnic, social classes and even the marginalised and underrepresented groups can voice their opinions, make themselves visible [41-45, 2]. Legally they have been defined as “all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive” [46]. Therefore these types of spaces are a key element of individual and social well-being, the places of a community’s collective life, displaying expressions of the diversity, natural and cultural richness and a foundation of civic identity.

Extant literature demonstrates the uniqueness of public space as viewed through the lenses of race [47-49], age [50-52], gender [53-56], and class [42, 11, 57]. Not much exists on its view from the perspective of the homeless, displaced and refugees most especially in cities of the global south hence, the section following discusses the various dimensions of access.

2.2. Dimensions of Accessibility, Inclusion, Publicness and Evaluation of Public Spaces

Access and inclusion in public space demonstrates the essence of such spaces and is one of the effective factors and a deterrent to increased utilisation and the achievement of

social interaction [58]. Within this frame, urban public space has been argued to be crucial in offering a space for survival and integration into the host community [59-61]. Access to, and utilisation of, public spaces and their physical and functional structures are among issues that are negatively affected by rapid urban growth. Especially in evolving economies, where conflict and violence have reduced public spaces to be far behind reaching the contemporary standards of better endowed cities [62].

Accessibility to all forms of public space can be measured and used as an indication of the degree of public space efficiency. In recent times, evaluation of accessibility of public space is an indication of the development level of cities. From literature, evaluation of accessibility in public space involves the use of indicators such as spatial distribution, temporal supply, physical access and equitable use. Space that is reachable by different modes of transport like pedestrian, bicycles, mass transit as well as the presence of a mass transit bus stop within the immediate surroundings of the public space and located in such a way as is close to the users is effectively spatially distributed. Spatial distribution as an indicator of accessibility is evaluated in this study using entrance to the space by different modes of transport as well as physical distance between the camp and parks.

Similarly, access is defined in the literature in both physical and psychological terms. According to [63], the accessibility of a public space can be judged by its connections to its surroundings, both visual and physical. Accessible public

space is open to everyone regardless of residence, physical abilities or financial status [64]. Physical barriers to access in parks include gates, fences and guards while, psychological barriers include fees, subtle barriers like uncomfortable seats and rough-faced furniture to keep out wanderers and homeless people. Visual barriers such as a lack of directional signs are considered as psychological and physical barriers. Hence physical access is evaluated in this study using the presence of fences and gate fees. Equity in public space connotes space that accommodates any and every human being to perform any activity within the confines of society's rules such that one person's use should not infringe on another's. Equitably accessible space is characterised by people of all ages, gender and socioeconomic status carrying out a variety of activities [65]. Equity in this study is measured by the presence of women, children, beggars and mentally challenged people in parks as well as using the provision of facilities for the disabled like ramps and rails. A total of nine variables are used to evaluate access in this study. They include access to the space by different modes of transport, physical distance between the camp and parks; Presence of physical barriers like fences around parks, payment upon entry into parks as a financial barrier, presence of women, children, beggars and mentally challenged people in parks as well as using the provision of facilities for the disabled like ramps and rails.

2.3. Internally Displaced People and Inclusion in Public Space

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are conceptualised as persons displaced from their home by crises but who have not crossed an international border to find safety. Unlike refugees they are on the run in their country. In 2019, an estimated 45.7 million globally people were internally displaced due to armed conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations [66]. The discourse of inclusion of IDPs into host communities is rife with a narrative of exclusion. Most urban authorities respond to IDPs by eviction, displacement, formalisation and regularization [1, 67]. Hence, IDPs constantly face social, economic and ethnic discrimination often times resulting in tensions between them and host communities.

The following sections describe experiential variables surrounding internally displaced persons and how IDPs engage public space, which will be used to evaluate engagement of IDPs with public space in this study;

2.4. Places of Respite

As part of the urban community, refugees and internally displaced are affected by and engaged in the process of urbanisation [68]. The daily life of the displaced is usually a daily struggle for survival within a state of limbo. In addition, displaced persons have to contend with the trauma of displacement, loss of social capital, non-possession of sufficient documentation, limited support networks, displacement in urban areas, restrictions on rights to work

and enter markets, and, in many contexts, antagonism by settled residents [69-71].

Further, livelihood opportunities and greater security are some of the most important factors affecting displaced persons [70]. Hence, not much of the time of the refugee is spent in play or recreation [72]. Parks and places of recreation and entertainment can provide a space of respite for IDPs as a mitigative solution. Studies have discovered that displaced persons with children often seek out places for play and recreation needs of the children [73]. The effects of prolonged periods of idleness and helplessness can be countered by the use of parks and places of recreation hence this is a variable used in this study.

2.5. Opportunities for Socialisation and Connection

IDPs experience a sense of disconnection from social ties because of the conflicts that cut them off from their original home. This often results in social isolation in camps and shelters. Urban public spaces such as parks, plazas, markets, waterfronts, and natural areas of our cities, contain people from different cultural groups who come together in a supportive context of mutual enjoyment thereby fostering common fellowship in the open which nurtures the growth of public life. This study evaluates social contacts achieved in public spaces as a variable in measuring the engagement of refugees with public space.

2.6. Uncertainty, Aggression and the Anxieties over the Use of Public Spaces

Many authorities describe refugees/displaced persons in illegitimate terms [74]. This creates a pervasive perception of IDPs as criminally minded and dangerous which breeds prejudices and apprehensions about the rights of IDPs. In some extreme cases such perceptions have led to xenophobic attacks on IDPs [73]. In addition, women who are IDPs are always at risk as they report gender-based violence, harassment, and intimidation. This is most especially experienced in public spaces [75] and retards the IDPs ability to integrate into host communities. Integration implies the ability of the IDP to participate with relative freedom in the economic and communal life of the host region [2]. This study interrogates IDPs experiences of insecurity while in public space.

2.7. Opportunities for Improved Livelihoods

Public spaces, where people of different ethnicity, religion, gender, and class meet are both a projection surface of society. They are also an arena of action for a wide range of development needs one of which is economic activities [76]. Cities represent opportunities for self-reliance and for some, durable solutions to displacement [68]. The importance of urban public space to the income generation activities of the poor is highlighted in literature; it is the prevailing source of livelihood for majority of urban dwellers in African countries [77, 78]. Accordingly, public space can and should be considered a common property resource from which the

urban poor generate a livelihood. Most refugees fit this profile and also should use public space to improve their livelihoods. The variable of how refugees provide an income from public space is also used to evaluate how refugees engage cities.

3. Methodology

This study is a nexus of two disciplines viz urban planning and social science, hence the methodology used criss-crosses both disciplines. It relies on a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection using observations, survey questionnaires and interviews as well as focused group discussions.

Preliminary survey of the residents of Makurdi highlighted areas used for recreation in Agan, Mbalagh, North bank I and II wards in Makurdi with large IDP populations. A handheld Magellan Spor Trak GPS was used to capture coordinates of the recreation areas. This information was then used to produce a single map showing the location and spatial dispersion of all the existing places for recreation in the study area. This is with the aim of showing proximity to the camps. The second stage involved observation and measurements of the features of recreation spaces identified to document the size of the spaces, the character of the spaces, activities therein and demographics of users. The third stage involved focused group discussions carried out at the camps leading to the development of the study variables and the final stage is the use of statistical tools in analysis of the findings leading to inferences.

The study population comprises the residents of Makurdi as well as residents of Abagena Internally Displaced person's camp in Makurdi Local Government Area. A total sample of spaces used for active and passive recreation was used. The Taro Yamane formula was applied to the population figure determined earlier to arrive at a sample figure of 400 respondents. According to the last population census, 15% of the total population was made up of older adults of the age range 60 years and above and so 15% of 400 this was added to the sample number to arrive at 460 respondents.

In Nigeria, neighbourhood parks are second-order recreation areas originally designed to serve people living within 0.4 to 0.8-kilometre radius of the park [79]. This study adopts the upper limit of 0.8km for convenience and uniformity. Consequently, 2km² area around parks was

determined as park neighbourhood threshold. These neighbourhood surrounding parks were then used as spatial units for data collection especially for respondents aged above 60 years old. This radius was used rather than using the neighbourhood area boundaries. This is because of the lack of well-defined boundaries between neighbourhoods common to most Nigerian and African cities [80].

The study seeks to obtain historical data which is spread over a thirty two year period; however there is a notorious lack of archival data common to African cities so this study surmounts this gap by using respondents recall ability. It relies mainly on self-reported recollections of public space gathered over time using the instruments of surveys and interviews consequently respondents within the age bracket of 60 years and above which age bracket should have been old enough to recall activities of 32 years ago was used. This age cohort was selectively chosen within neighbourhoods surrounding the parks using the snowball approach. Sampling of the remaining 400 respondents within public spaces was randomly done. Park neighbourhoods and recreation spaces were visited for seven consecutive days within which every 5th park user and 5th household was administered with questionnaires. Parks were visited during business hours within the morning, afternoon and evening period stipulated by time slots of 8 am-12noon, 12 pm -4 pm and 4pm-9 pm.

A combination of descriptive and inferential statistics was used. The analysis consisted of an iterative process comprising three different phases. Data exploring the experience of IDPs highlighting good, bad or neutral practices was captured. Using a process of thematic analysis described by [81], recurring patterns, or themes, which described the nature of the experience more specifically, were identified. Among the themes identified was the relationship between public space access and recreation, as discussed in this paper.

T-test analysis of variance was used as inferential statistical tools to make inferences that answer the research questions guiding this study, while descriptive statistics in the form of percentages, tables and graphs were also used.

4. Findings

Findings of this study are presented in five sections reflecting demographic information and the major objectives this study.

Table 1. Summary of Respondents Demographic Information.

Variable		Frequency	%	Parks			
				<60	%	>60	%
Gender	Male	259	56.9	218	55	42	70
	Female	201	43.1	178	45	18	30
	Total	460	100	396	100	60	100
Age	20-30	78	18.1				
	31-40	110	25.5				
	41-50	157	36.4				
	51-60	86	20				
	61-70					32	53
	71 above					28	47
	Total	431	100	431	100	60	100

Variable		Frequency	%	Parks			
				<60	%	>60	%
Marital status	Single	162	35.2	135	35.6	0	0
	Married	241	52.3	174	45.9	45	75
	Divorced/Separated	43	9.3	25	6.6	8	13.3
	Widow/Widower	14	3	7	2	7	11.7
	Total	460	100	341	100	60	10

Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2020

Table 2. Location and Area of Public spaces in Makurdi.

S/No	Park Name	Neighbourhood/character	Freq.	%	Coordinates (Easting and Northing)	Area (m ²)	Activities
1	Villa mart	North bank	44	11	451092, 856555	2,225.9	Bar, restaurant, car park
2	Suya Spot ct 5 Junction	North bank	32	8.0	450992, 856619	2170.5	Suyastand, mechanicshop, provisionshop, shoe maker
3	City bay	Low-level	52	13	449230, 854037	19707.6	Event center, bar, children halls, play grounds
4	MJ resort	International market	32	8.0	450511, 850874	3025.5	Swimming pool, bar, restaurant, event center
5	BIPC Hotel	North bank	28	4.0	451025, 856527	4,759.4	Hotel accommodation, events hall, swimming pool, restuarant, bar
6	SRS Junction Joint Bar	North bank	20	5.0	451261, 857631	33,372	Fuel filling station, motorparks, shops
7	Photo Studio		16	4.0			3
8	Golf Course	North bank	20	5.0	451692, 855913	243,136.5	Golf course
9	Okiki Hotel	North bank	4	1.0	451818, 860547	11,996	Lodging, restaurant, bar, swimming pool, event hall
10	Lafia Garage park	North bank	8	2.0	451443, 858704	16,572	Mechanic workshops, petty trading, motor park
11	Virtual Lodge	Northbank	8	2.0	454926, 858526	5,106	Bar, restaurant, swimming pool, event centre
12	Ejah Suite	Fiidi	16	4.0	453729, 853723	1,788	Bar, restaurant
13	White House Hotel	Northbank	4	1.0	451780, 860181	7,380	Lodging, bar
14	Bush Bar	Naka Road	12	3.0	444992, 852297 445032, 852341	1,216.5	Bar, restaurant, suya spot
15	Ruth-May Lodge	North bank	8	2.0	450736, 856724	561	Lodging, bar
16	Exodus Cinema	Wurukum	4	2.0	450188, 853838	8,434	Cinema
17	Aper Aku Stadium	Wadata	12	3.0	447375, 854688	111,985.3	Sporting activities
18	District 4	Old GRA	12	3.0	448567, 854756	795.5	Club house, bar
19	IBB Square	High level	12	3.0	447868, 852979	130,275.081	Public gatherings
20	Church		28	7.0			
21	Tito gate	Clerks Ward	12	3.0	448889, 854073	1,605.8	Restaurant
22	Heavy Duty Park	North bank	12	3.0	451758, 860002	873	Shops, motor park
23	Total		342				

Source: Ministry of Lands and Survey, 2020

4.1. Demographic Information

Demographic information was captured both for Makurdi and at the IDP camps. This is important because variables like age, gender and marital status have been shown to be important to access in public space. Therefore, the emerging information on respondents’ demographic information will situate data collected in a frame for validity check. Data, as presented in Table 1. Indicates that, there were generally more males seen in parks than females (57% / 43%). Respondents within the age cohort aged 60 and above, reporting the situation in the past also recall that the males still were more than the women in parks (60% / 40%).

Thus from 1976 to 2020 there has been no change in the ratio of male to female in the use of public spaces as consistently more males than females use public parks in Makurdi. Although the literature is not consistent on which of

the gender most frequently uses public space, research by [5] proposed the male-female ratio as an indicator of the public usability of New York’s privately owned public plazas. The findings of this study when viewed from the perspective of the study by Whyte, 1980 indicate that the public usability of parks in Makurdi is low.

The average age for park respondents was 41-50 years (36.4%) while for the older age cohort was 61-70%(40%). Findings also show consistently that mainly older respondents use public spaces within the study period. In any population census the youths dominate for instance the last census showed that youths make up 65% of the population of Nigeria. If this large population is not using parks then it is indicative of low patronage. This finding could be explained by the fact that older individuals are more independent economically and so can enjoy activities in parks. The unemployment situation is skewed negatively towards the youth hence their lack of finances to afford parks use. It also

means that there is a need to provide in public spaces activities that will serve as pull factors for all age groups. The respondents were married (52%) for current park users and older age cohorts (77%). The findings indicate that mainly married people more than singles have used public space over time. A vital percentage is the singles; this class is inclusive of the divorced and widowed. In parks, 47.8% of respondents currently use parks while only 22.4% are found among the older age cohorts. Even when the categories are combined, more married people use parks than singles both now and in the past indicating no variation over time in how parks are being used. Literature suggests that the importance of people’s needs in public space differs according to variables such as age, gender and marital status. Findings indicate no variation in how these groups use public spaces over time in the study area within the study period.

4.2. Classification of Public Spaces Used for Recreation by IDPs

Findings from respondents in Makurdi identified several spaces. Key elements of such spaces to be evaluated in this study include; location, character, size, activities carried out therein findings shown in Table 2 a total of 21 areas were

identified for recreation in Makurdi by respondent out of which 11 (52%) are located in North bank I and II wards. They had an average area of 26798m². The spaces had mainly restaurants and hotels. And the average distant between the spaces and the IDP camp was 4 kilometres.

The presence of these spaces for recreation does not presupposes that they are used for recreation findings in the next section highlight several variables teased out from literature in evaluating access to public spaces.

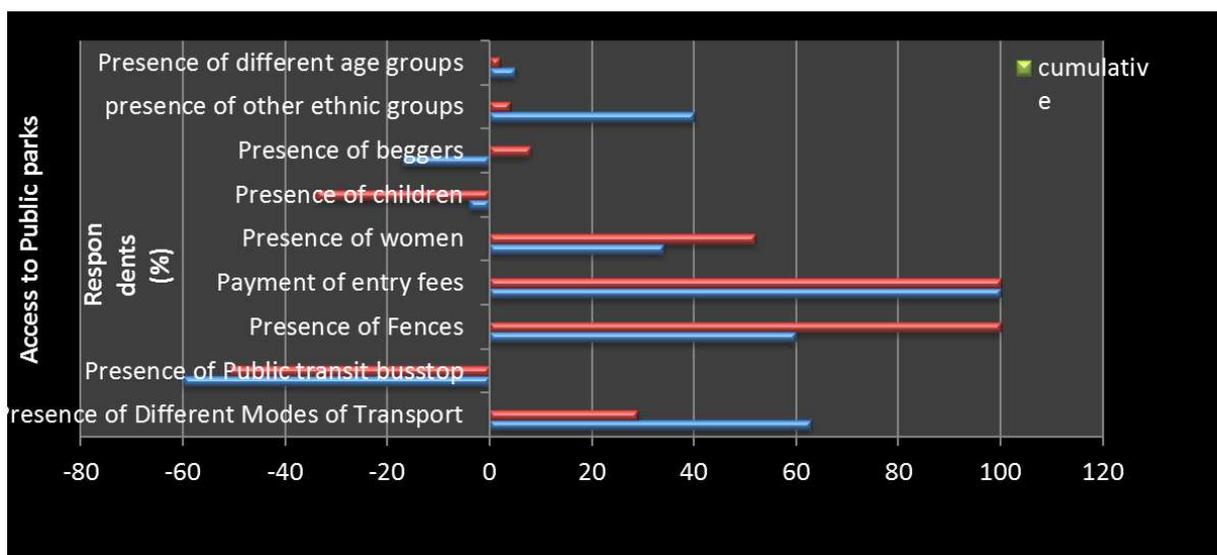
4.3. Dimensions of Access to Public Spaces in Makurdi Benue State

A total number of 9 variables were determined in evaluating access to parks in Makurdi over time. A summary of the cumulative variation in these variables shown in Table 3 and Figure 3 is discussed in the following section. The average score for variables that existed only in the past are shown with a – sign indicating negative variation from 1976-2020. Variables that are perceived to be present in parks currently but were absent in the past are shown with a + sign meaning a positive variation while variables that have remained constant during the study period (1976-2019) are shown as no change

Table3. Cumulative Analysis of Variables Measuring Access to Public Parks in Makurdi for 32 years.

Variables Measuring Access to public parks in Makurdi	<60 years	>60 years	cumulative
Presence of Different Modes of Transport	63	29	Positive variation
Presence of Public transit bus stop	-60	-51	Negative variation
Presence of Fences	60	100	Positive accessibility
Payment of entry fees	100	100	No change
Presence of women	34	52	No change
Presence of children	-4	-34	Negative variation
Presence of beggars	-17	8	Negative variation
presence of other ethnic groups	40	4	Positive Variation
Presence of different age groups	5	2	Positive variation

Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2020



Source: Author’s Fieldwork, 2020

Figure 3. Cumulative variation in access to public parks for a period of 32 years.

On the whole, out of nine accessibility indicators only two indicators payment of entry fees and presence of women in parks have consistently not changed. Four indicators have improved over time (Presence of Different Modes of Transport, Presence of Fences, presence of other ethnic groups and Presence of different age groups) three indicators (presence of public transport bus stop, presence of children and beggars) have negatively changed over the study period. The following section shows comparison of access between periods where there were IDP presence and when they were none.

4.4. Comparative Analysis of Accessibility Between Periods of No IDPs and Periods When There Were IDPs in the Town

Findings from fieldwork were disaggregated into two time epochs 2010-2015 and 2015-2020. This is because even though there have always been internally displaced people in Makurdi from 2015-2020 witnessed greater numbers of displaced people inflow into Makurdi from Fulani/herdsmen clashes.

Table 4. Independent t test showing the difference in the access/use of recreational parks in Makurdi from 2010-2015 and 2015-2020.

	Year	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Access/Use	2010-2015 (Without IDPs)	200	24.4211	2.32185	198	-.409
	2015-2020 (With IDPs)	200	24.6071	2.51308		

Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2020

The *t* test value = -.409 at the degree of freedom of 198 where the critical table value of *p* =.683 greater than the Alpha level of .05 which indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of access and use of recreational parks in Makurdi between the period of 2010-2015 without IDPs and 2015-2020 with the influx of IDPs to the city due to herdsmen attacks on farming communities in Benue State of Nigeria. This means that the level of access and use of recreational parks in Makurdi remain relatively the same irrespective of the presence of IDPs. This further means that the IDPs are less likely to visit recreational facilities thereby making no difference in the level of access and use of parks. The following section addresses specifically IDPs engagement with public spaces for recreation.

4.5. Analysis of IDP Engagement with the Public Spaces of Makurdi

Literature indicates that inclusiveness in urban areas is greatly enhanced in engagement with public space. Focus

group discussions with different homogenous groups made up of three age categories including older men and women aged above 60 years (n=10); middle aged married men and women <60 years and >30 (n=18) and young males and females aged <30 years (n=16) were conducted in the Abagena IDP camp on the outskirts of Makurdi. The discussions reveal the IDPs’ perspectives on engagement with public spaces both within their immediate communities and in the host community. All the IDPs who participated in discussions reside within the camp for displaced persons in Abagena Makurdi local government area. As such, the results reflect that spatial unit of Makurdi town and its environs. IDPs who assented to all four of the variables identified were considered to have a high engagement with public space those assenting to three to two variables were judged to have average engagement while those with agreement to less than two variables were considered to have few opportunities to engage with public space. The results are illustrated in the figure 4.

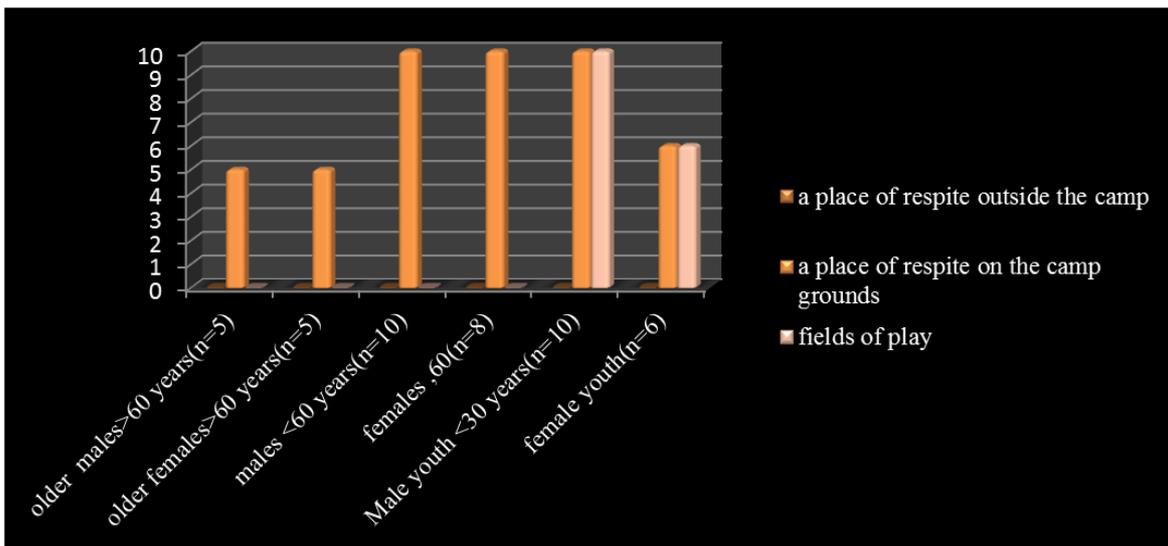


Figure 4. Opportunities of Public Space as a Place of Respite for IDPs (n=44).

4.5.1. Use of Public Space as a Place of Respite from the Daily Grind of IDP Camp Life

Responses from the male respondents showed that the only space for respite from their daily toil for survival is a spot under the tree in front of the camp where they gather for playing of cards, gambling and “daar”; a local based game was also mentioned as male leisure activities in the study area. The married female respondents (n=8) indicated that they had a field outside the camp designated as a football field where their children went to play which was accessible to the children at all times. The women recreate by engaging in church activities like participating in the choir and women group meetings and talking among themselves. The young men and women aged under 30 years (n=16) also had access to the football field as the second option for active recreation. None of the respondents had any engagement with places for recreation outside the campground in the host communities. Data reveals generally that from their perspective, IDPs do not engage public spaces outside the camps. This is mainly because the lack the financial wherewithal to afford the use of parks. This will have a negative impact on their inclusion in society of the communities in which they reside.

The reasons IDPs did not engage with places of recreation outside the camps were accessed and then analysed. All the participants (100percent) identified lack of finances as the most significant reason they did not engage with public spaces outside the camps as a place of respite from the daily toils of living in the camp. This view is expressed by some of the respondents

“We are needy and we don’t have any money to go out and relax ourselves. Imagine going out to a place of relaxation and seeing your mates’ spending money to enjoy themselves and you don’t have anything on you. You will feel ashamed of yourself”

Young Female FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

During festive seasons and as a means of relaxation some of the respondents especially the females mention the church as a place of respite. According to one of the young ladies.

“In my own place, our enjoyment comes from the church. Before Christmas day, we practise dances in order to entertain people in church. That way we derive our enjoyment. We are not comfortable here and for this reason we cannot enjoy ourselves”

Young Female FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

A finding from a study in the rural areas of Benue State [82] reveals that, there are hardly any leisure activities or facilities for rural women in the study area. This finding is also confirmed in this study by the respondents.

“We don’t go out for relaxation. We often stay in this place and discuss among ourselves as ladies. When we get bored, we normally sleep. Unlike the men, we don’t play card games. We don’t know how to play it”

Female (<60 years) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

The focus here was in using public spaces as a place of recreation as a respite from daily work for survival in the camps. Findings reveal that the IDPs do not go out of their camp to find a breather rather a tree within the environs of the camp is where majority of the IDPs find respite from daily toil. The children of the IDPs’ also have a field adjacent the camp provided by the government where they engage in active recreation. This finding is bound to negatively affect the productivity and mental health of the IDPs as well as their inclusion into the immediate host community and Makurdi in general.

4.5.2. Opportunities for Public Space as a Place of Socialisation and Connection for IDPs

As described in this section, the IDPs views on social relationship between members of the host communities in public space were explored through the qualitative data collection process of focus group discussion. They captured the experience of their engagement with host. Initially, on arrival at the camps they developed social relationships with members of the host communities which they say have gradually dwindled over time. According to findings of this study, IDPs responded that the main reason they could not continue relating socially with host communities is that the relationships were not mutually beneficial as the host community members viewed the IDPs as benefiting from the aids government and other organisations bring without including them. These views are expressed below:

“I have never seen people so terrible like the people in this place before. We did our utmost to make friends with the host community but we couldn’t. They are not friendly at all. We even pleaded with some to take us along on their farms, so we could help them work on their farms but they turned us down”

Young Male FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

“We have been able to make friends among ourselves. We also made friends with persons from the host community but such friendship does not last long because we are needy as a result of our idleness and we always don’t have anything to offer our new friends. They always want us to reciprocate their good deeds to us and when we are unable to the friendships don’t last,”

Older Male (>60 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

A number of explanations exist for this lack of sustained socialisation and connection between IDPs and host communities. In the first instance, the basic needs of the IDPs like water and food are provided within the camp, thus reducing incidences for mingling with host communities. The only basic need that takes IDPs out of the camp is the need for firewood used in cooking. Also, the need to charge phones takes IDPs into host communities which have electricity. The IDPs narrate that these instances cause them to interact minimally with host communities as can be seen by the following responses:

“Most of our basic needs like water are present within this facility. For that reason we don’t normally mingle with indigenes of this place because we don’t go outside quite often. One of the few things that make us leave this facility is firewood. We often mobilise and go out in groups to fetch firewood from a nearby forest. So we don’t really have reasons why we should be friends with the indigenes of this place”

Married Female (<60 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

Other opportunities to foster connection with host community come in the form of menial labour on the farms. The host communities engage the IDPs to help with farm labour at very menial cost even this is relegated to the younger respondents who have energy to farm. When they are hired for menial labour in the farms of the host community’s they are paid very meagerly as explained by young male respondents in a focused group discussion below:

“The money we get from our labour is always very meagre. Most of us sitting here are married people. At times, the money we earn from all our labour is just a thousand naira. Which businesses can one start with that small amount of money? The money we get is always not enough to do anything else but feed in order to survive”

Young Male (<30 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

Consequently there are very few opportunities for socialisation for the IDPs this will negatively affect their assimilation and inclusion into the societies of surrounding communities. This factor also negatively impacts on how the host community perceives and so relates with the IDPs.

4.5.3. Uncertainty, Aggression and the Anxieties from Host Communities Against IDPs

The ability of the IDPs to take part in communal life of the host community shows how they are integrated into such society. The older men and women reported that they had no issues with members of the host communities. On the other hand the younger ladies and men as well as the middle aged men and women reveal that they have clashed with members of host communities but such brawls are usually amicably resolved. The question of how the host community perceives the IDPs was put to the IDPs in a FGD and the following reflects their views on the host community’s acceptance of them:

“We the elderly ones don’t normally have issues that are peculiar to us as women because we don’t leave this place but our daughters have encountered issues that are peculiar to them as ladies because they move about”

Older female (>60 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

“Sometime in the past, our daughters were on their way to the forest to fetch firewood. They were accosted on their way by some men who seized their axes and cutlasses. The men demanded that our daughters have sex with them before they can return the items back. Our daughters

refused and the implements were not returned. Our daughters managed to escape and came to report the case to the elders who engaged the local vigilante and the axes and cutlasses were later returned” *Middle aged female (<60 >30 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.*

“We have had many issues with persons from the host community in the past. They have beaten our men before. Our women were also beaten when they went to fetch firewood and the firewood was seized from them as well. When the governor visited us with some items for Christmas, they came here and took one of the pigs he brought for us by force. They treat us with so much disdain because they feel we ought to share the donations given to us with them because we are inhabitants of their land. We have been able to live in harmony with them only recently since we started sharing the donations brought to us by humanitarian bodies like Red Cross, UNICEF e.t.c with them.

Middle aged Male (<60 >30 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

“We were almost beaten up by persons from the host community when Red Cross brought some aids for us. The police were the ones that came to quell the ensuing crises. They have beaten us here in the camp because we are living in their place.

Young Male (>30 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

“Whenever the Red Cross brings aids for us in their vehicle, it is preferred that the items be offloaded from the vehicles by young men from the camp so they can earn some money. However, the host community insists that only their young men offload and even when our young men from the camps help out they are not included in the payments for offloading. The governor came here sometime to commiserate with us during the Christmas season, but they came here to forcefully take away some of the things he brought for us. The governor was the one who resisted them. That night we were severely tortured by the host community in retaliation.

Young Male (>30 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

“We have always had issues with the people here because of their nature. They are very troublesome. We often restrain ourselves in order not to fight with them. They always demand a share from the aid the government brings to us and to avoid trouble we always give them a share. They always beat up our children who go to the playground to play football.

Young Male (>30 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

Aggravated treatment of IDPs by host communities will limit their ability to integrate into the host communities and also limit their ability to improve their standard of living. It also shows the perception of the host community of IDPs as oppourtunists.

4.5.4. Opportunities for Improved Livelihoods from Public Spaces in Host Communities by IDPs

Public spaces such as streets provide arena for economic activities which are a source of livelihood for majority of urban dwellers in African countries. Accordingly, how IDPs provide an income from public space is also evaluated in this study. The source of income generation avenues in public space was put to the IDPs findings from the discussions are presented below:

“No we don’t have any other means of making money apart from carrying out menial jobs for people. We cannot farm here because we don’t have farmlands. We cannot collect farmlands on lease because we don’t have money to pay for the farmlands

Middle aged Male (<60>30 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

“We buy and sell things like pepper from the income we make from the menial jobs for people”

Older female (>60 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

When asked if there are opportunities for them to trade in the neighbouring markets like those located in surrounding neighbourhoods like North Bank, Yagba and Daudu where there are daily and five day circle markets the discussants had the following explanations:

“Selling in North bank market requires that one pays for a space where they can display their wares. We don’t have money to pay for that. Other expenses like tax e.t.c are also involved”

Middle aged female (<60 >30years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

“we attempted to sell outside this place, in places like Yagba, Daudu and North bank but the expenses involved in starting a business in such places were too much for us. In one place, we were told to bring ten (10) thousand naira. In another, we were to buy drinks and other things before we could get a space to sell. That’s the reason why we only sell in this place”

Older female (>60 years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

“One benevolent woman gave me money to start a business, so I went to the market and bought some goods and sold. I made very little profit. But because of hunger, I used part of my capital to buy food to feed my children. This continued until I lost my capital and the business crumbled.

Middle aged female (<60 >30years old) FGD discussant, Abagena IDP camp Agan council ward.

Opportunities for improved livelihoods are a unique area for integration into society. Findings have shown that chances to make a living open to IDPs are limited to the camps thereby reducing the sphere of engagement with host communities and further limiting inclusion for IDPs.

4.6. Implications for Planning and Policy

Urban public spaces are important because among other benefits they foster social inclusion [83] Social exclusion is a

complex multidimensional phenomenon, occasioned by an individuals or a group’s inability to participate in economic, social and political aspects of life because of imposed constraints rather than by choice [84]. Social inclusion and appropriate integration, has been seen as a precondition for achieving all-encompassing and sustainable development [85] particularly for vulnerable groups in society among which are IDPs. Consequently, greater recognition of IDP’s participative rights in cities should be significant to both urban planners and designers and should result in the design and implementation of more accessible public spaces. It is envisaged that this should improve social inclusion of IDPs and further translate to more sustainable development especially for cities with large IDP populations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Generally residents of Makurdi recreate in hybrid spaces of restaurants and eateries more than in traditional parks and gardens. Over the study period accessibility of public spaces has increased on four out of nine indicators of access and decreased on three indicators while two indicators remained constant. Accessibility did not change between years where there were IDPs and Years where there was no IDP presence in Makurdi. Engagement of IDPs with public space is poor on all indicators. These finding lend themselves to the following recommendations:

1. There is a need for authorities and town planners to anticipate, evaluate and plan for the long-term settlement of displaced populations in urban areas as well as to prepare for their integration into host communities.
2. It is important to consider both children, women and men as key user groups when designing public space
3. Planners and city designers should consider the integration of hybrid spaces of recreation in planning for cities rather than sticking to traditional models of parks and gardens for recreation.
4. Activities common to hybrid spaces like eating and drinking which draw people to such spaces should be included in traditional parks to make them more attractive.
5. Public transportation networks in Makurdi should be improved to cover areas frequented by residents for recreation.
6. Public spaces should be provided closer to IDP camps or diverse activities for recreation should be included in the planning of IDP camps.

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