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# In-Migrants as Partners in Urban Infrastructural Development: Evidence from Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the contribution of in-migrants to infrastructural development in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Healey (1993) formula for determining sample size for an unknown population was used to determined sample size for the study. The study used data collected from 387 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaire administered to in-migrants residing in the town. Also, an inventory checklist was used to document infrastructure and establishments associated with migrant in the study area. Frequency counts, percentages, tables and charts were used for data analysis and presentation. The result indicates that in-migrants established 117 infrastructures in the study area. About 76.74% of the respondents acknowledged in-migrants' contributions to development in their communities. Monetary donations were the most frequently form of contribution (76.09%). The result obtained through inventory indicates that in-migrants contributed more to establishing educational institutions (55.6%) compared to other infrastructures. More so, individual contributions were frequently tailored towards drilling boreholes (30.49%), school-related development (27.91%), electricity (20.49%) and roads (16.54%). In addition, 75.97% of respondents acknowledged contributions by migrant community development associations. Nevertheless, 48.42% rated the overall effect of migrant contributions to development as moderate, while 36.39% rated it as low. The study concludes that in-migrants are meaningful partners in urban infrastructure provision, but their contributions require transparent financial management, inclusive decision-making and coordination with urban development board. It recommends stronger accountability mechanisms, project monitoring and collaborative infrastructure planning.

**Keywords**: In-migration, infrastructure, community development associations, urban development and Makurdi Metropolis.

## 1. Introduction

Migration is a major component of population change and urbanisation. People move within and across national boundaries in response to differences in employment, income, security, education and access to social amenities. Migration therefore represents more than a change of residence; it can also reshape labour markets, household strategies, social networks and development processes in both origin and destination areas (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2019; International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2022). Lee's (1966) push–pull framework explains that movement is influenced by conditions in the place of origin, attractions in the destination, intervening obstacles and personal circumstances. In the Nigerian context, urban centres attract migrants because they concentrate administrative institutions, markets, education, healthcare and diverse livelihood opportunities. Infrastructure is central to the functioning and development of urban settlements. Roads, electricity, water supply, schools, healthcare facilities and other services support economic activity and influence residents' quality of life. Fulmer (2009) describes infrastructure as the interconnected physical components and systems that provide essential services and sustain societal living conditions. Inadequate infrastructure can constrain productivity, discourage investment and increase the cost of living and doing business. The provision of infrastructure is therefore a central concern for urban planning, particularly in cities experiencing rapid population growth.

Government remains a major provider of public infrastructure, but public resources are often insufficient to meet expanding urban needs. Private investment, community self-help and migrant-related contributions can complement public provision. Previous studies indicates that migrants and community associations supported schools, roads, water supply, electrification and other community projects in Nigeria and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa (Ajaero & Onokala, 2013; IOM, 2021; Adepoju, 2023). Such contributions takes the form of cash donations, materials, skilled labour, direct construction or pooled resources mobilised through community organisations. The New Economics of Labour Migration theory argues that migration decisions are often shaped by household strategies for diversifying income and managing risks, while migrants may maintain links with wider communities through remittances and collective investment (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Mabogunje's (1970) systems perspective similarly highlights the connections between places through flows of people, capital and information. Applied to destination areas, these perspectives draw attention to the possibility that migrants can contribute to urban development not only as workers and entrepreneurs but also as donors and members of community development associations. However, migrants' contributions should not be assumed to replace the statutory responsibility of government. Rather, they should be understood as a potential complement to public planning and investment. The developmental value of contributions depends on whether projects respond to local needs are fairly distributed, properly managed and can be maintained over time.

Although several studies have examined the challenges associated with internal migration, there is limited empirical evidence on the specific contributions of in-migrants to infrastructural development in urban areas particularly Makurdi town. This study seeks to fill this gap by assessing the role of migrants in enhancing infrastructural development within Makurdi metropolis, thereby providing insights that can guide future urban planning and policy interventions.

## 2. Study Area

Makurdi town is the headquarters of Makurdi Local Government Area and capital of Benue State. The town is located between latitude 7°47'N - 10°00'N, and longitude 6°25'E and 8°81'E of the equator. The town has a population of 151,515 people in 1991 (NPC, 1991) and a projected population of 426,333 in 2025. NPC (2011) report on 2006 population and housing census by sex and State of origin indicates that Benue State has 280,427 out-migrants spread across the 36 States of the federation while the State has 135,598 in-migrants spread across its 23 L.G.As. The population of Makurdi comprises tribes such as the Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo, Jukun, Hausa, Yoruba and Ibos. The Tiv are the dominant tribe. Makurdi town is largely made up of people who engage in civil service duties, commercial activities and agrarian peasantry. (Shabu, 2021). The predominant economic activities in the study area include; commerce, agriculture and service sector. Other agricultural activities include livestock like cows and poultry as well as fishing.

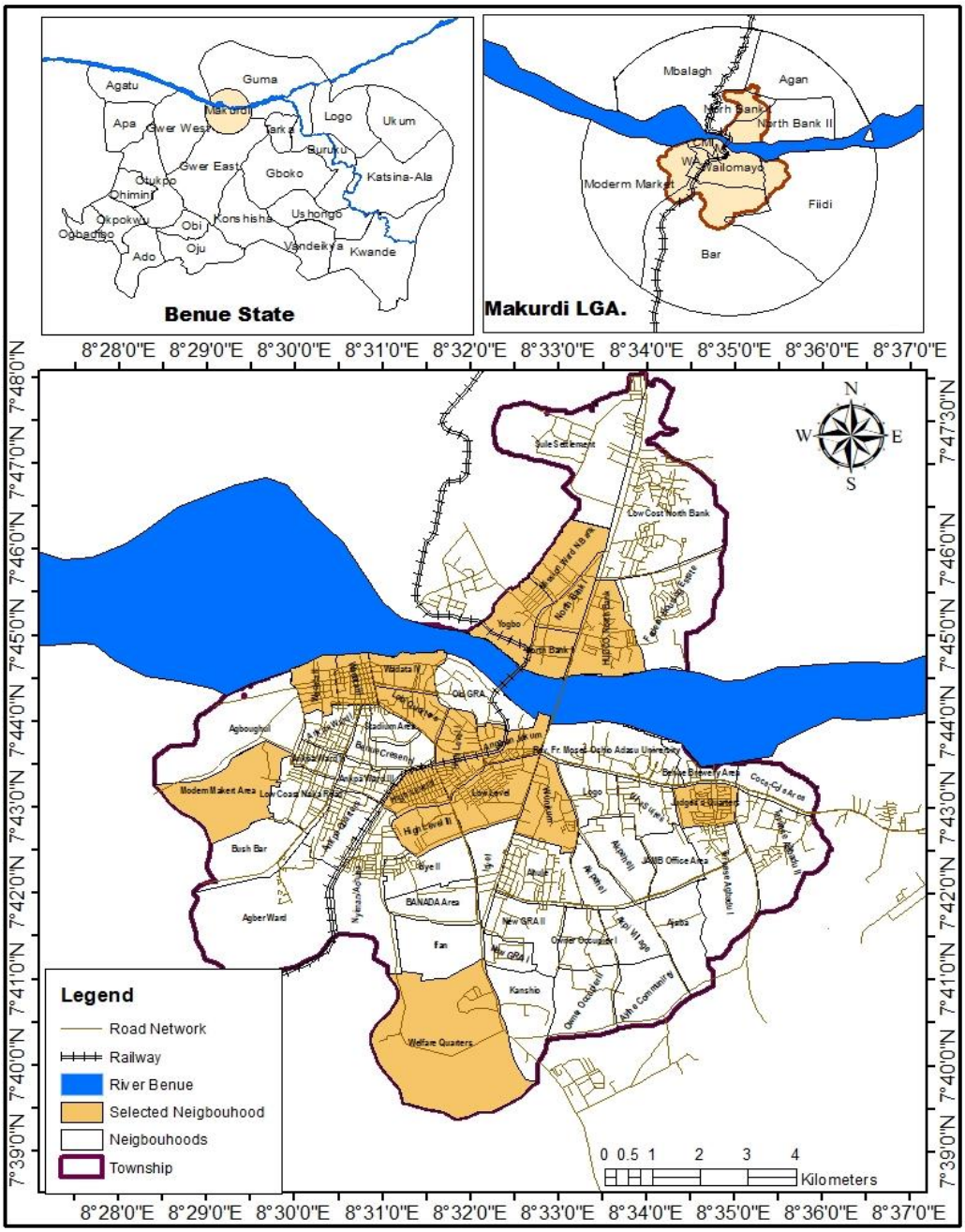



**Figure 1:** ***Makurdi Town showing Study neighbourhood***

## 3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was appropriate for describing respondents' reported contributions and documenting infrastructure and establishments associated with in-migrant activity in Makurdi Metropolis. The data required for this study included in-migrants' contribution to infrastructural development; forms of contribution and decisions about the use of funds; the uses of monetary donations; the role of community development associations in various neighbourhoods. Data were obtained via questionnaire administered to in-migrants. Furthermore, an inventory of infrastructure was conducted via checklist to identify the type, location and ownership of the infrastructures provided by in-migrants in Makurdi town.

The study population comprised in-migrants residing in selected neighbourhoods of Makurdi Metropolis, alongside the infrastructure and establishments documented in the inventory. The study identifies in-migrants, community leaders and household heads within selected areas as relevant groups for the wider study. The sample size was determined via the Healey (1993) formula for determining sample size for an unknown population as follows;

$$N = \frac{(z)^2\ (pu)\ (1 - pu)}{d^2}$$

N = is the required sample size

Z = is the alpha level at 95% significant level (1.96)

Pu = is the estimated proportion of the attribute present in the population (0.5)

d = is the level of precision (0.05)

Therefore, $N = \frac{(1.96)^2\ (0.5)\ (1-0.5)}{0.05^2}$ = 384.

However, the study decided to increase the sample size to 400 to make up any error that may arise due to non-response and unreturned questionnaire. Only 387 questionnaire were retrieved and analysed.

## 4.0 Results and Discussion

### *4.1 Types of Infrastructure Developed by In-Migrant*

Table 1 presents the type of infrastructure and establishments identified and recorded via inventory in the study area. The result indicates that 117 infrastructures were established by in-migrants in Makurdi town. Educational institutions (55.6%) constituted the major infrastructures ranked 1st while companies and business establishments ranked 2nd followed by hospitals and clinics, which was ranked 3rd. Filling stations was ranked 4th while hotels was ranked 5th. More so, electricity projects Transformers was ranked 6th. The presence of filling stations, hotels and guest houses further demonstrates the diversity of establishments documented by the study. These facilities are associated with commercial services, mobility-related activities and hospitality.

High concentration on education, commerce and healthcare is consistent with the outcome of a study in Burkina Faso by Beauchemin and Schoumaker's (2009), which found significant associations between migrant organisations and the provision of schools, health centres and roads. In Nigeria, Ibem (2009) examined community-led infrastructure provision in six low-income communities in Ohafia and identified community development unions, age-grade organisations, women's groups and other community organisations as actors involved in infrastructure provision. Similarly, Fateye et al. (2021) found that community development associations financed basic neighbourhood infrastructure through membership contributions, with water supply, roads, security and waste management featuring among their priorities. These studies also demonstrate that infrastructure provision can involve organised community action rather than individual ownership alone.

Furthermore, Alao and Babalola's (2024) empirical study of CSR-funded infrastructure in Lagos State, established that migrants provide projects such as classroom blocks, pipe-borne water, renovated health facilities, libraries and ICT centres. Likewise, Ajaero and Onokala (2013) found that migrants' remittances and community projects contributed to development in south eastern Nigeria. These studies show that community and migrant-related development initiatives support variety of infrastructure.

**Table 1: Types of infrastructure developed by in-migrants**

| Infrastructures | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| Educational Institutions | 65 | 55.6 | 1 |
| Companies/Business Entity | 14 | 12.0 | 2 |
| Health Institutions | 13 | 11.1 | 3 |
| Filling Station | 10 | 8.5 | 4 |

| Infrastructures | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hotels | 8 | 6.8 | 5 |
| Electricity Projects (Transformer) | 5 | 4.3 | 6 |
| Guest Houses | 2 | 1.7 | 7 |
| **Total** | **117** | **100** | |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2026.**

### *4.2 Variation in the distribution of some recorded Infrastructures in the Neighbourhoods*

The study shows that Modern Market area had the highest number of infrastructures with 12 entries accounting for (22.2%), Wurukum and North Bank had 18.5% each while High Level recorded 16.7% as indicated on table 2. The profiles varied by neighbourhood: filling stations were prominent in North Bank, businesses in Wurukum, hospitals and clinics in Wadata, and hotels in Judges Quarters. These findings merely indicate variation in the types of establishments recorded across Makurdi. The pattern is consistent with the broader argument that migrant-related development can extend beyond traditional community projects to commercial and service facilities provided individuall or jointly by migrants and community initiative. This agrees with a study by Daniel (2014) which demonstrates the importance of local institutional arrangements, financing and coordination in the implementation of community-level infrastructure or projects in Jos. Similarly, Emmanuel and Fasakin (2015) examine how community-based organisations engage in infrastructure provision across contrasting geographical settings. Together, these studies support examining neighbourhood context, investment opportunities and organisational capacity as possible explanations for spatial variation.

**Table 2: Neighbourhood distribution of recorded establishments.**

| Neighbourhood | Total entries | Share of 54 (%) | Reported pattern in inventory |
|---|---|---|---|
| Modern Market | 12 | 22.2 | Hospitals/clinics were the largest group; businesses also featured. |
| Wurukum | 10 | 18.5 | Companies/businesses dominated the recorded entries. |
| North Bank | 10 | 18.5 | Filling stations formed the largest category. |
| High Level | 9 | 16.7 | Businesses and hospitals/clinics were prominent. |
| Judges Quarters | 4 | 7.4 | All recorded entries were hotels. |
| Lobi Quarters | 4 | 7.4 | Hotels accounted for three of four entries. |
| Wadata | 3 | 5.6 | All recorded entries were hospitals/clinics. |
| Welfare Quarters | 2 | 3.7 | One guest house and one transformer. |
| **Total** | **54** | **100.0** | |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2026.**

### *4.3 Infrastructures established by individual Migrants*

Among the development projects established by individual migrants in the study area as presented on table 3, boreholes had the highest reported share (30.49%), followed by school-related development (27.91%), electricity (20.49%) and road construction (16.54%). Hand-dug wells, health facilities, town halls, classrooms, religious facilities and culverts were also reported. This suggests that individual contributions covered both basic services and community facilities. Boreholes and wells are associated with local water needs, while schools, electricity and roads support social services and economic activity. The percentages are presented as reported shares for each category; they do not sum to 100%, indicating that the categories have been multiple-response items or may use different denominators. They should therefore not be interpreted as mutually exclusive portions of a single total. The results indicate the range of contribution based on types of infrastructures. Similarly, in a study of Nigerian cities, Uduku (1994) established community-based provision of essential social infrastructure, including water and education. While Kandilige (2017) indicates that hometown associations mobilise collective remittances for development in their communities of origin.

**Table 3: Infrastructures contributed by Individual Migrants in Makurdi Town**

| Infrastructure type | Reported share (%) |
|---|---|
| Boreholes | 30.49 |
| School-related development | 27.91 |
| Electricity | 20.49 |
| Road construction | 16.54 |
| Hand-dug wells | 8.79 |
| Health facilities | 7.75 |
| Town halls | 9.30 |
| Classrooms | 5.43 |
| Churches/mosques | 5.17 |
| Culverts | 4.13 |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2026.**

### *4.4 Decision Making and Medium of establishing Infrastructures*

A total of 76.7% respondents acknowledged that in-migrants contributed to development in their communities. Monetary donations (76.09%) were the dominant form of contribution made, followed by materials (15.15%) and direct construction (6.06%). This suggests that financial support was the most frequently reported mechanism, although material and direct labour contributions were also part of development efforts in the study area. This is in line with Kandilige (2017) who indicates that hometown associations employ different strategies to mobilise resources for community development. Similarly, Appe and Papyan (2025) further broaden the understanding of diaspora philanthropy by considering money, time, labour and knowledge as potential contributions to public projects.

The study also indicates that in-migrants made financial contributions for community projects. Though amount contributed varies. About 42.89% indicated that they contributed above ₦50,000 while 31.27% reported amounts below ₦10,000. These figures suggest variation in the scale of contributions. Decision regarding the use of community funds was mainly through community representatives (41.60%) and stakeholders (33.33%), while in-migrants themselves accounted for 11.37%. This suggests that decisions about the use of funds were often mediated by community structures rather than being made solely by contributors. Such arrangements enable collective prioritisation, but transparency and contributor participation are important to sustain trust. The finding supports the need for clear reporting and inclusive decisions on project selection and expenditure.

**Table 4: Form of Migrants contribution and decision-making.**

| Perception on In-migrants contribution | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Contributions to place of residence** | | |
| In-migrants contributed to development | 297 | 76.74 |
| In-migrants did not contribute to development | 90 | 23.26 |
| **Mode of contribution** | | |
| Donate Money | 226 | 76.09 |
| Donate Materials | 45 | 15.15 |
| Built Infrastructure | 18 | 6.07 |
| Others | 8 | 2.69 |
| **How much did In-migrants contribute** | | |
| Less than N10,0000 | 121 | 31.27 |
| N10,000 – N20,000 | 100 | 25.84 |
| More Than N50,000 | 166 | 42.89 |

| Perception on In-migrants contribution | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Decision on what and how the money was used** | | |
| The in-migrants | 44 | 11.37 |
| The community | 161 | 41.6 |
| The stakeholders | 129 | 33.33 |
| The youth | 53 | 13.7 |
| **Total:** | **387** | **100%** |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2026.**

**4.5 Uses of Funds Contributed for Development**

Figure 2 indicates that electricity infrastructure received the largest reported share of monetary donations (38.24%), followed by boreholes and water supply (26.61%), town halls (26.1%) and road construction and maintenance (20.93%). The distribution indicates that donations were directed towards infrastructure with community-wide utility, particularly electricity, water and roads. These priorities illustrate how migrant contributions complement public infrastructure provision at neighbourhood level. However, contributions will be more sustainable where projects are technically assessed, coordinated with existing networks, and accompanied by maintenance arrangements. Without these safeguards, even well-intentioned donations may result in fragmented projects or infrastructure that is difficult to maintain. Similarly, Enefu, Mundi and Dakyes (2024) established that migrants sent remittance to home of origin for community development; the remittances were used for school, electricity, hospital and road construction.

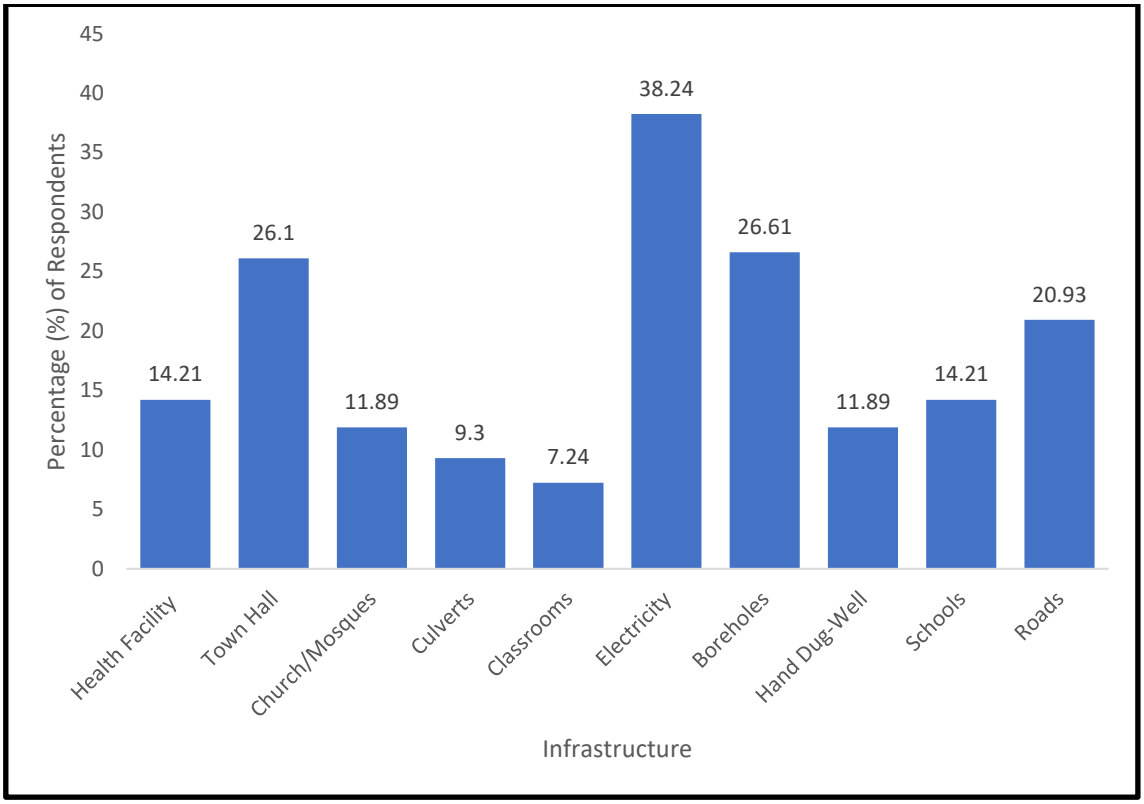



**Figure 2: Uses of monetary donations**

**Source: Fieldwork, 2026.**

***4.6 Strategies of Maximizing In-Migrant Contribution to Infrastructural Development***

Table 5 presents respondents' views on strategies for maximizing in-migrants' contribution to infrastructural development in the study area. Encouraging corporate social responsibility among in-migrants was ranked highest at 37.47%, followed by enacting laws that will force in-migrants to contribute part of income to infrastructural development (29.46%) and provision of special awards and recognition for outstanding in-migrant contributors (26.10%). Encouraging in-migrant/private-public partnership arrangements received the least support 9.56%. This suggests that respondents believe a combination of voluntary, regulatory, and incentive-based measures is needed, rather than relying on one single approach. The preference for encouraging social corporate responsibility reflects the growing number of in-migrants who now own businesses in Makurdi. Respondents believe that wealthy migrant traders and contractors should take more responsibility for community projects.

**Table 7: Strategies for Maximizing In-Migrant Contribution to Development**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| **Encourage In-migrants/private and public partnership** | | |
| No | 350 | 90.44 |
| Yes | 37 | 9.56 |
| **Enacting laws to compel in-migrants to contribute part of their income to development** | | |
| No | 273 | 70.54 |
| Yes | 114 | 29.46 |
| **Encourage social corporate responsibility** | | |
| No | 242 | 62.53 |
| Yes | 145 | 37.47 |
| **Give special awards and recognition to outstanding In-migrants who have made meaningful contribution** | | |
| No | 286 | 73.9 |
| Yes | 101 | 26.1 |
| **Total** | **387** | **100%** |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2026**

### *4.7 CONCLUSION*

The study revealed that in-migrants contribute to infrastructural development in Makurdi Metropolis through monetary donations, material support, direct construction and collective initiatives organised by community development associations. The inventory indicates that 117 infrastructure were establishment in the study area, with educational institutions forming the largest category (55.6%). The listed schools were concentrated in Modern Market, North Bank and Welfare Quarters, while the other recorded establishments included businesses, hospitals and clinics, filling stations, hotels, transformers and guest houses. Respondents also reported individual contributions to boreholes, school-related development, electricity and roads. The evidence therefore suggests that migrants represent a meaningful source of supplementary infrastructure investment, but the benefits depend on accountability, financial management, transparent decision-making, coordinated project selection and maintenance. Migrant contributions should complement, rather than replace, the responsibility of government to plan and provide equitable urban infrastructure.

### *4.8 RECOMMENDATIONS*

i. Strengthen financial transparency and accountability. Community development associations and project committees should keep verifiable records of funds received and spent, issue periodic financial statements and make project accounts available to members and beneficiaries. Independent audits should be considered for larger projects.

ii. Establish community-based project monitoring. Monitoring committees should include migrant representatives, community leaders, technical professionals and beneficiaries. They should monitor expenditure, quality, progress, completion and maintenance, and provide regular reports to contributors.

iii. Coordinate migrant-funded projects with urban planning. Relevant municipal and state agencies should maintain an updated neighbourhood infrastructure inventory and consult migrant associations before projects commence. This can help identify service gaps, reduce duplication and improve spatial equity.

iv. Promote inclusive decision-making. Migrants who provide funds or materials should be represented in project prioritisation and oversight, while community representatives should ensure that decisions reflect broader neighbourhood needs and are not controlled by a small group.

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