ASSESSMENT OF UNHCR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMMES ON INFRASTRUCTURE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN OGOJA, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.64633/wissj.v10i7.12

Keywords

UNHCR, Refugee resettlement, Infrastructure, Social development, Host communities, Ogoja, Cameroonian refugees

Abstract

Research Problem
The influx of Cameroonian refugees into Ogoja has increased demand for infrastructure and basic social services in refugee settlements and host communities. UNHCR interventions therefore seek to improve access to essential facilities and strengthen the resilience of both refugees and host populations. This study assessed the contribution of the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Programme to infrastructure and social development in Ogoja Town. A structured questionnaire was administered to refugees and members of host communities in Adagom 1, Adagom 3 and Ukende.

Methods/Theory
A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted, with systematic sampling used to select households. The study analysed 288 valid responses using frequencies, percentages and Spearman's rank-order correlation. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) was applied to this study because it explains how individuals and communities use available resources and opportunities to improve well-being, cope with shocks and reduce vulnerability.

Results
The findings revealed that 58.3% of respondents depended on farming for their livelihood, while 27.1% engaged in trading. Regarding programme interventions, 36.8% reported benefiting from health centres, 23.6% from boreholes and water supply, 13.9% from schools, 12.5% from roads, while 13.2% reported benefits across all sectors. Schools constituted the most prominent new infrastructure linked to the programme, accounting for 41.0%, followed by health centres (18.1%), boreholes/water supply (16.0%) and roads (2.1%); 22.9% reported benefiting from all the listed infrastructure. The relationship between duration of stay and infrastructural development was positive and statistically significant, with

a Spearman correlation coefficient of ρ = 0.68 (68%), p < .05. However, the impact on host-community social facilities was comparatively limited. Only 45.8% reported improvements in schools, while 25.7% reported improvements in health centres, 27.1% in boreholes and only 4.9% in roads. Conversely, 54.2%, 74.3%, 72.9% and 95.1% reported no improvements in schools, health centres, boreholes and roads respectively.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Programme has contributed significantly to infrastructure provision, particularly in education, health and water supply, but its benefits to host-community facilities remain uneven.

Recommendation

The study recommends increased investment in host-community infrastructure, especially roads, health centres and water facilities, alongside stronger participation of host communities in programme planning and implementation.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes to knowledge by providing the first empirical evidence on the extent and pattern of infrastructure and social-development outcomes associated with UNHCR resettlement interventions in Ogoja, and by establishing a statistically significant positive relationship between duration of stay and perceived infrastructural development (ρ = 0.68, p < .05).

Introduction

Forced displacement has increasingly become a major development concern worldwide, particularly as refugee situations persist for extended periods and create needs that go beyond immediate humanitarian assistance. Protracted displacement requires attention to infrastructure, social services, livelihoods and other aspects of sustainable development. The Global Compact on Refugees recognises this need by calling for stronger support for refugee-hosting communities and greater inclusion of refugees in national and local development systems (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2023). Research has shown that the presence of refugees can create both challenges and opportunities for host populations. In Uganda, for example, refugee-hosting communities have recorded improvements in access to public services and local economic opportunities where interventions have intentionally included local residents (Fallah et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023). Maystadt and Verwimp (2014) similarly found that refugee inflows could generate positive economic outcomes for some host households, while Del Carpio and Wagner (2023) demonstrated that refugee settlements could affect economic growth as well as social tensions in neighbouring communities. These findings indicate that the effects of refugee presence are not uniform but are influenced by the type of interventions implemented and the extent to which host communities are involved in and benefit from them.

The issue is especially important in Africa, where refugees frequently live among host populations rather than in geographically isolated camps. In Cameroon, Lambed Tatah et al. (2016) reported that the presence of refugees did not necessarily undermine local health systems and was linked to improvements in some maternal and child health outcomes. Evidence from Ethiopia also suggests that refugee presence can shape the

livelihoods and economic activities of host populations, although the nature and scale of these effects differ across local settings and depend on access to available opportunities (World Bank, 2022). Such findings highlight the need to examine refugee-related interventions within their particular geographical, social and institutional environments instead of assuming that similar outcomes will occur across different refugee-hosting communities.

Nigeria presents a significant setting for examining these issues because of the sustained presence of Cameroonian refugees, particularly in Cross River State. Ogoja has emerged as an important centre for refugee response activities, where UNHCR and its implementing partners have supported areas such as education, healthcare, livelihoods, child protection and community infrastructure. Recent UNHCR reports indicate that these interventions increasingly seek to serve both refugees and members of host communities through shared facilities, services and livelihood opportunities (UNHCR, 2025). Such interventions are important because the prolonged presence of refugees may increase pressure on existing infrastructure and social services, while the resources invested in refugee responses may simultaneously create opportunities for local development.

However, there is still limited empirical evidence showing the extent to which these interventions have produced concrete improvements in infrastructure and social development in Ogoja. Previous studies in the area have mainly examined the effects of refugee settlement on the labour market and environment (Ebong et al., 2020), social integration (Kironcho, 2023), and security and institutional collaboration (Oko, 2024). While these studies provide useful insights, they offer limited evidence on the wider developmental outcomes associated with UNHCR interventions, particularly in relation to newly constructed or improved infrastructure, social facilities, community participation and benefits received by host populations. This study therefore examines the impact of UNHCR refugee programmes on infrastructure and social development in Ogoja Town, focusing on how far these interventions have improved facilities and contributed to development outcomes among both refugee and host populations.

The prolonged presence of Cameroonian refugees in Ogoja has created a situation in which humanitarian needs increasingly intersect with the development concerns of host communities. Although refugee protection is principally addressed through humanitarian assistance, extended displacement can place additional pressure on existing water, health, education, housing, livelihood and other social infrastructure. The situation is particularly relevant in Nigeria because a large proportion of refugees live within host communities instead of being accommodated in separate camps. By the end of 2024, Nigeria was hosting about 127,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, while 78% of refugees in the South-South region were residing within host communities. In Cross River State, refugees have also become increasingly incorporated into state development plans and social services, reflecting a gradual movement away from short-term relief towards inclusion and longer-term solutions (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2025).

The significance of this situation is particularly apparent in Ogoja, where the sustained concentration of refugees has occurred alongside continuing demands for basic infrastructure and social services. UNHCR interventions in the area have included shelter support, child-friendly spaces, facilities for women and girls, livelihood infrastructure, agricultural assistance, a police post and other facilities designed to promote interaction between refugees and host

communities. UNHCR further reported investments in two primary healthcare facilities in Ogoja in 2025, while cassava-processing facilities and other livelihood infrastructure continued to be developed for the benefit of refugees and host populations (UNHCR, 2025, 2026). Nevertheless, the implementation of these projects alone does not demonstrate the extent to which they have improved infrastructure or contributed to broader social development within the host community.

Available empirical studies provide relevant insights, but their focus remains fragmented. Ebong et al. (2020), in their study of Ogoja, established that refugee settlement had significant implications for the local labour market and contributed to environmental and sanitation challenges. Their analysis, however, was primarily concerned with labour-market and environmental effects rather than the developmental contribution of humanitarian interventions. Kironcho (2023) also investigated the social integration of Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State, including Ogoja, and found that social and economic conditions shaped the integration process. The study nevertheless concentrated on factors influencing integration rather than examining whether refugee interventions had resulted in measurable improvements in infrastructure and social facilities. Similarly, a 2023 Save the Children endline assessment considered education and child-protection interventions involving refugees and host communities in Ogoja and other LGAs. Although the assessment reported improvements in learning spaces, educational materials and stakeholder capacity, its coverage was largely limited to education and child protection. Oko (2024), on the other hand, examined UNHCR–government collaboration and security concerns relating to Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State, with greater emphasis on protection, institutional cooperation and security than on infrastructure or wider social development.

These studies point to a clear empirical gap. Existing research has generated evidence on the consequences of refugee presence, social integration, specific sectoral interventions and security issues, but there remains limited systematic assessment of the overall contribution of UNHCR refugee programmes to infrastructure and social development in Ogoja Town. In particular, insufficient evidence exists on whether these interventions have resulted in new or rehabilitated infrastructure, strengthened social facilities, generated benefits for host communities, and produced different outcomes depending on the length of refugee presence. The present study addresses this gap by taking a broader development-oriented approach to UNHCR interventions, examining them collectively and assessing their observable and perceived contributions to infrastructure and social development in Ogoja Town.

While previous studies have examined labour market effects, social integration, and security concerns, none have systematically assessed the combined effects of UNHCR interventions on infrastructure and social development in Ogoja. This study therefore addresses this gap by adopting a broader development perspective that examines UNHCR interventions collectively and assesses their perceived and observable contributions to both infrastructure and social development in Ogoja Town. The study is therefore important for establishing whether prolonged humanitarian interventions have moved beyond immediate relief to generate sustainable and shared development benefits for both refugees and the communities that host them.

The specific objectives of the study are:

i. To assess the contribution of UNHCR refugee resettlement programmes to

infrastructure development in Ogoja Town.

ii. To examine the impact of these programmes on social development outcomes in host communities.

iii. To determine the relationship between duration of refugee stay and perceived infrastructural development.

Empirical Review of Related Literature

Refugee Presence and Host-Community Development

Fallah et al. (2023) examined the economic implications of refugee presence for host communities in Uganda using household-level and spatial data. The study found that refugee settlements could create economic opportunities through increased demand for goods and services, market expansion and greater participation in economic activities. This challenges the view of refugees solely as an economic burden and demonstrates potential livelihood spillovers. However, the study focused primarily on household welfare and economic outcomes, leaving physical infrastructure and access to social facilities largely unexplored. Thus, while it demonstrates broader development effects, it provides limited evidence on whether refugee-response programmes improve shared infrastructure. This distinction reinforces the need for the present study to examine infrastructure alongside social-development outcomes in Ogoja.

Tesfaye (2021) assessed the socio-economic effects of refugees and refugee camps on host communities in Bambasi, Ethiopia, using questionnaires, interviews, document analysis and focus-group discussions. The findings indicated that refugee presence affected local livelihoods while also improving access to health, education, clean water and electricity. The study demonstrates that refugee-related interventions can generate benefits beyond refugee populations, particularly in basic services. However, its broad socio-economic focus makes it difficult to isolate the contribution of particular humanitarian agencies or programmes. Its findings therefore support the possibility of positive spillovers but provide limited evidence of programme-specific impacts. This attribution gap remains important for assessing UNHCR interventions in the Nigerian context.

The World Bank (2022) examined the livelihood effects of refugee presence on host communities in Ethiopia using household microdata from the 2018 Ethiopia Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project. The analysis showed that refugee inflows influenced livelihood diversification and agricultural commercialisation by creating both opportunities and constraints. The study supports a development-oriented approach to refugee hosting but concentrates on economic livelihoods rather than physical infrastructure and social facilities. Consequently, it does not adequately explain whether refugee-response interventions translate into improvements in shared community infrastructure. This limitation is particularly relevant to Ogoja, where refugee interventions include infrastructure and social-service components requiring direct assessment.

Ebong et al. (2020) investigated the implications of Cameroonian refugee settlement for the labour market and environment in Ogoja, Cross River State, using a descriptive survey of 384 respondents and regression analysis. The study found significant effects on local economic activities and environmental conditions, confirming that refugee presence has consequences beyond humanitarian concerns. Its geographical relevance provides an important basis for the present study. However, its focus on labour-market and environmental outcomes means

that it did not systematically examine infrastructure, social facilities or the developmental contribution of humanitarian programmes. Thus, while it establishes that refugee settlement affects Ogoja, it leaves the specific infrastructure and social-development dimensions insufficiently examined.

Infrastructure and Social Service Provision

Kraler et al. (2024) examined social-service provision and refugee integration in Ethiopia and Ghana through qualitative interviews and focus-group discussions. The study found substantial differences in the distribution and quality of services between refugees and host populations, including cases where refugees had better access to pumped water than neighbouring hosts. Unlike studies emphasising positive spillovers, these findings demonstrate that refugee interventions may produce uneven benefits. This provides an important critical dimension for assessing not merely the existence of facilities but their accessibility and distribution among affected populations. However, the study did not assess the physical infrastructure and social-development effects of a specific UNHCR intervention in a Nigerian refugee-hosting town, leaving a clear contextual gap that the present study addresses.

More recently, UNHCR (2025) documented investments in infrastructure and services intended to benefit refugees and host communities in Nigeria, including livelihood facilities, a cooperative, child-friendly facilities, a police post and health facilities in Ogoja and surrounding settlements. The report indicates an institutional shift towards shared and development-oriented interventions. However, as an institutional account, it primarily documents programme activities and achievements rather than independently assessing beneficiaries' experiences or sustained outcomes. This creates an important distinction between reported programme outputs and empirically demonstrated community-level effects. The present study addresses this gap by assessing these interventions from the perspective of affected host communities.

Zhou et al. (2023) examined whether inclusive approaches to refugee hosting could produce development benefits for surrounding host communities in Uganda. Using longitudinal geospatial data on refugee settlements, schools, health facilities, roads and health-service utilisation from 2001 to 2020, the study found that communities closer to larger refugee settlements experienced improvements in access to public schools, health clinics, health-service utilisation and road density, without increased public hostility towards refugees. These findings suggest that refugee settlements can generate positive development spillovers where host-community needs are incorporated into humanitarian responses. However, the national-level geospatial approach provides limited insight into how specific organisations or programmes produce town-level outcomes. This limitation is relevant to Nigeria, where the contribution of individual interventions remains less established. The present study addresses this gap by focusing specifically on UNHCR interventions in Ogoja Town.

The literature reviewed demonstrates that refugee presence and humanitarian interventions can generate economic, infrastructural and social effects, but the evidence is neither uniform nor sufficiently contextualised. Studies from Uganda and Ethiopia highlight positive spillovers, while Kraler et al. (2024) demonstrate that benefits may be unevenly distributed. Ebong et al. (2020) confirms measurable effects in Ogoja but does not establish the developmental contribution of UNHCR interventions, while UNHCR (2025) documents interventions without independent assessment of their

outcomes. The literature therefore reveals three interconnected gaps: limited empirical evidence from Nigeria compared with East Africa; insufficient integration of infrastructure and social-development outcomes in Nigerian studies; and limited independent evidence on the combined contribution of UNHCR programmes to host-community infrastructure, social facilities and participation in Ogoja. The present study addresses these gaps by examining the extent to which UNHCR refugee programmes have contributed to infrastructure and social development within Ogoja Town.

Theoretical Framework

The Sustainable Livelihoods Theory/Framework (SLF) provides a suitable theoretical foundation for this study because it explains how individuals and communities draw on different resources and opportunities to sustain their well-being, respond to shocks and reduce vulnerability. Associated particularly with Chambers and Conway (1992) and subsequently developed by the Department for International Development (DFID, 1999), the framework identifies five broad forms of livelihood capital: human, social, physical, financial and natural capital. Within refugee-hosting settings, infrastructure and social facilities can be understood as important components of physical and social capital because they influence access to services, economic opportunities, social interaction and the capacity of communities to respond to prolonged displacement. The framework also recognises that livelihood outcomes are shaped by the wider vulnerability context, institutional arrangements, policies and people's ability to access and use available resources.

Previous research demonstrates the relevance of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to refugee contexts. Khasalamwa and Kweku (2021), for example, applied the framework to examine socio-economic spaces and livelihood strategies among South Sudanese refugees and host communities in northern Uganda. Drawing on a survey of 416 households and key-informant interviews, the study found that access to land, water, employment and other socio-economic resources was important for livelihood sustainability and local integration. At the same time, refugees continued to experience constraints in accessing some of these resources. The findings illustrate how access to livelihood assets can shape the capacity of both refugees and host populations to adapt to displacement and changing economic conditions.

Similarly, Ayalew et al. (2023) used the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to investigate the livelihood strategies of Eritrean and Somali refugees in Addis Ababa. Using in-depth interviews, key-informant interviews and focus-group discussions, the study found that refugees combined several sources of support, including humanitarian assistance, remittances, wage employment, self-employment and social networks. The findings demonstrate that refugee livelihoods rarely depend on a single resource; rather, households draw on multiple forms of capital and support systems to maintain their livelihoods. This reinforces the usefulness of the framework for analysing refugee settings where access to services, infrastructure, social relationships and economic opportunities interact to shape development outcomes.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is particularly relevant to the present study because UNHCR programmes in Ogoja can be interpreted as interventions that potentially strengthen the livelihood asset base of refugees and host communities. Newly constructed or upgraded infrastructure represents physical capital, while improvements in health, education and related social facilities can strengthen human and

social capital. Community engagement can also enhance social networks, participation and collective capacity. From this perspective, the significance of UNHCR programmes extends beyond the physical provision of facilities to the opportunities and capabilities that such facilities create for community members. The framework therefore allows the study to examine not only whether interventions have been implemented, but also whether they have expanded access to resources, services and opportunities for refugees and host residents. It consequently provides an appropriate theoretical basis for analysing the relationship between UNHCR programmes, infrastructure provision and broader social-development outcomes in Ogoja Town. However, the SLF has been critiqued for its limited attention to power dynamics and structural constraints. This study acknowledges that UNHCR interventions operate within broader political, institutional, and resource constraints that shape their effectiveness

Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study was conducted in Ogoja Town, Ogoja Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Ogoja is situated in the northern part of Cross River State and functions as an important administrative and commercial centre within the region. The area experiences a tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons, and agriculture and related economic activities remain important to the livelihoods of the local population. Ogoja is particularly relevant to this study because it has become a major location for the reception and settlement of Cameroonian refugees following the escalation of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. The refugee situation in the area dates from 2018, when Cameroonian refugees were relocated to the Adagom settlement, with UNHCR and Nigerian authorities subsequently coordinating protection and humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, 2018).

Over time, refugee settlement has expanded beyond Adagom 1 to include Adagom 3 and Ukende, resulting in sustained interaction between refugee populations and neighbouring host communities. UNHCR maintains a sub-office in Ogoja and collaborates with government agencies and other partners to provide protection, livelihood assistance, social services and infrastructure for refugees and host populations. Reported interventions include a police post and staff quarters at Adagom 1, facilities supporting livelihood activities, refugee–host cooperatives and a 3.5-km access road connecting Adagom with farmland used by both refugees and members of the host community (UNHCR, 2025). UNHCR has also supported entrepreneurship and vocational training involving refugees and host residents in Adagom, alongside newer initiatives aimed at strengthening economic inclusion and self-reliance (UNHCR, 2024, 2025). The combination of prolonged refugee presence, interaction with host populations and sustained humanitarian and development interventions makes Ogoja an appropriate setting for assessing whether UNHCR programmes have translated into improvements in infrastructure and social development.

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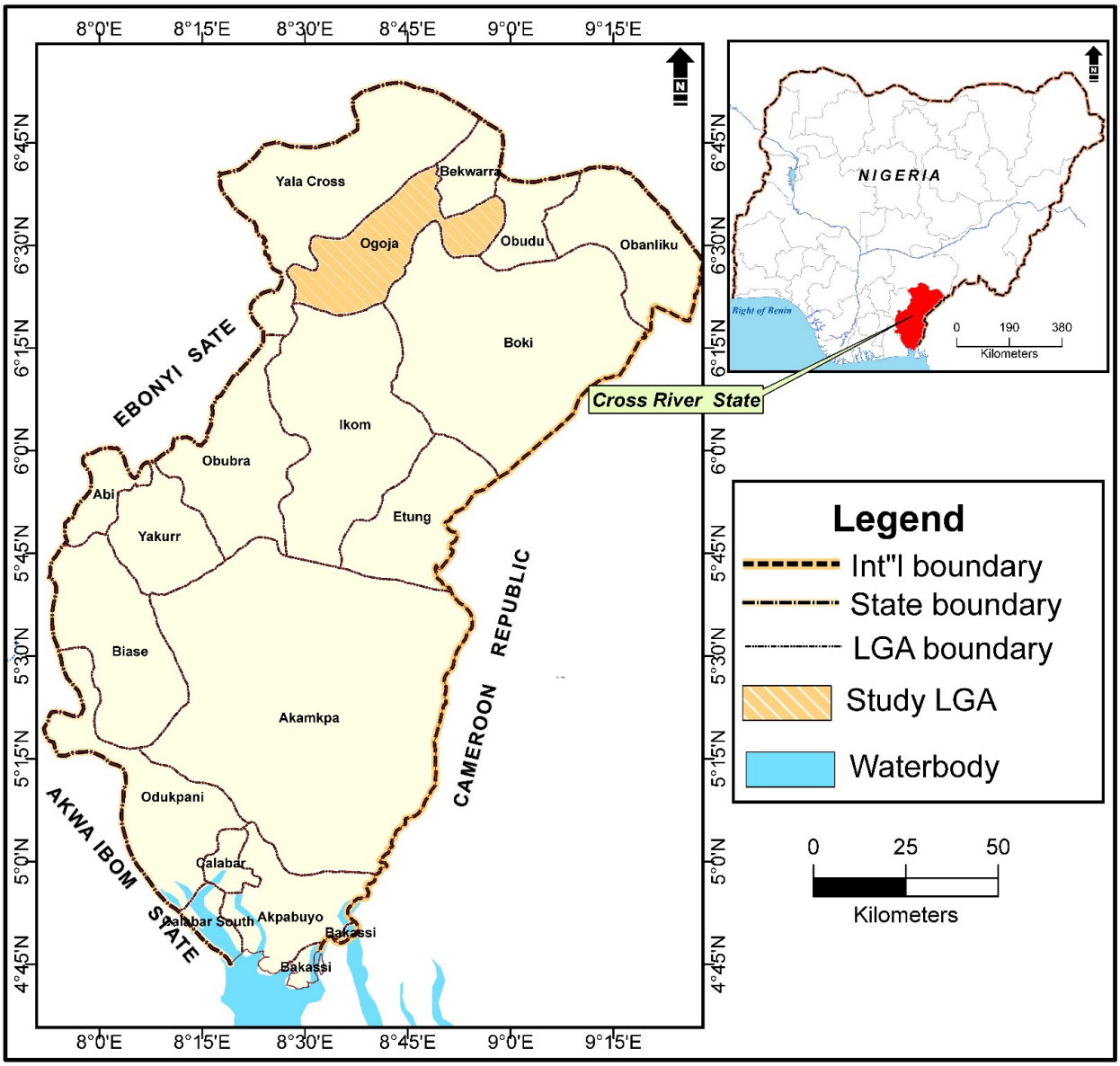


Figure 1: Map of Cross River State showing Ogoja LGA

Methods

Primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire administered to adult refugees and members of the host communities across the selected refugee settlements in Ogoja Town. A multi-stage sampling approach was used to identify and select respondents. Ogoja was purposively selected because of its established role as a major location for hosting Cameroonian refugees. Based on information obtained from relevant refugee-management authorities, three settlements—Adagom 1, Adagom 3 and Ukende - were selected for the study. The populations of the three settlements were 2,500, 2,000 and 1,150 respectively, resulting in a combined population of 5,650. From this population, a sample of 359 respondents was determined and proportionately distributed across the three settlements. Accordingly, 159 respondents were selected from Adagom 1, 127 from Adagom 3 and 73 from Ukende.

Following the proportional allocation, systematic sampling was used to select households from the available sampling frames. Every second household was selected after establishing a random starting point, thereby providing a consistent procedure for household selection across the settlements. Within the selected households, the questionnaire was administered face-to-face by trained field assistants. The field assistants were able to communicate in English, French and relevant local languages, which facilitated interaction with respondents from different linguistic backgrounds and reduced potential communication difficulties during data collection. The questionnaire was organised into six sections. These covered respondents' demographic characteristics; access to UNHCR services; infrastructure; social integration and self-reliance; socio-economic effects; and perceptions of the effectiveness and sustainability of UNHCR programmes.

Following fieldwork, the completed questionnaires were examined for completeness and consistency before being coded and entered into statistical software for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondents' characteristics and describe the distribution of responses relating to UNHCR programmes, infrastructure and social development. Inferential statistical techniques were subsequently applied to examine relationships among the study variables, assess differences where appropriate and test the study hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Spearman's rank-order correlation was specifically employed to determine the relationship between the duration of refugee stay and infrastructural development. Chi-square tests were used where appropriate to examine associations between categorical variables, while regression analysis was applied to assess the extent to which UNHCR interventions were associated with infrastructure and social-development outcomes. The choice of each statistical procedure was guided by the nature and measurement level of the variables being analysed. Findings were presented in tables and interpreted in accordance with the study objectives and hypotheses.

Results and Discussions

Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of Refugees

The age distribution presented in Table 1 shows that the respondents were largely concentrated within the younger and economically active age groups. Respondents aged 18–30 years constituted the largest category, with 116 individuals (40.3%), followed by those aged 31–45 years, who accounted for 74 respondents (25.7%). Together, these two categories comprised 190 respondents (66.0%), indicating that approximately two-thirds of the respondents were within the active working-age population. This age structure is important for understanding the livelihood and development needs of the refugee population because a relatively large working-age group may increase demand for employment, skills development and income-generating opportunities.

Respondents below 18 years accounted for 42 individuals (14.6%), highlighting the presence of children and dependants within refugee households and the corresponding need for education, healthcare and other social services. Those aged 46–60 years represented 34 respondents (11.8%), while respondents above 60 years constituted the smallest group, with 22 individuals (7.6%). Overall, the distribution points to a predominantly youthful refugee population, with relatively fewer older persons. Such a structure may create both pressures and opportunities: households may face dependency-related demands where children and older persons rely on working-

age members, while the sizeable working-age population also provides potential for greater labour-force participation when suitable employment, vocational training and livelihood support are available.

Table 1: Age of Respondents

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<18 years	42	14.6
18–30 years	116	40.3
31–45 years	74	25.7
46–60 years	34	11.8
>60 years	22	7.6
Total	288	100.0

Source: Author's Analysis, 2026.

Educational Attainment of Respondents

The educational profile presented in Figure 2 indicates that most respondents had attained either primary or secondary education, while relatively few had progressed to tertiary or vocational training. Secondary education was the most common level of attainment, reported by 134 respondents (46.5%). This suggests that almost half of the respondents possessed some level of formal education that could provide a foundation for further skills development and participation in semi-skilled employment.

Primary education was reported by 64 respondents (22.2%), while 48 respondents (16.7%) had no formal education. Combined, these two categories account for 112 respondents (38.9%), indicating that a substantial proportion of the respondents had relatively limited formal educational qualifications. This situation may restrict access to formal employment and other opportunities that require higher levels of educational or technical competence. It also underscores the importance of adult education, vocational training and other forms of skills development within refugee-support programmes.

Only 40 respondents (13.9%) reported tertiary education, while just 2 respondents (0.7%) indicated that they had received vocational training. The relatively small proportion with tertiary or vocational qualifications suggests that advanced and employment-oriented skills remain limited among the respondents. Rather than indicating simply a weakness in educational attainment, this pattern points to a potential gap between the existing skills of the refugee population and the requirements of the labour market in host communities. Strengthening vocational education and livelihood-oriented training could therefore improve the capacity of refugees to take advantage of available economic opportunities and reduce prolonged dependence on humanitarian assistance.

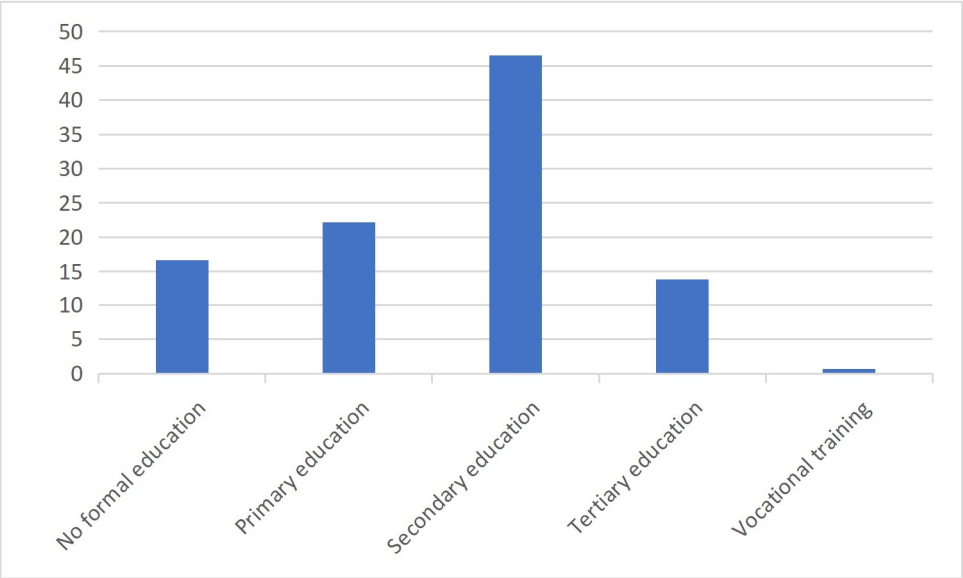


Figure 2: Education Level of Respondents

Source: Author's Analysis, 2026

Source of Livelihood

The livelihood distribution in Table 2 provides further evidence of the economic circumstances of the respondents. Farming was the dominant livelihood activity, involving 168 respondents (58.3%), while trading was reported by 78 respondents (27.1%). Artisan work accounted for 20 respondents (6.9%), and only 4 respondents (1.4%) reported government employment. A further 18 respondents (6.3%) depended primarily on NGO support or foreign aid. The concentration of respondents in farming and trading is notable. Together, these two activities accounted for 246 respondents (85.4%), indicating that most respondents depended on informal or relatively low-income livelihood activities. Such dependence may expose households to fluctuations in agricultural productivity, market conditions and other economic uncertainties. The very small proportion engaged in government employment also suggests that access to stable formal-sector employment was limited among the respondents. At the same time, the presence of respondents in farming, trading and artisan activities indicates an existing livelihood base that could potentially be strengthened through access to finance, markets, infrastructure, skills training and other forms of economic support.

Table 2: Source of Livelihood

Source of Livelihood	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	168	58.3
Trading	78	27.1
Artisan work	20	6.9
Government employment	4	1.4
NGO/foreign aid	18	6.3
Total	288	100.0

Source: Author's Analysis, 2026.

UNHCR's Refugee Resettlement Programmes Implemented

The pattern of services reported by respondents in Table 3 indicates that health-related interventions were the most prominent form of community engagement. Health centres were identified by 106 respondents (36.8%), while 68 respondents (23.6%) reported benefiting from boreholes and water-supply interventions. Schools accounted for 40 respondents (13.9%), roads for 36 respondents (12.5%), while 38 respondents (13.2%) indicated that they had benefited across all the listed sectors. The findings suggest that health and water infrastructure were particularly visible components of the refugee resettlement programme. This emphasis is understandable in a refugee-hosting environment, where access to safe water and healthcare is closely connected to immediate welfare and public health. However, the comparatively lower proportions associated with schools and roads point to possible differences in the scale or visibility of interventions across sectors. Roads, in particular, have implications beyond transportation because their condition can affect access to schools, health facilities, markets and livelihood opportunities. Similarly, inadequate educational infrastructure may constrain longer-term human-capital development.

The finding is consistent with UNHCR (2022), which reported that emergency and basic-service infrastructure often receives considerable attention in refugee-hosting communities. While such interventions are essential, the present findings suggest that a balanced approach that combines immediate service provision with longer-term investments in education, transport and economic infrastructure may be important for sustainable development in Ogoja.

Table 3: Services Benefited under the Resettlement Programme

Type of Community Engagement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Health Centers	106	36.8
Boreholes and Water Supply	68	23.6
Schools	40	13.9
Roads	36	12.5
All Sectors	38	13.2
Total	288	100.0

Source: Author's Analysis, 2026.

Duration of Stay and Infrastructural Development

The result presented in Table 4 shows a strong positive relationship between duration of refugee stay and infrastructural development, with a Spearman's rho of 0.68. The coefficient indicates a substantial positive association: respondents who had stayed longer in the refugee-hosting environment tended to report greater access to or exposure to infrastructural development. The relationship was statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p < .05$), providing sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship. The result should, however, be interpreted as an association rather than proof that longer refugee residence directly causes infrastructural development. A possible explanation is that infrastructure and services are introduced progressively as refugee situations become more established. Refugees who have remained in the area for longer periods may therefore have had more opportunities to encounter or benefit from successive interventions than more recent

arrivals. The finding also suggests that the timing of programme implementation may influence beneficiaries' experiences of infrastructure provision.

The pattern is particularly relevant when the different service categories are considered. Health centres accounted for 36.8% of reported services, while 13.2% of respondents reported benefits across all sectors. Respondents with longer periods of residence, particularly those in the 5–6 years and more than 6 years categories, were more likely to have experienced successive rounds of programme implementation. This may reflect the phased nature of humanitarian and development interventions, in which infrastructure such as boreholes, schools and health facilities is introduced or upgraded over time.

The finding is broadly comparable with evidence from other refugee-hosting contexts. In Uganda, Betts et al. (2019) reported that longer-term refugee presence and progressive integration policies were associated with improved access to land and services. Similarly, Crawford et al. (2021) found that access to infrastructure and employment opportunities in Ethiopia could improve as refugees interacted with and navigated institutional systems over time. Kenya presents a contrasting situation, where encampment policies can restrict refugees' access to wider economic and social opportunities, thereby weakening the possibility of progressive integration (Omata & Kaplan, 2013). The Ogoja finding therefore suggests a relatively strong relationship between duration of residence and infrastructural access, while also drawing attention to the need to ensure that recent arrivals are not disadvantaged while longer-term interventions are being implemented.

Table 4: Correlation between Duration of Stay and Infrastructural Development

Variables	Spearman's rho (ρ)	Correlation (%)	Significance (p-value)
Duration of Stay × Infrastructural Development	0.68	68%	$p < .05$

Source: Author's Analysis, 2026.

New Infrastructure Linked to the UN Refugee Resettlement Programme

The results in Table 5 indicate that schools were the most frequently reported form of new infrastructure associated with the UN refugee resettlement programme in Ogoja. A total of 118 respondents (41.0%) identified schools, suggesting that education-related infrastructure was particularly visible to respondents. This finding is consistent with the importance of education in supporting the longer-term well-being and integration of displaced populations.

A further 66 respondents (22.9%) reported that all the listed infrastructure such as schools, health centres, roads and water facilities had been developed or upgraded. This indicates that a considerable proportion of respondents experienced interventions across multiple sectors rather than in a single area. However, the distribution also shows that such comprehensive infrastructure development was not uniformly experienced by all respondents.

Health centres were identified by 52 respondents (18.1%), while 46 respondents (16.0%) reported boreholes or water-supply infrastructure. Roads were identified by only 6

respondents (2.1%), making transportation infrastructure the least reported category. The particularly low road figure suggests that road development may have received considerably less attention than social infrastructure. This has wider implications because the usefulness of schools, health centres, water facilities and livelihood opportunities can be affected by the ease with which residents can reach them.

Overall, the distribution points to greater visibility of social infrastructure, especially education and health, than of economic and transportation infrastructure. The pattern suggests that the programme has contributed more visibly to human-capital and basic-service infrastructure than to physical connectivity. While investments in schools and health facilities can directly improve social welfare, inadequate road infrastructure may continue to constrain market access, mobility and economic integration for both refugees and host communities.

Table 5: New Infrastructure Linked to the UN Refugee Resettlement Programme

Infrastructure type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Schools	118	41.0
Health centers	52	18.1
Roads	6	2.1
Boreholes / water supply	46	16.0
All of the above	66	22.9
Total	288	100.0

Source: Author's Analysis, 2026.

Distribution of Infrastructure Development across Communities

The results in Table 6 indicate a broadly similar pattern of infrastructure development across Adagon 1, Adagon 2 and Ukende. Schools represented the largest category in each of the three communities, accounting for 40.6% in Adagon 1, 41.2% in Adagon 2 and 41.4% in Ukende. The differences are very small, with less than one percentage point separating the three communities. This consistency suggests that educational infrastructure was a prominent component of the programme across the study locations rather than being concentrated in one particular community.

Health centres were the next most frequently reported category, accounting for 18.0% in Adagon 1, 17.6% in Adagon 2 and 19.0% in Ukende. Again, the differences are relatively small. Ukende recorded the highest proportion at 19.0%, which may reflect either greater visibility of healthcare interventions or a stronger perceived need for such services in the community. Nevertheless, the relatively close distribution across the three locations indicates that healthcare interventions were not heavily concentrated in a single settlement.

Boreholes and water-supply infrastructure accounted for 15.6% in Adagon 1, 15.7% in Adagon 2 and 17.2% in Ukende. The close clustering of these figures suggests a broadly comparable pattern of water-related interventions across the communities. The somewhat higher proportion recorded in Ukende may be associated with differences in local water needs or respondents' exposure to water-related projects. The importance of water infrastructure is further underscored by evidence from other refugee settings. In Jordan, for example, the concentration of Syrian refugees has been associated with pressure on water and sanitation infrastructure (Verme, 2023). This comparison highlights the need for

infrastructure provision in Ogoja to keep pace with population needs if pressure on existing facilities is to be avoided.

Roads remained the least frequently reported form of infrastructure across all three communities. They accounted for 2.3% in Adagon 1, 2.0% in Adagon 2 and 1.7% in Ukende. The consistently low figures suggest that limited road development is not restricted to one settlement but represents a broader feature of the intervention pattern. This finding is important because road connectivity can influence access to markets, schools, healthcare and livelihood opportunities. The limited attention to roads may therefore reduce some of the wider economic benefits that could otherwise arise from investments in social infrastructure.

The category "all of the above," representing respondents who reported development or upgrading across schools, health centres, roads and water facilities, accounted for 23.4% in Adagon 1, 23.5% in Adagon 2 and 20.7% in Ukende. Adagon 1 and Adagon 2 therefore recorded almost identical proportions, while Ukende had a somewhat lower figure. Although the difference is not large, it suggests that comprehensive, multi-sectoral infrastructure development may have been slightly less evident in Ukende than in the other two communities.

Taken together, the findings in Table 6 suggest a relatively consistent pattern of intervention across the three communities, with education remaining the most prominent infrastructure category, followed by health and water facilities. The consistency is important because it indicates that the observed sectoral pattern is not simply the result of conditions in one settlement. At the same time, the consistently low reporting of road infrastructure points to an area where future interventions could complement existing investments. Strengthening connectivity alongside schools, health centres and water facilities could improve residents' ability to access services and participate in economic activities, thereby making infrastructure investments more supportive of broader social development.

Table 6: New Infrastructure Linked to the UN Refugee Resettlement Programme

Infrastructure Type	Adagon 1 Freq	Adagon 1 (%)	Adagon 2 Freq	Adagon 2 (%)	Ukende Freq	Ukende (%)	Total
Schools	52	40.6	42	41.2	24	41.4	118
Health Centers	23	18.0	18	17.6	11	19.0	52
Roads	3	2.3	2	2.0	1	1.7	6
Boreholes / Water Supply	20	15.6	16	15.7	10	17.2	46
All of the Above	30	23.4	24	23.5	12	20.7	66
Total	128	100.0	102	100.0	58	100.0	28

Source: Author's Analysis, 2026.

Impact of UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Programmes on Infrastructure

The findings presented in Table 7 indicate that improvements in school infrastructure were experienced by 132 respondents (45.8%), while 156 respondents (54.2%) reported no such improvement. Although schools were the most frequently identified type of new infrastructure associated with the programme in Table 4.11, the findings suggest that access to these improvements was not widespread among respondents. The relatively close distribution between those who reported

improvements and those who did not may indicate that school-related interventions were concentrated in particular locations, especially areas closer to refugee settlements. This pattern may be associated with the tendency of humanitarian interventions to prioritise locations where refugee populations are concentrated. The finding therefore suggests that investment in educational infrastructure does not automatically result in equivalent benefits across the wider host community. More inclusive planning may be necessary to ensure that improvements in schools respond to the needs of both refugee and host populations and do not create perceptions of unequal access.

The results for health-centre improvements show an even more pronounced difference. Only 74 respondents (25.7%) indicated that they had benefited from improvements in health centres, whereas 214 respondents (74.3%) reported no benefit. Although health centres featured prominently among the infrastructure associated with the refugee resettlement programme, the relatively low proportion reporting direct benefits suggests that the reach of these improvements may have been limited. One possible explanation is that some interventions may have focused on improving the capacity of existing facilities, providing equipment or strengthening services in locations with high refugee concentrations rather than expanding access across the wider host population. Regardless of the specific form of intervention, the finding points to a gap between the existence of health-related investments and the extent to which host-community members perceive themselves as beneficiaries. Expanding health infrastructure and integrating refugee-related health interventions with the needs of host communities would therefore be important for improving equitable access to healthcare.

Road infrastructure recorded the lowest level of reported benefit in Table 5. Only 14 respondents (4.9%) reported benefiting from road improvements, compared with 274 respondents (95.1%) who reported no improvement. The magnitude of this difference indicates that road development was considerably less visible or accessible to respondents than other forms of infrastructure. This finding is significant because road connectivity influences access to markets, health facilities, schools, farms and other essential services. Limited road infrastructure may consequently reduce the wider developmental benefits that can be obtained from investments in education, healthcare and water supply. The finding also reinforces the result in Table 3, where roads accounted for only 2.1% of the infrastructure identified by respondents. Road development therefore emerges as one of the clearest areas requiring greater attention if refugee-hosting interventions are to support longer-term economic and social development.

The pattern for water infrastructure is also indicative of limited coverage. A total of 78 respondents (27.1%) reported benefiting from improvements in boreholes, while 210 respondents (72.9%) reported no benefit. Although the proportion benefiting from water improvements was higher than that recorded for roads and health centres, a clear majority of respondents still reported no improvement. This suggests that water interventions may have been concentrated in particular settlements or locations rather than implemented at a scale sufficient to cover the wider host population. Since reliable access to safe water has implications for health, household welfare and daily economic activities, limited coverage may continue to place pressure on existing water sources. Expanding and maintaining water infrastructure would therefore benefit both refugee and host populations and could contribute to greater resilience within refugee-hosting communities.

Overall, the findings in Table 5 show that the impact of UNHCR refugee resettlement programmes on social facilities has been uneven across sectors. School improvements recorded the highest proportion of reported benefits at 45.8%, followed by water infrastructure at 27.1%, health centres at 25.7% and roads at only 4.9%. The results indicate that while the programme has contributed to improvements in important social facilities, these interventions have not translated into broad-based access for all respondents. The evidence therefore points to the need for a more balanced approach in which humanitarian investments address immediate refugee needs while also strengthening the infrastructure and services upon which host communities depend.

Table 7: Improved Social Facilities in Host Communities

Benefited Improvement	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
School	No	156	54.2
	Yes	132	45.8
Total		288	100.0
Health centre	No	214	74.3
	Yes	74	25.7
Total		288	100.0
Roads	No	274	95.1
	Yes	14	4.9
Total		288	100.0
Borehole	No	210	72.9
	Yes	78	27.1
Total		288	100.0

Source: Author's Analysis, 2026.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Programme has contributed to infrastructure and social development in Ogoja Town, particularly through interventions involving education, healthcare and water-related facilities. The findings indicate that these interventions have improved access to basic services for some refugees and members of the surrounding host communities. However, the benefits have not been experienced uniformly across the study population. The relatively low proportions of respondents reporting improvements in health centres, roads and water facilities, in particular, suggest that important gaps remain in the coverage of basic infrastructure within host communities. The evidence therefore indicates that the developmental contribution of refugee interventions is present but uneven, reinforcing the need to address host-community infrastructure alongside the immediate needs of refugees. The study also concludes that the duration of refugee presence is positively associated with infrastructural development. The observed Spearman's rho of 0.68, which was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicates a strong positive relationship between length of stay and reported infrastructural development. This suggests that infrastructure and service benefits may accumulate as refugee situations become more established and interventions are implemented over time. However, the relationship should be understood as an association rather than evidence that duration of stay directly causes infrastructure development.

The sustainability and effectiveness of these interventions also depend on the quality of collaboration among UNHCR, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, local authorities and the communities concerned. Greater participation by host populations in identifying priorities, implementing projects and monitoring facilities could improve the relevance and sustainability of interventions. The study contributes empirical evidence from Ogoja to the wider literature on refugee-hosting communities by demonstrating that humanitarian interventions can have development implications beyond immediate refugee protection. At the same time, the findings show that the presence of infrastructure does not necessarily mean that benefits are equally accessible to refugees and host populations. Refugee-management policies should therefore increasingly adopt an inclusive development perspective that considers the welfare of refugees alongside the longer-term infrastructure and social-service needs of host communities.

This study contributes to the literature on refugee-hosting communities in Nigeria by providing the first systematic empirical assessment of UNHCR interventions on infrastructure and social development in Ogoja Town, and by establishing a statistically significant relationship between duration of stay and perceived infrastructural development. However, a major limitation of the study is its reliance on self-reported perceptions of infrastructure and social development, which may be subject to recall bias. Additionally, the study was conducted in only one LGA, limiting the generalizability of findings to other refugee-hosting contexts in Nigeria.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed: Given that 95.1% reported that they had not benefited from road improvements, greater attention should be given to road infrastructure. UNHCR, government agencies and other development partners should therefore increase investment in the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of roads serving refugee-hosting communities. Improved road connectivity would facilitate access to schools, health facilities, farms, markets and other economic and social opportunities. Health infrastructure and services should be strengthened. Although health centres accounted for 18.1% of the new infrastructure identified by respondents, only 25.7% reported benefiting from improvements in health centres, compared with 74.3% who reported no improvement. Additional investment should therefore be directed towards health facilities, equipment, staffing and maintenance. Where possible, refugee-focused health interventions should be integrated with existing community health systems so that improvements can serve both refugees and host populations.

Water and sanitation interventions should be expanded. Boreholes and water supply represented 16.0% of the new infrastructure associated with the programme, yet 72.9% of respondents reported that they had not benefited from improvements in boreholes. UNHCR and relevant partners should therefore increase the coverage of functional water facilities and establish sustainable maintenance arrangements involving local communities. Expanding access to reliable water would contribute to improved household welfare, public health and community resilience. Educational infrastructure should be expanded and maintained. Schools constituted the largest category of new infrastructure identified by respondents, accounting for 41.0% of responses. Nevertheless, 54.2% of respondents reported no improvement in schools within their communities. Additional classrooms, learning facilities, educational materials and rehabilitation of existing schools should therefore be prioritised to

accommodate the needs of both refugee and host-community populations.

Host communities should have a stronger role in programme planning and implementation. Since the benefits of interventions varied considerably across infrastructure sectors, UNHCR and its implementing partners should involve community leaders, residents and other relevant stakeholders in identifying priorities. Participatory planning would help ensure that projects reflect locally identified needs, improve community ownership and reduce perceptions that refugee interventions benefit refugees at the expense of host populations.

Infrastructure interventions should be planned as part of longer-term development strategies. The positive relationship between duration of refugee stays and infrastructural development suggests that prolonged displacement requires interventions that move beyond short-term humanitarian assistance. UNHCR, government authorities and development partners should therefore coordinate infrastructure planning with local development priorities so that facilities created in response to displacement remain useful and sustainable over the longer term.

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