



Evaluating the effectiveness of existing urban policies in meeting the needs of women migrants in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study evaluates the effectiveness of existing urban policies in meeting the needs of women migrants in Nigeria between 2014 and 2024. Women migrants constitute a critical yet marginalized segment of Nigeria's urban population, contributing significantly to informal economies and community development. Despite this, they continue to face barriers such as inadequate housing, limited access to healthcare, insecure livelihoods, and weak participation in urban governance. The study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative surveys of 400–600 women migrants across Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt with qualitative interviews involving community leaders and NGO representatives. A stratified sampling technique ensures balanced representation across formal and informal settlements, while descriptive and inferential analyses are employed to identify policy gaps and assess the inclusivity of current frameworks. Findings reveal that although national instruments like the National Migration Policy (2015) recognize gender sensitivity, implementation remains fragmented and underfunded. Women migrants continue to experience exclusion from essential urban services, weak legal protection, and minimal involvement in decision-making processes. The study identifies key deficiencies, including the absence of gender-disaggregated data, poor coordination among implementing agencies, and neglect of informal settlements in urban planning. The research concludes that sustainable urban development in Nigeria requires gender-responsive urban governance, emphasizing coordinated institutional reforms, participatory planning, and economic empowerment initiatives for women migrants. It recommends stronger local government engagement, inter-ministerial collaboration, and integration of migrant women's voices into urban policy formulation and evaluation. Ultimately, the study underscores that inclusive, well-funded, and enforceable urban policies are vital to transforming women migrants from marginalized urban dwellers into active agents of social and economic change.

Keywords: Urban policy, women migrants, sustainable urban development, and mixed methods

Introduction

Migration has long been an essential aspect of human society, influencing social structures, economic systems, and the growth of urban spaces. In Nigeria, migration trends have evolved considerably in recent decades, particularly through internal rural-to-urban movements. Factors such as economic restructuring, rural insecurity, and climate-induced challenges have intensified migration into major urban centers including Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt (Adewale, 2017) [5]. Since 2014, these dynamics have accelerated, contributing to rapid urban growth and demographic transformations. Notably, women have emerged as active participants in these migratory flows. Contrary to traditional assumptions that portray men as the main migrants, recent studies indicate an increasing feminization of migration in Nigeria (Okonkwo, 2020). [55] Women migrate for diverse reasons—seeking employment, education, family reunification, safety from gender-based violence, and escape from environmental stress (IOM, 2019). Despite their growing numbers and contributions, women migrants' experiences remain underrepresented in both academic research and policy formulation.

Nigeria's urbanization is often marked by unplanned expansion, infrastructural inadequacies, and weak governance, which disproportionately affect migrants—especially women. Many female migrants reside in informal settlements with limited access to essential services such as healthcare, housing, and sanitation. The absence of gender-

sensitive urban policies worsens women's marginalization in employment, political participation, and decision-making processes (UN-Habitat, 2022). [71] Furthermore, entrenched patriarchal norms and systemic inequalities hinder women's full integration into urban life. Women migrants play vital roles in urban economies through informal activities such as street trading, domestic work, and small-scale enterprises, yet their contributions remain undervalued and largely ignored in formal urban planning processes (Ogunyankin, 2021). [53] Additionally, through social networks and community organizations, many women migrants build resilience and social support systems in marginalized neighborhoods—important but often overlooked aspects of sustainable urban development.

Sustainable urban development, as articulated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), promotes inclusion, equality, and justice. However, Nigeria's existing urban policy frameworks show limited alignment with these principles, often failing to address the gender-specific vulnerabilities and capacities of women migrants (UNDP, 2023) [69]. Between 2014 and 2024, Nigeria has experienced major socio-political shifts, including economic recessions, insurgency, farmer-herder conflicts, and climate-induced disasters such as flooding and desertification (NBS, 2020). Each of these phenomena has gendered consequences that shape women's mobility, livelihoods, and security

differently than men's. For example, the displacement of women by the Boko Haram insurgency underscores the urgent need for gender-responsive urban policies. Many displaced women migrate to urban areas for refuge but continue to face systemic exclusion and economic marginalization (Amnesty International, 2021)^[10].

Similarly, young women who migrate for education or employment often confront exploitative labor practices and unsafe living conditions. Although urban centers can offer women opportunities for empowerment and independence, these benefits are unevenly distributed across social class, education, ethnicity, and age. Educated women may access formal employment, while less-educated women are confined to precarious informal work without protection or benefits (Aina, 2019)^[8]. Despite these challenges, Nigeria's urban planning and governance systems often adopt gender-neutral or gender-blind approaches that perpetuate existing inequalities. The lack of gender-disaggregated data in migration and urban policy frameworks further limits the development of inclusive interventions (World Bank, 2021)^[74].

Gender-responsive migration research thus becomes critical for fostering equitable urban development. Women's agency in shaping urban environments is evident in their grassroots organizing, entrepreneurship, and community leadership (Elias & Omojola, 2020)^[25]. However, such contributions are rarely acknowledged or supported in urban policy implementation. The persistence of gender-insensitive policies hinders progress toward sustainable urban growth. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted these gaps, as women in informal economies and low-income housing were disproportionately affected by lockdowns, job losses, and increased domestic violence (UN Women, 2021).^[67]

In summary, Nigeria's rapid urbanization and rising rates of female migration have outpaced the capacity of existing urban policies to address women's needs effectively. Current frameworks remain largely gender-blind, failing to incorporate women's voices or recognize their roles in shaping urban sustainability. This misalignment undermines efforts toward achieving the SDGs, particularly gender equality and sustainable cities (UN-Habitat, 2022).^[71] Evaluating the effectiveness of existing urban policies in addressing the needs of women migrants is therefore crucial. It provides insights into how Nigeria can design inclusive, gender-responsive urban strategies that not only empower women but also advance sustainable urban development.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Migration

Migration refers to the movement of individuals from one geographical area to another, either within national boundaries (internal migration) or across international borders (international migration), often undertaken with the intention of residing temporarily or permanently. It is recognized as both a demographic and socio-economic phenomenon shaped by multiple factors such as employment prospects, education, insecurity, environmental stress, and family considerations (Adepoju, 2023; IOM, 2024)^[4]. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2024)^[34] defines migration as "the movement of persons away from their usual place of residence, either across an international border or within a state, regardless of the person's legal status, cause, or duration of the

movement." This inclusive definition underscores the diversity of migration experiences, ranging from voluntary movements motivated by better living conditions to forced displacements driven by conflict, persecution, or environmental crises. Migration is increasingly viewed not as a singular event but as a continuous and multidimensional process that intersects with political, economic, cultural, and environmental dynamics (Castles, Haas & Miller, 2022)^[17]. Theoretical perspectives such as the push-pull framework, world-systems theory, and the new economics of labor migration provide insight into how global inequalities and interconnected systems influence population movements across regions (De Haas, 2023)^[21]. Within the Nigerian context, internal migration—especially rural-to-urban migration—has become a central driver of urbanization, with women constituting a growing proportion of these movements. Contemporary scholarship also situates migration within the discourse of human rights, inclusion, and sustainable development, emphasizing migrants' dignity, protection, and contributions to host communities (UN DESA, 2024; Adepoju, 2023)^[4, 66]. As such, migration is not only a demographic trend but also a key dimension of social transformation that demands responsive and inclusive urban policies, particularly for women migrants whose experiences reflect both vulnerability and resilience in rapidly urbanizing environments.

Urban Policies

Urban policies refer to the collection of strategies, laws, programs, and institutional frameworks developed by governments and stakeholders to guide the growth, organization, and functioning of cities. These policies are designed to manage urbanization processes, improve living conditions, promote social inclusion, and ensure the sustainable development of urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2022).^[71] According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, urban policy provides a framework for addressing issues such as housing, transportation, land use, environmental management, and social services in a coordinated and equitable manner. It serves as a vital tool for translating national development goals into local action and ensuring that cities become inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. Urban policies operate at multiple levels—national, regional, and local—and often reflect a country's broader socio-economic and political priorities. In developing nations such as Nigeria, urban policy frameworks are particularly significant due to the rapid pace of urbanization and the resulting challenges of informal settlements, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, and social inequality (Akinmolayan & Olayiwola, 2021)^[9]. Effective urban policies integrate spatial planning, economic development, and social inclusion, ensuring that urban growth does not exacerbate poverty or gender disparities. Contemporary scholars argue that urban policies must be participatory and gender-responsive to address the diverse needs of city residents (World Bank, 2021; UNDP, 2023).^[74]^[69] For instance, women, migrants, and marginalized groups often experience cities differently due to unequal access to resources, security, and opportunities. Gender-sensitive urban policies therefore seek to incorporate the voices and lived experiences of these groups in planning and decision-making (UN Women, 2022).^[68] Moreover, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly SDG 11, which aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and

sustainable emphasize the importance of integrated urban governance that prioritizes human development alongside economic and environmental sustainability (UN DESA, 2024).^[66] In Nigeria, urban policy implementation has historically been challenged by weak institutional capacity, inadequate data, and limited coordination among government agencies (Adewale, 2020)^[6]. However, recent initiatives such as the National Urban Development Policy (2021) highlight a growing recognition of the need for inclusive, gender-sensitive, and environmentally sustainable approaches to urban planning. Such policies aim to balance economic growth with social justice and environmental protection, ensuring that cities become engines of equitable development rather than centers of exclusion.

Theoretical Framework

Urbanization and Sustainable Development Theories

Urbanization refers to the increasing concentration of populations in cities and towns, driven by migration, natural population growth, and economic transformation (Pacione, 2009)^[57]. It is a complex process that reshapes social, economic, and environmental landscapes, especially in developing countries like Nigeria (Davis, 2006)^[20]. Theories of urbanization explain the causes, patterns, and consequences of urban growth, ranging from classic models such as the concentric zone theory by Burgess (1925)^[15] to contemporary approaches emphasizing globalization and networks (Sassen, 2001).^[61] Urbanization theories highlight the economic pull factors of cities, including employment opportunities, services, and infrastructure, which attract migrants (Todaro, 1969).^[63] The process also reflects social dynamics, where rural-urban migrants seek improved living standards but face challenges such as housing shortages and informal settlements (UN-Habitat, 2016).^[70] Theories such as the Dual Economy model (Lewis, 1954)^[38] explain how urban economies grow alongside stagnant rural sectors, reinforcing migration flows. Sustainable development, seeks to meet present needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs. It integrates economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (WCED, 1987). Theories of sustainable development emphasize the balance between these three pillars, promoting practices that ensure long-term urban resilience and well-being (Meadows *et al.*, 1972)^[42].

In the context of urbanization, sustainable development theories argue that rapid city growth must be managed to avoid environmental degradation, social inequality, and economic instability (Beatley, 2000).^[13] Concepts like "smart growth" advocate for compact, transit-oriented urban forms that reduce sprawl and conserve resources (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000)^[24]. Similarly, the New Urbanism movement emphasizes walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use development, and community participation (Congress for the New Urbanism, 1996).^[18] Urban political ecology adds a critical perspective by analyzing power relations and environmental injustices in urban spaces, highlighting how marginalized groups often bear the brunt of unsustainable urbanization (Heynen *et al.*, 2006)^[31]. Sustainable urban development theories call for inclusive governance and policies that empower vulnerable populations, including women migrants (Fainstein, 2010).^[28] The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015^[65] underscore urban sustainability as a global priority, particularly SDG 11

which aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (UN, 2015). Theories addressing urban poverty and informality focus on how slums and informal settlements can be integrated into sustainable urban planning (Roy, 2005).^[60] Environmental sustainability theories emphasize reducing urban carbon footprints through renewable energy, waste management, and green infrastructure (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999).^[51] The circular economy approach encourages cities to recycle and reuse materials, minimizing waste and resource extraction (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013).^[26] Social sustainability theories stress community cohesion, social equity, and cultural identity as essential for sustainable urban life (Dempsey *et al.*, 2011)^[22]. They highlight the role of social capital and networks in supporting migrant integration and urban resilience (Putnam, 2000).^[58] Economic sustainability theories focus on creating diverse, stable economies that provide employment and reduce vulnerability to shocks (Jacobs, 1969)^[35]. They emphasize local entrepreneurship and innovation as drivers of urban sustainability (Florida, 2002)^[29].

Theories of urban resilience examine how cities can absorb and recover from social, economic, and environmental stresses (Meerow, Newell, & Stults, 2016)^[43]. Resilient urban development involves adaptive governance, participatory planning, and disaster risk reduction (Vale & Campanella, 2005).^[73] In Nigeria, rapid urbanization presents challenges such as congestion, pollution, and inequality, making sustainable urban development essential (Olokesusi, 2006).^[56] Gender-sensitive sustainable urban theories advocate addressing the specific needs of women in urban planning to ensure equitable access to services and opportunities (Agarwal, 1992).^[7] Integrating gender perspectives into sustainable urban development enhances social justice and urban resilience by recognizing women's contributions and vulnerabilities (Elmhirst, 2011)^[27]. Participatory urban governance theories emphasize engaging diverse stakeholders, including migrant women, in decision-making processes (Arnstein, 1969).^[11] Technological innovations such as smart cities aim to improve urban sustainability through data-driven management of resources and services (Batty *et al.*, 2012).^[12] However, theories caution against technology-driven approaches that ignore social inequalities and local contexts (Graham & Marvin, 2001).^[30] Ecological modernization theory argues that environmental improvements can be compatible with economic growth if technology and policy are aligned (Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000)^[45]. It encourages integrating environmental concerns into urban industrial development and infrastructure planning. The concept of eco-cities promotes urban designs that minimize environmental impact while enhancing quality of life through green spaces, energy efficiency, and sustainable transport (Register, 2006).^[59] Such approaches are critical for Nigerian cities experiencing fast urban growth amid environmental challenges. Overall, urbanization and sustainable development theories provide frameworks for understanding and managing the interplay between human settlements, social structures, and environmental systems (Campbell, 1996)^[16]. They guide policy interventions aiming to create cities that are economically vibrant, socially inclusive, and ecologically sustainable (Jenks & Jones, 2010)^[36].

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on urban policies and women migrants in Nigeria reveal persistent structural gaps in policy effectiveness and inclusivity. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019) ^[33] provides a comprehensive national migration profile that synthesizes census, survey, and administrative data to map internal and international migration dynamics in Nigeria. The report identifies large-scale rural–urban migration, gendered mobility patterns with significant female internal migration, and unequal access to essential services among migrants. These findings highlight governance and data limitations that hinder effective policy response, leading the IOM to call for gender-disaggregated data collection, improved institutional coordination, and the inclusion of migrant-sensitive perspectives in urban planning (nigeria.iom.int).

A more localized assessment by the Mixed Migration Centre (2023) ^[44] focuses on the Ajegunle informal settlement in Lagos, employing a mixed-methods field study involving 110 household surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The study found that women migrants face recurrent flooding, insecure housing tenure, limited sanitation facilities, and restricted access to formal livelihoods. Many respondents also reported exclusion from formal urban policy processes and weak access to social protection programs. The findings demonstrate that existing urban policies, which often overlook informal settlements and women's participation, fail to mitigate vulnerability. The study therefore recommends gender-responsive and community-based policy interventions, including the formal recognition of informal settlements to promote inclusivity (Mixed Migration Centre, 2023) ^[44].

Similarly, a spatial and socio-economic analysis of Sabo, an informal settlement in Ibadan (2022), reveals that women-headed migrant households are disproportionately affected by poor housing conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and exclusion from urban land-use planning. Using geo-spatial imagery and household surveys, the study provides concrete evidence that mainstream urban planning practices in Nigerian cities neglect informal migrant communities, particularly those dominated by women. It concludes that inclusive land-use policies and targeted service delivery are crucial to improving the living conditions of women migrants.

Further evidence from Tuki's (2024) ^[64] HiCN Working Paper on Gender and Migration Aspirations in Nigeria uses quantitative household survey data from Edo and Kaduna States to analyze how gender, marital status, and socio-economic variables influence migration decisions. The study finds that single and young women exhibit higher migration aspirations driven by educational and employment opportunities, while married women show lower aspirations due to social and economic constraints. The author argues that uniform urban and migration policies overlook these gender-specific drivers and therefore recommends gender-sensitive programs that recognize the unique challenges and motivations of women migrants.

In a related qualitative study, Nwafor (2024) ^[52] investigates Access to and Utilization of Healthcare among Migrant Women in an Urban Slum using interviews and focus group discussions. The study reveals that migrant women are often excluded from public health initiatives due to barriers such as lack of legal documentation, high service costs, and discriminatory treatment by providers. Consequently, many

women rely on informal healthcare systems that are insufficient for managing chronic and reproductive health needs. The findings underscore the inadequacy of current urban health policies in reaching migrant women and recommend mobile healthcare units, simplified registration processes, and culturally sensitive health services as remedies.

Beyond Nigeria-specific studies, Mueller *et al.* (2023) ^[46] conducted a regional synthesis on Gendered Consequences of COVID-19 for Internal Migrants, which includes Nigerian cases. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study demonstrates that the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected female migrants through job losses, food insecurity, and heightened gender-based violence. The absence of gender-sensitive provisions in urban response policies exacerbated these challenges, emphasizing the need for gender-responsive urban emergency frameworks to safeguard women migrants during crises and to include them in recovery efforts.

Lastly, Ziorkluis *et al.* (2024) ^[76] conducted a comparative empirical study assessing *Migrant and Indigenous Informal Community Dynamics* using survey data and community-driven development (CDD) evaluations. The findings reveal that migrant women often possess strong intra-community social networks (bonding capital) but limited connections with formal institutions (bridging capital), restricting their access to municipal services and participation in urban planning. Programs that strengthened institutional linkages and community participation notably improved service access for women migrants. The authors advocate for policies that enhance legal recognition and participatory mechanisms for migrants to ensure equitable inclusion in urban development processes.

Collectively, these empirical studies demonstrate consistent patterns: women migrants in Nigerian cities experience exclusion from essential urban services, insecure tenure, precarious livelihoods, and weak participation in governance structures. The evidence highlights critical deficiencies such as the absence of gender-disaggregated data, exclusion of informal settlements from urban policy frameworks, and insufficient gender-responsive budgeting. Together, these findings provide an empirical foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of Nigeria's current urban policies in addressing the needs of women migrants. They also suggest key policy indicators—including healthcare access, tenure security, livelihood support, governance participation, and gender-based violence prevention—that can serve as benchmarks for future policy evaluation.

Although previous empirical studies provide valuable insights into gendered migration patterns and the socio-economic challenges faced by women migrants in Nigeria, significant research gaps remain concerning the systematic evaluation of existing urban policies and their actual effectiveness in addressing these challenges. The reviewed studies, such as those by the IOM (2019) and Mixed Migration Centre (2023) ^[44], primarily describe migration trends, gendered vulnerabilities, and living conditions within informal settlements but do not rigorously assess how urban development or social policies respond to these realities. Similarly, local case studies in Ibadan and Lagos (2022; 2023) emphasize women's exclusion from urban planning and infrastructure services without providing measurable policy performance indicators or frameworks for policy effectiveness. While other works such as Tuki

(2024) [64] and Nwafor (2024) [52] explore gendered migration aspirations and access to health services, they remain sector-specific and do not integrate findings into a broader evaluation of Nigeria's urban policy frameworks. Furthermore, studies such as Mueller *et al.* (2023) [46] and Ziorklui *et al.* (2024) [76] contribute valuable regional and comparative perspectives but focus on immediate social outcomes—like resilience, social capital, or pandemic recovery—rather than long-term policy impact or gender accountability mechanisms in urban governance. Overall, there is a lack of empirical studies that holistically examine how urban policies—whether in housing, healthcare, livelihoods, or governance—perform in meeting the specific needs of women migrants in Nigeria. Existing literature tends to highlight gender disparities descriptively but stops short of evaluating policy implementation, effectiveness, and inclusivity through a gender-responsive framework. Consequently, little is known about which policies have succeeded or failed, how women migrants perceive these policies, and what institutional factors hinder their responsiveness. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by evaluating the effectiveness of current urban policies in Nigeria in meeting the socio-economic and governance needs of women migrants, with a view to providing evidence-based recommendations for more inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A research design provides the overall structure and plan that directs the process of conducting a study (Creswell, 2014) [19]. It specifies the methods and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to effectively address the research questions (Yin, 2018). An effective design ensures that findings are valid, reliable, and accurate (Kumar, 2019). [37] It also helps define the research problem, objectives, and hypotheses (Bryman, 2016) [14].

There are several types of research designs—exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and experimental—each suitable for different research aims (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016) [62]. Quantitative designs typically involve numerical data, surveys, and statistical analysis (Neuman, 2014) [50], while qualitative designs focus on exploring experiences, meanings, and social contexts through interviews and observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) [23]. A mixed-methods design integrates both approaches to provide a more holistic understanding (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The choice of research design depends on the study's objectives, available resources, and ethical considerations (Creswell, 2014) [19]. Case studies, for instance, allow for detailed examination of specific phenomena or groups (Yin, 2018). Sampling strategies and data collection techniques are also integral components of a research design (Kumar, 2019). [37] Additionally, the design includes plans for data analysis and the integration of ethical considerations such as confidentiality and informed consent (Neuman, 2014) [50]. Ultimately, a research design serves as a systematic blueprint that guides the research process, ensuring that the findings are credible and meaningful (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). [62]

Study Area

This research focuses on urban areas in Nigeria, a country experiencing rapid urbanization and significant internal

migration. Nigeria's major cities—Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt—have seen substantial population growth, becoming economic and social centers that attract migrants seeking better livelihoods, education, and living conditions (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022) [49].

Lagos, Nigeria's economic hub, presents a diverse and complex urban environment suitable for examining gendered migration and social vulnerabilities (UN-Habitat, 2020). [72] Abuja, the nation's capital, offers a contrasting setting with planned infrastructure but faces growing challenges of informal settlements and unequal access to urban resources (Adelekan, 2016) [1]. Kano and Port Harcourt, representing northern and southern Nigeria respectively, add regional diversity and cultural perspectives to the study.

The research includes both formal and informal urban settlements where many migrant women reside and encounter issues of housing, employment, safety, and social service access (Amnesty International, 2018). The period between 2014 and 2024 provides a decade-long window to analyze policy shifts, migration trends, and development interventions affecting women migrants in Nigerian cities.

Reconnaissance Survey

A reconnaissance survey was conducted as a preliminary stage to gain an overview of the study areas and the lived realities of women migrants in selected Nigerian cities. The survey helped identify key issues, relevant stakeholders, and research challenges related to gender, migration, and urban development. Site visits were undertaken to areas with high concentrations of migrants, including both formal neighborhoods and informal settlements. Informal discussions were held with community leaders, NGO representatives, women migrants, and government officials to gather insights on livelihood strategies, urban vulnerabilities, and social integration. Observations of housing quality, infrastructure, and access to services were also made.

Findings from this phase informed the refinement of data collection instruments, ensuring cultural appropriateness and contextual relevance. The survey also assisted in selecting representative sampling sites and identifying gaps in gender-specific migration data, strengthening the focus and feasibility of subsequent research phases.

Population of the Study

The study population consists of women migrants residing in urban centers across Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt. These include internal migrants from rural areas, interstate migrants, and international migrants who have settled in these cities between 2014 and 2024. [35] Participants are women aged 18 years and above who relocated primarily for economic, educational, or social reasons. They include individuals engaged in both formal and informal economic activities and living in a variety of urban settlements, ranging from structured neighborhoods to informal slums. The population is stratified by factors such as age, occupation, and residential type to ensure representativeness. This population is chosen to capture diverse migration experiences and gendered challenges linked to urban living and development. The study also compares recent migrants (within five years) with long-term residents (more than five years) to assess adaptation patterns and vulnerabilities.

Sample Size

The study's sample size is determined by the size of the women migrant population in the selected cities and the need for reliable, statistically valid results. Using a stratified sampling approach, a total sample of approximately 400–600 respondents will be drawn, following previous migration studies in Nigeria (Adepoju, 2010; Ojo, 2016) [2-54]. Each city—Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt—will contribute between 100 and 150 respondents, representing varied subgroups by age, occupation, and settlement type. The sample accounts for possible non-response and attrition. In addition, purposive sampling will identify key informants such as NGO workers and community leaders, whose insights will enrich qualitative data collection. This sample size balances statistical adequacy with practical manageability and depth of analysis.

Sampling Techniques

A combination of **stratified**, **purposive**, and **snowball sampling** techniques will be used.

- **Stratified Sampling:** The population will be divided into strata based on city of residence, age, occupation, and settlement type. Random sampling will then be used within each stratum to ensure representativeness and minimize bias.
- **Purposive Sampling:** Key informants—including officials, NGO representatives, and experienced migrant women—will be deliberately selected for their expertise and insights into migration and gender-related issues.
- **Snowball Sampling:** This will be employed for reaching hidden or marginalized groups of migrant women, specially in informal settlements or those lacking legal documentation, through referrals from initial respondents.

Using multiple sampling techniques ensures inclusiveness and enhances the validity and richness of the data collected.

Sources of Data Collection

The research draws from both primary and secondary data sources to provide a holistic understanding of women's migration experiences and urban development.

- **Primary Data**
Data will be collected directly from respondents using:
 1. Structured questionnaires for quantitative analysis;
 2. In-depth interviews for qualitative insights;
 3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with women migrants and community leaders; and
 4. Key informant interviews with policymakers and practitioners.
- **Secondary Data**
Supplementary information will be obtained from:
 1. Government publications (NBS, Ministry of Women Affairs, urban planning authorities);
 2. Reports from international bodies such as UN-Habitat, IOM, and the World Bank;

3. Academic books and journal articles; and
- iv. Policy and media reports on gender, migration, and urban development (2014–2024).

Triangulating these data sources enhances depth, reliability, and contextual accuracy.

Instruments of Data Collection

Multiple instruments will be employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data:

1. Structured Questionnaire

Used to obtain standardized quantitative data on demographics, migration history, employment, housing, and access to urban services.

2. Interview Guide

A semi-structured guide will facilitate in-depth interviews, allowing for open-ended discussions on gendered migration experiences and urban policy impacts.

3. Focus Group Discussion Guide

Designed to generate collective insights on community experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms among women migrants.

4. Observation Checklist

Used to document housing conditions, infrastructure availability, and visible indicators of urban sustainability.

All instruments will be pretested and refined for clarity, cultural appropriateness, and reliability, with translations provided where necessary.

Reliability and Validity of Instruments

To ensure credible findings, the study emphasizes both **reliability** and **validity**.

▪ Reliability

Consistency will be ensured through pretesting and pilot studies. Questionnaires and interview guides will be tested with a small group of respondents to identify ambiguities. Internal consistency of scales will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

▪ Validity

- **Content validity:** will be established through expert reviews and literature alignment.
- **Construct validity:** will be enhanced by using well-recognized measurement scales.
- **Face validity:** will be confirmed through feedback from local stakeholders to ensure cultural and contextual relevance.

Triangulation across multiple instruments and data sources will strengthen the overall robustness of the study.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Given the mixed-methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be applied.

▪ Quantitative Analysis

Data from questionnaires will be analyzed using SPSS or STATA.

1. Techniques will include Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, percentages, standard deviations);
 2. Cross-tabulations and chi-square tests to explore relationships between variables;
 3. Inferential statistics (t-tests, ANOVA) to test group differences; and
 4. Regression analysis to assess the effects of demographic and migration variables on socioeconomic outcomes
- **Qualitative Analysis**
Interview and FGD data will be transcribed and analyzed thematically using *NVivo* or manual coding. Steps include open coding, theme development, and interpretive synthesis to identify patterns and linkages among gender, migration, and urban challenges.

Findings from both approaches will be triangulated to ensure validity, allowing the study to capture both numerical trends and lived experiences of women migrants in Nigeria’s urban centers.

Data Presentation and Results

The gathered data will be showcased through a mix of descriptive tables, charts, graphs, and thematic summaries to effectively convey the findings. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires will be illustrated using frequency tables, pie charts, bar graphs, and cross-tabulations to emphasize patterns and relationships among the variables. These visual aids will facilitate comparisons of demographic information, migration histories, employment types, and access to urban services across various respondent groups. Inferential statistical outcomes, including chi-square tests and regression results, will be summarized in tables to demonstrate the significance of relationships between key variables. Qualitative data derived from interviews and focus group discussions will be thematically organized, featuring illustrative quotes from respondents to reinforce key themes. Themes will be structured around central issues such as gender-specific challenges, coping strategies, and perceptions of sustainable urban development. The data will be presented on a city-by-city basis to reflect the contextual differences among urban environments in Nigeria. Where relevant, maps or photographs may be incorporated to visually depict living conditions or urban infrastructure. In summary, the presentation will strive to be clear, accessible, and in alignment with the study’s objectives and research questions.

Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

Descriptive analysis provides a summary and organization of the primary characteristics of the dataset, offering a comprehensive overview of the demographic and socioeconomic traits of the respondents. This type of analysis generally includes measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) and measures of variability (range, standard deviation, variance), along with frequency distributions and percentages. For instance, the average age of respondents in the study was 32.7 years, accompanied by a standard deviation of 8.4 years, which indicates a moderate level of variability in the age distribution. The typical household size was 5.3 individuals, with a range

from 1 to 12 members, underscoring the variations in living situations. Income data indicated that the median monthly income was around ₦35,000, with a broad range that reflects the varied economic activities and employment conditions among women migrants. Educational attainment statistics showed that 28% of respondents possessed tertiary education, while 12% had not received any formal education. Frequency tables and percentages were employed to illustrate categorical variables such as marital status, type of occupation, and residential area (formal versus informal settlements). For example, 47% of respondents were self-employed, and 62% resided in rented accommodations. These descriptive statistics lay the groundwork for subsequent inferential analysis, aiding in the identification of patterns and trends within the studied population.

Age Distribution of Respondents

The age distribution of the women migrants surveyed reflects a predominantly young and economically active population. The largest group falls within the 25–34 years age bracket, comprising 42% of respondents, which suggests that migration is most common among young adults likely seeking employment and better urban opportunities. The 35–44 age group accounts for 30%, indicating a significant proportion of mid-career women who may have migrated for both economic and family reasons.

Women aged 18–24 represent 18% of the sample, highlighting the presence of younger migrants, possibly including recent graduates or early-stage workers. Only 10% of respondents were aged 45 and above, showing that migration tends to decrease with advancing age, possibly due to established family responsibilities or lower mobility. This age distribution aligns with broader migration trends observed in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa, where younger adults dominate rural-to-urban migration flows. Understanding this demographic is crucial for tailoring urban development policies and gender-sensitive interventions to support the livelihoods and welfare of women migrants in Nigerian cities. *Table*

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–24	90	18%
25–34	210	42%
35–44	150	30%
45 and above	50	10%
Total	500	100%

Source: Field work 2025

Analysis of Age Distribution of Respondents

The analysis of the age distribution among women migrants in the selected urban areas of Nigeria reveals important insights into migration patterns and their implications for sustainable urban development. The data show that the majority of respondents (42%) are within the 25–34 years age group, indicating that migration is most prevalent among young adults who are typically in their prime working and reproductive years. This demographic is likely motivated by the search for better employment opportunities, education, and improved living conditions in urban centers. The substantial representation of the 35–44 years age group (30%) suggests that mid-career women also form a significant portion of urban migrants. This group

may be balancing economic activities with family responsibilities, and their migration decisions could be influenced by both personal and household considerations. The presence of 18% of respondents aged 18–24 highlights the involvement of younger women in migration, potentially including students, recent graduates, or early entrants into the urban labor market. Only 10% of respondents are aged 45 and above, reflecting a lower tendency for older women to migrate to urban areas, possibly due to established social ties, responsibilities, or reduced mobility. This pattern aligns with existing migration theories that emphasize higher migration rates among younger populations. The predominance of younger women migrants poses specific challenges and opportunities for urban planners and policymakers. It underscores the need for gender-responsive urban development strategies that address employment, housing, healthcare, and social integration tailored to the needs of this active demographic. Moreover, their vulnerabilities—such as precarious employment, housing insecurity, and exposure to gender-based violence—require targeted interventions to promote sustainable and inclusive urban growth. In summary, the age distribution profile of respondents indicates that urban migration among women in Nigeria is largely driven by younger and middle-aged adults, shaping the socioeconomic fabric of Nigerian cities and influencing sustainable urban development dynamics.

Educational Attainment of Respondents

The educational attainment of the women migrants surveyed reflects a diverse range of formal education levels. The largest proportion of respondents, 35%, completed secondary education, indicating that a significant number have basic to intermediate education which may facilitate entry into informal and formal labor markets. Those with tertiary education accounted for 28%, showing that a notable segment of women migrants possesses higher education qualifications, which can enhance their employment prospects and capacity for urban engagement. Meanwhile, 25% of respondents had only primary education, highlighting challenges related to skill levels and access to higher-paying jobs. Approximately 12% of women migrants reported having no formal education, underscoring the persistent barriers to education access for some groups, which can exacerbate vulnerability in urban environments. This distribution of educational attainment is critical for understanding the varied experiences of women migrants in Nigerian cities. It affects their economic opportunities, social mobility, and ability to navigate urban systems, including housing, healthcare, and civic participation. Policies aimed at sustainable urban development must consider these educational disparities to foster inclusive growth and empower women migrants across different education levels.

Table 2: Educational Attainment of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No formal education	60	12%
Primary education	125	25%
Secondary education	175	35%
Tertiary education	140	28%
Total	500	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Analysis of Educational Attainment of Respondents

The analysis of educational attainment among women migrants in the selected urban centers in Nigeria reveals a broad spectrum of formal education levels that significantly influence their socioeconomic integration and livelihood strategies in urban environments. A majority of respondents (35%) have completed secondary education, suggesting that many women possess foundational academic skills enabling them to engage in various forms of employment, especially within the informal sector where basic literacy and numeracy are essential. Notably, 28% of the respondents have attained tertiary education, indicating that a considerable proportion of women migrants hold higher educational qualifications. This subgroup is likely better positioned to access formal employment opportunities, professional networks, and urban services, which can contribute positively to sustainable urban development. Their presence also highlights the potential for skilled female migration to contribute to urban economic growth and innovation. Conversely, 25% of respondents have only primary education, which may limit their access to stable and well-paid jobs, thereby increasing their reliance on informal, precarious, or low-income work. Additionally, the 12% with no formal education face the greatest barriers to economic advancement and social inclusion, making them particularly vulnerable to urban poverty and exclusion. The disparities in educational attainment reflect underlying structural inequalities that shape women migrants’ experiences in cities. Education influences not only employment prospects but also access to information, social capital, and participation in civic life. As such, the diverse educational profiles call for targeted interventions that provide skills training, adult education, and empowerment programs tailored to different educational levels. Overall, the educational attainment patterns among women migrants underscore the importance of incorporating education-sensitive approaches in urban development policies to promote gender equity, economic empowerment, and sustainable urban growth.

Employment Status of Respondents

The employment status of women migrants in the study reflects a predominance of informal sector engagement, with 47% of respondents identifying as self-employed or working in informal jobs. This highlights the critical role the informal economy plays in providing livelihoods for migrant women, often characterized by job insecurity, low income, and lack of social protection. Formal employment accounts for 20% of respondents, indicating that a smaller but significant portion of women migrants have access to more stable and regulated job opportunities, which may come with better working conditions and benefits. Unemployment remains a challenge, with 18% of respondents currently without work, pointing to barriers such as limited job availability, discrimination, or insufficient skills that impede women’s full participation in the urban labor market. Additionally, 15% of women migrants are engaged in domestic or caregiving work, a sector typically undervalued and often excluded from formal labor protections, yet vital to the urban economy. These employment patterns underscore the vulnerability of many women migrants to economic instability and exploitation, reinforcing the need for policies that promote decent work, skills development, and social protection tailored to their unique circumstances.

Table 3: Employment Status of Respondents

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Formal employment	100	20%
Informal/self-employed	235	47%
Unemployed	90	18%
Domestic/caregiver	75	15%
Total	500	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Analysis of Employment Status of Respondents

The employment status of women migrants in the selected urban centers of Nigeria reveals significant insights into their economic integration and the challenges they face in securing stable livelihoods. A majority of respondents (47%) are engaged in informal or self-employed work, underscoring the dominant role of the informal sector as a primary source of income for migrant women. This sector typically offers flexible opportunities but is often characterized by job insecurity, low wages, and limited access to social protections, making women vulnerable to economic shocks and exploitation. Formal employment accounts for 20% of the respondents, suggesting that a smaller segment of women migrants has successfully accessed more secure and regulated job opportunities. Formal sector employment often provides better wages, job security, and benefits such as healthcare and pensions. However, barriers such as limited educational qualifications, discrimination, and gendered social norms may restrict many women from entering this sector. Unemployment affects 18% of the respondents, highlighting persistent challenges in the urban labor market. These challenges may include a mismatch between available jobs and women’s skills, discrimination, and the limited availability of jobs suitable for women, especially for recent migrants. High unemployment rates among women migrants can contribute to poverty and increased vulnerability to exploitation or engagement in precarious informal work.

Domestic and care giving work comprises 15% of employment among respondents, a sector traditionally undervalued and often lacking formal recognition or protection. Women working in this sector may face irregular work hours, low pay, and social invisibility, which exacerbates their economic precarity. Overall, the employment status distribution reflects structural barriers that women migrants encounter in urban labor markets. Policies aiming to improve women’s economic empowerment must focus on expanding formal employment opportunities, enhancing skills training, and providing social safety nets to address vulnerabilities associated with informal and precarious work.

Marital Status of Respondents

The marital status of women migrants in the study shows that a majority (55%) are married, reflecting family-oriented migration patterns where women often move to urban areas with or to join their spouses. This marital predominance suggests that many women’s migration decisions are closely linked to family reunification and household economic strategies. Single women constitute 30% of respondents, indicating a significant portion of women migrating independently, potentially driven by economic opportunities, education, or personal autonomy. This group may face unique challenges related to social support and urban integration. Widowed, divorced, or separated women

make up 15% of the sample. These categories often represent vulnerable groups who may migrate to urban areas seeking economic independence or social support networks after changes in marital status. Understanding the marital status distribution is important as it influences women’s social roles, access to resources, and migration motivations. It also impacts their exposure to gendered vulnerabilities and access to support systems within urban environments.

Table 4: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	150	30%
Married	275	55%
Widowed	35	7%
Divorced/Separated	40	8%
Total	500	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Analysis of Marital Status of Respondents

The marital status distribution among women migrants in Nigerian urban areas provides valuable insight into the social dynamics influencing migration and settlement patterns. A majority of the respondents, 55%, are married, underscoring the role of marriage as a significant factor in female migration. This suggests that many women migrate to urban centers either as part of family relocation, to join spouses, or to improve household economic prospects. Marriage often shapes women’s migration decisions and their subsequent access to social and economic resources in cities. Single women account for 30% of respondents, reflecting a substantial proportion of independent migrants who move to urban areas seeking employment, education, or personal development. This group may face different challenges compared to married women, including limited social networks and heightened exposure to urban risks, but may also have greater autonomy in decision making.

Widowed, divorced, and separated women make up 15% of the sample, a group that often experiences heightened economic and social vulnerability. Their migration may be driven by the need to rebuild livelihoods and secure social support after marital dissolution or bereavement. This segment highlights the intersection of marital status and gendered vulnerabilities in urban environments. The diversity in marital status among women migrants influences their integration experiences, access to housing, employment, and social support mechanisms. Policies aimed at sustainable urban development should therefore consider marital status as a critical factor in designing gender sensitive interventions that address the varied needs of women migrants.

Monthly Income Distribution (₦)

The monthly income distribution of women migrants in the study reveals significant variation in economic status and earning capacity within the urban environment. A substantial portion of respondents (40%) earn below ₦30,000 monthly, indicating a large group of low-income earners who may be vulnerable to poverty and economic insecurity. This low-income bracket is likely associated with informal or precarious employment, limited access to stable jobs, and barriers to higher-paying opportunities. About 35% of respondents fall within the ₦30,000 to ₦60,000 income range, representing a middle-income segment that may have better access to resources and urban services but

still face financial constraints. This group likely includes women engaged in informal entrepreneurship, skilled trades, or lower-tier formal employment.

The remaining 25% of respondents earn above ₦60,000 monthly, suggesting a smaller but significant cohort with relatively higher earning power. These women may hold formal sector jobs or successful small businesses, contributing more substantially to household income and urban economic activities. Understanding this income distribution is crucial for assessing the economic vulnerabilities and potentials of women migrants, guiding policy efforts towards inclusive urban development and targeted economic empowerment programs.

Table 5: Monthly Income Distribution (₦)

Income Range (₦)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 30,000	200	40%
30,000 – 60,000	175	35%
Above 60,000	125	25%
Total	500	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Analysis of Monthly Income Distribution (₦)

The monthly income distribution among women migrants in Nigerian urban areas highlights the economic disparities and challenges faced by this demographic. A significant 40% of respondents earn below ₦30,000 monthly, indicating a large segment of women living with low or unstable incomes. This low-income group is often employed in informal or precarious jobs characterized by limited job security, low wages, and absence of social benefits, which exacerbates their vulnerability to poverty and limits their capacity to access essential urban services such as healthcare, housing, and education. The middle-income bracket, comprising 35% of respondents earning between ₦30,000 and ₦60,000, represents a segment with somewhat improved economic conditions. Women in this group may be engaged in more stable informal employment, small-scale entrepreneurship, or entry-level formal jobs. While they enjoy relatively better economic status, they still face constraints that can restrict upward mobility and full participation in urban economic opportunities.

Only 25% of respondents earn above ₦60,000 monthly, a smaller proportion that reflects women with higher earning potential. These women are likely employed in formal sector positions or run successful businesses, enabling them to contribute more significantly to their households and the urban economy. Their higher income affords better access to urban amenities and greater resilience against economic shocks. Overall, the income distribution underscores persistent economic inequalities among women migrants, shaped by factors such as education, employment type, and access to resources. Addressing these disparities through targeted economic empowerment, skills training, and social protection policies is essential for fostering sustainable urban development and enhancing the livelihoods of women migrants.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study underscore critical policy gaps and opportunities that must be addressed to ensure that sustainable urban development in Nigeria is inclusive and gender-responsive, particularly for women migrants. The

following policy implications are drawn from the gendered dynamics observed between 2014 - 2024:

Mainstream Gender in Urban Planning and Development Policies

Urban development frameworks must systematically incorporate gender perspectives to recognize and address the unique needs of migrant women. This requires: Developing gender-sensitive urban design guidelines that account for women's safety, access to public spaces, transport, and infrastructure. Institutionalizing gender mainstreaming units within urban planning agencies to ensure that women's voices are included in decision-making processes. Promoting participatory planning involving women migrant groups to tailor urban services to their realities.

Enhance Access to Affordable, Safe, and Adequate Housing

Given the prevalence of informal settlements and unsafe living conditions for female migrants: Governments should prioritize the development of affordable housing schemes targeted at low-income women migrants and female-headed households. Strengthen legal frameworks to protect women's land and housing rights, particularly for informal sector workers who often lack formal documentation, and integrate social amenities such as childcare, health centers, and safe public lighting in housing projects to improve quality of life.

Support Economic Empowerment through Inclusive Urban Employment Policies

Since many migrant women work in informal sectors with little job security: Policies must facilitate formalization pathways for women's informal businesses by providing access to microfinance, training, and markets, enforce labor protections and workplace safety regulations that specifically consider women's roles and vulnerabilities, invest in skills development programs tailored to urban female migrants to diversify their economic opportunities beyond low-wage informal jobs.

Strengthen Social Protection and Services for Migrant Women

Urban social services often fail to meet the needs of migrant women who face vulnerabilities such as GBV and health risks: Expand gender-sensitive social safety nets that cover healthcare, education, and childcare for migrant women, establish dedicated support centers to address gender-based violence in urban environments, providing accessible legal and psychological assistance and improve data collection on migrant women's access to urban services to guide evidence based policy interventions.

Promote Legal and Political Inclusion of Women Migrants

Women's limited participation in urban governance restricts their influence over policies that affect them: Reform policies to enhance women migrants' political representation and civic participation at local government levels, simplify documentation and registration processes that enable migrant women to access public services and participate in community leadership, and facilitate partnerships between government, NGOs, and community organizations to advocate for women's urban rights.

Integrate Migration and Gender Perspectives into National Urban Sustainability Frameworks

Urban sustainability policies and programs (including Nigeria's National Urban, development Policy) should explicitly address the intersection of migration and gender, ensure alignment with international frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development, Goals (SDG 5 on Gender Equality and SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities) and promote multi-sectoral collaboration to address complex urban challenges facing women migrants holistically.

Conclusion

This research has highlighted the multidimensional and gendered dynamics of migration and their profound implications for sustainable urban development in Nigeria between 2014 and 2024. Women migrants represent a crucial yet frequently overlooked segment of urban populations, whose mobility is shaped by complex economic, social, and security factors. Despite their essential roles in urban economies and community networks, they continue to encounter persistent barriers such as poor housing, unstable employment, and exposure to gender-based violence. The findings indicate that, although national policies acknowledge gender and migration concerns, a wide gap remains between policy formulation and actual implementation. This disconnect restricts migrant women's access to social services, legal safeguards, and avenues for economic advancement. Moreover, the lack of consistent gender-disaggregated data hampers evidence-based policy development and intervention design. The study emphasizes women's economic empowerment as a pivotal element for strengthening their resilience and participation in sustainable urban growth.

Deficiencies in housing and infrastructure disproportionately impact women migrants, underscoring the need for inclusive and gender-responsive urban planning. Legal and protective frameworks are inadequate, leaving many women vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Tackling these challenges demands an integrated approach that embeds gender considerations across all levels of migration and urban governance. Policymakers must prioritize coordinated policy reforms, adequate resource allocation, and institutional capacity-building. Equally vital is the participation of women migrants in decision-making and planning processes to ensure their experiences and priorities inform policy outcomes. Collaboration with civil society and grassroots organizations can enhance advocacy, service delivery, and accountability. In essence, sustainable urban development in Nigeria depends on recognizing women migrants as active contributors to transformation rather than passive beneficiaries. As emphasized by Adepoju (2019) ^[3], achieving inclusive and equitable urbanization requires transformative policies that move beyond rhetorical gender commitments toward practical, measurable implementation. This study therefore calls for sustained commitment to gender-responsive migration governance that upholds the dignity and rights of women in Nigeria's urban settings.

Recommendations

To effectively address the deep-seated inequalities faced by women migrants in Nigerian cities, comprehensive policy reform is imperative. Although frameworks such as the National Migration Policy (2015) acknowledge the

importance of gender-sensitive strategies, their implementation has remained inconsistent and underfunded. It is crucial to convert policy declarations into tangible, well-resourced actions at both federal and state levels. Institutionalizing gender mainstreaming across urban development and migration agencies will help ensure women's needs are systematically integrated into planning and execution processes. Urban policies should explicitly address critical areas such as housing, healthcare, safety, and economic participation for women migrants. Enhanced coordination among key ministries—Women Affairs, Housing, Labor, and Internal Affairs—is needed to harmonize policy responses and eliminate duplication. Local governments, being closest to affected communities, should be equipped with adequate authority and funding to drive gender-responsive initiatives. Strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems are also necessary to track progress toward gender equity goals. Furthermore, the active participation of civil society and women-led organizations in both policy design and implementation should be encouraged. As Adepoju (2019) ^[3] argues, achieving sustainable urban development requires moving from symbolic inclusion of gender perspectives to concrete, enforceable measures. Economic empowerment stands out as a crucial strategy for improving women migrants' agency and well-being. Many female migrants remain concentrated in informal, low-income occupations such as domestic work, petty trading, and hospitality, which lack job stability and social protection. Bridging this economic gap demands targeted interventions, including vocational and entrepreneurial training, access to affordable finance, and the creation of business incubation centers. Promoting women's entrepreneurship through microcredit schemes, mentorship programs, and digital literacy training can strengthen their financial independence and urban integration. Public-private partnerships can help formalize informal sectors, ensuring fair wages and labor protections. In addition, local authorities should provide market spaces, cooperatives, and infrastructural support to women traders, especially in densely populated areas. As UN Women (2022) notes, economic empowerment not only reduces poverty but also enhances women's household and community decision-making power. Financially independent women tend to invest more in children's education and local development, thus advancing broader urban sustainability objectives. Therefore, embedding gender inclusion into economic planning is not merely a social imperative—it is a critical engine for achieving equitable and sustainable urban growth in Nigeria.

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