



**PORT HARCOURT  
NIGERIA**

**THE 'COLLABORATIVE MEDIA ADVOCACY PLATFORM'**

# Amplifying voices of the unheard

## KEY CONCEPTS

URBAN PLANNING,  
SECURITY OF TENURE,  
INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS,  
SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A low-lying area built on 'chicoco'—the black mud of mangrove creeks—the Port Harcourt waterfront settlements are home to some 480 000 people. Unrecognised by the state, the settlement experiences highly insecure housing tenure. Government demolitions of occupied waterfront homes have both rendered people homeless and crippled livelihoods, as many residents work informally in the area. Through film, radio, and other media giving a voice to poor communities in Port Harcourt, the Collaborative Media Advocacy Platform (CMAP) is bringing visibility to these residents and their right to a place in the city.

**COMMUNITIES**  
Port Harcourt informal waterfront communities

**POPULATION**  
480 000 in 49 informal waterfront settlements

**DENSITY**  
6 097 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>

**INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICITS**  
Sanitation, electricity, water, waste disposal

**CLIMATE**  
Tropical climate, average temperature is 27 degrees Celsius

**RISKS**  
Evictions, flooding, polluted water, air, and soil

## Introduction

Driven in part by immense wealth generated for a select few by extractive industries, spatial and income inequality and injustice characterise Nigeria's oil capital of Port Harcourt. These inequalities also manifest in voice, with poor and marginalised communities like those in the waterfront settlements excluded from or dismissed in their efforts to participate in shaping the vision of the city they call home.

## How it Works

CMAP is a collective that uses audio-visual media to amplify the voices of the poor to create change in the informal settlements across Port Harcourt. Building 'social infrastructure'—or the social, economic, environmental, and cultural assets that enable a more resilient, just, equitable, and sustainable world—CMAP's The Human City Project has various programmes. Among these are the flagship Chicoco Radio (a floating radio station built and run by waterfront residents); Chicoco studios (a music studio for waterfront artists); and the Chicoco cinema (an inflatable cinema that travels to communities across Nigeria). Chicoco Maps, which equips informal settlement residents with the tools to map out their neighbourhoods, literally put waterfront settlements on the map, resulting in the waterfront's inclusion in a World Bank-funded sanitation survey implemented across Port Harcourt.

The radio programmes and recording studios are located in The Shed, which also serves as a public space where residents can host meetings and events, and charge mobile phones. Built by waterfront residents and powered by solar energy, The Shed is one of the first manifestations of CMAP's physical infrastructure, and demonstrates the benefits of social cohesion.

## Governance and Finance

All Chicoco initiatives are run by the Chicoco Collective, a group of about 50 artists, musicians, actors, broadcasters, and communicators, upskilled with cartography, mapping, and land surveying skills. An incorporated board of trustees from communities across Port Harcourt, known as the Chicoco Community Media Initiative, owns Chicoco Radio. Governed by an international board of directors, CMAP's different projects are led and managed by global experts.

## The Impact

IMPACT	SOCIAL	ENVIRONMENTAL	ECONOMIC
Improved security of housing tenure	X		X
Community radio with programmes from and by waterfront residents	X		
Community mapping and the creation of datasets	X		
Training programmes for youth in transferable skills such as videography and enumeration	X		X
Provision of a community public space in the form of The Shed	X		
Successful legal support through court cases against the State	X		X
Documentation of flooding impacts in waterfront settlements		X	
Chicoco media initiative as a template of community organising	X	X	X
Learning exchange with organisation in Lagos, Nigeria	X		

## Looking Ahead

CMAP is starting to explore physical infrastructure provision that is context-specific and future-oriented. The first, the Chicoco Space—a building that will house the recording studios, as well as a multi-use space and canteen that will serve food from the urban farm—is in the works. The building will be powered by solar, generate bioenergy, and incorporate rainwater harvesting technologies. The success of this building will not only serve as a proof of concept for other waterfront communities, but will inform policy makers, practitioners, and citizens on the practicality of bringing together infrastructures that can address climate change adaptation and mitigation, while being embedded in the reality of informality. CMAP also sees opportunities for experimentation at the neighbourhood level for the provision of services such as solar energy.

## Learn More

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