

Original Article  
City PlanningLafia: a State Capital without Street  
Names and House Numbers

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## ABSTRACT [ENGLISH/ANGLAIS]

Street name and house numbering are major parts of address and planning of settlements such as urban centres. Normally, settlements would have their streets named and houses numbers on each street would be logically numbered. Lafia (the administrative headquarters of Lafia Local Government and the capital city of Nasarawa State) is one of few cities in Nigeria not having streets named and its houses numbered. This research work gathered the implications of lack of street names and house numbers in Lafia metropolis via reconnaissance, questionnaires, published journals and books. Data obtained were analysed and summarised in this paper. Overall, we would recommend that Nasarawa State Government should place priority on proper street naming and house numbering and as well as make a reliable/sustainable master plan for the cities and other settlements within the state.

**Keywords:** City planning, master plan, state capital, house number

## RÉSUMÉ [FRANÇAIS/FRENCH]

Nom de la rue et la numérotation des habitations sont de grandes parties de l'adresse et de la planification des établissements tels que les centres urbains. Normalement, les établissements auraient leurs rues nommées et numéros de maisons sur chaque rue seraient numérotés logiquement. Lafia (le siège administratif de Lafia gouvernement local et la capitale de l'Etat de Nasarawa) est une des rares villes au Nigeria de ne pas avoir rues nommées et ses maisons numérotées. Ce travail de recherche a réuni les conséquences de l'absence de noms de rues et numéros de maison en métropole Lafia via reconnaissance, des questionnaires, des revues et des livres publiés. Les données obtenues ont été analysées et résumées dans le présent document. Dans l'ensemble, nous recommandons que Nasarawa gouvernement de l'État devrait accorder la priorité à la dénomination de la rue correcte et la numérotation des habitations et ainsi que de faire un plan directeur fiable / durable pour les villes et autres établissements au sein de l'Etat.

**Mots-clés:** La planification de la ville, plan directeur, capitale de l'Etat, numéro de la maison

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Accepted/Accepté:  
February 2014

Full Citation: Salawu  
OA, Angbo YB, Ebuga  
EA. Lafia: a State  
Capital without Street  
Names and House  
Numbers. World  
Journal of Building  
Technology, and Estate  
Management  
2014;1(1):10-4.

## INTRODUCTION

A street name or odonym refers to an identifying name given to a street. The street name forms part of the address while House numbering is the system of giving a unique number to each building in a street or area with the intention of making it easier to locate a particular building. These street names are often given in a two-part form: an individual name known as the specific, and an indicator of the type of street, known as the generic. An example of specific street name is Muritala Mohammed Road while that of generic is Bank close or Coast crescent.

In recent decades, many cities in the developing world have experienced extremely rapid growth. This growth according to Catherine et.al, [1] has created many underserviced neighbourhoods. The street identification systems initially used in old neighbourhoods in the city

centres have rarely been extended to new ones. Inadequate identification systems have created a worrisome predicament for urban services. With no system of street coordinates, how do you find your way around a constantly growing city? How do you dispatch ambulances, firemen, or law enforcement personnel quickly? How do you send mail and messages to private homes? How can municipal services be provided? How do you pinpoint breakdowns in water, electricity, and telephone systems? How do you set up an efficient tax collection system? [1]

Naming of streets and numbering of houses do not consider the size, pattern or calibre of people in such settlements but almost all the urban centres have their streets named and houses numbered while compared with non-urban centres. This is as a result of immeasurable benefits accrued to street naming and

house numbering such as home addressing, geographical analysis, location/finding for Fire Service and Police Services, rectification of faults or emergencies, business applications, tax collection, delivery of post and courier services, record keeping for legal transactions and many more meaningful reasons [2].

It is one of the responsibilities of Local Authority to carryout administration of street names and numbering process to ensure that all properties in various settlements are officially addressed. This concept may be extended to urban networks and services: in addition to buildings, other types of urban fixtures, such as public standpipes, streetlamps, and taxi stands also get addresses [3].

This study fully examined factors responsible for non-naming of streets and non-numbering of houses in Lafia: the administrative capital city of Nasarawa State in Nigeria, its impacts on the dwellers of the city and the way forward.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

To gather data we carried out reconnaissance survey along the ten tarred roads in Lafia Metropolis and administered questionnaires to 100 participants selected by multistage sampling. In the first stage, Lafia metropolis was divided into 10 clusters. In the second stage, 10 participants were selected from each cluster. Overall, we were able to retrieve 78 questionnaires out of the 100 administered (table 1). We analysed and summarized the responses from study participants and summarize the results in table 2.

**Table 1:** Questionnaires Distribution in Lafia Metropolis

Names of Clusters	Questionnaires		Percentage Returned (%)
	Shared	Returned	
Ombi I	10	8	80
Ombi II	10	9	90
Tundu-Amba	10	7	70
Angwan Jaba	10	10	100
Angwan Tiv	10	6	60
Sabo Pegi	10	7	70
Tundu-Kauri	10	7	70
Angwan Mangu	10	8	80
Tundu-Amba	10	8	80
Sabo Kasuwa	10	8	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>78</b>

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Lafia town has been the local government headquarters since the then Benue- Plateau State in the 12 states structure of Nigeria between 1966 and 1976. Benue and Plateau were two provinces in northern Nigeria and Lafia Native Authority (local government, as they are now called) was part of the Benue province. When Benue state was created from Benue Plateau state in 1976, the Lafia local government opted to remain in plateau state. According to Barau and Bashayi [4], the Lafia local government of 1976 was later split into Lafia, Awe, Doma, and Obi local governments as more states were created in the country in 1996 and Nasarawa with her capital headquarters as Lafia was one of these state. The master plan, which makes provision for comprehensive development in all the districts of the City [5] and comprehensively gives guide to growth of a community or region has over the years, not been given adequate attention it requires. It is used in allocation of spaces to all types of land uses; including transportation and utilities. The master plan is supposed to have been reviewed quinquennially (i.e. every five years) but this has been ignored by successive administrations. It is a pertinent fact that Lafia master plan dates back to 1977. It ought to have been used from 1977 to 1982, and it is now 32 years overdue and has not been reviewed.

In other words, this master plan is supposed to have been reviewed six times to take into cognizance social, economic, political, as well as physical dynamics of Lafia city.

Many preferred their area to be called with 'Angwan, Tudun and Sabo' (literarily meaning 'area, hill and new' respectively) as this is noticed in majority of Lafia residence areas like Angwan Mangu, Tundu Gwandara, Tundu Tmba, Tudun Kauri, Angwan Jaba, Agwan Nugu, Sabo Pegi, Sabo Kawuswa, Angwar doka, etc. These may be traced to high prevalence of illiteracy and low proficiency in English language.

The impact of this non-naming of streets and non-numbering of houses in Lafia has the city's first time visitors to erroneously surfer and waist their little earned cash on phone calls and transport fares as they precise place they aim for can hardly be located without these.

The made delivery of mails at home highly impossible, many mails and courier hampers over stay in post office and if they are registered, they are mostly returned undelivered.

Traffic accidents resulting motorists searching for addresses, the difficulty of maintaining correct records

such as voter records, property records, driver’s licences etc. and bad public relations resulting from the inconveniences caused to visitors by a confusing and duplicating systems [6].

During emergencies such as harmed robbery or fire incidence, the rescuing team suffers problems of tracing fire distress calls or emergencies, the team can only trace with noise, smoke or smog from the burning building.

Also individuals gave names to different streets based on their individual discretions and this has made streets to

have multiple names. Many have duplication and others triplication of names especially in Tundu-Kauri, Bukan-Sidi and in Millionaires’ quarters, area of Lafia. Examples are Road Safety road, Ministry of Education Road, N. Y. S. C. Road and Layin Mallam Ali in Tundu-Kauri Area. Another road in has B Division road, Agwe hotel road, Millionaires’ Quarters road. Also, Moha street, Corpers’ Lodge Street, and Agabi Street amongst others are names given by residents, which are not recognised by any constituted authorities.

**Table 2:** Mode Responses to the Questionnaires Retrieved

S/N	Items in Questionnaire	Modal Response	Frequency of Modal Response	Interpretation
1	Awareness of street names and house numbers	No street name and no house number	42	People believe the area names are used calling the streets
2	Awareness of officially registered street names	Nobody registered it because it is the area name	8	Majority acclaimed that streets and houses are not officially registered
3	Location of identification of streets	We use objects and landmarks to identify places	58	Usage of landmarks within the area and public properties
4	Means of identifying houses	Phone calls	71	Phone conversations
5	Visitation by visitors and during emergencies	Description with area names, landmarks within the area and mobile phone calls	76	Usage of area names, landmarks within the area and phone conversations
	Rating of responses to emergencies by security agents	Very poor	69	To rescue during emergencies is always very difficult as the rescue team can always use the smog, noise or light to locate the scene of the incident

Some residents do not seem to appreciate the importance of house numbering. House numbering is therefore regarded as foreign Gusau and Dauda [7]. Many preferred their houses being called with a prefix of ‘gidan’ and their various names (i.e. literarily ‘house of’). This has generated many problems to residents of Ombi I and Ombi II neighbourhoods near Nasarawa State Polytechnic and Nasarawa State College of Agriculture respectively. Students residing outside school campuses in these areas have various names -given to their hostels such as White-House, Civilian Barracks, Shingban, Bachelors’ quaters, Low-Waist Lodge, Kukere Villa, Arsenal, King’s Palace, Atlanta, Washington D.C etc. carelessly written with charcoal on their dromedaries.

**CONCLUSION**

Proper naming of streets and numbering of houses is important in all settlement. Usually, numbering of houses is done in such a way that those at the left hand sides bear odd numbers and those on the right even numbers. Some of the important problems in Lafia metropolis and in Nasarawa State as a whole will be solved if streets are properly named and houses are properly numbered. In addition, property rating (an important source of generating revenue by government) could be done more easily if all streets are properly named and houses are properly numbered.

To achieve these, Nasarawa State Government needs to make a new (or, at least, revise existing) master plan so

that the entire state can properly built, and streets can be properly named and houses properly numbered.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT / SOURCE OF SUPPORT

Nil.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interests were declared by authors.

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**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**

**Questionnaire**

1. Are you an indigene of Lafia? (a) Yes  (b) No
2. Do you live in Lafia (a) Yes  (b) No
3. If Yes in Q2, does your street have name? (a) Yes  (b) No
4. What is your street name? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is the street officially marked by any government agent with any signboard?  
 (a) Yes  (b) No
6. What is the name of your area? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Does your house have number? (a) Yes  (b) No
8. Does any government office number your house (a) Yes  (b) No
9. If No in Q2, are you a first comer to Lafia? (a) Yes  (b) No
10. How do you describe your in Lafia location to people? (a) Landmarks   
 (b) Phone Calls  (c) Name of the area  (d) Others. Please Specify  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
11. How do you contact people/rescue agent during emergencies? (a) Landmarks  
 (b) Phone Calls  (c) Name of the area  (d) Others  Please Specify  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
12. Does your house address form any part of your postal address? (a) Yes   
 (b) No
13. Do you like the house identification pattern in Lafia? (a) Yes  (b) No
14. Please rate the house identification pattern in Lafia (a) Excellent   
 (b) Very Good  (c) Good  (d) Fair  (e) Poor
15. Are you aware of property rating in your area (a) Yes  (b) No
16. How is your house described in the receipt of payment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
17. What do you think is responsible for this non-naming of street and unnumbered  
 houses in your area? (a) Illiteracy  (b) Lack of Government's will   
 (c) Ignorant of its importance  (d) Preference of area name to street names   
 (e) Others.
18. What do you think to be the way forward \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you very much.**