



TONIPIRIAMA AMA

COMMUNITY PROFILE

DISCLAIMER

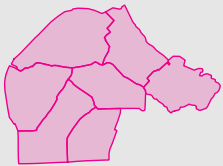
This community profiling project is based on mapping fieldwork carried out by the Chicoco Mapping Team in partnership with community leadership. Community histories were documented through key informant interviews with community elders and leaders, as well as focus group discussions with key community stakeholders selected by the community leadership. These views are representative of the tribal leadership and their designations of community structures.

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY & TRIBAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Tonipiriama Ama is one of twelve Ama's that make up Obumuton-Chiri, which is the indigenous Okrika name for the part of Port Harcourt land acquired by the Colonial Government through the 1913 Port Harcourt Agreements. Through Okrikan history, Obumuton-Chiri represents the geographical area of Port Harcourt belonging to and occupied by the Okrikan tribe. Although the origins of the original 'landlords' of Port Harcourt is contested by several tribal groups.

Obumuton-Chiri is one of many kingdoms within the Okrikan tribal system that is administratively headed by an Amanyenabo (King) with the support of a Council of Chiefs. Within the Obumuton-Chiri territory, the 12 Ama's and their executive committees report to the Amanyenabo. The Ama's also separately have formal Community Development Committee (CDC) status registered with the Rivers State Government. The CDC designation is typically used for any formal engagement with the government, otherwise community governance is managed through the Okrikan system. An Ama is typically subdivided into 7-8 Polo's with their own executive committees that are underneath Ama and Amanyenabo governance and administrative structures.

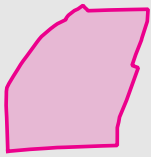
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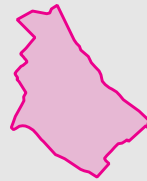
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TONIPIRIAMA AMA



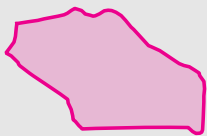
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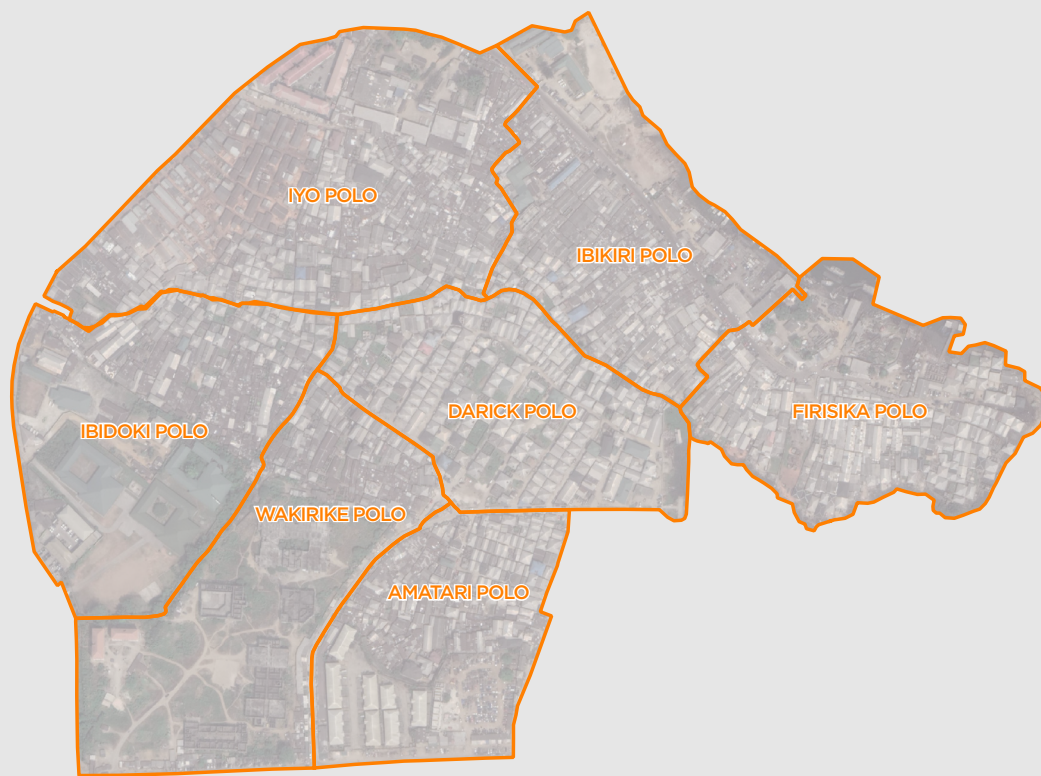
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COMMUNITY HISTORY

Tonipiriama Ama is a waterfront community located in the southern part of Port Harcourt in the region designated as Obumuton-Chiri by the Okrikan tribe. Different parts of the community are locally known as either Okrika Waterfront or Marine Base. Tonipiriama Ama has earned these nicknames as it has been the host for private, government, and commercial boat transport from the southernmost colonial area of Port Harcourt, commonly referred to as 'Old Town', to Okrika Island for many decades. The upland areas of what are now Amatari, Wakirike, Ibidoki, Iyo, Ibikiri, and Firisika Polo were settled by fishermen and traders years before the city was officially founded in 1913. During the civil war, many of the original settlers fled the area to return to their villages, where there was relative safety. Post-war, in the early '70s, many people returned to the area to reclaim their property. New and old residents also began to establish new territory by hand-dredging the swampy land with a thick fibrous mud called 'chicoco mud', which they cut from the mangroves.

With the 1913 agreement between the British and a number of local tribes, a large part of the waterfront area around Old Town, including the entirety of the Marine Base and Okrika Waterfront, was claimed by the Okrikan tribe and designated as Sekini Ama. The name Sekini is based on the name many Ijaw tribes used to give a group of trusted persons selected to make laws, judge or settle matters. In 1982, the residents of NEPA waterfront (Ibidoki Polo), Amatari and Wakirike gathered together to discuss bringing three phase electrification to residents of these areas. During this meeting, a Community Development Committee (CDC), given the name Sebiri, was established as an officially registered government entity. Sebiri included these three communities, and parts of Marine Base communities. Sebiri is a made up name combining two Okrikan phrases of 'Se', meaning all Okrikan people in three local government areas and 'Biri' meaning middle. This was an important catalyst for the formal management of this area, as a CDC designation allowed residents to engage with and make formal requests to the government.

Then, from 1988-89, as the community rapidly developed and expanded into the mangrove, the communities were divided into sub-Ama entities called, Polo's, and given Okrikan names for administrative and governance purposes. In 1992, Sekini Ama was formally registered as a CDC. As the communities expanded into the mangroves, Sekini Ama was subdivided into three Ama's: Tonipiriama Ama, Sekini Ama and Idango Ama. The present Tonipiriama Ama with its current boundaries was established in 2000.

In 1992-94, through a jetty project established by the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), the area now known as Primerose Estate was sand-filled. Originally, OMPADEC planned to sandfill only the area around the current jetty. But, community leadership negotiated the sand-filling of a much larger area to accommodate the community's rapid population growth. Although the jetty project was never completed due to a change in Rivers State governorship, the land was reclaimed by the Okrikans and the estate was renamed Darick Polo. With the sand-filling of the community, development shifted from 'batchas' (temporary half-block structures made of mixed materials), to predominantly full-block structures. During the 2020 statewide lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a large informal market sprung up in the community that served both waterfront residents and residents from the broader city.

TONIPIRIAMA IN NUMBERS



0.46 km²
SIZE



7
POLOS



2,230
STRUCTURES



21
SCHOOLS



10
PUBLIC TAPS/
BOREHOLES



2
PUBLIC TOILET



0
HEALTH
FACILITIES

LANDMARKS & LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Parts of the Ama are well known throughout Port Harcourt city as Okrika Waterfront. From the old colonial and southernmost part of the city, referred to locally as the 'Old Town', Okrika Waterfront is generally known to be located behind the Central Police Station and St Peter's Church. Known landmarks include Marine Base Roundabout and the former teaching hospital. The community is host to the city's main commercial jetty for transport to Okrika Island. The three communities known as Marine Base: Iyo, Ibikiri and Firisika Polos are also host to a number of mostly marine-oriented government entities and private enterprises. Plank Shed, one of the city's largest timber markets, is located within Iyo Polo. Darick Polo is also the host community to the Chicoco Collective, which includes the waterfront community-led radio station, Chicoco Radio. The Abili Drafts Centre is a community space shared by multiple Polo's in the Ama, and the adjacent open space is used for many large community events.

GOVERNANCE

Tonipiriama is one of 12 Ama's within Obumuton-Chiri kingdom, which is part of the traditional Okrikan governance system. The Ama includes 7 Polos: Amatari, Darick, Firisika, Ibiidoki, Ibikiri, Iyo and Wakirike. The Ama has an overarching chairman and executive committee (Exco) that oversees the governance of the Polos, with each having their own chairman and Exco. These positions are typically elected, but during various periods historically, as well as currently, the positions have been appointed.

In the Okrika system, to be considered for the chairman position the representative must be an Okrikan man above the age of 35, as well as a landlord in the community. Similar rules apply to the other Exco positions, although the treasury position must be held by a married Okrikan woman who is a resident in the community. The Exco is supported by both an elders and a youth council, as well as a woman leader. Non-indigenes are allowed to, and often do, hold leadership positions in the light, sanitation, utility, etc. committees. Exco meetings are typically held in the Okrikan native language, but broader general community meetings are held in Pidgin or Standard English.

While the community is legislated through the Okrikan indigenous system, Tonipiriama Ama is also formally registered as a Community Development Committee (CDC). Any formal partnerships or requests from the community to the local and state government are facilitated through its CDC status.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

The community has historically provided most of its own infrastructure and services, including boreholes, drainage, footbridges, light poles and wires. The Ama and the individual Polos carry out community levies to raise funds for infrastructure projects and maintenance, such as drainage construction or transformer repair. Tonipiriama Ama manages the public hanging toilet that is located in Darick Polo, but shares usage with the surrounding communities, including Cemetery Waterfront.

Several large development projects have been carried out over the years, including the sand-filling of Primerose Estate (Darick Polo) by OMPADEC, the paving of Jetty Road by NDDC, and the recent NDDC street lighting project in the Marine Base communities of Iyo, Ibikiri, Firisika and parts of Darick Polo. There have also been several infrastructure projects, including footbridges, and community boreholes, constructed by elected government officials or NGOs. Most notably, a major treated borehole and water tank was constructed by Rotary International in 2021. The Chicoco Radio building and Chicoco Shed, which serves as a community town hall, are both solar-powered facilities.

ACCESS

Okrika Island is approximately a 15-minute ride by speed boat from the commercial jetty in Firisika Polo. Other parts of the community are easily accessible by boat at high tide. Several parts of the community, including Marine Base and Darick Polo, are accessible by motor vehicle via paved access roads, while other communities are primarily only accessible by pedestrians and in some cases by motorbikes.



AMATARI POLO

COMMUNITY PROFILE

AMATARI POLO IN NUMBERS



0.05 km²
SIZE



304
STRUCTURES



3
SCHOOLS



1
PUBLIC TAPS/
BOREHOLES



0
PUBLIC TOILETS



0
HEALTH
FACILITIES



LANDMARKS & LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Amatar Polo is located directly opposite a section of the Central Police Station (CPS) barracks. One side of the community, situated along the bustling Jetty Road, is lined with shops, small businesses and bars. The major entrance into the waterfront, near St Peter's Church, is also a very busy commercial area, and includes the well-known CSS bookshop. Amatar is adjacent to the Ama's shared Abili Court (Drafts Centre), located at the community's roundabout. The community also is host to a new Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company (PHED) office, located in a Clifftop Estate off Hospital Road in Sekini Ama. The community also shares a boundary with Abo Ama.

COMMUNITY HISTORY

Amatar was one of the original areas settled as part of Okrika Waterfront, with the smaller upland area of Amatar Polo settled over 40 years ago. The community slowly expanded over the years as the mangroves were filled in with chicoco mud. Between 1992 and 1994, the adjacent community, which would become Darick Polo, was sand-filled, leaving Amatar without direct waterfront access. From 2013-14, one of the major access roads into the community, known as Jetty Road, was paved with Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) funding, improving motor vehicle access.



GOVERNANCE & SERVICES

The community has an active Okrikan traditional leadership system with an elected chairman and subcommittee members. There is one public borehole and water tap for households in the community. Many households use the public hanging toilet located in the adjacent Darick Polo. The community is the only Polo in the Ama to use bulk electricity billing, and divides the monthly bill between units.

ACCESS

The community is easily accessible by motor vehicle from the Old Town area of the city off Aggrey Road, from Cemetery or Banham streets. Furthermore, Jetty Road allows direct access down into the waterfront. The community itself is mostly pedestrian only, with several major pedestrian access paths off Jetty Road (including stairs) and at the end of Cemetery Street.



DARICK POLO

COMMUNITY PROFILE

DARICK POLO IN NUMBERS



0.05 km²
SIZE



302
STRUCTURES



5
SCHOOLS



1
PUBLIC TAPS/
BOREHOLES



1
PUBLIC TOILETS



0
HEALTH
FACILITIES



LANDMARKS & LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Darick Polo is host to Chicoco Radio, including the organisation's Media Shed which doubles as the community town hall. An open area near the Abili Court (Drafts Centre) is often used as an event space for large public gatherings. The Chicoco Shed is also used as an event space for meetings and concerts, and is in the process of being developed into a community centre. The waterfront area, including the toilet and jetty, is used by other Polos in the Ama, as well as by Cemetery Waterfront (Ibiapu Polo).

COMMUNITY HISTORY

Darick Polo, which is otherwise known as Primerose Estate, was sand-filled by the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) from 1992 to 1994 to complete a jetty project. The project was halted due to a change in state government, and the land was reclaimed by the Okrikan people. The first 20 settlers from Wakirike Polo were allocated plots of land in 1998 by the Amayanabo or traditional leader of Obumuton-Chiri, Port Harcourt, and by 1999 most had started building their homes. From 2000, others began to move into the community. Almost all structures in the community have been constructed as permanent homes, built with cement blocks.



GOVERNANCE & SERVICES

The community manages a public hanging toilet for the Ama. The first block toilet was constructed by an NGO, but after several storms the structure collapsed. The current toilet is a temporary construction. A public borehole was completed by Rotary in 2021, serving the Polo and surrounding communities. There is also a newly constructed MTN telecommunications mast in the Polo. The community has established paint colours (cream and brown) for all structures. Religious institutions must pay to use other paint colours.

ACCESS

Most of the community is accessible by motor vehicles, with wide numbered roads. The main road which runs down to the Jetty was paved by NDDC. The community is also accessible by water at high tide, and there are canoe ferry services to Firisika Polo. There are 2 footbridges connecting the community to Ibiidoki and Ibikiri Polo. The bridge to Ibikiri Polo is locked at night in an effort to reduce criminal activities. The community is easily accessible from the from Aggrey Road, down Banham Street or through the Central Police Station (CPS) barracks.



FIRSIKA POLO

COMMUNITY PROFILE

FIRSIKA POLO IN NUMBERS



0.06 km²
SIZE



321
STRUCTURES



1
SCHOOLS



1
PUBLIC TAPS/
BOREHOLES



0
PUBLIC TOILETS



0
HEALTH
FACILITIES



LANDMARKS & LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Commonly referred to as Marine Base, this community has a busy commercial dock that is a hub for ferries, fishermen and commercial boats. The community is host to an official government jetty, as well as several marine company headquarters. A satellite of Salvation Ministry Church, one of the major churches in Port Harcourt, is currently under construction in the community. The community also hosts an army checkpoint and a busy taxi rank.

COMMUNITY HISTORY

Firisika Polo was first settled around 1980, but was formally given its name, which means 'the works that never spoil', in 1993. The community has been an active hub for marine activity for decades. After conflict with the speed boat union over their informal use of land in the community, the jetty in Darick Polo was inaccessible during low tide. An agreement was made to designate a plot of land in Firisika Polo for the union to use as their main jetty for transport to and from Okrika.

GOVERNANCE & SERVICES

The first caretaker committee was installed in 1988. The following year, the first elected chairman and subcommittee were established to replace the caretaker committee. There is one free community tap and borehole, built by a member of the Rivers State House of Assembly in 2009. The community has no public toilet facilities and very few household latrines.

ACCESS

Firisika Polo is located at the end of a peninsula. There is one paved road running through the community. It is easily accessible by motor vehicle from Eastern Bypass Road. There are also several access points from Darick Polo, by narrow footbridge and by ferry during high tide.





IBIDOKI POLO

COMMUNITY PROFILE

IBIDOKI POLO IN NUMBERS



0.07 km²
SIZE



250
STRUCTURES



3
SCHOOLS



1
PUBLIC TAPS/
BOREHOLES



0
PUBLIC TOILETS



0
HEALTH
FACILITIES



LANDMARKS & LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

The boundaries of this community include the office of the former National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), which is now the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company (PHED). The office is located off the Hospital Road axis. Most notably, Ibidoki Polo is host to Township Primary School, which has meant many students pour into the community while on their lunch break. Another major private primary school, Cornerstone, is located within the community.

COMMUNITY HISTORY

As one of the original three communities in Okrika waterfront, Ibidoki Polo has served as a fisherman settlement and hub for boats from Okrika since the city was founded in 1913. Ibidoki Polo began to grow more significantly after the civil war in the early '70s as people returned to the city from their villages. The old part of the community is largely unplanned, while the newer sand-filled area is well planned. Before it was named Ibidoki Polo, the community was known as 'the community after the bridge', or NEPA waterside.



GOVERNANCE & SERVICES

The community has one public borehole that was constructed by a politician vying for votes. It is maintained by the community. There are two footbridges in the community, one built by the NGO 'Achievers' and the other constructed by the community. There are no public toilet facilities. The community experiences severe flooding when the large drainage canal overflows during the rainy season.

ACCESS

Ibidoki Polo is primarily accessed through neighboring Polos. From Marine Base roundabout, one can pass through Coffin Lane and Iyo Polo to enter the community. From the town axis, one must pass through Wakirike Polo, as well as the shared footbridge across the major drainage canal, in order to reach the community. Ibidoki Polo does not have any motor vehicle or water access.



IBIKIRI POLO

COMMUNITY PROFILE

IBIKIRI POLO IN NUMBERS



0.06 km²
SIZE



321
STRUCTURES



4
SCHOOLS



2
PUBLIC TAPS/
BOREHOLES



0
PUBLIC TOILETS



0
HEALTH
FACILITIES



LANDMARKS & LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

This community is host to several federal and local marine government entities on the north side of Eberi Street. This includes a National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) sand-filling project. The Marine Police also has offices and living quarters located in the community. The Polo has erected a signboard with their name on it near the Marine Police quarters.

COMMUNITY HISTORY

The community is one of three Polos that, together are commonly referred to as Marine Base. Ibibiri Polo, which means 'peaceful and good land' in Okrikan, was founded in the early '70s as the first settlers returned from the village after the civil war. In the '80s, the community rapidly expanded as more people infilled the mangrove through hand dredging with 'chicoco mud'. In 2021, the Rivers State Government demolished a number of structures along the fence of the government's property on Eberi Street to make way for the construction of a government jetty.

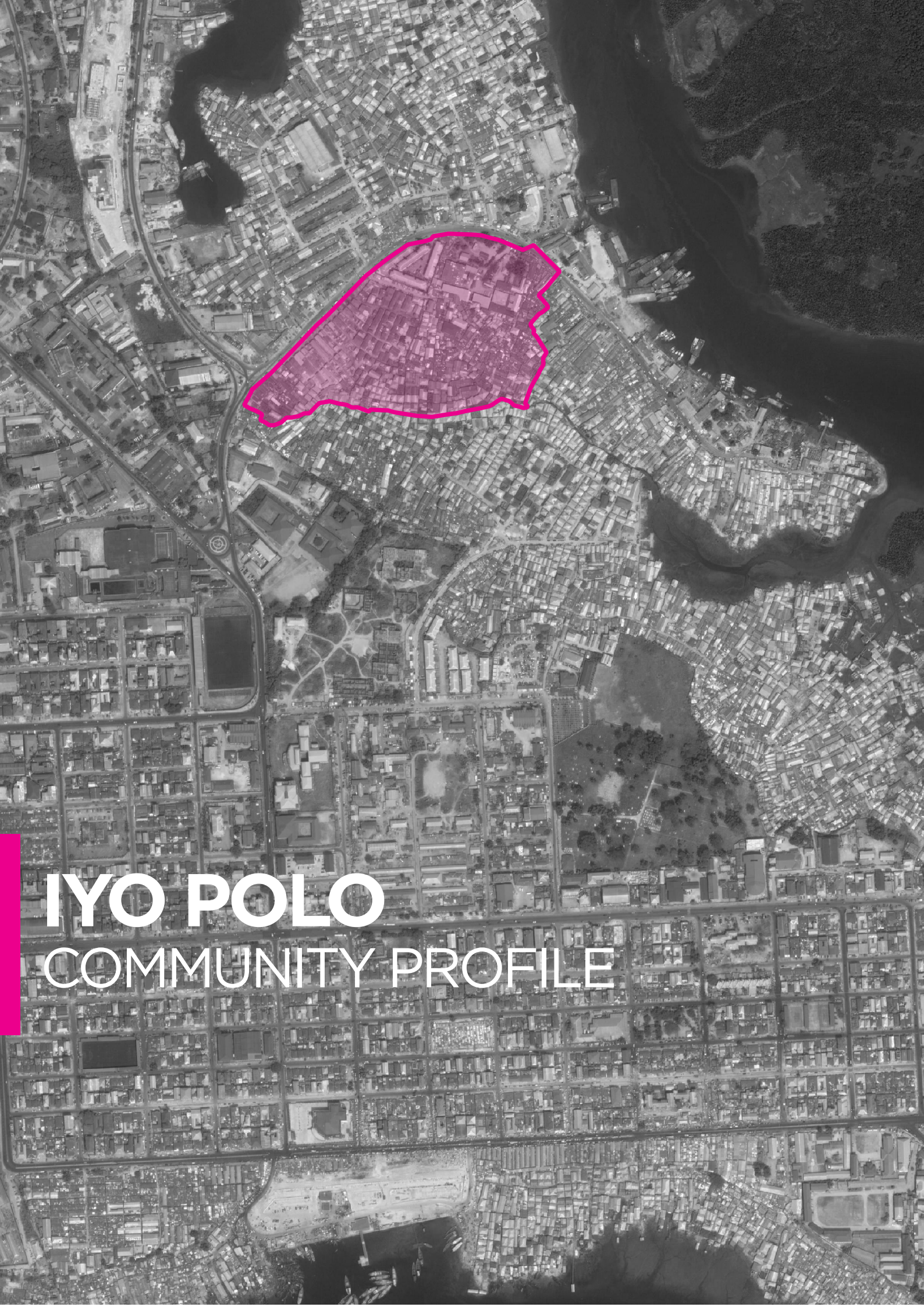


GOVERNANCE & SERVICES

The community received street lighting as part of an NDDC project in Marine Base in 2021. Through an agreement with the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), the community receives sand left over from the sand-filling and concrete piling construction project in the community, which they regularly use to improve their roads. Ibibiri Polo has two community boreholes and there are several privately-owned hanging toilets that are used by the public.

ACCESS

The community is located halfway down the Marine Base peninsula. There is motor vehicle access via the paved Eberi Street, but this road does not provide access to the rest of the community. There is a wooden footbridge across the community's main drain, which connects Ibibiri to Darick Polo. The community is accessible by boat from the Ministry of Transport and NIWA boatyards, although entry is restricted at times on these government properties.



IYO POLO

COMMUNITY PROFILE

IYO POLO IN NUMBERS



0.09 km²
SIZE



547
STRUCTURES



4
SCHOOLS



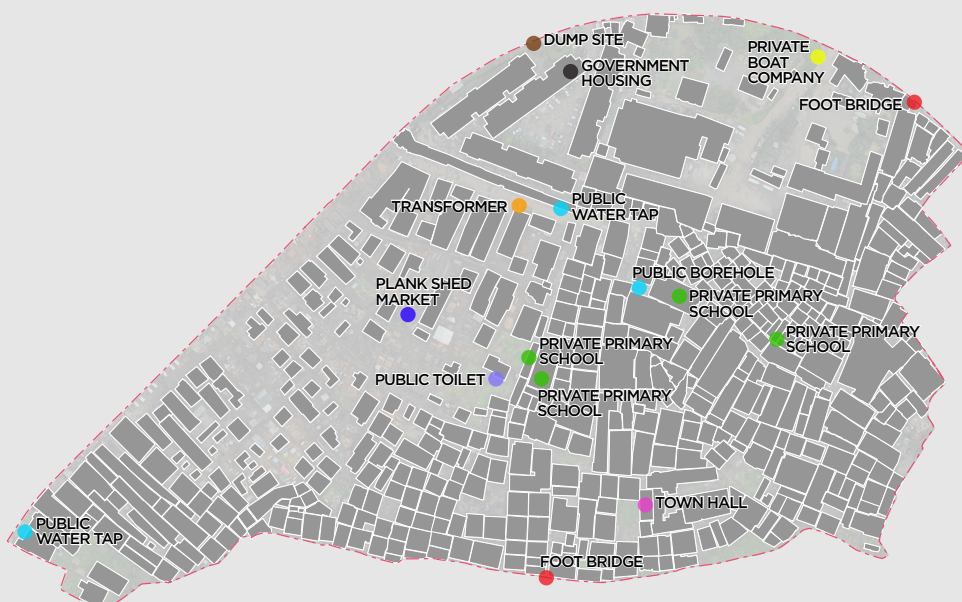
3
PUBLIC TAPS/
BOREHOLES



1
PUBLIC TOILETS



0
HEALTH
FACILITIES



LANDMARKS & LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

This community is well-known for hosting Plank Shed, one of the city's largest timber markets. The market burned down in February 2021 and is in the process of being rebuilt. The community is host to the Waterglass Boat Yard, owned by the government, but leased to three private boat building companies, including Epenal Boat Builders. A government housing estate has also been established within the community's boundaries.

COMMUNITY HISTORY

Iyo Polo, which means 'my own property' in Okrikan, has existed as a hub for fishermen for many years, but experienced rapid expansion through hand dredging in the late '70s. Prior to this, only a small island of land existed, with fish farms built by residents. The community was once host to an incurable disease hospital (IDH) for tuberculosis patients, which was moved as the community grew to avoid residents being exposed to TB.



GOVERNANCE & SERVICES

Iyo Polo is part of a 2021 street lighting project that was launched by NDDC. The community has several public boreholes — one built by former Governor Diete-Spiff, one by a local church, and another by a community member who used prize money from a quiz competition. There is one public toilet that was built by Port Harcourt Local Government Area (PHALGA). There was another wooden public toilet that has now been deconstructed as it was situated too close to housing and did not have proper drainage flow.

ACCESS

The community is easily accessible from Marine Base roundabout along the busy paved Eberi Street that runs all the way through the Marine Base Peninsula. There is one major access road which runs adjacent to the Plank Shed Market, allowing motor vehicle access into the community. There is a footbridge connecting the community to Ibidoki Polo.



WAKIRIKE POLO

COMMUNITY PROFILE

WAKIRIKE POLO IN NUMBERS



0.07 km²
SIZE



185
STRUCTURES



1
SCHOOLS



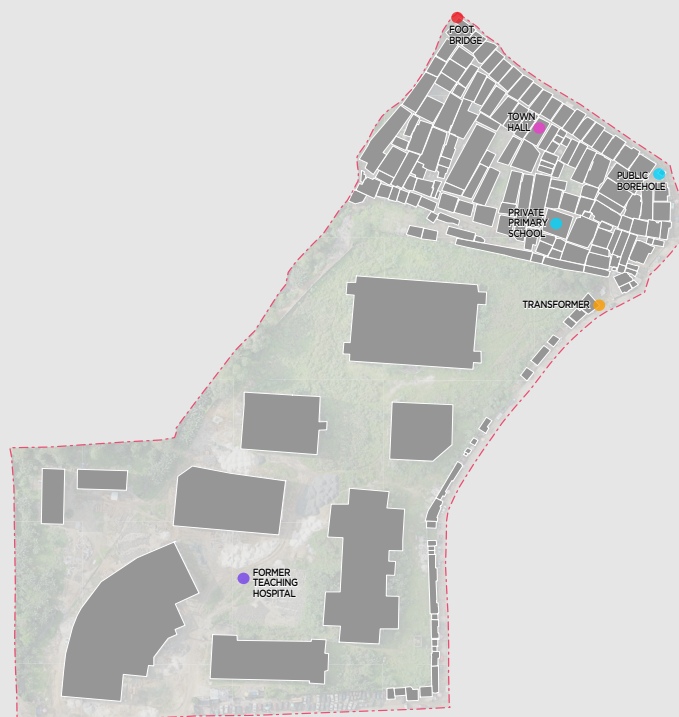
1
PUBLIC TAPS/
BOREHOLES



0
PUBLIC TOILETS



0
HEALTH
FACILITIES



LANDMARKS & LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

The walled-off compound of the city's former teaching hospital makes up a large portion of the land within this community's boundary. The hospital has gone through various phases of use, demolition and re-construction under different tenures of governorship since before the civil war. The hospital compound is cited as government land, which has created a unique dynamic between the informal waterfront community and the state government. The community has established a Community Liaison Officer (CLO) to manage relations with the new hospital development. The community shares the Abili Court drafts centre, with adjacent Polos. Wakirike Polo has also constructed and leases stalls for business along the busy Jetty Road that runs from the upland Hospital Road down into Okrika Waterfront. Wakirike Polo has also constructed and leases stalls for business along the busy Jetty Rd that runs from the upland Hospital Rd down the waterfront.

COMMUNITY HISTORY

Wakirike Polo is one of the earliest places settled in Okrika Waterfront, with many people moving to the area as early as the 1950's. Many of these early settlers were fishermen and timber sellers, who sold their goods at the upland market. Most early settlers fled during the civil war and returned after to reclaim the land that had been abandoned during the war. Prior to the sand-filling of Primerose Estate, the community was situated on the bank of the river and hosted the dock for boats traveling to Okrika.

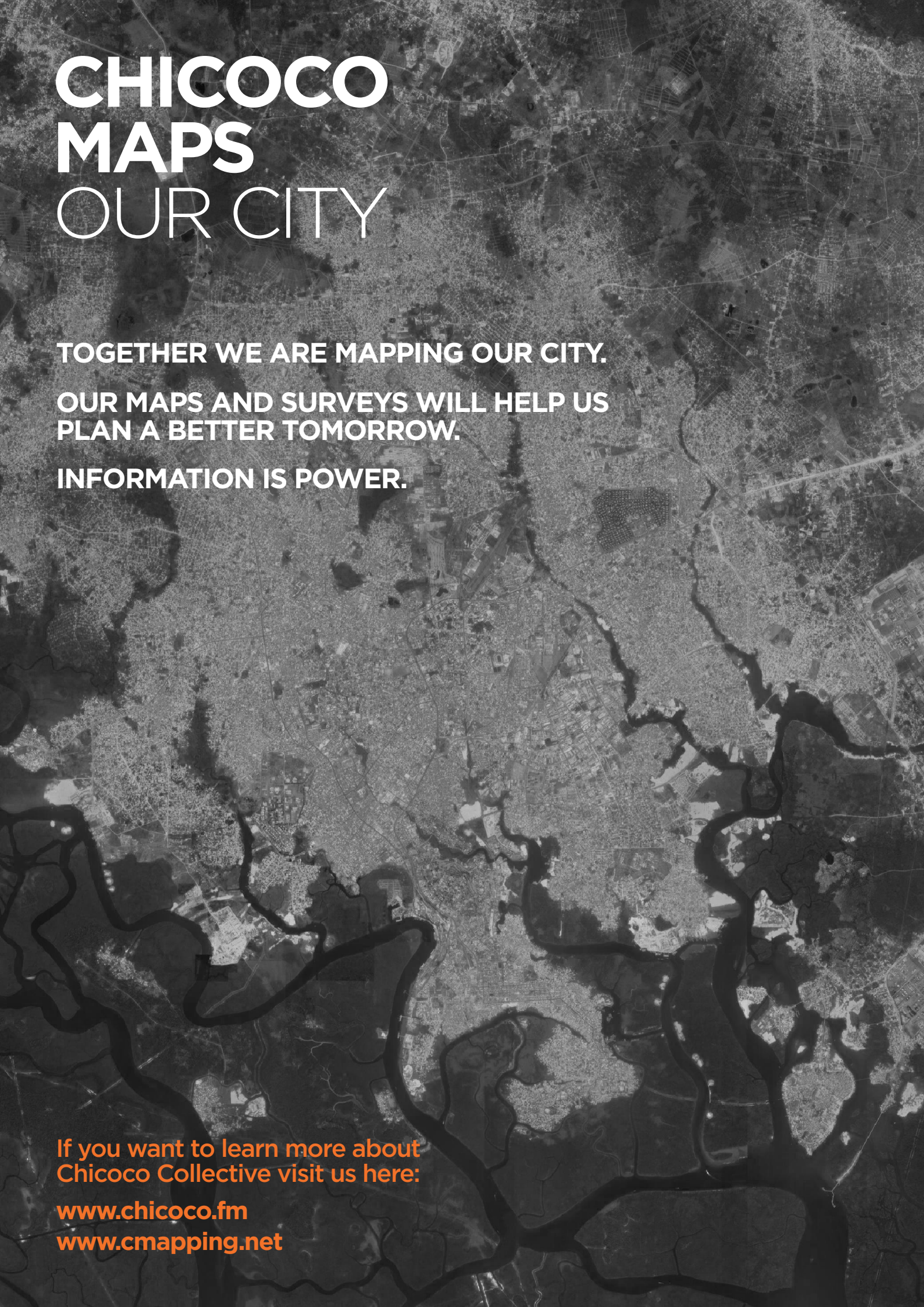


GOVERNANCE & SERVICES

The community has an active Okrikan leadership system, although it is currently only operating with a 5-person executive committee with a number of leadership positions remaining vacant. The community has provided all of its own infrastructure, including one public borehole and water tap, and a footbridge over the drain canal to Ibidoki Polo. In 1981 the residents of the Wakirike Polo raised funds to bring electricity into the community by paying 40-50 Naira per household. The community shares access and use of neighboring Polo services i.e. the hanging toilet and new Rotary installed water tap.

ACCESS

The main roads, including the paved Jetty Road and road bordering Darick Polo, are accessible by motor vehicle from Aggrey Road. Pedestrians can also enter the community from Hospital Road through a gate on the former teaching hospital property locally called 'Small Gate'. The community can also be accessed across its pedestrian footbridge from Ibidoki Polo and the Marine Base axis.



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