

URBANISATION AND RURAL INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF ABDULSALAM ABUBAKAR GENERAL HOSPITAL, GULU/VATSA, NIGER STATE.

USMAN ADAMU

Department of History and International Studies, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Niger State.
usmaniyya@ibbu.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Urbanization is rapidly changing the morphology of developing nations, including Nigeria, with Gulu/Vatsa exemplifying as a microcosm of this transformation. This study investigates the establishment and operation of the Abdulsalam Abubakar General Hospital from 2014 in Gulu/Vatsa and how it shapes the socio-cultural, economic and political activities of the area. Utilizing primary data from oral interviews, archival materials and secondary sources, the research analyzes the rural transformation and development of the area. Findings reveal that the hospital has significantly enhanced health consciousness, provided employment, and stimulated local economic activity. Additionally, it has reinforced the government's commitment to healthcare, bolstering political support and fostering community engagement. This study highlights the critical role of healthcare infrastructure in promoting urbanization, improving living standards, and strengthening community ties.

Keywords: *Urbanization, Rural, Infrastructure, Facilities, Hospital resilience*

INTRODUCTION

Urban infrastructure development is crucial for the well-being and sustainable growth of cities and their populations. It involves the improvement and expansion of physical structures, systems, and services that support urban life, such as transportation networks, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, water and sanitation systems, and more. Urbanization is rapidly changing the general

morphology of most developing nations of the world including Nigeria (Orekan, 2015). The physical or spatial manifestation of man's activities over space gives rise to settlements which exhibit certain differential characteristics to the extent that a distinction can be drawn between them. Cities grow from settlement areas which serve specific functions and people's activities in these

centers lead to the constant expansion of cities on the long run (Achi, 2004).

The development of urban infrastructural facilities in Gulu/Vatsa is a major focus of this study. The case study focuses on the development of the Abdulsalam Abubakar General Hospital during the period of Dr Muazu Babangida Aliyu Governor of Niger State in 2014. The expansion and enhancement of healthcare facilities within urban regions are essential to meet the increasing demands of a growing population. Urbanization has enormous consequences on infrastructures in Nigeria and other developing countries due to population increase involved in its process. Areas with infrastructure are more alive than non-serviced areas and also attract more people. There are numerous infrastructural facilities in Gulu/Vatsa which are in poor shape and bad condition which has become a major challenge faced by inhabitants in terms of their socio-economic and physical wellbeing (Julius, 1985).

The study explored and analyzed the development of urban infrastructural facilities in Gulu/Vatsa with a focus on Abdulsalam Abubakar General Hospital from 2014. It assessed existing urban infrastructural facilities including transportation, water supply, sanitation,

electricity, and telecommunications. The work evaluates the state of Abdulsalam Abubakar General Hospital in terms of its physical infrastructure, medical equipment, and capacity to provide healthcare services. It further analyzed the impact of urban development on quality and accessibility of healthcare services in Gulu/Vatsa. Finally, it identified challenges faced in developing urban infrastructural facilities in Gulu/Vatsa.

STUDY METHODS AND AREA

Methodology

This study involved a combination of primary and secondary data collection to examine the development of urban infrastructural facilities in Gulu/Vatsa, particularly focusing on the Abdulsalam Abubakar General Hospital from 2014. Primary data were collected through interviews with local residents, healthcare providers, and officials to gather firsthand insights into the hospital's development and the overall urban infrastructure, and complemented by archival sources. Secondary data were obtained from newspapers, and official records to complement and validate the primary data. The collected data were thematically analyzed to identify patterns and draw conclusions about the state of infrastructure,

the challenges faced, and the impact of urbanization on the healthcare services in Gulu/Vatsa. This approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the interplay between urban development and healthcare accessibility in the area.

Historiography was employed to examine the different perspectives and approaches of the study over time. It provides understanding of the interpretations of history and assess the primary and secondary sources used to reconstruct events and understand their reliability and biases. It focuses on historical narratives, tracing how historical narratives and interpretations have changed over time, influenced by new evidence, changing societal values.

Land and People of Gulu/Vatsa

The region of Gulu/Vatsa is not only home to a vibrant development of diverse cultures and traditions but also a rich history that stretches back centuries.¹ Geographically significant area, the land and people of Gulu/Vatsa have shaped the socio-economic fabric of their communities through their origin, geographical location, and engagement in various economic activities.

The indigenous people of Gulu/Vatsa are the Nupe, with other ethnic groups such as Ganagana (Abawa/Gupa), Gbagyi, Egbira, Yoruba, among others. The first inhabitants of Gulu/Vatsa were the Gulu/Vatsa Narakpe who migrated from Nupe ko village to settle in the area as hunters and farmers. The second group to arrive was the Gulu/Vatsa Emiko who migrated from Gawu Babangida and settled in present-day Emiko. The third group were the Gulu/Vatsa Lukafu who migrated from Starami, a neighboring community of Gulu/Vatsa. The last group were the Gulu/Vatsa Anguwa who migrated from Hausa land shortly before Usman Dan Fodio Jihad of 1804 and settled in present-day Anguwa as traders. Gulu/Vatsa is dominated by different ethnic groups who speak different languages such as Hausa, Nupe, Ganagana, Gbagyi, Igbo, Mada, Tiv, Yoruba, Bassa etc (Jimada, 2005).

Geographical Location

Gulu/Vatsa is located in the southern part of Lapai headquarters of Lapai Local Government area of Niger State, positioned along latitude 90. It is situated in the southern Guinea Zone of the Savannah region and is surrounded by neighboring villages. The population of Gulu/Vatsa is about 168,000

¹ Interview with Etsu Muhammadu Sani, aged 48, Gulu, 30/2/2023

and covers about 100 square miles. The village is blessed with good perennial streams. The northern part of Gulu/Vatsa is bordered by Fapo, Nassarawa, and Duma Village, while the south includes Ewugi, Gbedako, and Evuti. In the east are Lafiyan Kpakada, Zango, and Kpada Villages, whereas in the west it shares borders with Gulu/Vatsa Vasta, Vulegbo, and Atsu Village.²

Socio-Economic Activities of the People

The people engage in a variety of socio-economic activities that sustain their livelihoods. Agriculture is the backbone of the local economy, with farming practices ranging from subsistence to commercial agriculture. The region's fertile soils support the cultivation of crops such as maize, millet, sorghum, and vegetables. Apart from agriculture, the people have traditionally engaged in other economic activities such as livestock rearing, fishing, and trading. The region's abundant water resources provide ample opportunities for fishing, which has been a significant economic activity for generations. The vibrant local markets serve as hubs for trade.³

² Interview with Isah Adamu Yunusa, aged 42, Gulu, 30/2/2023

³ Interview with Mallam Kandi, aged 47, civil servant, Kandi, 30/2/2023.

Gulu/Vatsa is also home to skilled artisans and craftsmen who specialize in traditional crafts such as pottery, weaving, and woodwork. These skilled individuals not only preserve their cultural heritage but also contribute to the local economy through the production and sale of their handcrafted products. In recent years, the community has undergone a gradual transformation with the integration of modern industries and infrastructure. This has led to the emergence of sectors such as manufacturing, services, and tourism, offering new avenues for economic development and employment.⁴

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF GULU/VATSA GENERAL HOSPITAL

The General Hospital stands as a symbol of progress and development in the region, catering to the healthcare needs of the local population. Established with the aim of providing quality medical services, the hospital has played a vital role in improving the health and well-being of the community. Hence, focus is delved into the establishment of the General Hospital, exploring the factors responsible for its creation and the impact it has on the region

⁴ Interview with Muhammed Saba Yakubu, aged 70, retired civil servant, Minna, 15/2/2023

The Hospital is a significant achievement in the healthcare infrastructure of the region, representing a commitment to the well-being of the local population. The hospital was established through the efforts of various stakeholders, including government authorities who recognized the increasing healthcare demands within the region. Healthcare professionals were instrumental in shaping the hospital's mission, advocating for accessible and high-quality medical services. The community members themselves played an integral role in making the hospital a reality, with their collective voice and support reflecting their long-standing aspirations for affordable and readily available healthcare. The hospital stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and symbolizes a brighter and healthier future for the community.⁵ (See Appendix 4).

The General Hospital was established to improve access to medical services in the region. Prior to its existence, residents faced challenges in accessing healthcare due to inadequate infrastructure and geographical barriers. The hospital's location allowed for prompt and convenient access to healthcare services, regardless of location. It offered a

wide range of medical specialties, simplifying the patient's healthcare journey by providing a one-stop destination for consultations, diagnostics, treatment, and emergency interventions. This comprehensive approach guaranteed timely access to critical medical care, enhancing the overall health outcomes of the community. The hospital's establishment was a success in improving access to healthcare by addressing geographical barriers and offering a comprehensive array of medical services.⁶ (See Appendix 2).

Improved Access to Healthcare

The establishment of a hospital has significantly improved healthcare accessibility in the community. Prior to the hospital's existence, residents faced challenges accessing essential medical services due to geographical barriers, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This resulted in delayed medical attention and financial burdens for individuals and their families. The hospital addressed these issues by offering a wide range of specialized medical services, including internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, and emergency care.

⁵ Interview with Muhammed Ibrahim, aged 47, Estu, Kandi, 30/2/2023.

⁶ Interview with Umar Abubakar, aged 52, farmer, Kandi, 26/2/2023.

This comprehensive approach made the hospital a one-stop destination for medical consultations, diagnostics, treatment, and emergency care. The hospital's establishment removed geographical barriers that had previously impeded healthcare accessibility and promoted the principle that quality healthcare is a basic human right accessible to all.

The hospital's role in enhancing healthcare accessibility extended beyond its location. It systematically addressed the range of medical services available to the community by offering not only basic care but also specialized medical specialties. The inclusion of internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, and a well-equipped emergency department ensured that a broad spectrum of healthcare needs could be met at a single institution. The establishment of the Hospital was a watershed moment in the region's healthcare landscape as it significantly enhanced healthcare accessibility by addressing long-standing geographical challenges and offering comprehensive medical services. It underscored the principle that healthcare should be within reach of all contributing to

improved health outcomes and an overall higher quality of life for the community.⁷

Enhanced Medical Services

The General Hospital was established to provide advanced and comprehensive medical services to the community. Prior to its existence, individuals requiring specialized care had to travel considerable distances, resulting in inconvenience and delays in accessing essential medical interventions. The hospital sought to address these challenges comprehensively by providing holistic healthcare services under one roof, encompassing a wide range of medical specialties. By centralizing this spectrum of services within the hospital, it offered the community a one-stop destination for their healthcare needs. This comprehensive service approach simplified the patient's healthcare journey and ensured timely access to critical medical care.⁸

The hospital's mission was to provide specialized medical services, advanced diagnostic facilities, and a well-equipped emergency department. Its medical specialties included internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, surgical services, and emergency care department. The availability of specialized

⁷Interview with Aliyu Yelwa, aged 57 Gulu, 22/2/2023

⁸Interview with Muhammed Saba Yakubu, aged 70, retired civil servant, Minna, 17/2/2023.

medical professionals and advanced diagnostic facilities meant that residents received care that was both efficient and effective. The centralization of services at the Hospital ultimately contributed to the enhancement of the community's overall health outcomes. It eliminated the barriers that had previously hindered timely access to specialized care and emergency interventions, leading to improved health management and ultimately better healthcare outcomes for the community. The establishment of the hospital was a remarkable achievement driven by the community's need for specialized, comprehensive, and efficient healthcare services (Jimada, 2005).

Human Resources Development

The Hospital prioritized the development and recruitment of a skilled and diverse healthcare workforce. This initiative aimed to assemble a team of healthcare professionals and support staff who could deliver a wide range of medical services efficiently and effectively. The recruitment process ensured that the hospital was adequately staffed with qualified and compassionate individuals who could provide the highest standard of care to the community. The hiring initiative

generated employment opportunities within the community, contributing to increased income and job security for many residents, consequently stimulating local economic growth and stability. The focus on local recruitment was instrumental in the development of a skilled healthcare workforce specific to the Gulu/Vatsa region. By hiring individuals from the community or neighboring areas, the hospital fostered the growth of a locally rooted healthcare team.⁹

The development of this local healthcare workforce was an essential investment in the sustainability of healthcare services within the community. It ensured that the Hospital could effectively meet the evolving healthcare needs of the region, both in present and future times. The establishment of this hospital went beyond providing healthcare services; it was a catalyst for local economic development, job creation, and the development of a skilled and locally rooted healthcare workforce. This multifaceted impact not only enhanced access to healthcare but also strengthened long-term healthcare sustainability.

HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS OF THE HOSPITAL TO THE COMMUNITY

Ambulance Services

⁹ Interview with Ibrahim Muhammed Vulegbo, aged 70, Hakimi, Gulu, 30/2/2023.

The hospital provides ambulance services as a crucial component of its offerings to ensure the well-being of the community, particularly in emergency healthcare situations. The ambulance services are designed to address the urgency of timely and efficient transportation during medical emergencies, equipped with necessary medical facilities and staffed by trained professionals. The improved emergency response facilitated by ambulance services has a profound impact on the overall health outcomes of individuals in the community, enhancing the chances of positive outcomes for patients and building trust and confidence within the community.

Beyond transportation, ambulance services contribute to a proactive approach to healthcare within the community by fostering a sense of security among residents and encouraging individuals to seek medical assistance promptly. In essence, the provision of ambulance services by the hospital is a manifestation of its dedication to the well-being of the community, reinforcing its role as a central healthcare institution committed to providing comprehensive and timely healthcare solutions to residents it serves.¹⁰

(See Appendix 1)

Special Clinical Services

The hospital offers special clinical services that go beyond standard medical care to address specific medical conditions and the unique needs of different demographic groups in the community. Specialized clinics for chronic diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension, provide continuous and personalized care, education, and support to improve health outcomes and quality of life. The hospital also establishes clinics that cater to the healthcare needs of distinct age groups, including pediatric clinics for children and geriatric clinics for the elderly. By tailoring clinical services to specific needs, the hospital ensures a targeted and effective approach to healthcare delivery that acknowledges the complexity of healthcare and addresses the importance of individualized care plans. These special clinical services foster a sense of community well-being by acknowledging and catering to unique health needs, enhancing health outcomes, contributing to a more inclusive and responsive healthcare system, and exemplifying a holistic approach to healthcare.¹¹ (See Appendix 3).

Surgical Services

The hospital's surgical services are a vital part of its healthcare solutions, providing a

¹⁰ Interview with Hamisu Musa aged 70, farmer, Gulu, 20/2/2023

¹¹ Interview with Abubakar Sadiq, aged 54, civil servant, Kandi, 21/2/2023.

comprehensive range of medical interventions to meet the diverse needs of the community. The hospital has invested in modern surgical facilities and assembled a skilled surgical team, enabling it to perform a wide array of procedures with precision, efficiency, and a focus on patient safety. The surgical team comprises highly trained and experienced professionals covering various specialties, allowing the hospital to address an extensive range of medical conditions.¹²

The hospital's state-of-the-art surgical facilities are equipped with advanced medical technologies that enable the surgical team to perform routine surgeries as well as more complex and specialized interventions. The availability of comprehensive surgical care contributes significantly to the overall health outcomes of the community by enhancing accessibility to critical healthcare services. Routine surgeries can prevent the escalation of certain medical conditions, promoting long-term health and well-being within the community.¹³

The provision of surgical services represents a pivotal aspect of its commitment to comprehensive healthcare. The combination of modern facilities, a skilled surgical team,

and a diverse range of services ensures that the community has access to essential medical interventions. This holistic approach emphasizes the importance of surgical care in addressing the health needs of the community and underscores the hospital's role as a central healthcare institution in the region.¹⁴

Onsite Pharmacy

The hospital's onsite pharmacy reflects a commitment to holistic healthcare by providing convenient access to medications and enhancing medication management. Patients can easily access prescribed medications immediately after medical consultations or upon discharge, eliminating the need for separate trips to external pharmacies. Trained pharmacists work closely with healthcare providers to ensure accurate and appropriate medications tailored to patients' specific needs, promoting adherence to treatment plans and improving health outcomes. The integration of an onsite pharmacy aligns with the hospital's broader commitment to providing comprehensive and patient-centered care, contributing to a more holistic and efficient healthcare experience for patients.¹⁵

Obstetrics and Gynecological Services

¹² Interview with Hamisu Musa aged 70, pharmacist, Gulu, 20/2/2023.

¹³ Interview with Aliyu Yelwa, aged 57, farmer, Gulu, 09/2/2023.

¹⁴ Interview with Samaila Yusuf aged 56, surgeon, Gulu, 20/2/2023.

¹⁵ Interview with Isah Adamu Yunusa, aged 45, civil servant, Gulu, 22/2/2023.

The hospital provides specialized obstetrics and gynecology services to support maternal and women's health. These services include antenatal care, childbirth support, routine gynecological check-ups, screenings, and preventive care. The hospital also offers educational programs and resources related to maternal and women's health to promote community health awareness. The hospital's commitment to providing specialized care reflects its dedication to addressing a critical aspect of community health.¹⁶

THE IMPACT OF GULU/VATSA COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

The establishment and operation of the hospital have undoubtedly left a lasting impact on the community. The work explored and analyzed the multifaceted impact of the hospital on various aspects of the community, including socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions.¹⁷

Socio-Cultural Impacts

The hospital has had a significant impact on the local community beyond just providing medical services. One of the most notable impacts is the positive shift in health consciousness among community members, with residents becoming more proactive in managing their well-being. The hospital has

also become a focal point for health education programs, including regular workshops and awareness campaigns covering a range of topics. By fostering a sense of community health responsibility, the hospital encourages individuals to take an active role in their health, contributing to the overall well-being of the community.

The hospital's engagement with local traditions and cultural practices has played a crucial role in building trust within the community. By incorporating culturally sensitive healthcare approaches, the hospital demonstrates a deep understanding of the community's values and beliefs. This approach not only facilitates better communication between healthcare providers and patients but also strengthens the bond of trust between the community and the hospital. In many cases, traditional healing practices have been integrated where appropriate, bridging conventional medicine and cultural beliefs (Bourne, 1986).

The socio-cultural impact of the hospital is profound, touching the lives of community members in ways that go beyond medical treatment. However, it also has economic impacts on the local area that cannot be ignored. The presence of a hospital can attract

¹⁶ Interview with Shehu Tukur aged 60, Gynaecologist, Gulu, 20/6/2023.

¹⁷ Interview with Isah Adamu Yunusa, aged 42, Teacher, Gulu, 30/2/2023.

businesses and investment to an area, creating jobs and boosting economic growth. Additionally, hospitals often purchase goods and services from local suppliers, further stimulating economic activity. However, while hospitals primarily exist to provide medical care to patients, they can have far-reaching impacts on their surrounding communities. The hospital discussed here has had both socio-cultural and economic impacts on its local area through its focus on health education programs, culturally sensitive approaches to healthcare, and contributions to local economic growth.¹⁸

Economic Impacts

The General Hospital has a significant economic impact on the community beyond healthcare services. The hospital is a major source of employment, providing stable jobs for healthcare professionals, administrative staff, and support personnel. This generates income for families and contributes to improved living standards. The hospital also acts as a catalyst for broader economic development in the area by creating demand for goods and services from local businesses such as pharmacies, clinics, and eateries. This symbiotic relationship between the hospital and local businesses contributes to the

creation of a vibrant economic ecosystem within the community.¹⁹

The hospital's reputation for providing quality healthcare services can have a positive impact on the community's overall economic standing. A well-equipped and professionally staffed hospital is an asset that can enhance the community's appeal to potential residents and businesses. This may attract further investments and contribute to the development of the local economy. Therefore, the Hospital plays a crucial role in fostering both health and prosperity within the community. Its positive influence on the local economy underscores its significance as a key institution in promoting economic growth and improving living standards (Achi, 2004).

Political Impacts

The hospital has a significant political impact within the region as it reflects the government's commitment to fulfilling the healthcare needs of its citizens. The provision of quality healthcare is a fundamental element of social welfare, and the hospital plays a central role in delivering on this aspect of governance. The hospital may also serve as a focal point for community engagement with political leaders, creating a

¹⁸ Interview with Muhammed Ibrahim, aged 47, Estu, Kandi, 30/2/2023.

¹⁹ Interview with Shehu Tukur aged 60, Gynaecologist, Gulu, 20/6/2023.

platform for meaningful dialogue on broader community development discussions (Mikail, 2016).

The hospital's presence may result in increased attention and prioritization of health-related policies and initiatives in local governance discussions. As a significant stakeholder in the community's health, the hospital may advocate for policies that address public health challenges, allocate resources for healthcare infrastructure, and promote preventive healthcare measures. This could lead to a more comprehensive and targeted approach to healthcare governance in the region.

The hospital's role in addressing health disparities within the community can have implications for political support and community satisfaction. A well-functioning hospital that caters to the diverse healthcare needs of the population demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and equity. This commitment may enhance the political standing of local authorities, garnering support from a community that perceives tangible efforts to improve their well-being.²⁰ Thus, the establishment of the Gulu/Vatsa Community Hospital has significantly enhanced healthcare delivery through a range

of comprehensive services tailored to the community's needs. It has impacted the community in socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions. Socio-culturally, the hospital has elevated health consciousness among residents and fostered community health responsibility through education programs and culturally sensitive healthcare practices, bridging conventional medicine with local traditions. Economically, the hospital has become a major employment hub, boosting local businesses and contributing to the overall economic vibrancy of the area. Politically, the hospital stands as a testament to the government's commitment to healthcare, facilitating community engagement with political leaders and influencing health policy prioritization. By addressing health disparities and promoting inclusivity, the hospital has enhanced community satisfaction and political support for local authorities, underscoring its vital role in rural development.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that the Gulu/Vatsa Community Hospital plays a pivotal role in enhancing healthcare and overall well-being in the community. By offering critical services such as ambulance support,

²⁰ Interview with Musa Muhammed, aged 52, farmer, Gulu, 24/3/2023.

specialized clinical care, advanced surgical procedures, an onsite pharmacy, and dedicated obstetrics and gynecology services, the hospital addresses the diverse health needs of the population effectively. These services not only improve health outcomes but also contribute to economic development and socio-cultural cohesion by fostering health awareness and integrating culturally sensitive practices. The hospital's impact extends to political dimensions by exemplifying governmental commitment to healthcare, thus enhancing community trust and political engagement. Overall, the Gulu/Vatsa Community Hospital stands as a central institution in promoting comprehensive healthcare and regional development. The study highlights the importance of infrastructural development in enhancing the overall well-being and trust of the population.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Gulu/Vatsa Community Hospital continues to expand its specialized healthcare services, particularly focusing on enhancing emergency response capabilities through ongoing training and investment in ambulance services. Additionally, efforts should be made to strengthen partnerships with local businesses and community stakeholders to sustain

economic benefits derived from hospital operations. Furthermore, continuous engagement with the community to ensure culturally sensitive healthcare practices and ongoing health education programs will further foster trust and improve health outcomes across diverse demographic groups.

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APPENDIXES



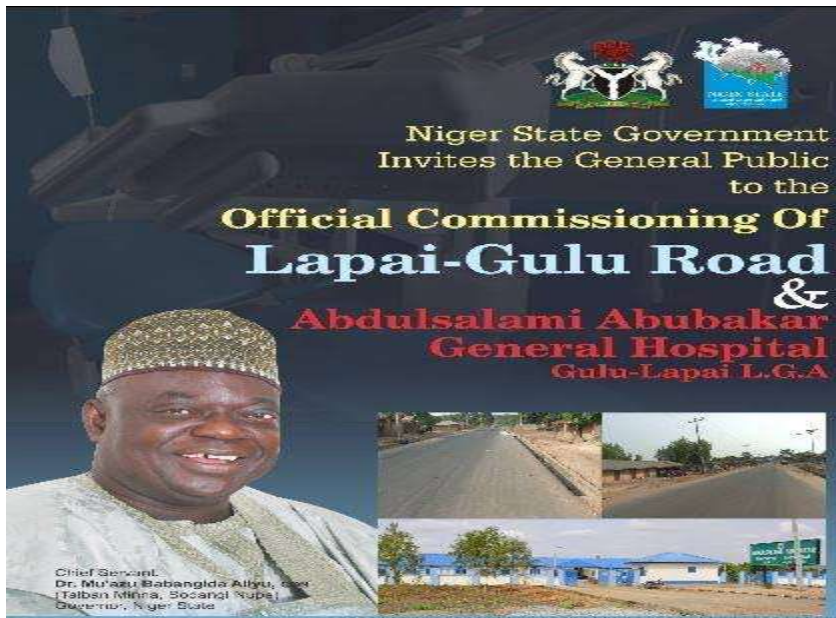
Appendix 1: The Frontage of Abdulsalami Abubakar General Hospital, Gulu.



Appendix 2: Picture of Abdulsalami Abubakar being registered as the first patient of the Hospital.



Appendix 3: The main structures of the Hospital.



Appendix 4: The entrance into the Hospital.