



Gombe State Local Government Summit

T H E M E D :
Local Government
Autonomy, Fiscal Responsibility,
and Sustainable Development.

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**Strengthening Governance at the Local Government
Level to Deliver (Reforms & Results) Basic and Essential Services**

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Introduction

Local governments are the closest tier of government to the people, playing a vital role in delivering essential services such as healthcare, education, water supply, sanitation, and infrastructure. However, in Gombe State's 11 Local Government Areas (LGAs), several challenges hinder effective service delivery, necessitating urgent reforms. This presentation examines these challenges and explores practical tools and strategies to improve governance and service delivery, drawing on relevant local examples.

To drive meaningful reforms and achieve tangible results, the Government of Gombe State has convened this **Local Government Summit**, themed "**Local Government Autonomy, Fiscal Responsibility, and Sustainable Development**." The summit provides a platform for critical discussions on strengthening local government institutions, ensuring financial accountability, and fostering sustainable development at the grassroots level.

I am particularly honored to present on "**Strengthening Governance at the Local Government Level to Enhance Service Delivery**." This topic is fundamental to improving governance structures and ensuring the efficient delivery of critical services such as healthcare, education, water supply, sanitation, and infrastructure. Strong local governance is essential to fostering inclusive development, improving the quality of life for citizens, and enhancing grassroots participation in decision-making. This summit also seeks to examine Nigeria's federal structure from various perspectives and generate concrete recommendations for legislative and constitutional reforms aimed at strengthening the local government system. These insights will contribute to the ongoing constitutional review process in Nigeria.



Accordingly, this paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

- **Examine the Challenges of Local Governance in Gombe State** - This will explore the governance and coordination constraints that hinder effective service delivery at the local level, particularly in Gombe State.
- **Promote Comparative Perspectives on Local Government Systems** - By analyzing best practices from Uruguay (South America), Rwanda, Kenya and Tanzania (Africa), the paper will highlight effective governance models that enhance local autonomy, fiscal responsibility, and sustainable development.
- **Present Strategies for Enhancing Service Delivery in Gombe State** - Based on global experiences, the paper will outline actionable recommendations that can inform Nigeria's local government reforms particularly in Gombe State, ensuring improved service delivery and stronger governance mechanisms.

Drawing lessons from Uruguay—known for its highly decentralized and participatory local governance system—as well as other countries with strong local government frameworks, this presentation will provide valuable insights into practical strategies for improving governance and achieving sustainable development at the local level.

Geography & Opportunities.

Gombe State shares boundaries with all the other States in the zone, namely Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Taraba and Yobe. It occupies a total land area of about 20,265 sq. km. The northern belt of the State is mountainous and undulating, while the topography of the south is flat and plain. The Gongola River traverses the State, watering most of the northern and northeastern parts of it before emptying itself into the Benue River at Numan. Numerous seasonal streams also serve as tributaries to the Gongola River.

The vegetation is generally guinea savannah grassland with a concentration of woodlands in the south-east and south-west. Gombe State is situated in the Centre of the Northeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

It is located between latitudes 9° 30 and 12° 30 North and longitudes 8° 45 and 11° 45 East. The projected population, as of 2019, was 3,585,131. This was made up 1,886,108 (52.6 per cent) males and 1,699,023 (47.4 per cent) females.

In Gombe State, about 46 per cent of the population belongs to the adolescent group (i.e. less than 15 years), while 51 per cent falls within the working cluster (between 15-64 years) and about 3.0 per cent belongs to the aged group (65 years and above).





Overview of Gombe State Local Government Areas: Challenges, Opportunities, and Growth Potential

Gombe State comprises **11 Local Government Areas (LGAs)**, each with unique socio-economic characteristics, challenges, and opportunities for growth.

Agriculture remains a key driver of economic activity in several LGAs. **Funakaye, Akko, and Yamaltu-Deba** are vital agricultural hubs with vast potential for expanding irrigation systems and introducing mechanized farming to boost food production. **Balanga LGA**, home to a large farming population, presents significant opportunities for agro-processing industries, which could add value to raw agricultural produce and create jobs. Meanwhile, **Dukku LGA**, despite its arid terrain, can leverage solar-powered water projects to improve access to clean water for both domestic use and irrigation.

As the **commercial and administrative center**, **Gombe LGA** holds immense potential for urban renewal, industrial expansion, and improved healthcare infrastructure. **Biliri and Kaltungo LGAs**, known for their vibrant local markets, can benefit from improved road networks and financial inclusion programs to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Additionally, **Kwami, Funakaye, and Shongom LGAs** offer promising opportunities for renewable energy development, particularly in solar and wind power, to address rural electrification gaps and enhance local industries.

Despite persistent challenges in **education, healthcare, water supply, and sanitation**, Gombe State has made significant strides in economic development. The state ranked **first in Nigeria for the ease of doing business between 2021 and 2022**, positioning it as an attractive destination for investment. The **Muhammadu Buhari Industrial Park in Dadin Kowa, Yamaltu-Deba**, presents a transformative opportunity for industrial growth, job creation, and economic diversification. To maximize its impact, strategic linkages should be established between all LGAs and the industrial park to ensure inclusive development.

These opportunities align with the **Gombe State Development Plan (2021–2030)**, which provides a comprehensive roadmap for achieving sustainable growth, improving service delivery, and enhancing the quality of life for all residents. By implementing strategic investments in infrastructure, agriculture, and human capital development, Gombe State can unlock its full economic potential and drive long-term prosperity across all LGAs.

Challenges in Basic and Essential Service Delivery in **Gombe State**.

Gombe State's 11 Local Government Areas (LGAs) face significant challenges in delivering basic and essential services, including healthcare, education, water supply, sanitation, and infrastructure. These challenges hinder socio-economic development and the well-being of residents.



Challenges in Healthcare Service Delivery

- » **Shortage of Medical Personnel and Essential Drugs:** Many primary healthcare centers in rural areas, such as Balanga and Yamaltu-Deba, operate with inadequate medical staff and a lack of essential drugs, leading to poor healthcare services.
- » **Insufficient Funding and Delayed Disbursement:** Limited financial resources and delays in funding allocation disrupt the timely provision of healthcare services across LGAs.
- » **Geographical Barriers to Access:** Poor transportation infrastructure in hilly and riverine areas, such as Lungure in Kaltungo, makes it difficult for residents to access healthcare facilities, increasing maternal and child health risks.

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Challenges in Education Service Delivery

- » **Poor Quality of Education Infrastructure:** Despite government efforts in constructing and renovating schools, many public schools in Kwami and Yamaltu-Deba remain in poor condition, with dilapidated classrooms and insufficient teaching materials.
- » **Shortage of Qualified Teachers:** Remote villages in Nafada LGA experience a severe shortage of trained teachers, impacting learning outcomes.
- » **High Dropout Rates Among Girls:** Early marriage remains a significant challenge, particularly in Nafada and Funakaye LGAs, where cultural norms contribute to high female school dropout



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Challenges in Water Supply and Sanitation

- » **Inconsistent Water Supply:** Despite government investments in the Gombe Regional Water Supply Scheme, many communities, especially in Dukku LGA, still rely on unprotected wells and water tank deliveries due to erratic water supply.
- » **Limited Sanitation Coverage and Enforcement:** While Gombe State Environmental Protection Agency (GOSEPA) has made efforts in sanitation through monthly clean-up exercises, these efforts need to be expanded across all LGAs to achieve broader impact.
- » **Weak Enforcement of Hygiene and Sanitation Laws:** The open defecation law signed by the state government is not strictly enforced, leading to frequent outbreaks of waterborne diseases in several communities.



Challenges in Local Infrastructure

- » **Poor Rural Road Networks:** Many roads connecting farming communities remain in poor condition, such as Kaltungo East roads, Jigawa area roads in Nafada LGA, and the Biri-Wawa Road linking Funakaye, Nafada, and Dukku LGAs.
- » **Inadequate Electricity Supply:** Several areas, particularly in Balanga LGA, experience persistent electricity shortages, affecting local businesses and economic activities.

Addressing these challenges requires **strategic planning, targeted investments, and stronger coordination** between local and state governments to improve essential service delivery in Gombe State.

Lessons from Local Government-Led Interventions in Education, Health, Water and Sanitation, and Rural Infrastructure in Africa.

Local governments across Africa have played a critical role in improving basic service delivery, particularly in education, healthcare, water and sanitation, and rural infrastructure. These interventions, funded and implemented at the local level, offer valuable insights for Gombe State, Nigeria.

1. Rwanda: Education and Health Infrastructure Expansion in Bugesera District

The Bugesera District local government has been instrumental in improving access to education and healthcare through targeted infrastructure investments. In collaboration with the Rwanda Local Government Board (RLGB), the district funded the construction of **10 new primary schools** and upgraded **five health centers** between 2015 and 2020, benefiting over **15,000 students** and **50,000 residents**. The district government ensured funding through locally generated revenue and decentralization grants. These interventions increased school enrollment and improved access to maternal healthcare services.

In addition, Bugesera's local government facilitated the construction of boreholes and water pipelines, providing clean water to **over 25,000 households**. This initiative significantly reduced waterborne diseases and enhanced school attendance rates, particularly among girls. ([Government of Rwanda](#))

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2. Kenya: Water and Sanitation Infrastructure in Turkana County

Turkana County's local government prioritized investments in water and sanitation infrastructure to address chronic water scarcity. Through the county's Water and Sanitation Development Plan, funded by county budgets and donor support, the local government constructed **100 boreholes and rehabilitated 50 existing ones** between 2016 and 2022. This initiative directly benefited **over 120,000 residents**, including rural schools and health centers.

In addition to borehole construction, the county funded the installation of **10 solar-powered water supply systems** to ensure sustainable and uninterrupted water access in remote villages. The improved water supply reduced the prevalence of waterborne diseases by **30%**, significantly enhancing public health outcomes. (Turkana County Government, 2022).

3. Tanzania: Rural Infrastructure Development in Kigoma District

Kigoma District Council in Tanzania has been at the forefront of improving rural infrastructure to facilitate better service delivery.



Geographical and Economic Context

Feature	Gombe State (Nigeria)	Uruguay
Land Area	20,265 km ²	176,215 km ²
Topography	Mountainous in the north, flat plains in the south	Mostly flat plains and hills
Water Bodies	Gongola River and seasonal streams	Río de la Plata, Uruguay River, and lakes
Climate	Guinea savannah grassland	Temperate climate, suitable for agriculture
Economic Activities	Agriculture (crops & livestock), trade, small industries	Agriculture (beef, soybeans), technology, services

Key Observations:

- » Uruguay has a **larger landmass**, but both regions rely heavily on **agriculture** for economic sustenance.
- » Uruguay has invested in **technology and services**, diversifying its economy, whereas Gombe still largely depends on **subsistence agriculture**.
- » Uruguay's **local government system** plays a crucial role in maintaining **essential services** such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, which Gombe can learn from.

Comparison of Basic Service Delivery



Education Sector

Challenges in Gombe State

Despite efforts by the Gombe State government to improve education, the sector faces several challenges, particularly at the local government level:

- **Low literacy rates**, especially among children in rural areas and among girls.
- **Inadequate school infrastructure**, with a lack of classrooms, learning materials, and trained teachers.
- **Poor teacher training and retention**, leading to an **inconsistent quality of education**.
- **Limited access to technology**, with very few schools integrating digital learning methods.

Uruguay's Success Model

Uruguay has **one of the most advanced education systems in Latin America** due to several key initiatives:

- **Free and Universal Education**: Public education is free at all levels (primary, secondary, and university), ensuring high literacy and school completion rates.
- **Strong Investment in Digital Learning**: The **Ceibal Plan**, launched in 2007, provides **free laptops and internet access** to all public school students, bridging the digital divide.
- **Decentralized Education Administration**: Local governments have autonomy over school management, ensuring **efficient allocation of resources** and better oversight.

Lessons for Gombe State

- » | **Adopt digital learning programs** to expand education access, especially in rural communities. Establish **digital learning centers** in each local government area.
- » | **Strengthen teacher training** and provide incentives to improve retention, particularly in rural schools.
- » | **Decentralize school management**, giving local government authorities more power to fund, equip, and oversee schools effectively.
- » | **Expand school infrastructure**, particularly in underserved areas, to **increase enrollment rates and reduce dropout levels**.



Healthcare Sector

Challenges in Gombe State

- **Limited access to healthcare**, especially in rural communities, due to a lack of health centers and professionals.
- **High maternal and child mortality rates** due to inadequate **antenatal and postnatal care**.
- **Insufficient funding for primary healthcare centers**, making it difficult to provide **essential drugs and equipment**.
- **Overburdened urban hospitals**, as rural residents often travel long distances to seek medical care.

Uruguay's Success Model

Uruguay has a **strong and decentralized healthcare system**, making healthcare accessible to all citizens:

- **Universal Healthcare Coverage**: Uruguay offers **affordable healthcare to all citizens**, reducing **infant and maternal mortality rates**.
- **Decentralized Primary Healthcare System**: Local governments have **autonomy to manage** health facilities, ensuring healthcare services meet **community-specific needs**.
- **Investment in Rural Healthcare**: Uruguay prioritizes **mobile clinics, rural health centers, and telemedicine**, ensuring that **even the most remote areas** receive quality healthcare.

Lessons for Gombe State

- » | **Expand rural healthcare facilities**, ensuring that each local government has a **fully equipped primary healthcare center**.
- » | **Strengthen local government autonomy in managing health resources**, ensuring funding is **properly allocated** to meet local needs.
- » | **Implement telemedicine programs** to provide remote consultations, reducing the burden on urban hospitals.
- » | **Increase funding for maternal and child health programs**, including free antenatal care and immunization services.



Rural Infrastructure Development

Challenges in Gombe State

- **Poor road networks**, making it difficult for rural residents to access markets, schools, and hospitals.
- **Limited access to clean water and sanitation** leading to high incidences of waterborne diseases.
- **Unstable electricity supply**, affecting households, businesses, and public institutions like schools and health centers.

Uruguay's Success Model

Uruguay has successfully developed **rural infrastructure** through strategic **decentralization and investment**:

- **Well-maintained rural roads**: The government invests heavily in **road construction and maintenance**, ensuring easy access to markets and essential services.
- **Reliable Water Supply**: Uruguay ensures **clean drinking water and sanitation services** for all communities, reducing disease outbreaks.
- **Decentralized Infrastructure Development**: Local governments are responsible for **rural electrification, road construction, and public works**, ensuring rapid response to community needs.

Lessons for Gombe State

- » | **Empower local governments to manage road construction and maintenance** independently to ensure **timely repairs and expansions**.
- » | **Increase investment in clean water and sanitation projects**, working with **public-private partnerships** to ensure sustainability.
- » | **Expand rural electrification projects**, particularly through **solar energy and mini-grids** to improve electricity access.
- » | **Establish local infrastructure development funds**, allowing communities to finance and maintain small-scale infrastructure projects.

Key Takeaways:

What Gombe Can Learn from Uruguay

- ✓ **Decentralized governance leads to efficient service delivery.** Uruguay's local governments play a central role in managing **education, healthcare, and infrastructure**, ensuring that services are tailored to local needs.
- ✓ **Investment in digital learning bridges the education gap.** Gombe can introduce **e-learning programs** to increase student engagement and literacy rates.
- ✓ **Expanding primary healthcare and telemedicine improves health outcomes.** Uruguay's model shows that **affordable, accessible healthcare** is key to reducing maternal and infant mortality.
- ✓ **Better rural infrastructure enhances economic growth.** Well-maintained **roads, clean water, and electricity** improve **agricultural productivity, education, and healthcare access**. **Adopting Uruguay's governance approach**, particularly in **local government administration**, Gombe State can significantly **enhance service delivery**, improve the **quality of life** for its residents, and accelerate **socio-economic development**.



Local Government: Tools and Strategies for Enhancing Service Delivery in Gombe State

To improve the delivery of basic and essential services in the Gombe State's 11 LGAs, the following **five strategic approaches** should be prioritized:



Establish Gombe LGAs Results Delivery Dashboard at the Ministry of Local Government or Ministry of Planning and Budget

A **Results Delivery Dashboard** should be established at the **Ministry of Local Government** or the **Ministry of Planning and Budget** to provide real-time monitoring and evaluation of service delivery across all LGAs. This dashboard will:

- Track **key performance indicators (KPIs)** in education, healthcare, water and sanitation, and rural infrastructure.
- Use **geospatial mapping** to identify underserved areas and prioritize interventions.
- Provide data-driven insights for **evidence-based decision-making** and budget allocation.
- Enhance **transparency and accountability** in service delivery by making performance data publicly accessible.



Establish Gombe LGAs Coordination and Performance Management Unit

A Gombe LGAs Coordination and Performance Management Unit should be created to harmonize planning, implementation, and evaluation across all local governments. This unit will:

- Ensure alignment of local government activities with state and national development priorities.
- Provide technical support to LGAs on project planning, implementation, and monitoring.
- Facilitate inter-LGA collaboration to address cross-cutting challenges such as education access, healthcare delivery, and infrastructure development.
- Organize quarterly performance reviews to assess LGA achievements and provide corrective actions where necessary.



The Ministry of Planning and Budget and Ministry of Local Government Should Support Each LGA to Develop a Local Government Development Strategy Based on Their Peculiarities

Each LGA should develop a Local Government Development Strategy (LGDS) tailored to its unique needs and opportunities, with technical support from the Ministry of Planning and Budget and the Ministry of Local Government. The LGDS will:

- Identify **specific challenges and priorities** for each LGA (e.g., irrigation systems for Balanga, water supply for Dukku, school infrastructure for Nafada).
- Define **short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals** to guide LGA investments.
- Ensure that development plans are **aligned with state and federal policies** for maximum impact.
- Include **community engagement strategies** to enhance local participation and ownership of development projects.



Capacity Building and Hand-Hold Support

To ensure effective governance and service delivery, targeted **capacity-building initiatives** and **technical assistance** should be provided to LGAs. Key actions include:

- **Training for LGA Officials:** Organize workshops on **budgeting, project management, and monitoring & evaluation** to enhance governance capacity.
- **Technical Assistance in Service Delivery:** Provide LGAs with **experts and sector specialists** to support planning and execution of key projects in education, health, and infrastructure.
- **Hand-Hold Support for Local Councils:** Establish mentorship programs where experienced policymakers guide LGA administrators in **policy implementation and financial management**.
- **Digital Literacy and Technology Adoption:** Equip LGAs with **modern digital tools** for e-governance, data collection, and service tracking.
- **Strengthening Revenue Generation:** Train LGA finance officers on **effective tax collection, financial accountability, and alternative funding models** to sustain local projects.



Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and **Community Participation**

To ensure sustainability, Gombe LGAs should **leverage partnerships** with the private sector, donor agencies, and local communities. Key actions include:

- **Encouraging corporate social responsibility (CSR)** investments in education, health, and infrastructure.
- **Mobilizing donor funding** for large-scale development projects.
- **Empowering community-based organizations (CBOs)** to take ownership of service delivery initiatives.
- **Implementing cost-sharing mechanisms** where communities contribute to maintaining local infrastructure.

Implementing these **five strategic approaches**, Gombe State's LGAs will be better positioned to **deliver results, improve livelihoods, and drive sustainable development** across all sectors.



Conclusion

Gombe State's **11 Local Government Areas (LGAs)** face both challenges and opportunities in the delivery of essential services such as **education, healthcare, water and sanitation, and rural infrastructure**. Persistent issues like **inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, and infrastructural deficits** hinder progress, but the state possesses immense potential for sustainable development.

By leveraging **strategic investments in agriculture, renewable energy, industrialization, and human capital development**, Gombe State can enhance service delivery and improve the overall well-being of its residents. The establishment of the **Muhammadu Buhari Industrial Park** and the state's **top ranking in ease of doing business** underscore its commitment to economic transformation. However, achieving inclusive development requires a **coordinated, data-driven approach** where each LGA capitalizes on its strengths while systematically addressing local constraints.

To drive sustainable progress, Gombe State must prioritize **good governance, fiscal responsibility, and strengthened local government autonomy**. Enhanced **inter-LGA collaboration**, backed by a well-defined **Local Government Development Strategy**, will ensure targeted interventions that align with sector-specific needs. The **effective implementation of the Gombe State Development Plan (2021–2030)** will be instrumental in bridging infrastructure gaps, improving public services, and unlocking the state's full economic potential. With **strategic leadership, multi-sectoral partnerships, and evidence-based policy implementation**, Gombe State can establish a **resilient, inclusive, and thriving future**—one where every LGA actively contributes to the state's overarching vision of sustainable development and economic prosperity.

About Murtala Adogi Mohammed PhD.

Dr. Murtala Adogi – Policy Expert, Governance Reformer, and Development Specialist

Dr. Murtala Adogi is a distinguished expert in social sector, environmental sustainability, and governance reform, with nearly two decades of experience in policy design, results delivery, and system strengthening. His career spans public institutions, international development organizations, and high-level government advisory roles.

As the founder of **System Strategy and Policy Lab (SSPL)**, Dr. Adogi leads a premier policy think-tank specializing in **policy design, implementation support, advocacy, research, third-party monitoring, capacity building, and project execution**. SSPL collaborates with government ministries, agencies, NGOs, and international organizations to drive impactful reforms and enhance service delivery.

Dr. Adogi has played a critical role in shaping Nigeria's education and governance landscape. He served as an **Education Adviser for the UK Government's DFID/FCDO Northern Nigeria Office in Kano** and as an **Education Specialist at UNICEF Nigeria**. In these capacities, he worked with **22 State Governors in 17 Nigerian states, Ministers, Heads of MDAs and Senior Government officials**, providing strategic support to strengthen institutions, systems and governance.

His academic journey reflects his commitment to expertise and innovation. He holds a **Ph.D. in Climate Change, Livelihoods & Rural Development** from the **University of Port Harcourt**, an **MSc in Ecology and Environmental Sustainability** from the **University of Aberdeen**, and an **MA in Development Studies** from **Bayero University Kano**. He earned his **BSc. Ed in Biological Sciences Education** with Second Class Upper Honors from **Ahmadu Bello University Zaria**.

A **Chevening Scholar**, Dr. Adogi has enhanced his expertise through specialized training, including **Youth and Education in Post-Conflict Communities** at the **University of Groningen, Netherlands**, and **Working with Ministers** at the **Institute for Government, London**.

Most recently, Dr. Adogi convened the **Northern Nigeria Development Dialogue (NNDD)**, where he unveiled the **Northern Nigeria Development Goals (NNDGs) 2045** as the **Lead Advocate**. This visionary framework aims to drive long-term development and structural transformation across Northern Nigeria, focusing on governance, economic growth, human capital development, and sustainability. Beyond his professional achievements, he is a dedicated family man, happily married with four children, embodying a balance of professional excellence and personal fulfillment.





“I urge all Local Government Chairmen to take inspiration from Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya— a silent achiever whose leadership is defined by results, not recognition. True leaders let their work speak for itself, knowing that excellence is never loud; it is reflected in actions, not words. Let your achievements be the voice that truly matters.”

- Murtala Adogi



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