

## The Wild Bunch - Keke NAPEP

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There are swarms of them in most Nigerian cities. Yellow, noisy and slightly dangerous, auto rickshaws provide cheap public transport - and a livelihood for tens of thousands of their drivers.

The motorized three-wheeler taxis are known as “Keke-NAPEP” – a combination of the Yoruba word for bicycle and the acronym for a 2001 National Poverty Eradication Programme, in a neat onomatopoeic package.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YxDuAT5qVs>

In northern Nigerian cities, Keke have replaced “Okadas”, the popular motorbike taxis [banned](#) in the wake of ride-by shootings by the jihadist group Boko Haram.

The Okada ban in the northeastern city of Maiduguri, introduced in 2011, was a significant source of grievance among urban youth; the motorbike taxi business provided a rare income-earning opportunity. The state government - aware the ban was a recruitment boon for Boko Haram - subsidized Kekes; now hordes of them rattle along the city’s streets, weaving through its traffic jams.

Okada and Keke drivers are key to what make Nigerian cities work. In risking Nigeria’s formidable traffic and the scorn of car-users, they earn much more than the national minimum wage. Not bad for (almost exclusively) young men, who typically either did not go to school or quit early.

Nigeria’s raft of poverty alleviation schemes have historically been based on the idea that

providing equipment and inputs will create entrepreneurs and wealth. “What has remained an issue is the weak impact [ these programmes have had ] on the poor who are the target beneficiaries,” noted a 2013 [report](#) assessing the impact of NAPEP in Benue State.

It concluded that making an appreciable impact on poverty levels requires access to micro credit and education reforms that develop entrepreneurial skills, as well as real consultation with those the strategies aim to assist. Better targeted programmes - and the reigning in of corruption - would help tremendously, the study noted.

Okada drivers themselves view their business as precarious. In a 2014 [survey](#) of Okada in the western state of Kwara, 79 percent of respondents said their standards of living had improved moderately or substantially as a result of the business, but 59 percent still assessed their situation as “not satisfactory”.

The key complaints were a lack of access to loans, and the sheer dangers and difficulties encountered on the roads – applicable to Okada and Keke drivers alike.

In a blog on Keke and the NAPEP experience in Lagos, [Victoria Okoye](#), a community manager, wrote: “The very group targeted for positive impact has enjoyed limited benefits, due to lack of access to finances and collateral to purchase the vehicles that could empower them. As Keke have risen in popularity, so too have prices for vehicles, pricing out the lower and no-income groups.”

But it’s far from a uniform experience, she said: “On the flipside, some do benefit from Kekes’ popularity; for those with the means, Keke has turned out to be a lucrative business.

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<http://newirin.irinnews.org/extras/2015/2/18/the-wild-bunch-nigerias-tricycle-taxis>