Community Primary School Itowolo, Lagos

Itowolo Ikorodu (104101)

Itowolo is a small riverine settlement located within Greater Ikorodu (Ikorodu LGA, Lagos State). Historically an artisanal fishing village situated along seasonal wetlands, the community remains closely tied to its natural environment. The wider Ikorodu area hosts an estimated 0.78–1.2 million residents, based on recent projections (Ikorodu LGA ≈ 781,500 in 2022; metropolitan estimates ~1.2 million in 2025). The immediate corridor surrounding Itowolo particularly the Ajegunle–Ikorodu informal settlement zone—is densely populated, with neighbourhood clusters of about 18,000 residents, while Itowolo itself is a smaller, tightly clustered riverside community.

Livelihoods in Itowolo are based on small-scale and artisanal fishing, mostly canoe-based. During off-season periods, residents diversify into petty trading, mat weaving, palm tapping, fuel-wood collection, local transport services (boat/portage), small-scale farming, and a range of informal economic activities. Across Ikorodu LGA, fish-farming and pond aquaculture also contribute to local income sources.

Socially, Itowolo is a multi-ethnic settlement where the Yoruba community is predominant. Its diversity is further shaped by migrant populations and sustained by strong informal governance networks. Most residents are low-income and rely on communal systems for support and resilience. However, basic infrastructure remains limited: **narrow access routes, inadequate drainage, and irregular public services are common features**. The community faces recurrent seasonal **flooding, which consistently disrupts school attendance**, sanitation conditions, mobility, and household livelihoods.



Approx. site area: 36,792 Square Meters

Key Information: A flood-prone riverine community requiring green, resilient infrastructure, improved waste management, and safer learning spaces for vulnerable children.

Priority areas & main expectations: Located in a rapidly growing community, the school is a symbol of hope for hundreds of children, yet its learning environment is increasingly threatened by multiple environmental pressures. The perimeter fence, once a protective boundary, has deteriorated over time, leaving the school exposed to safety risks and uncontrolled external activities.
Within the compound, frequent flooding disrupts learning, washes into classrooms and sanitation areas, and accelerates the breakdown of already fragile facilities. The existing sanitation blocks no longer function reliably, creating serious hygiene and public health concerns, especially during the rainy season. Waste accumulation around the school further compounds these challenges. With no structured collection point, refuse often ends up in low-lying areas, contributing to blockages, odour, and heightened flood risk. The school's low elevation makes it particularly vulnerable, as stormwater easily pools within the compound, creating unsafe conditions for pupils and teachers alike.

Presentation of the Site

The Community Primary School in Itowolo, established in the 1980s, is currently experiencing a severe deterioration in its buildings and overall conditions, compromising its ability to function as a safe learning environment.

Critical environmental and infrastructure challenges are:

- **Chronic flooding:** The school sits at a lower elevation than surrounding homes, making it highly susceptible to flooding during rainfall and dam releases from the Ogun River. These recurring inundations disrupt the academic calendar, damage learning spaces, and expose pupils to significant health and safety risks.
- **Collapsed perimeter fence:** The total failure of the school's boundary fence has created major security and sanitation concerns:
    - Unrestricted access: Strangers enter the compound freely, resulting in vandalism of infrastructure and persistent safety threats.
    - Open defecation and Illegal dumping: With no physical barriers, the compound has become a site for public defecation and refuse disposal.





Development Expectations

The development expectations are to create a secure, elevated, and flood-resilient school campus. This includes a robust perimeter fence, raised sanitation blocks, and a primary flood defence. The ultimate goal is to transform the school into a functional, year-round safe haven for learning, while also serving as a Community Emergency Hub during floods—providing a safe, accessible space that protects people within the surrounding community by offering shelter and refuge during disaster events. Given the site's history of informal use, designs must also incorporate robust, low-maintenance materials and security features to deter vandalism and ensure long-term sustainability.

Proposals should demonstrate how they integrate nature-based solutions, sustainable drainage, and community co-benefits. To achieve this, proposals should integrate solutions for flood resilience through a “Living Levee” and a “Sponge School” model.

The Living Levee would be established along the community’s water edge using native riparian vegetation, shrubs, and wetland species. This natural buffer slows inflowing water, dissipates flood energy, stabilizes soil, and reduces erosion—while providing habitat, shade, and aesthetic value. Unlike concrete embankments, it grows stronger over time, supports biodiversity, and lowers maintenance costs.

Inside the school and surrounding community spaces, a Sponge School approach transforms the campus into a functional stormwater management system. Permeable walkways, rain gardens, bioswales, raised playfields, and soak-away landscapes would retain, absorb, and filter rainwater on-site rather than letting it overwhelm drains. This creates learning opportunities for students, improves sanitation during floods, and reduces standing water that breeds disease vectors.

Together, these solutions could create a resilient neighbourhood landscape—protecting infrastructure, reducing flood risks, improving micro-climate, enhancing environmental literacy, and offering replicable models for other flood-prone areas of Lagos.

The proposals should also integrate solutions for water & sanitation safety, considering integrated large-scale rainwater harvesting systems to reduce runoff and provide a non-potable water source, coupled with flood-proof sanitation infrastructure providing secure, private, and disability-accessible services for all genders and diverse users whilst preventing groundwater contamination.

Finally, this competition invites teams to reimagine what a safe, resilient, and inspiring school environment could look like. Instead of prescribing solutions, we challenge participants to explore innovative, context-sensitive ideas that respond directly to these issues:

- How might the boundary be secured in a way that enhances safety and community ownership?
- What creative approaches could transform sanitation into a flooding-resilient, child-friendly system?
- How can waste be managed sustainably, perhaps even turned into a resource?
- And what nature-based strategies could elevate and protect the school from flooding while enriching its landscape?

Participants are encouraged to propose bold, sustainable interventions—structural, social, environmental, or hybrid—that strengthen safety, sanitation, waste management, and climate resilience. Your solutions should not only address the school’s pressing vulnerabilities but also unlock new possibilities for learning, community engagement, and long-term environmental sustainability.

City climate priorities and specific environmental challenges

Lagos State's climate action, as outlined in its Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan, prioritizes three key issues: combating flooding, enhancing green infrastructure, and building community resilience, particularly in vulnerable, low-income settlements like Itowolo.

The specific climate risks to be addressed by the the teams are severe and interconnected:

- **Flooding:** The primary risk, driven by heavy rainfall and Ogun River dam releases, causes recurrent infrastructural damage, school closures, and health crises.
- **Waterborne Disease & Soil Pollution**: Floodwaters mix with unmanaged waste and sewage from open defecation, contaminating the soil and creating a high-risk environment for children.
- **Heat Stress**: The lack of tree cover and permeable surfaces creates an urban heat island effect, making classrooms unbearably hot and hindering learning.

Specific planning rules and regulations

Students must align their designs with the strategic frameworks governing development in Lagos. The project is situated within a Residential Zone (RU) according to Lagos State planning law, permitting community facilities like schools. All designs must comply with the Lagos State Building Control Regulations, which mandate strict standards for structural integrity, ventilation, and accessibility.

Critically, the site falls within a Coastal & Riverine Area as defined by the Lagos State Regional Development Plan. This imposes specific constraints:

- Setbacks: A mandatory buffer from the water body must be respected for the new flood defense structure.
- Resilient Construction: Any new structure or major retrofit must adhere to flood-proofing guidelines, ideally elevating habitable spaces above the documented flood level.

The project must actively support the goals of the Lagos Climate Action Plan (2022-2050), particularly Pillar 2 on Adaptation & Resilience. Key strategic references include:

- **Lagos State Climate Action Plan:** https://moelagos.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/C40-Lagos_Indesign-Document-Full-Report-Revert-2_Update-2.pdf
- **Lagos State Building Control Regulations:** https://lasbca.lagosstate.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/LASBCA-GUIDE.pdf
- **Lagos State Development Plans:** https://www.lamata-ng.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Lagos-Development-Plan.pdf

Proposals should demonstrate feasibility within this regulatory context while pushing innovative, compliant solutions.

Language requirements

Proposals must be submitted in English.

City-specific awards

The winning team of the Students Reinventing Cities (SRC) competition will be formally recognised by Lagos State as **Climate Change Ambassadors**. This prestigious role positions the champions as youth voices for resilience, innovation, and sustainability—supporting public awareness, participating in knowledge-sharing platforms, and inspiring community-driven action.

As ambassadors, they will have opportunities to collaborate with Government Agencies, contribute to clean air and climate initiatives, and help shape a greener and more climate-smart future for Lagos. This recognition not only celebrates their achievement, but also empowers young people to lead transformational change for a healthier, thriving, and inclusive city.