

REVENUE ALLOCATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF EBONYI STATE, 2015 - 2023

Etim Okon Frank^{1*}, Igwe Victor Emeka²

^{1*,2} Department of Public Administration, University of Uyo Uyo Akwa
Ibom State.

* **Correspondence:** Etim Okon Frank

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ABSTRACT: Effective and efficient revenue allocation and utilization remain the cornerstone of development of any society. This research work therefore set out to examine the relationship between improved revenue allocation and socioeconomic development of Ebonyi state from 2015-2023 aiming to identify factors that accounted for the effective utilization of the revenue allocated to Ebonyi within this period. It focuses on the impact of the federation account committee (FAAC) disbursements and internally generated revenue (IGR) on key socioeconomic indicators such as infrastructure development, education, food production and poverty reduction. The differences between the socio-economic development of Ebonyi State from 2015-2023 and the previous administrations were also examined. A mixed method approach was employed including the distribution of survey questionnaires and key informants' interview with relevant stake holders, to collect data on the effective utilization of the revenue generated and allocated to Ebonyi within the period under review. The study adopted two theories, namely, the Fiscal Federalism Theory and the Decentralization Theory. The analysis revealed significant correlation between improved revenue allocation and the socioeconomic development of Ebonyi State from 2015-2023

highlighting the development recorded in education, infrastructure and the agricultural sector in Ebonyi State within the period under review. The study thus recommended that it is imperative for the state government to partner with relevant development partners and the various local governments to ensure that there is adequate infrastructural development spread in both urban areas and rural communities across the 13 local governments of the state so as to fast-track socio-economic development status of the people of the state.

Keywords: *Revenue allocation, Socioeconomic development, FAAC disbursements & IGR, Ebonyi State (2015–2023)*

Introduction

Over the years, Ebonyi State has remained one of Nigeria's most economically disadvantaged states, grappling with severe poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and electricity. Despite its rich agricultural potential, a combination of structural challenges, historical neglect, and reliance on external financial support has left many communities in a state of deprivation. Poverty in Ebonyi is not merely a matter of low income; it is characterized by a lack of basic human necessities such as food, clean water, shelter, and access to education and healthcare services. Consequently, a large portion of the state's population continues to face social exclusion and economic vulnerability, while the state's infrastructure remains underdeveloped, with many roads, schools, and healthcare facilities either in poor condition or completely lacking (Ucha, 2010).

A significant factor contributing to Ebonyi's persistent poverty and slow development is its heavy dependence on federal allocations, which make up the majority of the state's revenue. Nigeria's fiscal federalism system has been structured in such a way that the federal government controls the lion's share of the national revenue, leaving state and local governments with a small portion. Historically, this allocation system has favored the federal government, perpetuating the fiscal dependence of states like Ebonyi, severely limiting their capacity to generate internal revenue and fund development projects independently (Likita, 1999). This fiscal structure has made it

increasingly difficult for Ebonyi State to diversify its economy, fund vital infrastructure projects, or create a self-sustaining cycle of growth (Buhari, 2001).

This dependency on federal revenue has contributed to widening socio-economic inequalities within the state. It has hindered Ebonyi's ability to effectively allocate resources for social development and reduce poverty sustainably. Despite attempts to improve the management of allocated resources, challenges remain, especially regarding the equitable distribution of funds to address the state's most pressing developmental needs. While the administration of Governor David Umahi, which began in 2015, has led to some improvements in infrastructure, agriculture, and security, these developments have been largely financed by federal transfers and the state's limited internal revenue generation. As a result, Ebonyi's continued reliance on federal allocations remains a major obstacle to achieving long-term, self-sustaining development (Udu & Ibeogu, 2019).

Although efforts have been made to enhance internal revenue generation—such as the creation of industrial clusters and an improved revenue collection system—the state's dependence on federal allocations remains entrenched (Ojokunle, 2021). This study seeks to investigate the relationship between revenue allocation and socio-economic development in Ebonyi State, examining how Nigeria's fiscal federalism system influences the state's ability to promote sustainable growth and reduce poverty. By exploring the dynamics of fiscal dependence, this study aims to uncover the systemic constraints that limit Ebonyi's capacity to foster autonomous development. Additionally, the research will propose solutions to create a more equitable and efficient resource allocation system, enabling the state to reduce its reliance on federal allocations and chart a path toward long-term socio-economic growth. The findings of this study will be crucial in informing policy reforms aimed at improving revenue generation and distribution systems, ultimately empowering states like Ebonyi to harness their development potential and reduce poverty effectively.

Research Design

The study employs a combination of descriptive and documentary research methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between revenue allocation

and socio-economic development in Ebonyi State. The descriptive research method is utilized to explore and describe the opinions and perspectives of respondents, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the issues surrounding the allocation and utilization of resources. This approach is particularly suited to the research objective of assessing how revenue distribution affects the socio-economic development of the state. Data for the study were primarily gathered from secondary sources, including a variety of relevant materials such as textbooks, scholarly journals, government bulletins, and newspapers. These documents provided both historical and current perspectives on the fiscal policies, revenue allocation systems, and development outcomes in Ebonyi State.

Additionally, official government records, budget documents, and reports from developmental agencies were also consulted to offer quantitative data on revenue allocation patterns, expenditure priorities, and the specific projects funded by the allocated resources. The qualitative data collected from these secondary sources were analyzed using content analysis, with a thematic approach. This method involved systematically examining the content of the documents to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key issues related to revenue allocation and its socio-economic impact. The thematic approach helped categorize the information into distinct themes, such as infrastructure development, agricultural initiatives, healthcare services, and educational advancements, allowing for a deeper analysis of the relationship between these areas and the state's revenue distribution. Through this analytical process, the study was able to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the current revenue allocation system, providing insights into how effective governance and financial management have influenced socio-economic development in Ebonyi State. The combination of descriptive research and documentary analysis thus enabled a comprehensive exploration of the research topic, offering a thorough understanding of the dynamics at play.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Fiscal Federalism Theory, supported by the Decentralization Theory, to analyze the relationship between revenue allocation and socio-economic development in Ebonyi State. Both theories offer insights into how resource

distribution and governance structure can influence development outcomes at the state and local levels.

Fiscal Federalism Theory has been significantly developed by scholars such as Richard Musgrave, Wallace E. Oates, and Charles Tiebout. Musgrave (1959) was a pioneering economist in public finance, with notable contributions to fiscal federalism, particularly regarding the role of governments in managing economic resources. Oates (1972), in his influential work on fiscal federalism, emphasized the allocation of responsibilities and resources between different government levels, highlighting the importance of decentralized decision-making for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness in resource use. Tiebout's (1956) seminal paper, "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures," laid the foundation for understanding how fiscal federalism operates within local government structures.

At its core, Fiscal Federalism Theory assumes that there is a vertical fiscal imbalance between the central (federal) government and subnational (state or local) governments, meaning that the federal government controls a significant portion of resources while subnational governments receive smaller allocations. This imbalance affects the ability of states like Ebonyi to generate their own revenue independently, often leaving them reliant on federal transfers. The theory is concerned with two key dimensions:

- i. Vertical imbalance, which addresses the distribution of responsibilities and resources between the federal government and subnational units.
- ii. Horizontal imbalance, which focuses on disparities in the resources and capacities of local governments within a state.

In the context of Ebonyi State, the vertical fiscal imbalance manifests in the unequal distribution of resources between the state and local governments, with the federal government controlling a significant share of the country's revenue. Despite this, the allocation of revenue to Ebonyi has empowered the state government to prioritize local developmental projects, particularly infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges, shopping malls, government buildings, and healthcare facilities. This aligns with fiscal federalism's goal of promoting efficiency, equity, and stabilization in

resource allocation. Efficient use of allocated revenue has enabled the completion of projects that have enhanced infrastructure and fostered economic growth. Furthermore, equitable distribution of resources across the state's various sectors and local governments has promoted inclusive development and reduced regional disparities, contributing to overall state stability.

The horizontal fiscal imbalance in Ebonyi is evident in disparities among local governments within the state. While some local governments have more resources and access to development initiatives than others, these imbalances have been addressed through strategic resource allocation, ensuring that all areas benefit from development initiatives. By bridging these gaps, the state government has ensured that resources are used effectively to promote balanced growth across Ebonyi. Moreover, Decentralization Theory, as propounded by Paul Appleby (1945), complements fiscal federalism by advocating for the transfer of decision-making powers from central government authorities to subnational governments. Appleby argued that decentralization promotes more efficient, responsive, and equitable governance outcomes. By decentralizing decision-making to the state level, Ebonyi's government has been able to tailor its policies to local needs, addressing regional priorities more effectively than a centralized government could. For instance, decentralized governance in Ebonyi has enabled the state government to prioritize infrastructure development, healthcare, education, and agriculture in ways that are more attuned to the specific needs of local communities.

The decentralized nature of governance in Ebonyi has allowed the state to allocate resources based on local preferences, which in turn has led to more targeted investments in essential sectors. This approach has helped to foster economic growth, improve public service delivery, and reduce poverty in the state. Fiscal federalism and decentralization theories together highlight the importance of localized decision-making and resource allocation, suggesting that revenue allocation mechanisms empower states like Ebonyi to address local challenges effectively. Furthermore, the intergovernmental relations emphasized by fiscal federalism have fostered cooperation between the Ebonyi State and the federal government. This collaborative approach has enhanced revenue allocation strategies, making them more effective in

addressing the state's developmental needs. In conclusion, the synergy between fiscal federalism and decentralization has enabled Ebonyi State to leverage its resources effectively, facilitating infrastructure development, economic diversification, and poverty reduction, and driving the overall socio-economic progress of the state.

Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework

Concept of Revenue Allocation

Revenue allocation is a critical aspect of public finance, referring to the systematic distribution or sharing of income or funds among different entities, regions, States, or sectors based on predetermined criteria or principles. This process is instrumental in ensuring that resources are allocated fairly and efficiently to support various governmental functions, services, and development initiatives. Several authors have explored the concept of revenue allocation, providing insights into its mechanisms, challenges, and implications. Boadway and Shah's (2009) comprehensive work on fiscal federalism delved into the principles and practices of revenue allocation in multi-tiered governance structures. They discuss the challenges associated with designing effective revenue-sharing mechanisms and emphasize the importance of aligning allocation with development goals.

Wildasin's (1988) research focused on fiscal competition, including aspects of revenue allocation among subnational entities. The work contributed to the understanding of how competition between regions can influence the allocation of resources and fiscal policies. Bahl and Martinez-Vazquez's (2008) edited volume explored various aspects of fiscal federalism, shedding light on revenue allocation, decentralisation, and the complexities associated with distributing resources across different levels of government. Breton's (1996) work provided insights into the economic theory of competitive governments, addressing the dynamics of fiscal competition among jurisdictions. The book explores how governments compete for mobile resources, influencing revenue allocation strategies.

Bird and Vaillancourt (2008) contributed to the understanding of changing fiscal relations between different levels of government. Their work addressed the evolving nature of revenue allocation systems and the implications for intergovernmental

fiscal relations. Simply put, revenue allocation involves considering the diverse perspectives offered by these and other scholars. These insights collectively contribute to the ongoing discourse on the principles, challenges, and best practices associated with distributing resources among various entities in a multi-level governance system.

In a nutshell, the referenced works above provide theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence, and practical insights that enhance the understanding of revenue allocation dynamics and their impact on Socio-economic development. By drawing on these insights, the study on "Revenue Allocation and Socio-economic Development of Ebonyi State, 2007-2023" can contextualise its analysis within the broader literature on fiscal federalism, competitive governments, and intergovernmental fiscal relations, thereby enriching its findings and recommendations. For instance, the work of Boadway and Shah (2009) on fiscal federalism offers a comprehensive understanding of the principles and practices of revenue allocation in multi-tiered governance structures. This is particularly relevant to the study as Ebonyi State operates within Nigeria's federal system, where revenue allocation mechanisms play a critical role in distributing resources among different tiers of government. Insights from Boadway and Shah's work therefore, can inform the analysis of revenue allocation patterns in Ebonyi State and the implications for Socio-economic development.

Concept of Socio-economic Development

The concept of economic development refers to the increase in both the quantity and quality of goods produced within a country, fostering growth and transformation. It involves the shift of an economy from a primary sector reliance to more diversified secondary sector activities, including manufacturing and services. Economic development aims to improve living standards by increasing per capita income, satisfying the population's basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing, and enhancing both the service and manufacturing sectors of the economy (Musaechio & Lazzarini, 2012). This process entails a combination of quantitative and qualitative changes, such as the transformation of production structures and the implementation

of advanced management methods to achieve sustainable growth (Kubiczek, 2014; Litwiński, 2017).

Socio-economic development, on the other hand, refers to the process through which both social and economic improvements are made in a society. It encompasses changes in tangible factors, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy, and employment, alongside less tangible factors like personal dignity, freedom, and the quality of life (Chojnicki, 2010; UNDP, 2012). In this broader context, socio-economic development is influenced by both exogenous and endogenous factors, impacting areas such as material conditions, economic structures, access to public goods, social relationships, and environmental conditions (Bellu, 2011; Litwiński, 2017). It focuses not only on economic growth but also on human development and social justice, ensuring a more equitable distribution of opportunities and resources.

Scholars such as Sen (1999) and Haq (1995) have emphasized that socio-economic development should be evaluated based on the expansion of people's capabilities and freedoms, highlighting the importance of social and political conditions in fostering development. According to Sen (1999), the central goal of development is to enhance individuals' abilities to lead lives they value, focusing on reducing inequality and ensuring everyone has access to opportunities. Haq, as a co-creator of the Human Development Index (HDI), has stressed that development must consider not just economic measures but also social indicators, such as access to education, healthcare, and overall well-being (Haq, 1995). This approach underscores the need for a holistic, people-centered development strategy that balances economic growth with improvements in social conditions.

In the context of Ebonyi State, socio-economic development entails a comprehensive approach aimed at improving the quality of life for its residents. It involves efforts to diversify the state's economy, enhance agricultural productivity, foster industrialization, and promote entrepreneurship and innovation. Additionally, it includes investments in physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, telecommunications, and transportation networks, to create an enabling environment for sustainable development (Denen, 2003). Governor David Umahi's

administration, for instance, emphasized infrastructural projects such as the construction of roads, flyovers, and the Ebonyi State International Airport, along with a focus on education and healthcare, which have contributed to socio-economic improvements in the state (Okutu, 2020).

Socio-economic development in Ebonyi also requires strengthening policies and delivery mechanisms to ensure equitable access to essential services like water, food, sanitation, education, and healthcare, particularly for the rural poor. The government's focus on gender equity, employment opportunities, and social protection for vulnerable groups, such as women, youths, and the elderly, further aligns with broader socio-economic development goals (Ugwuala & Ucheoma, 2021). As such, socio-economic development in Ebonyi involves not only the growth of the economy but also the improvement of social conditions and the empowerment of individuals to participate in the development process.

Impact of Effective Revenue Utilization on Socio-Economic Development in Ebonyi State 2015-2023

Between 2015 and 2023, Ebonyi State recorded significant socio-economic developments through effective utilization of allocated revenue. These developments span across various sectors, from health to agriculture, each contributing to the improvement of the state's infrastructure and the quality of life for its residents. In the **health sector**, notable achievements include the establishment of an Ultra-Modern Laser Fever Centre at FETHA II in Abakaliki, which became the designated centre for the South East and parts of North Central Nigeria. The state government also renovated all 13 general hospitals, complete with fencing and landscaping. Additionally, the state government contributed over N800 million to assist patients who could not afford medical bills, built more infrastructure at FETHA, and constructed a new emergency and accident ward at FETHA II, costing approximately N1 billion. Furthermore, Ebonyi's collaboration with global development partners like the World Bank and UNICEF enhanced its healthcare development efforts (Ojerind, 2014).

In **works and transport**, Ebonyi State witnessed the completion of over 300 km of internal roads within the capital city and the construction of 20 km of roads in each local government area, many of which were paved with concrete. The state also completed the construction of over 10 bridges and 23 flyovers, and built a new international cargo airport. These infrastructural advancements improved connectivity and transportation across the state, making it more accessible (Nkwede & Nwovu, 2012).

In the **environment** sector, the Ministry of Environment spearheaded the construction of a waste recycling plant and the installation of solar lighting on all roads in the capital city. These efforts were part of a broader initiative to improve environmental sustainability, with regular cleaning of the capital and the establishment of a waste-to-wealth plant contributing to the state's efforts to address environmental challenges (Molokwu, Nwose & Alozie, 2023).

In **education**, the state invested over six billion Naira through the UBEC Partnership Fund, which was used to renovate and construct new school buildings. The government also accredited Ikwo College of Education and the School of Health Technology, allowing them to award degrees and professional certificates, respectively. Ebonyi State maintained the 10th position in national rankings for WAEC and NECO examinations and introduced agricultural and moral programs in schools. In higher education, the state government reduced tuition fees at Ebonyi State University and funded overseas scholarships for students (Udu & Ibeogu, 2019). Regarding **power**, the state installed 6 km of streetlights in each local government area and implemented aggressive rural electrification projects. Additionally, it purchased 1.5 MW biomass plants and constructed a 100 KVA solar plant for Ebonyi State University (Okutu, 2019).

In the **water resources** sector, the state completed the Oferekpe and Ezillo water projects, while advancing the Ukawu Water Project to 80% completion. The state also improved water supply coverage in the capital city to about 35%, ensuring daily water distribution to residents. These efforts were part of a comprehensive approach to improve public utilities and ensure sustainable water supply (Molokwu, Nwose & Alozie, 2023). In **lands, housing, and survey**, significant projects included the

construction of a new government house, an ecumenical center, and a modern shopping mall. The state also renovated key government buildings, including the Presidential Lodge and Governor's Office, further enhancing the state's infrastructure (Handelman, 2006).

In **agriculture**, the state focused on improving rice production by building three modern rice mills across its three senatorial districts. The government also supported cassava production with the purchase of processing machines and provided over N2.5 billion in loans to farmers. The launch of the "one man, one-hectare" program and the procurement of over 50 tractors also helped enhance agricultural productivity (Ezeali, 2013). Lastly, the **Ministry of Economic Empowerment** empowered over 4,000 youths and 4,500 widows, providing grants to support small businesses and improve livelihoods, particularly for those who had previously worked as hawkers in major cities like Lagos (Okutu, 2019). These developments demonstrate Ebonyi State's commitment to improving the socio-economic well-being of its people through targeted revenue utilization, impactful partnerships, and visionary leadership.

Review of Empirical Literature

The relationship between revenue allocation and socio-economic development is multifaceted, with significant implications for governance, infrastructure, and the overall well-being of a population. Effective revenue allocation can lead to improved infrastructure, better governance, and higher living standards. Scholars have explored the complexities of this relationship, emphasizing how the equitable distribution of financial resources among government tiers influences economic and social development outcomes. Bird and Slack (2005) examined fiscal challenges in developing countries, particularly focusing on revenue generation and allocation at the local level, highlighting its impact on urban development. Shah (2006) further explored fiscal decentralization, noting its potential benefits for socio-economic growth by improving resource allocation efficiency across government levels. Bahl and Martinez-Vazquez (2008) also contributed to this discourse by exploring the impact of fiscal federalism and decentralization on development outcomes, suggesting that decentralized systems can lead to better socio-economic results.

In the Nigerian context, Adeboye (2018) investigated the link between revenue allocation formulas and socio-economic development, focusing on the challenges and opportunities within the allocation system. Similarly, Khan (2005) emphasized governance and state capacity as critical factors influencing the effective allocation of resources. Smoke (2001) highlighted the importance of aligning fiscal decentralization with development objectives, noting that poorly managed decentralization can undermine local development efforts. These studies collectively stress that the relationship between revenue allocation and socio-economic development is influenced by factors such as governance structures, policy frameworks, and the efficiency of resource utilization.

A key empirical study by Dang (2013) analyzed the relationship between revenue allocation and economic development in Nigeria, using time series data from 1993 to 2012. The study found a significant causal relationship between revenue allocation and real GDP, with revenue allocations having a positive impact on economic development. The study recommended improving financial control and auditing processes to minimize corruption and inefficiencies, thereby maximizing the developmental potential of allocated resources. This finding is particularly relevant to the socio-economic development of Ebonyi State, as it underscores the importance of effective revenue management for sustainable growth.

In contrast, studies focused on individual states, such as Nnanseh and Akpan (2013), investigated the effects of internally generated revenue (IGR) on infrastructure development in Akwa Ibom State. Their findings revealed uneven contributions to infrastructural development, such as road, water, and electricity, highlighting the importance of IGR for state development. Nkanor and Udu (2016) conducted a similar study in Ebonyi State, finding a low effect of IGR on infrastructure development. Other studies, such as Ihedinihu et al. (2014), explored the relationship between tax revenue and economic growth, emphasizing the significant role of tax revenue in fostering national economic growth.

The literature on IGR and infrastructure development further includes studies by Abiola and Ehigiamuose (2014) and Ekankumo and Braye (2011), both of which confirmed a positive relationship between IGR growth and capital expenditure,

underscoring the importance of internal revenue in achieving fiscal viability. Madugba and Joseph (2016) also found a significant relationship between VAT and economic development, highlighting the role of tax revenue in driving economic growth. In the context of local government, Mohammed et al. (2015) demonstrated a significant relationship between government expenditure and IGR in Adamawa State, emphasizing the need for robust fiscal policies to sustain development.

Revenue Allocation and Key Sectors Development in Ebonyi State (2015-2023) An Overview

i. Poverty Alleviation

In a study by Nwahia, Ahmed, Onyeabor, and Balogun (2021) titled “Analysis of Poverty Status of Ebonyi State Farming Households”, poverty was identified as a significant issue in Ebonyi State, with 54% of farming households considered poor. The study utilized multi-stage sampling and descriptive statistics, along with Foster, Greer, and Thorbecke (FGT) and Logit regression models to analyze the data. Factors such as household size, dependency ratio, sex, monthly household expenditure, and farm size were found to significantly influence the poverty status of these households. The study recommended that government programs should address these socio-economic characteristics to improve living standards, especially focusing on reducing youth unemployment and supporting the elderly to ease the dependency burden and reduce poverty (Nwahia et al., 2021).

In a similar vein, Nwakamma, Hangeior, Edeh, and Alo (2023) examined “Skills-Based Infrastructure and Human Capital Development: Interrogating Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency”. Their study emphasized that human capital development requires targeted efforts in providing infrastructure such as schools, vocational training centers, and healthcare facilities. The Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA) has contributed significantly to this effort, though challenges such as inadequate school infrastructure persist. The study found a positive relationship between the construction of classroom blocks and improved education quality, as well as between vocational training centers and enhanced entrepreneurial skills among youths. However, it noted

that EB-CSDA's assistance for indigent students was limited. The authors recommended increasing budgetary allocations to EB-CSDA to further enhance its capacity for human capital development (Nwakamma et al., 2023).

Similarly, Ezeali, Uwadi, and Nwaowu (2018) explored the “Activities of Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA) in the Development of Ebonyi State, Nigeria (2009-2014)”. The study found a significant relationship between EB-CSDA’s provision of infrastructure such as classroom blocks and improved education quality. The study also highlighted the agency’s success in providing vocational training, which boosted entrepreneurial skills among youth. The research further demonstrated that EB-CSDA’s infrastructure projects, including micro-projects in 135 communities, contributed positively to the socio-economic development of the state. These projects provided access to water, rural electrification, and improved health facilities, which in turn enhanced school attendance and reduced health-related issues. The study concluded that the EB-CSDA played a key role in reducing poverty and improving living standards in rural communities, but further efforts are needed to address infrastructural gaps (Ezeali et al., 2018). These studies collectively underscore the importance of targeted infrastructure development and socio-economic interventions in addressing poverty and enhancing human capital in Ebonyi State. While progress has been made, particularly in education and vocational training, more comprehensive efforts are required to tackle ongoing challenges such as inadequate resources for indigent students and the need for sustained investment in infrastructure.

ii. **Educational Sector**

Education-based human capital development has been shown to be extremely beneficial for the country’s economic growth (Armeanu *et al.* 2018). Through increased income and technical know-how, education is essential to reducing poverty.

Following the return to civil rule in 1999, one of the biggest challenge that faced the government of Ebonyi state was how to drastically reduce the level of illiteracy in the state and inadequate educational advancement among the people cutting across the 13 local governments. Governor David Umahi consolidated on the policies of

the previous administrations in tackling poverty by reducing the illiteracy level in the state. The government of Ebonyi state thus implemented a number of intervention programmes to raise the literacy rate in order to reduce poverty level in the state. Below is a critical analysis of the performances of the administrations of the past three Governors in the educational sector between 1999-2023.

Table 1: Budget Utilization in the Education Sector in Ebonyi State Under Governors Egwu, Elechi and Umahi's Administrations (1999-2023)

S/N	Year/Governor	Total Budget Estimate (₦Billion)	Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure	Strategic Capital Projects Executed
1.	1999 under Governor Egwu	₦28.7 billion	₦10.2 billion	₦18.5 billion	Classroom blocks, 44km roads, Ebonyi State University Lecture Blocks, Free and compulsory primary education etc.
2.	2000 Under Governor Egwu	₦33.5 billion	₦10.5 billion	₦23 billion	6 Classroom blocks across the 13 LGAs; Faculty of Agriculture Complex etc.
3.	2001 Under Governor Egwu	₦38.2 billion	₦10.2 billion	₦28 billion	Multiple EBSU Lecture room blocks; Academic staff building etc.
4.	2002 under Governor Egwu	₦39.7 billion	₦10.4 billion	₦29.3 billion	Establishment of Ebonyi State College of Education
5.	2008 under Governor Elechi	₦40.5 billion	₦11 billion	₦29.5 billion	Construction of pilot Schools, construction of roads, Classroom blocks.
6.	2010 under Governor Elechi	₦42.3 billion	₦12.3 billion	₦30.1 billion	EBSU Lecture room blocks, more pilot schools, foreign scholarship etc.
7.	2018 under Governor Umahi	₦44.4 billion	₦14 billion	₦30.4 billion	King David University of Medical Sciences, Building of Classroom blocks across the 13 LGAs etc.
8.	2023 Under Governor Umahi	₦45.8 billion	₦14.7 billion	₦31.1 billion	Faculty of Education Complex, EBSU

Source: Ebonyi State Ministry of Finance (2023).

The educational sector in Ebonyi State saw substantial development between 1999 and 2023, particularly through the strategic allocation of revenue. Governor Sam

Egwu, who governed from 1999, laid the foundation for many educational reforms. In 1999, his administration's budget was ₦28.7 billion, with ₦18.5 billion allocated to educational projects. Notable projects included the construction of Ebonyi State University (EBSU) lecture blocks and the introduction of free and compulsory primary education. In 2000, with a ₦33.5 billion budget, the administration allocated ₦23 billion for the construction of classroom blocks and the Faculty of Agriculture Complex. In subsequent years, similar budgets were earmarked for significant educational infrastructure, including the construction of multiple EBSU lecture rooms, primary and secondary school classrooms, and vocational training centers (Udu & Ibeogu, 2019).

Governor Egwu's tenure also saw Ebonyi State's involvement in World Bank programs such as the Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) project. These programs aimed at providing free access to basic education and improving educational quality across the state. The UBE project, launched in 1999, focused on education for all, emphasizing equity and lifelong skills (Opoh, Okou, & Ani, 2015). Despite these efforts, Egwu's administration struggled with the rising poverty and socio-economic inequality in the state, which limited the impact of the education reforms. Under Governor Egwu, significant milestones were achieved, including the elevation of the former Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) campus in Abakaliki to Ebonyi State University (EBSU) in 2000. The establishment of the State College of Education in Ikwo (2006) and the School of Health Technology in Ngbo also enhanced human capital development (Udu & Ibeogu, 2019). Additionally, the state participated in the Higher Education Pact (HIPACT) program, which provided scholarships for students to study abroad, further improving the state's educational outlook (Okutu, 2019).

Governor Umahi's administration (2015-2023) also focused on educational development, spending ₦30.4 billion on projects like the King David University of Medical Sciences and the construction of classroom blocks across the 13 LGAs. However, despite these efforts, challenges remained in fully addressing the socio-economic inequalities inherited from previous administrations, as indicated by the

limited impact of the BESDA and UBE programs in reducing poverty (Nwakamma et al., 2023).

iii. Infrastructural Sector

Umahi most notable achievements in Ebonyi state were in infrastructure. His administration embarked on massive infrastructural development to enhance transportation within the state and also to open up the state for trade and investment which will reduce the poverty level in the state.

Below is the performance of the past administrations on infrastructural development in Ebonyi state.

Table 2: Annual Budget Utilization for Infrastructural Development Under Governor Martin Elechi (2007 - 2015)

S/N	Year	Annual Budget Estimate	Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure	Strategic Capital Projects Executed
1.	2007	₦57 billion	₦22 billion	₦35 billion	Unity bridges, roads etc.
2.	2008	₦60.2 billion	₦24 billion	₦36.2 billion	Construction of pilot Schools, construction of roads, Classroom blocks.
3.	2009	₦65. 4 billion	₦25 billion	₦40.4 billion	Construction of Pilot schools, Health Centres, EBSU Faculty of Law complex etc.
4.	2010	₦68.9 billion	₦28.3 billion	₦40.6 billion	Ochudo Centenary city, Development centres' secretariat, unity bridges phase II
5.	2011	₦72.5 billion	₦30.7 billion	₦41.8 billion	Oferekpe Water Scheme project, rural electrification, roads.
6.	2012	₦80.2 billion	₦35.3 billion	₦44.9 billion	Oferekpe Water Scheme, State Secretariat
7.	2013	₦83.3 billion	₦38.2 billion	₦45.1billion	Unity Bridges phase III, rural electrification, primary school classroom blocks etc.
8.	2014	₦85.2 billion	₦39 billion	₦46.2 billion	Oferekpe water scheme, rural electrification, roads etc.

Source: Ebonyi State Ministry of finance (2014).

The analysis of Ebonyi State's strategic developments during the administration of Chief Martin N. Elechi (2007–2015) reveals significant investments in education, infrastructure, and human capital development. Elechi's government consistently allocated substantial portions of the annual budget to both recurrent and capital expenditures, with a clear focus on improving critical sectors such as education, water supply, and rural electrification. In 2007, the budget was ₦57 billion, with ₦22 billion for recurrent expenditure and ₦35 billion allocated to capital projects, including the construction of unity bridges, foreign scholarships, and roads. This pattern continued in subsequent years. For example, in 2008, the budget increased to ₦60.2 billion, with ₦36.2 billion directed towards infrastructure projects like the construction of pilot schools, roads, and classroom blocks. Similar allocations were made in 2009 and 2010, where capital expenditure focused on essential educational and infrastructural developments, including the construction of health centers and the Faculty of Law complex at Ebonyi State University (EBSU), as well as the Ochudo Centenary City project (Nwakamma et al., 2023).

By 2011, the budget had grown to ₦72.5 billion, with ₦41.8 billion dedicated to infrastructure, including the Oferekpe Water Scheme and rural electrification. In the years that followed, such as 2012 and 2013, the government continued to invest in education and infrastructure, completing significant projects like the Oferekpe Water Scheme and foreign scholarships for Ebonyi indigenes (Okutu, 2019). By 2014, the total budget reached ₦85.2 billion, with a large portion again allocated to infrastructure, including the completion of rural electrification and the construction of foundational structures for an international market (Ezeali et al., 2018). During this period, several educational interventions were made, including the construction and renovation of schools across local governments. Notable projects included the building of classroom blocks, examination halls, and the renovation of primary and secondary school facilities in locations such as Izzi Unuphu, Igbeagu, Amasiri, and Mbeke-Ishieke. These efforts were largely supported by the World Bank-assisted Community and Social Development Projects (CSDP), which played a key role in improving educational infrastructure across Ebonyi State (Udu & Ibeogu, 2019).

The Elechi administration also made notable strides in human capital development. The establishment of the Staff Development Centre and the granting of scholarships and employment to top-performing graduates were significant achievements. Additionally, the partnership with the Industrial Trust Fund (ITF) and the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) enabled the empowerment of youth through skills acquisition programs in areas such as catering, event management, and welding. These efforts helped reduce unemployment by encouraging youths who had migrated to urban centers to return and engage in skill-building activities (Okutu, 2019).

Table 3: List of World Bank-assisted projects undertaken in Ebonyi State by Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB CSD) under Elechi Administration

S/N	LGA	Beneficiary Community	Type of Project Executed	Sector	Status
1	Abakaliki	Indiegu-Amachi	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (1no)	Water	Completed
2	Afikpo North(now Afikpo LGA)	Akpoha	Grading of 3km Road and Rehabilitation of One Box Culvert	Transport	Completed
3	Afikpo South (now Edda LGA)	Ebunwana	Drilling of a Hand Pump Water Borehole	Water	Completed
4	Ebonyi	Ikelagu Ishieke	Completion of School Block with Hostel	Education	Completed
5	Ezza North	Ekka	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (1No.)	Water	Completed
6	Ezza South	Amaezekwe	Construction of 6Classroom Block with Principal's Office	Education	Completed
7	Ikwo	Echi-Alike	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (1no)	Water	Completed
8	Ishielu	Iyonu	Construction of Town Hall	Socio-economics	Completed
9	Ivo	Akaeze	Grading of 14km Farm Road with (4nos) Ring Culvert of 600mm Diameter	Transport	Completed
10	Izzi	Ndieze-Enyim	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (2no)	Water	Completed

11	Ohaozara	Amenu-Okposi	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (1 no)	Water	Completed
12	Ohaukwu	Umuogudu-Akpu	Construction of 10 KM Earth Road & Culverts (8 Nos,)	Transport	Completed
13	Onicha	Amagu-Mgbom	Drilling of Hand Pump Water Borehole (1No.)	Water	Completed

Source: Udu, Nwoba, & Ibenwo (2021)

These impacts showed that there is significant relationship between EB-CSDA's provision of classroom blocks and improvement on the quality of primary and secondary education for the pupils and students in the state. Thus, the EB-CSDA significantly improved the quality of teaching in the study area through construction of modern classroom blocks in both primary and secondary schools; EB-CSDA's vocational training centers also enhanced entrepreneurial skills among the youths in the local government areas. The result of this study is consistent with that of Ezeali, *et al.* (2018) who discovered that the EB-CSDA has promoted community and socio-economic development in Ebonyi State through the provision of over 288 micro-projects in 135 communities covering the entire 13 local government areas. The infrastructural facilities provided include portable water, rural electrification, classrooms, schools, laboratories, VIP toilets, hospitals and health centres, markets, construction and rehabilitation of feeder roads, culverts and bridges. These according to the researchers have increased the number of children in schools, provided access to drinking water, reduced diseases, infections, maternal and infant mortality rate and contributed positively to the socio-economic development of Ebonyi State.

Table 4: Outline of Infrastructural Projects in Ebonyi State under Governor David N. Umahi administration (2015-2023)

S/N	Year	Annual Budget Estimate	Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure	Strategic Capital Projects Executed
1.	2015	₦99.2 billion	₦37 billion	₦62.2 billion	Completion of 300km of internal roads within the capital city; Completion of 3 twin flyover bridges of each length of 700m etc.
2.	2016	₦101.154	₦38.758	₦62.397	Built over 10 No of bridges

		billion	billion	billion	across the state; 20km per LGA of road construction of which most of the roads are on concrete pavement etc.
3.	2017	₦127.233 billion	₦40.171 billion	₦87.062 billion	Built emergency and accident building at FETHA II; Completion of additional 5 twin flyover bridges of each length of 600m etc.
4.	2018	₦208.332 billion	₦43.327 billion	₦165.005 billion	Purchased 3 Number of modern rice mills and installed parboiling units of machines in our rice mills at Ikwo, Izzi and Oso Edda; new Government House completed; Ecumenical Centre completed.
5.	2019	₦219.452 billion	₦45.327 billion	₦174.125 billion	Empowerment of over 4000 Ebonyi youths with N250,000 each as grants especially those who were hawkers in Lagos; Water projects at Uburu, Izicha Forest, all the Sakamori line, Ugwulangwu, Ishinkwo-Ukawu and Juju Hill etc.
6.	2020	₦215.332 billion	₦43.356 billion	₦171.976 billion	Completion of Ezillo Water Scheme and Ukawu Water Project; installed a minimum of 6km of street light in all Local Government Areas; installed street light within Abakaliki capital city; aggressive rural electrification projects etc.
7.	2021	221.346 billion	45.422 billion	175.924 billion	Purchased 1.5mw of biomass plants; built for EBSU, 100KVA Solar Plant; Building of waste recycling plants; Effective cleaning of the capital city and of Purchase of Equipment. Construction of waste to wealth recycling Plant. Invested over six billion Naira from our UBEC Partnership Fund with Federal Government of Nigeria for renovation and construction of

					new school buildings and equipping of some of our schools. Accredited Ikwo College of Education fully to start the award of degree. Accredited School of Health Technology for issuance of their professional certificates.
8.	2022	₦223.422 billion	₦46.221 billion	₦177.201 billion	Completion of a total of 23 flyovers, 10 of which are twin flyovers, 1 is 30 span and about 500m; completion of Ebonyi shopping mall; completion of new international market; construction of international airport and over 600 roads constructed on 8 inches concrete pavement; construction of University of medical sciences in Uburu etc.

Source: Ebonyi State Ministry of Finance (2022); Office of the SA to the Governor on Media and Publicity Francis Nwaze (2022).

From 2015 to 2023, Governor David N. Umahi’s administration significantly impacted Ebonyi State’s socio-economic development, with strategic revenue utilization for infrastructural and human capital projects. The annual budgets of the state during this period reflect a strong focus on capital expenditures, which were channeled into key projects that improved the state’s infrastructure and living conditions. In 2015, the state government presented a ₦99.2 billion budget, allocating ₦37 billion for recurrent expenditure and ₦62.2 billion for capital projects. Key projects executed included the completion of 300 km of internal roads within the capital city and the construction of three twin flyover bridges, each with a length of 700 meters. In 2016, the budget increased to ₦101.154 billion, with ₦38.758 billion allocated for recurrent expenditure and ₦62.397 billion for capital expenditure. Major developments included the construction of over 10 bridges across the state and the completion of 20 km of concrete-paved roads in each of the state’s 13 local government areas (LGA) (Molokwu, Nwose & Alozie, 2023).

The budget continued to rise in subsequent years. In 2017, the budget reached ₦127.233 billion, with ₦87.062 billion allocated to capital expenditure. Notable projects included the construction of an emergency and accident ward at FETHA II and the completion of five additional twin flyover bridges. The following year, the budget saw a substantial jump to ₦208.332 billion, with ₦165.005 billion dedicated to capital projects. Key projects during this period included the purchase of three modern rice mills, the construction of the new government house, and the completion of the Ecumenical Centre (Ezeali et al., 2018).

In 2019, the administration allocated ₦219.452 billion, with ₦174.125 billion directed towards projects such as the empowerment of over 4,000 youths with ₦250,000 grants and the completion of various water projects across the state. The year 2020 saw a budget of ₦25.332 billion, with ₦171.976 billion earmarked for strategic infrastructural projects, including the completion of the Ezillo Water Scheme and the Ukawu Water Project, along with rural electrification initiatives (Okutu, 2019). By 2021, the budget had risen to ₦221.346 billion, with ₦175.924 billion allocated to capital projects, such as the purchase of a 1.5 MW biomass plant for EBSU and the construction of waste-to-wealth recycling plants. The government also invested over ₦6 billion from the UBEC Partnership Fund to renovate and build new school structures, and accredited Ikwo College of Education and the School of Health Technology for degree and certificate issuance, respectively (Udu & Ibeogu, 2019).

In 2022, Governor Umahi's administration allocated ₦223.422 billion, with ₦177.201 billion directed towards major capital projects. These included the completion of 23 flyovers, the Ebonyi Shopping Mall, the new international market, the international airport, and the construction of over 600 roads paved with 8-inch concrete. The year-on-year analysis of the state's capital expenditure highlights the administration's commitment to socio-economic growth through large-scale infrastructural projects, many of which are now operational and contributing to the state's development (Nwakamma et al., 2023). Governor Umahi's administration leveraged the revenue allocations to pursue ambitious infrastructural projects, enhancing the state's educational facilities, healthcare, transportation, and overall

socio-economic development. The completion of projects such as the Government House, Ecumenical Centre, and numerous flyovers, along with continued investments in education and human capital development, underscores the administration's focus on long-term growth and sustainability.

Figure 1: Ultramodern International Market built by Governor Umahi.



Source: Office of the SA to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Francis Nwaze (2022).

It is imperative to note that Ebonyi State experienced some degree of infrastructural revolution despite being the fourth poorest state in the country with a poverty headcount of 79.8% and unemployment rate of 40.3%. (Molokwu, Nwose & Alozie, 2023:84). The above figures show that the administration of Umahi to large extent transformed the state in terms of infrastructure such as roads, flyovers, housing etc.

Figure 2 & 3: Aerial View of University of Medical Sciences Built by Governor Umahi's Administration



Source: Nwaze (2022).

Figure 4: Showing twin flyover and street lights constructed by Governor David N. Umahi Administration



Source: Office of the SA to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Francis Nwaze (2022).

The above figure shows that there is a relative improvement in the quality of road infrastructure. The capital city as shown above is now illuminated in the night by street lights and concrete pavement roads which aids socio-economic activities for small scale businesses and private establishments. Human capital development is critical in the development of any country and its component state. The Ebonyi State government under the past successive administrations have had the mandate to improve the socio-economic conditions of Ebonyi people, particularly, the rural populace. They have also tried to ensure that the rural population gets a fair share of at least 80% of government funding for micro projects. By the design of this blueprint, communities should identify projects while EB-CPRA would select from the proposed projects by the benefiting communities through registered Community Development Associations. The Community Development Unions are usually composed of selected representatives including the chairman, secretary, women representative (usually the treasurer), youth leader, and the disabled as the case warrants.

Figure 5: Showing Various Units of Long Span Flyovers Constructed by the Umahi Administration



Source: Nwaze (2022).

The Ebonyi State government under the above administration also embarked on the task of reducing poverty in the state through ensuring solid infrastructural development. However, the aspect of poverty reduction through wealth creation and business empowerment as well as improved workers welfare suffered to some extent during the period under review. Thus, despite this massive infrastructure, greater number of Ebonyians remain trapped in poverty and lack of access to minimum standard of living.

Figure 6: Shopping Lots and a Tower inside the newly constructed Ultramodern



Source: Office of the SA to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Francis Nwaze (2022).

Figure 7: Showing Ebonyi Airport built by Umahi's Administration



Source: Nwaze (2022).

iv. Agricultural Sector

From 2015 to 2023, the government of Ebonyi State, under the leadership of Governor David Umahi, significantly focused on agriculture to support food security, increase productivity, and alleviate poverty. Agriculture has always been central to the state's economy, with residents largely engaged in farming activities, cultivating crops such as rice, yams, maize, and cocoyam. Past administrations have implemented various programs to enhance agricultural production, with an emphasis

on mechanized farming. Governor Umahi's administration, in particular, introduced several transformative initiatives aimed at boosting agricultural productivity and the livelihoods of farmers.

One of the key programs introduced during Umahi's administration was the building of rice mill clusters. Under the previous administration of Chief Martin Elechi (2007–2015), three modern rice mills were constructed in Ebonyi State, one in each of the three senatorial zones, to process, package, and market rice. These mills, however, were not functional until Umahi's administration took over. The government modernized the mills by acquiring destoning and packaging machines, effectively increasing the rice production capacity of the state. This modernization has made Ebonyi a significant producer of high-quality rice, which is now processed in large quantities (Molokwu, Nwose & Alozie, 2023).

In addition to the rice mills, the One Man, One Hectare Programme was introduced to encourage residents, especially civil servants and young graduates, to engage in farming. This initiative aimed to reduce dependency on salaries and address the state's unemployment challenges by promoting agricultural activities as a viable career path for the youth (Okutu, 2019). The Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), a partnership between the Ebonyi State Government and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), provided soft loans to rice farmers to improve their production capacity. Civil servants were also given loans with low or no interest to support their farming ventures.

The Ebonyi State Agriculture Development Programme (EBADEP) was another major initiative. This program supported farmers by providing modern inputs such as agricultural machinery, fertilizers, and seeds at subsidized rates. It also focused on research and extension services, ensuring that farmers had access to the latest agricultural practices and technologies. Additionally, the program offered post-harvest support, including grants, tax relief, and loans to encourage agricultural exports. The government also created a database of commercial farmers and cooperative societies to help plan and implement agricultural programs more effectively (Ezeali et al., 2018).

Regarding agricultural funding, the government of Ebonyi State allocated substantial resources to the sector. From 1999 to 2015, the state government spent ₦20 billion on agricultural development. However, under Governor Umahi's administration, the allocation to agriculture increased significantly, with ₦45 billion spent between 2015 and 2023. These funds were used to purchase modern rice processing machines, including parboiling, destoning, and packaging equipment, which were distributed to the three rice mills in the state. Additionally, farmers received subsidized rice and yam seeds, fertilizers, and insecticides, helping to boost agricultural output (Udu & Ibeogu, 2019). The government's investment in agriculture was driven by several key goals, including increasing food production, improving food security, and raising the income levels of farmers. Another critical goal was reducing unemployment in the state by encouraging agricultural ventures, thus improving the overall quality of life for farmers and rural communities (Nwakamma et al., 2023).

Factors contributed to effective utilization of Revenue Allocation in Ebonyi State: An Assessment

i. Collaboration with World Bank

The Ebonyi State Government, in partnership with the Federal Government of Nigeria and the World Bank, launched the Community and Social Development Project (CSDP) to improve local governance and infrastructure at the community level. This collaboration led to the creation of the Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA), which empowered local communities through financial support and the provision of essential services like electricity and pipe-borne water. The CSDP aimed to reduce poverty and improve the standard of living, especially in rural areas (Ojerind, 2014). Despite previous challenges with other intervention programs, the CSDP significantly improved life in Ebonyi State by enhancing community-driven development (Molokwu, Nwose & Alozie, 2023). Under Governor Umahi's leadership, the project continued to yield positive results, benefiting rural communities (Ezeali, 2013).

ii. Visionary Leadership

The establishment of Ebonyi State in 1996 came with numerous developmental challenges, including poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and low levels of human

capital development. Notable efforts to address these issues include the introduction of free and compulsory education by Governor Dr. Sam Egwu in 1999, which significantly increased school enrollment (Udu & Ibeogu, 2019). The subsequent development of Ebonyi State University and the State College of Education contributed to the state's educational advancement. Furthermore, Governor Umahi's administration continued this legacy by initiating skill development programs and infrastructure projects, including the construction of roads, an international market, and an airport, thus laying the foundation for long-term socioeconomic growth (Okutu, 2019).

iii. Hands-on Approach

Governor Umahi's leadership was characterized by a hands-on approach to governance, particularly in the area of project implementation. Umahi personally oversaw major government projects, ensuring that contractors adhered to quality standards and deadlines. His direct involvement helped address issues of poor project supervision, which often delayed the completion of government initiatives in Nigeria (Handelman, 2006). By ensuring that projects were completed on time and to the required standard, his administration was able to enhance the state's infrastructure and improve the living conditions of its residents (Nkwede & Nwovu, 2012).

iv. Appointment of Professionals to Form the Government

Governor Umahi was known for appointing professionals based on merit rather than political affiliation. This meritocratic approach allowed the state to benefit from the expertise of key individuals, such as Engr. Fidelis Nwaeze, who played a pivotal role in constructing over 300 kilometers of roads, 23 flyovers, and an international airport (Udu & Ibeogu, 2019). Umahi's appointments ensured that those responsible for executing development projects were capable and aligned with his vision for the state's growth, which contributed to the successful execution of various infrastructural projects (Molokwu, Nwose & Alozie, 2023).

v. Resource Management

Efficient resource management under Governor Umahi was critical to the success of the state's infrastructural development. Despite Ebonyi being one of the poorest

states in Nigeria, Umahi's administration managed to execute numerous developmental projects, including road construction and the development of key markets. This effective use of state resources allowed for the completion of large-scale projects that benefited the state's population (Molokwu, Nwose & Alozie, 2023). The prudent allocation of resources enabled the state to make tangible progress in infrastructure, improving the quality of life for many residents (Handelman, 2006).

Discussion of Findings

Despite significant revenue allocations to Ebonyi State between 1999 and 2015, the state faced severe poverty, with a substantial portion of its population lacking basic necessities like food, clothing, and education (Ucha, 2010). The poverty situation was compounded by a lack of political power and limited options for the impoverished, leading to increased vulnerability to violence and radicalization (Agaibe, 2015). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2012), Ebonyi had the highest poverty rate in the South East geopolitical zone, with 56% of the population living in poverty well above the national average of 46% (UNDP, 2013). These challenges reflected the state's low Human Development Index (HDI), signaling significant socio-economic issues.

However, upon assuming office in 2015, Governor David Umahi began addressing these issues with a focus on infrastructural development, education, and agriculture, aiming to improve the state's socio-economic conditions. Umahi's administration invested heavily in improving infrastructure, particularly roads. The government constructed and reconstructed internal roads in the state capital, Abakaliki, replacing dilapidated roads with concrete pavements designed for long-term durability. Umahi's background as a civil engineer played a crucial role in ensuring that these roads would last for decades. The administration also embarked on the construction of 23 flyovers across the state, improving traffic flow and giving the state a more modern outlook. Furthermore, the construction of Ebonyi State's international airport was completed within two years, enhancing regional connectivity (Adebanjoko & Walter, 2019).

In addition to infrastructure, Umahi's administration focused on agricultural development as a key strategy for poverty reduction. The state government established modern rice mills and milling clusters, significantly boosting rice production capacity. The introduction of programs like the One Man, One Hectare Programme encouraged every resident, including civil servants, to engage in farming. This was part of a broader effort to reduce dependence on government salaries and decrease the unemployment rate. Umahi also collaborated with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to provide soft loans to farmers, further encouraging agricultural activities. The creation of industrial clusters in the three senatorial zones led to the creation of 200,000 jobs, which directly contributed to reducing poverty (Okutu, 2019).

In education, Governor Umahi made significant strides by declaring a state of emergency in the educational sector. His government committed substantial resources to reconstruct and remodel schools, including the building of over 2,000 classrooms, the establishment of ICT departments in schools, and the construction of modern educational facilities such as the new Ebonyi State University Teaching Hospital and the University of Medical Sciences in Uburu. His government's focus on education led to remarkable improvements in the state's education sector, including Ebonyi's top ranking in the 2021 Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), with the highest enrollment and impressive performance in the country (Southern Examiner, 2024).

The agricultural and educational improvements under Umahi's administration significantly contributed to reducing poverty and enhancing the overall quality of life in Ebonyi State. His focus on infrastructure, combined with strategic agricultural and educational investments, transformed Ebonyi from one of Nigeria's poorest states to one of the most advanced in terms of infrastructure and human capital development. Governor Umahi's tenure showcased how focused leadership and strategic investments could address longstanding challenges and drive socio-economic development.

Conclusion

This study highlights the transformative socio-economic development of Ebonyi State under Governor David Umahi from 2015 to 2023. Once one of Nigeria's poorest states, Ebonyi experienced significant improvements in infrastructure, governance, and security, thanks to Umahi's focused leadership and prudent use of resources. Major infrastructural achievements included the construction of over 300 km of roads, 23 flyovers, and the Ebonyi State International Airport, which enhanced connectivity and positioned the state for regional investment. Additionally, the governor prioritized security by providing operational vehicles for security agencies, making Ebonyi the most secure state in the South East. Umahi's leadership was marked by a commitment to the well-being of the people, as seen in his efforts to support the healthcare system and ensure timely payment of workers' salaries. His administration also provided generous festive season support to workers and fostered community involvement in development projects. Through his emphasis on rural development, industrial clusters, and local government collaboration, over 200,000 jobs were created, helping to reduce poverty. The state's numerous completed projects, including major roads and markets, cemented Ebonyi's position as a leading state in Nigeria's development landscape. Governor Umahi's tenure is a model of effective governance, demonstrating how strategic resource management can drive substantial change and elevate a state's socio-economic status.

Recommendations

The following constitute the fundamental recommendations of this study

i. **Infrastructural Development Consolidation:**

To enhance the current state of infrastructure in Ebonyi between 2015-2023, it is crucial for the government to collaborate with development partners and local governments. This will help ensure infrastructure is evenly distributed across urban and rural areas in the 13 local governments, which could significantly reduce the state's poverty level and accelerate socio-economic development.

ii. Enhancing Revenue Utilization and Generation:

The state government must increase its commitment to utilizing and generating revenue through socio-economic diversification. Strengthening the state's internally generated revenue base will help foster sustainable economic growth.

iii. Improvement in Education and Manpower Development:

Further improvement in education enrollment and human resource development should be prioritized. The state should increase budgetary allocation to primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, offer more scholarships, and enhance staff welfare in the education sector. Additionally, boosting both public and private sector growth will promote economic stability and sustainability while addressing poverty and ensuring food self-sufficiency through a robust agricultural revolution.

vi. Transparency and Accountability in Revenue Administration

To improve accountability and transparency in revenue administration, the state government should implement stronger monitoring and audit frameworks. This will help minimize revenue misappropriation and ensure that socio-economic development projects are executed efficiently and on time.

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