

## **Intervention Policies of Akwa Ibom State Government: Poverty, Unemployment and Rural Development**

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### **Abstract**

*The Akwa Ibom State Government in Nigeria has implemented a range of intervention policies aimed at addressing key socio-economic issues including poverty, unemployment, and rural development. These policies have been designed to foster economic growth, improve living conditions, and enhance the quality of life for residents. Notable initiatives include the Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP) targeting poverty alleviation through financial aid and skill development, job creation schemes such as the Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme, and infrastructure projects to support rural development. This paper provides a comprehensive examination of these policies covering the period from 2015 to 2023, evaluating their objectives, implementation strategies, and outcomes. It highlights significant projects like the establishment of Ibom Air, rural road networks, and skill acquisition centers, offering insights into their impact on the socio-economic conditions of the state. The analysis aims to assess the effectiveness of these interventions in achieving the state's developmental goals and addressing the critical challenges faced by its population. Data was gathered from secondary sources such as relevant books and internet materials. Findings indicated that while significant progress has been made through various intervention programs, there are critical challenges that need to be addressed to enhance*

*their effectiveness and sustainability. The paper reveals several key outcomes and challenges in the areas of poverty eradication, unemployment reduction, and rural development. The policies have led to notable achievements, including improvements in poverty levels, job creation, and rural infrastructure. However, they have also faced significant obstacles, such as funding constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies, skill mismatches, and maintenance issues. The study recommended among others that the effectiveness of Akwa Ibom State Government's intervention policies, is crucial to increase funding and streamline administrative processes while aligning vocational training with job market needs. Additionally, strengthening maintenance for infrastructure, ensuring equitable program distribution, and fostering public-private partnerships will address existing challenges and improve overall program impact.*

**Keywords:** *Poverty, Unemployment, Poverty Eradication, Rural Development*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Akwa Ibom State, situated in the south-eastern region of Nigeria, has grappled with persistent socio-economic challenges that have necessitated targeted intervention policies. Since 2015, the state government has undertaken a series of strategic initiatives to combat poverty, reduce unemployment, and promote rural development. These efforts reflect a broader commitment to enhancing socio-economic conditions and driving sustainable development within the state.

Poverty remains a pervasive issue in Akwa Ibom, with many residents experiencing significant economic hardship. The state's approach to poverty alleviation has involved the implementation of the Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP), which includes financial assistance, skill acquisition programs, and microfinance initiatives designed to support the most vulnerable populations (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2017). These programs aim to address the root causes of poverty by improving financial stability and expanding economic opportunities.

Unemployment, particularly among youth, has been a critical concern, exacerbating socio-economic instability. In response, the state has introduced several job creation initiatives. The Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme is one such initiative aimed at increasing employment opportunities through job placements, internships, and skills training (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2019). Additionally, the establishment of Ibom Air, the state-owned airline, has contributed to job creation and economic growth by stimulating the local economy and enhancing connectivity.

Rural development has also been a focal point, with substantial investments in infrastructure and community-driven projects. The state government has prioritized the construction of rural roads, the development of agricultural programs, and the establishment of skill acquisition centers to bolster economic activity and improve living standards in underserved areas (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2021). These infrastructure projects are aimed at improving access to markets, education, and healthcare, thereby supporting the overall development of rural communities.

This paper explores the intervention policies of the Akwa Ibom State Government from 2015 to 2023, providing a detailed analysis of their design, implementation, and impact. By examining key projects and programs, this study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions in

addressing poverty, unemployment, and rural development challenges and contributing to the state's overall progress.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite the Akwa Ibom State Government's concerted efforts from 2015 to 2023 to address the pervasive issues of poverty, unemployment, and rural development, significant challenges persist in achieving the intended outcomes of its intervention policies.

Poverty in Akwa Ibom State remains a critical concern, with a significant portion of the population continuing to live below the poverty line despite various social investment programs. The effectiveness of the Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP) and other poverty alleviation initiatives in providing sustainable improvements in living conditions has been questioned. There is a need to evaluate whether these programs effectively target the most vulnerable populations and lead to tangible improvements in their economic status (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2017).

Unemployment continues to be a major issue, particularly among the youth. While initiatives such as the Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme and the establishment of Ibom Air were introduced to create job opportunities, the high rate of unemployment suggests that these measures may not have fully addressed the scale of the problem. The effectiveness of these job creation programs in providing long-term employment and reducing the unemployment rate needs thorough examination (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2019).

Rural development efforts, including infrastructure projects and agricultural support, have aimed to enhance economic activities and living conditions in rural areas. However, despite significant investments, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to markets, and insufficient support for rural enterprises persist. An assessment of the impact of these development projects on rural communities is necessary to determine if they have achieved their objectives of improving connectivity, access to services, and overall quality of life (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2021).

This problem statement highlights the need for a comprehensive analysis of the Akwa Ibom State Government's intervention policies. Evaluating the effectiveness of these policies in addressing poverty, unemployment, and rural development challenges is crucial to understanding their impact and identifying areas for improvement. By examining the successes and shortcomings of these initiatives, policymakers can better tailor future interventions to achieve more sustainable and inclusive development outcomes.

## **3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Development as Freedom Theory**

Development as Freedom theory emphasizes that development should be seen as a process of expanding people's capabilities and freedoms rather than merely increasing income levels. Sen (1999) argues that poverty is not only a lack of resources but also a deprivation of basic capabilities that allow individuals to lead a minimally acceptable life (Sen, 1999). This theory helps frame the Akwa Ibom State Government's poverty alleviation strategies, which focus on providing skill development and financial support to enhance the capabilities of the disadvantaged.

### **3.2 Human Development Theory**

The Human Development Theory, as articulated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), expands on Sen's (1999) ideas by focusing on improving individuals' quality of life through education, health, and economic opportunities. The theory posits that human development is crucial for achieving sustainable development and poverty reduction (UNDP, 2010). This framework is relevant to evaluating the Akwa Ibom State Government's initiatives such as the Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP), which aim to enhance the overall well-being of the population through comprehensive support services.

### **3.3 Employment Creation and Economic Development Theory**

Employment Creation and Economic Development Theory explores the relationship between job creation and economic growth. This theory suggests that generating employment opportunities not only reduces unemployment but also stimulates economic development by increasing consumer spending and improving living standards (Katz & Krueger, 2019). This theoretical perspective supports the analysis of job creation initiatives in Akwa Ibom, such as the Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme and the establishment of Ibom Air, in terms of their effectiveness in reducing unemployment and boosting the local economy.

### **3.4 Infrastructure and Rural Development Theory**

The Infrastructure and Rural Development Theory focuses on how infrastructure improvements can drive economic growth and enhance the quality of life in rural areas. This theory posits that investments in infrastructure—such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities—are crucial for stimulating economic activity, reducing poverty, and improving access to services in rural areas (Aschauer, 1989). This framework is used to evaluate the Akwa Ibom State Government's rural development projects, including road construction and agricultural support, in terms of their impact on economic development and community well-being.

## **4.1 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### **4.2 Poverty**

Poverty is among the most familiar and enduring of human conditions. Umoh (2022) pointed out that despite the rising discovery of natural resources and unprecedented prosperity of nations, mass poverty continued to exist especially in areas such as Africa. As contain in Britannica Dictionary (2023), poverty is seen as the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. It exists when people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs. In this case, the identification of poor people first requires a determination of what constitutes basic needs. These may be defined as narrowly as “those necessary for survival” or as broadly as “those reflecting the prevailing standard of living in the community.” The first criterion would cover only those people near the borderline of starvation or death from exposure; the second would extend to people whose nutrition, housing, and clothing, though adequate to preserve life, do not

measure up to those of the population as a whole. Poverty is about not having enough money to meet basic needs including food, clothing and shelter.

According to the World Bank Organization (2009),

*“Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty has many faces, changing from place to place and across time, and has been described in many ways. Most often, poverty is a situation people want to escape. So poverty is a call to action - for the poor and the wealthy alike -- a call to change the world so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence, and a voice in what happens in their communities. Extreme poor are those living on less than \$1.90 a day.”*

The World Bank defines those living under US\$2 a day as living in poverty, and those living under US\$1.25 as living in extreme poverty internationally. The nature of poverty differs in all societies. But generally, the poor in every society are those which of the prevailing standards are found to be deficient in means of subsistence and privileges of life. Poverty is related to deprivation, want or lack, suffering and denials of even the basic things of life. It then follows that a poor man cannot be said to have peace since he has to work hard to earn a living, sustaining anxiety, frustration and despair. Salem (2015) refers to poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs, which means that there is an inadequate level of consumption giving rise to insufficient food, clothing and/or shelter, and regrettably, the lack of certain capacities, such as being able to participate with dignity in society.

Also, Amartya Sen (1999) defines poverty not just as a lack of income but as a lack of capabilities and opportunities. He argues that poverty is more accurately described by the inability to achieve basic human capabilities and function effectively in society. Peter Townsend (1979) describes relative poverty as a situation where individuals lack resources to meet the standard of living considered normal or acceptable within their society. Relative poverty focuses on inequality and the disparity between different social groups.

Alkire and Santos (2010) introduce a multidimensional approach to poverty, emphasizing that poverty should be understood through multiple deprivations beyond income, such as health, education, and living standards.

Howard Silver (2007) defines poverty in terms of social exclusion, which refers to individuals being systematically excluded from participating fully in societal activities and accessing resources due to economic, social, or institutional barriers.

Furthermore, Olayemi (1995) refers to the poor as those having no access to the basic necessities of life such as food, clothes, economic obligation, skillful employment, economic assets and lack self-esteem. In the opinion of CBN (1999), attributes of poverty may be classified into structural, economic, social and cultural deprivation. These dimensions of poverty exhibit a vicious cycle and account for the recurring decimal of poverty. Thus, poverty means living on less than a dollar per day or the inadequacy of opportunities for access to education, health, transport and productive employment.



To Misango and Ongiti (2013), poverty is categorized as both absolute and relative. It is absolute because it is describe as lack of resources to meet the physical needs for survival, a lack of basic security, the absence of one or more factors that enable individuals and families to assume basic responsibilities and to enjoy fundamental rights. On the other hand, relative poverty can be described in relation to particular groups or areas in relation to the economic status of other members of the society which is interpreted as lack of resources to achieve a standard of living that allows people to play roles, participate in relationships, and live a life that is deemed normative of the society to which they belong. Poverty results from and even consists of a lack of basic securities, which not only include financial resources, but also education, employment, housing, health care and other related aspects leading to deprivation.

## **4.2 Unemployment**

Unemployment refers to the situation where individuals who are actively seeking work are unable to find employment. It is a key indicator of economic health and is often analyzed through various metrics such as the unemployment rate, underemployment, and youth unemployment (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2020). Policies aimed at reducing unemployment typically focus on job creation, skills development, and economic stimulation (Katz & Krueger, 2019). In Akwa Ibom State, unemployment reduction efforts include job creation schemes and youth empowerment programs.

Unemployment can be classified into several types: Frictional Unemployment: Short-term unemployment that occurs when individuals are between jobs or are entering the labor market for the first time. Structural Unemployment: Occurs when there is a mismatch between workers' skills and the needs of employers, often due to technological changes or shifts in the economy. Cyclical Unemployment: Results from economic downturns and fluctuations in the business cycle, leading to a decrease in overall demand for goods and services (OECD, 2018).

Policies aimed at creating new employment opportunities and reducing unemployment rates. Examples include public works programs, subsidies for businesses to hire new employees, and support for entrepreneurial ventures. Specific initiatives targeting young people to reduce youth unemployment, such as vocational training, internships, and apprenticeships (Katz & Krueger, 2019).

## **4.3 Rural Development**

Rural development encompasses strategies and policies aimed at improving the economic and social well-being of people living in rural areas. It includes infrastructure development, agricultural support, education, and healthcare (United Nations, 2019). The goal is to enhance living standards, reduce poverty, and stimulate local economic growth (Aschauer, 1989).

In Akwa Ibom State, rural development initiatives focus on building infrastructure, supporting agriculture, and improving access to essential services. Building and improving physical infrastructure such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities. Infrastructure development is crucial for connecting rural areas with markets, improving access to services, and supporting economic growth (Aschauer, 1989).

Initiatives aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and supporting rural livelihoods. This includes providing access to technology, credit, and training for farmers. Programs designed to

enhance agricultural productivity through training, technology transfer, and financial support. Examples include subsidies for fertilizers, access to improved seeds, and irrigation infrastructure (World Bank, 2021).

Efforts to strengthen community organizations and support local initiatives. This may include capacity-building activities, support for local enterprises, and promoting community participation in decision-making processes. Establishments providing training and education in various vocational skills to empower rural residents and facilitate local economic development (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2021).

## **5. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE**

A study by Ekong and Asuk (2021) analyzed the Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP) and found that the program had a positive impact on reducing poverty levels among beneficiaries by providing financial assistance and vocational training. However, the study also highlighted challenges such as inadequate funding and inefficiencies in program delivery.

According to Udo and Bassey (2022), while the AKSIP successfully improved the livelihoods of many poor households, its sustainability is threatened by limited resources and administrative hurdles. The authors recommend enhancing program management and increasing funding to ensure long-term success.

Research by Nwankwo and Ojo (2023) indicates that the Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme has been relatively successful in providing job placements and training to young people. However, the study noted that the scheme has not fully addressed the high unemployment rates due to the limited scope of job creation and the mismatch between training provided and market needs.

A study by Okoro and Iwuji (2022) assessed the impact of Ibom Air on job creation and local economic growth. The findings suggest that Ibom Air has significantly contributed to job creation in the state, enhancing connectivity and promoting local businesses. Nevertheless, the study also pointed out that the airline's operations face challenges such as high operational costs and competition from established carriers.

A study by Eyo and Ekpo (2021) evaluated the impact of rural road construction and other infrastructure projects on economic activities and access to services in rural areas. The study found that improved infrastructure significantly enhanced market access and service delivery, contributing to local economic growth. However, issues related to maintenance and quality of construction were noted.

According to Udom and Nseabasi (2022), agricultural support programs in Akwa Ibom State, such as subsidies for fertilizers and access to improved seeds, have led to increased agricultural productivity and income among rural farmers. Despite these successes, the study highlighted challenges such as inadequate extension services and limited access to credit for smallholder farmers.

Adofu, I. and O. Akoji (2013) assessed the impact of skill acquisition on poverty in Kogi State of Nigeria. They used structured questionnaires for collecting primary data from six Local Government Area of the state and used descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages. They found that 65% of the respondents accepted that lack of entrepreneurship skills among youth is responsible for the high rate of poverty in Kogi state, Nigeria. The result also revealed that at least

60% of the people that benefitted from the skill acquisition programme can afford the basic necessity of life.

Ezeanyej, Imoagwu and Ejefobihi (2019) conducted a research on the synergy of rural development and poverty reduction in Nigeria. Both the quantitative and qualitative measurements attest to the growing incidence and depth of poverty in the country. The paper concluded that, government and its agencies should focus on ways of encouraging entrepreneurial culture and skill in order to reduce poverty level in Nigeria and bring about more equitable distribution of income and wealth thereby leading to sustainable economic growth.

## 6. APPRAISAL OF INTERVENTION POLICIES OF AKWA IBOM STATE GOVERNMENT: POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 6.1 Akwa Ibom State Poverty Profile

Data published by the Global Data Lab (GDL) (2023) and the Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (2023) are used for the analysis of poverty rate in Akwa Ibom State. Global Data Lab (GDL) is an independent data and research center at the Nijmegen School of Management of Radboud University with the mission of bringing together all available household surveys for low- and middle-income countries and integrating them into one encompassing data infrastructure. Global Data Lab conducted an assessment on wealth, poverty and assets of households in Nigeria to provide an overview of the major social and economic characteristics of the country and states. The results of the assessment on Akwa Ibom State are presented thus:

#### Global Data Lab Assessment on Wealth, Poverty and Assets of Households in Akwa Ibom State

INDEX INDICATOR	2016	2017	2018	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
% of mean international wealth index	49.20	49.80	50.40	51.00	48.90	46.70	44.60	42.40	40.30
% of poor household (with IWI value under 70)	85.30	84.70	84.20	83.70	85.60	87.50	89.50	91.40	93.30
% of poorer households (with IWI value under 50)	52.90	52.40	52.00	51.50	55.30	59.00	62.80	66.50	70.30
% of poorest households (with IWI value under 35)	22.90	21.50	20.10	18.80	23.80	28.80	33.90	38.90	44.00



<b>% of households with computer</b>	5.57	6.00	6.42	6.84	7.05	7.25	7.46	7.67	7.87
<b>% of households with TV</b>	62.80	61.40	59.90	58.50	50.80	43.10	35.40	27.60	19.90
<b>% of households with refrigerator</b>	27.70	28.20	28.70	29.10	25.20	21.30	17.40	13.50	9.58
<b>% of households with cell phone</b>	84.30	85.40	86.60	87.80	86.00	84.20	82.50	80.70	78.90

Global Data Lab (2024)

From the data in the table above, eight years assessments of people affected by poverty were done in three categories- poor, poorer and poorest. Those under the poor category are those who can take care of their basic needs. The poorer are those who cannot satisfy their basic needs always. The poorest are those who lean on others for their survival. Regarding the household items, very few persons are able to purchase refrigerator from the assessment made for the seven years.

Data published by the Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (2022) from the reports of the survey coordinated by the National Social SafetyNets Coordinating Office (NASSCO), contained in the National Social Register (NSR) indicated 51.0% unemployment rate and 16.7% underemployment rate in Akwa Ibom State (MPI, 2022). The multidimensional indicator of poverty among households in the state using education, water, housing and assets are presented in the table below:

#### **Poverty Survey in Akwa Ibom State by Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022)**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Not Deprived</b>	<b>Deprived</b>
<b>1</b>	Deprivation in education attainment for people aged 10 years and above who have not completed six years of school	74%	26%
<b>2</b>	Deprivation in school attendance for school-aged children	82%	18%
<b>3</b>	Distribution of households deprived in sanitary facilities	30%	70%
<b>4</b>	Distribution of households by deprivation in access to clean drinking water	36%	64%
<b>5</b>	Distribution of households by deprivation in housing materials— roofing	45%	55%
<b>6</b>	Distribution of households by deprivation in housing materials— flooring	32%	68%
<b>7</b>	Distribution of households by deprivation in cooking fuel	1%	99%
<b>8</b>	Distribution of households by deprivation in ownership of assets	15%	85%

Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022) as at 2024

From the table above, apart from the educational attainment in which children are not deprived of, citizens are deprived of other items for assessment- example, sanitary facilities, access to clean drinking water, housing materials (roofing and flooring), cooking fuel and ownership of assets.

### Multidimensional poverty by age group Akwa Ibom State using the Nigerian MPI 2022

Akwa Ibom State	MPI		Incidence (H, %)		Intensity (A, %)		Population share (%)		Number of poor people (million)	
	0–17	18+	0–17	18+	0–17	18+	0–17	18+	0–17	18+
Indexes	0.31	0.28	73.8	69.4	42.1	40.3	3.1	3.6	2.25	2.83

Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022) as at 2024

The above three boxes show the share of the population of Akwa Ibom State that pertain to each age category. The population shares in the columns for children 0–17 and adults 18+ show the percentage of the population who belong to each age group.

Nigeria MPI (2022) by age shows that overall, 0.28% of adults aged 18 and above are multidimensionally poor, compared to 0.31% of children. Two-thirds of children aged 0–17 are poor, and more than half of all poor people are children. The intensity of poverty for children is higher, with deprivations in 42.8% of possible indicators, compared to 40.3% for adults. Children are significantly poorer than adults. On average, poor children are deprived in a larger share of indicators than poor adults.

## 6.2 Programmes put in place by Akwa Ibom state government for poverty eradication, unemployment and rural development

The Akwa Ibom State Government has implemented a range of policies and programs from 2015 to 2023 to address poverty eradication, unemployment, and rural development. These initiatives reflect a strategic approach to improving the socio-economic conditions of the state’s residents. The Akwa Ibom State Government has implemented several poverty eradication programs aimed at improving the economic well-being of its residents. Key initiatives include the Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP) and various microfinance and social welfare schemes. To tackle high unemployment rates, Akwa Ibom State has initiated several programs focused on job creation, skill development, and economic empowerment, especially targeting the youth. Rural development in Akwa Ibom State has been a priority, with numerous programs aimed at improving infrastructure, agriculture, and overall rural living conditions.

### A. Poverty Eradication Programs

**Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP):** Launched to provide financial aid and skill development to low-income households. The program includes:

**Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT):** Provides direct financial support to poor families, with a focus on improving their living conditions and encouraging school attendance among children. By 2023, over 20,000 households had benefited from this initiative.

**Skill Acquisition and Vocational Training:** Offers training in various trades and skills to help individuals start their own businesses or gain employment. Approximately 5,000 individuals have completed training programs under this scheme (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2021).

**Microfinance and Cooperative Societies:** The state has established microfinance institutions to provide low-interest loans to small-scale entrepreneurs and cooperative societies. These financial supports aim to enhance economic activities and self-employment among residents. By 2022, the Akwa Ibom State Microfinance Bank had disbursed over ₦2 billion in loans to various small businesses (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2022).

**Ibom Sure-P (Social Welfare and Empowerment Program):** A program aimed at providing social support and economic empowerment to underprivileged groups. Components of Ibom Sure-P are; Educational Scholarships: Scholarships for students from low-income families, and Health Interventions: Subsidized healthcare services for the poor. As reported by Ekong and Asuk (2021), the program has awarded scholarships to over 3,000 students and provided health care services to more than 20,000 individuals.

## **B. Unemployment Reduction Programs**

**Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme:** This program aims to create job opportunities and provide vocational training for young people. The scheme includes:

**Job Creation:** Direct employment opportunities in various state-owned enterprises and initiatives. In 2023, the scheme created approximately 10,000 jobs for youths across different sectors.

**Vocational Training:** Provides training in skills such as IT, welding, and tailoring. Around 7,000 youths have completed vocational training through this scheme (Nwankwo & Ojo, 2023).

- **Ibom Air:** Established as a state-owned airline to boost local employment and economic activity. Since its inception in 2019, Ibom Air has created over 1,000 direct jobs and has contributed to the economic growth of the state by enhancing connectivity (Okoro & Iwuji, 2022).
- **Entrepreneurship Development Program:** Supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through grants and training. This program aims to foster entrepreneurship and reduce unemployment by encouraging self-employment. As of 2023, the state government has supported over 2,000 SMEs with grants and training (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2023).

## **C. Rural Development Programs**

**Rural Infrastructure Development:** Focuses on building and upgrading infrastructure in rural areas. Key projects include:

**Road Construction:** The state has invested heavily in rural road networks to improve connectivity and market access. Notable projects include the construction of over 200 kilometers of rural roads between 2015 and 2023 (Eyo & Ekpo, 2021).

**Water and Electricity Supply:** Implementation of projects to provide potable water and electricity to underserved rural communities. By 2022, around 150 rural communities had

been provided with new water sources and electrical connections (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2022).

**Agricultural Support Programs:** Designed to boost agricultural productivity and support farmers. Programs include:

**Fertilizer Subsidies and Improved Seeds:** Subsidies and distribution of improved seeds to enhance crop yields. Approximately 10,000 farmers received subsidies in 2022 (Udom & Nseabasi, 2022).

**Agricultural Training Centers:** Establishment of centers to provide training on modern farming techniques and agribusiness. Over 3,000 farmers have been trained since 2015 (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2021).

**Skill Acquisition Centers:** Provide vocational training and support to rural residents to improve their employability and entrepreneurial skills. There are currently 12 skill acquisition centers across the state, which have trained approximately 8,000 individuals (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2023).

### **6.3 Policy Implications of Akwa Ibom State Government for poverty eradication, unemployment and rural development**

The analysis of the Akwa Ibom State Government's intervention policies in poverty eradication, unemployment reduction, and rural development reveals several important policy implications. These implications offer insights into potential improvements and strategic adjustments needed to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives.

#### **a. Enhancing Program Effectiveness and Efficiency**

Many programs, such as the Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP), face challenges due to bureaucratic inefficiencies. To improve effectiveness, there is a need for streamlined administrative processes and enhanced transparency in program management. Implementing more efficient administrative procedures and investing in technology to track program outcomes and expenditures could improve service delivery and reduce corruption.

Limited funding and resource allocation have impacted the reach and effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs and rural development initiatives. Increased financial support and better allocation of resources are necessary to expand the scope of programs like AKSIP and rural infrastructure projects. This includes exploring alternative funding sources, such as public-private partnerships or international grants.

#### **b. Addressing Unemployment Challenges**

The Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme has faced challenges due to a mismatch between the skills provided and the actual needs of the job market. There is a need for closer collaboration with industry stakeholders to ensure that vocational training programs align with current job market demands. This could involve updating training curricula and increasing employer involvement in program design.

Programs such as Ibom Air have demonstrated the potential for job creation through investment in local businesses. Expanding support for SMEs through grants, loans, and

business development services can create additional employment opportunities. The state could also offer incentives for businesses to hire locally and support entrepreneurial ventures.

### **c. Strengthening Rural Development Efforts**

While rural infrastructure development projects have had significant positive impacts, issues related to maintenance and quality have been identified. Establishing regular maintenance schedules and quality control measures for infrastructure projects can ensure the longevity and continued effectiveness of investments in roads and healthcare facilities.

Agricultural support programs have been beneficial but face challenges such as inadequate extension services and limited access to credit. Expanding extension services, improving access to financial resources for farmers, and integrating modern farming techniques can enhance the effectiveness of agricultural support programs. Additionally, strengthening market linkages for agricultural products can further support rural livelihoods.

### **d. Enhancing Monitoring and Evaluation**

Effective monitoring and evaluation are critical for assessing the impact of intervention programs and making necessary adjustments. Developing comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks can help track the progress of various initiatives, assess their impact, and identify areas for improvement. Regular feedback mechanisms and impact assessments should be integrated into program planning and execution.

## **6.4 Challenges Facing Programs for Poverty Eradication, Unemployment, and Rural Development in Akwa Ibom State**

The Akwa Ibom State Government has implemented several programs aimed at addressing poverty eradication, unemployment, and rural development. Despite these efforts, various challenges have emerged, impacting the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives. Below is a discussion of the primary challenges faced by these programs.

### **6.4.1. Challenges in Poverty Eradication Programs**

#### **a. Limited Funding and Resource Allocation**

Many poverty eradication programs, such as the Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP), suffer from inadequate funding, which limits their reach and impact. The financial resources allocated are often insufficient to cover the needs of all eligible beneficiaries and to sustain long-term program goals (Udo & Bassey, 2022).

#### **b. Bureaucratic Inefficiencies and Corruption**

Inefficiencies in program administration and instances of corruption can hinder the effective delivery of poverty alleviation services. Delays in disbursement and mismanagement of funds are common problems, affecting the program's overall impact (Ekong & Asuk, 2021).

#### **c. Insufficient Reach and Coverage**

Despite the positive impact of programs like AKSIP, many potential beneficiaries, especially in remote areas, do not receive the intended support due to logistical challenges and limited program coverage (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2022).

### **6.4.2. Challenges in Unemployment Reduction Programs**

#### **a. Mismatch Between Skills Training and Job Market Needs**

The Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme and other vocational training programs often face challenges due to a mismatch between the skills provided and the actual needs of the job market. This results in limited job placement success and underemployment (Nwankwo & Ojo, 2023).

**b. High Operational Costs and Sustainability Issues**

Programs such as Ibom Air, while successful in creating jobs, face high operational costs and financial sustainability challenges. The airline's profitability and long-term viability are influenced by competition and fluctuating operational expenses (Okoro & Iwuji, 2022).

**c. Inadequate Support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**

While there are efforts to support SMEs, including through grants and loans, many small businesses still struggle due to inadequate access to finance, insufficient business development services, and high operational risks (Nwankwo & Ojo, 2023).

**6.4.3. Challenges in Rural Development Programs**

**a. Poor Maintenance of Infrastructure**

Despite significant investments in rural infrastructure, issues related to maintenance and quality of construction have been reported. This affects the long-term benefits of infrastructure projects such as roads and healthcare facilities (Eyo & Ekpo, 2021).

**b. Limited Agricultural Extension Services**

Agricultural support programs face challenges due to limited extension services, which affects farmers' access to modern farming techniques and knowledge. Additionally, there are issues with the availability of credit facilities for smallholder farmers (Udom & Nseabasi, 2022).

**c. Inequitable Distribution of Benefits**

There are concerns that the benefits of rural development programs are not evenly distributed, with some communities and individuals receiving more support than others. This inequity can lead to disparities in development outcomes (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2021).

**7. METHODOLOGY**

The study employs a descriptive research design to provide a detailed account of the policies and programs implemented by the Akwa Ibom State Government. This design is chosen to systematically document and describe the nature, and impact of various interventions. data and academic materials made available and easily accessible by information and communication technology facilities such as internet, World Wide Web, online databases, elibraries et cetera. It involves a multi-faceted approach. This approach includes qualitative and quantitative research methods, and analytical techniques for comprehensive evaluation, text content analysis and available official statistics in different proportions for problem-solving or problem-identification depending on the objective of the research.

**8. FINDINGS**

Based on the detailed analysis of the Akwa Ibom State Government's intervention policies in poverty, unemployment reduction, and rural development, the following key findings have emerged: Effectiveness of Poverty Eradication Programs like the Akwa Ibom State Social



Investment Program (AKSIP) have provided substantial support to vulnerable populations, including financial aid and skill development opportunities. There have been measurable reductions in poverty rates in areas where these programs are actively implemented. Insufficient funding and resource allocation have constrained the reach and sustainability of poverty alleviation efforts (Udo & Basse, 2022). Administrative delays and corruption have hindered the effective delivery of aid (Ekong & Asuk, 2021).

Effectiveness of Unemployment Reduction Programs such as the Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme and Ibom Air have created significant employment opportunities and contributed to local economic development (Okoro & Iwuji, 2022). Vocational training programs have equipped many individuals with skills relevant to local job markets. A disconnect between training programs and job market needs has limited the effectiveness of these initiatives (Nwankwo & Ojo, 2023). High operational costs and sustainability issues have impacted the long-term success of some programs (Okoro & Iwuji, 2022).

Significant investments in rural infrastructure have enhanced access to essential services such as healthcare and education (Eyo & Ekpo, 2021). Agricultural support programs have helped increase productivity and improve the livelihoods of rural farmers (Udom & Nseabasi, 2022). Poor maintenance of infrastructure projects has reduced their long-term effectiveness (Eyo & Ekpo, 2021). Inadequate extension services and access to credit for farmers have constrained the impact of agricultural programs (Udom & Nseabasi, 2022).

Inefficiencies and corruption within administrative processes have affected the overall impact of the programs. Uneven distribution of benefits has led to disparities in program impact across different communities (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2021). Enhanced financial support and better resource allocation are crucial for expanding and sustaining these programs. Improving administrative efficiency and reducing corruption can enhance program effectiveness. Ensuring that vocational training aligns with job market demands can improve employment outcomes. Implementing robust maintenance schedules and extending support services can enhance the long-term benefits of infrastructure and agricultural programs.

## **9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The analysis of intervention policies implemented by the Akwa Ibom State Government reveals several key outcomes and challenges in the areas of poverty eradication, unemployment reduction, and rural development. The policies have led to notable achievements, including improvements in poverty levels, job creation, and rural infrastructure. However, they have also faced significant obstacles, such as funding constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies, skill mismatches, and maintenance issues.

Programs like the Akwa Ibom State Social Investment Program (AKSIP) have had a positive impact on poverty reduction but are limited by insufficient funding and administrative inefficiencies. Initiatives such as the Akwa Ibom Youth Employment Scheme and Ibom Air have successfully created jobs and enhanced skills, though they face challenges related to skill mismatches and operational sustainability.

Investments in infrastructure and agricultural support have improved rural living conditions, but issues with maintenance and inadequate support services have affected their long-term effectiveness. Overall, while the interventions have achieved some success, the effectiveness and

sustainability of these programs have been hindered by various operational and systemic challenges.

This paper therefore recommends that:

**1. Enhance Funding and Resource Allocation:** Increase financial support and ensure better allocation of resources to intervention programs. This includes providing adequate funding for ongoing projects and exploring alternative funding sources such as public-private partnerships.

Adequate funding is crucial for expanding the reach and impact of poverty alleviation, unemployment reduction, and rural development programs. Enhanced resources will help address the limitations faced due to insufficient financial backing (Udo & Bassey, 2022).

**2. Improve Administrative Efficiency and Transparency:** Streamline administrative processes, reduce bureaucratic delays, and implement measures to curb corruption. Establish transparent monitoring and evaluation systems to track the progress and impact of policies.

Administrative inefficiencies and corruption have undermined program effectiveness. Improving governance and transparency will enhance the delivery and impact of intervention policies (Ekong & Asuk, 2021).

**3. Align Skills Training with Market Needs:** Ensure that vocational and skills training programs are closely aligned with the demands of the job market. Regularly update training curricula based on labor market trends and employer feedback.

Skill mismatches between training programs and job market needs have limited employment outcomes. Aligning training with market demands will improve job placement and reduce unemployment (Nwankwo & Ojo, 2023).

**4. Strengthen Maintenance and Support for Infrastructure and Agriculture:** Develop and implement robust maintenance plans for infrastructure projects and extend support services for agriculture, including access to credit and extension services.

Effective maintenance and continued support are essential for sustaining the benefits of infrastructure and agricultural programs. Addressing maintenance issues and expanding support services will enhance the long-term impact of rural development initiatives (Eyo & Ekpo, 2021; Udom & Nseabasi, 2022).

**5. Promote Equity in Program Implementation:** Ensure equitable distribution of program benefits across different communities. Implement strategies to reach underserved areas and address disparities in program impact.

Unequal distribution of benefits has led to disparities in the effectiveness of programs. Promoting equity will ensure that all communities benefit from intervention policies and help achieve more comprehensive development goals (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2021).

**6. Foster Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage collaborations between the government, private sector, and non-governmental organizations to leverage additional resources, expertise, and innovation in program implementation.

Public-private partnerships can provide additional support and resources, improving the effectiveness and reach of intervention programs (Okoro & Iwuji, 2022).

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