

PUBLIC FINANCE UTILIZATION, INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT DELIVERY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA, 2015-2023

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Abstract

The central problem addressed in this study is that the substantial financial resources ostensibly invested in infrastructure delivery in Rivers State have not translated into commensurate economic investment capable of fostering socio-economic development through poverty reduction, employment generation, and social equality. The study was anchored on the resource curse theory and adopted a descriptive research design. Both quantitative and qualitative data were drawn from primary and secondary sources and analysed using critical content analysis. The findings revealed, among other things, that despite the comparatively sizeable public revenue accruing to Rivers State, these resources have not been effectively utilised to drive robust, strategic, and coordinated infrastructure development. This deficiency is largely attributable to the absence of a coherent infrastructure development policy and roadmap, resulting in a distorted, disjointed, and poorly coordinated pattern of infrastructure project delivery. Such an approach has been incapable of attracting sustainable economic investment, enhancing agricultural productivity, stimulating industrialisation, or ultimately reducing the state's human misery index. These outcomes reflect manifestations of weak political leadership, which continues to reinforce the resource curse phenomenon in Rivers State. Based on the findings, the study recommends, among others, the immediate reactivation and effective implementation of the 2009/2019 Infrastructure Development Policy and Roadmap of Rivers State; increased and better-targeted investment in socio-economic infrastructure; the adoption of geo-spatially informed and coordinated multi-sectoral infrastructure planning; and enhanced citizen engagement in infrastructure governance, alongside sustained demands for transparency and accountability from political leadership, as critical pathways to the state's socio-economic development.

Keywords

*Public Finance Utilization,
Infrastructure Delivery,
Resource Curse,
Decrepit Political Leadership,
Socio-Economic Development.*

1. Introduction

Public finance is concerned with how governments raise, allocate, spend, and manage financial resources for the benefit of their citizenry. It refers to all revenues accruable to and received by government, which are utilised in the discharge of its constitutional functions and responsibilities to the people, as well as for the operation and maintenance of the machinery of the state. The sources of public finance include revenue receipts, loans, borrowings, and grants. The manner in which these resources are mobilised and utilised largely determines the capacity of the state to provide public goods and stimulate sustainable development.

Infrastructure constitutes the backbone of a progressive society and economy. It comprises the physical components of interconnected systems that support production and service delivery, while sustaining and improving acceptable standards of living for the population. Efficient transportation networks reduce the cost and time of movement of goods and people; high-capacity telecommunications infrastructure facilitates large-scale and rapid communication as well as efficient information flow; oil and gas facilities ensure continuous energy availability for domestic consumption and export earnings; while efficient power generation, transmission, and distribution systems enhance the production of goods and services. Collectively, these infrastructure elements significantly improve labour productivity, population well-being, and overall economic

growth and development (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2020). In this sense, infrastructure performs both productive and enabling roles within the economy.

Socio-economic development, on the other hand, refers to both qualitative and quantitative improvements and positive transformations in the socio-economic well-being of the population. It is manifestly reflected in sustained reductions in poverty, unemployment, inequality, and the overall human or social misery index. Infrastructure development is therefore a *sine qua non* for socio-economic development in any society. By implication, the provision of socio-economic infrastructure—such as quality road, rail, water, and air transport systems; electric power generation and distribution facilities; communication networks; and human capital development infrastructure including schools and hospitals—in appropriate quality and quantity constitutes not only a major driver of development but also, in a significant sense, an indicator of the level of development attained by a given society (Eremie, Hart, & Barigbon, 2019).

However, infrastructure is not a God-given natural endowment such as land or rivers; rather, it is the outcome of deliberate human effort supported by substantial financial investment. This reality brings to the fore the fundamental issue of public finance utilisation. The administration of development therefore accentuates the importance of efficient, effective, and transparent mobilisation and utilisation of public revenue within a well-planned, coordinated, and guided framework of infrastructure development and project delivery. The nature of public finance utilisation and the pattern of infrastructure project delivery are expected to be deliberately designed and implemented in ways that stimulate economic growth, attract productive investment, and engender sustainable socio-economic development. It is against this background that this study investigates the level of public revenue available to Rivers State, the nature of public finance utilisation, the pattern of infrastructure project delivery, and their implications for socio-economic development in the state between 2015 and 2023.

2. Statement of the Problem

The challenge of providing citizens with basic needs and achieving accelerated economic growth and development remains a fundamental concern confronting all organised societies. Central to this challenge are the availability, mobilisation, and utilisation of public resources. These factors largely determine the extent to which infrastructure project delivery translates into economic growth and sustainable socio-economic development. Infrastructure serves both as the foundation of economic growth and as a benchmark for assessing national performance (Aschauer, 1989; World Bank, 1994), hence the sustained emphasis on socio-economic infrastructure delivery in both policy and academic discourse.

Empirical studies—including Fatai et al. (2010), Sahoo et al. (2010), Ozumba (2021), and Okpalaoka (2021)—have consistently demonstrated a strong correlation between infrastructure delivery, economic growth, and development. These studies argue that infrastructure expenditure exerts a direct and significant impact on economic performance by reducing transaction costs, expanding productive capacity, and improving competitiveness. By implication, a society characterised by weak or inadequate infrastructure is one with a fragile economic foundation and limited prospects for sustainable development.

A dominant strand of argument attributes Nigeria's persistent infrastructure deficit primarily to a poor revenue base (Diamond, 1990; World Bank, 1994). According to this perspective, limited public revenue constrains the capacity of the state to invest adequately in critical infrastructure. Okpalaoka (2021), for instance, argues that developing countries such as Nigeria have experienced sluggish economic growth largely due to the absence of the requisite infrastructure needed to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). However, the same author also contends that ineffective and decrepit political leadership often fails to prioritise infrastructure project delivery within governance mandates, preferring instead the execution of white-elephant projects aimed at securing short-term political and electoral advantages rather than long-term developmental outcomes.

Conversely, another school of thought maintains that Nigeria's infrastructure deficit is not primarily a function of revenue inadequacy but rather of weak vision, poor commitment, and deficient leadership quality. Undoubtedly, the revenue profile of Nigeria and of Rivers State in particular, has comparatively improved over the years. Despite this improvement, infrastructure development outcomes have remained unimpressive and substantially below the expected global benchmark of 70 per cent. For example, core infrastructure stock accounted for only 35.0 per cent of GDP as of 2015 (African Development Bank [AfDB], 2023). This suggests that a significant proportion of resources allocated to infrastructure development has been either insufficient, poorly prioritised, inflated, diverted, or outrightly embezzled. In some instances, infrastructure project delivery has functioned merely as a conduit for siphoning public funds, facilitating embezzlement and money laundering, thereby exemplifying a profound lack of commitment to genuine development.

These dynamics encapsulate the political economy of infrastructure project delivery in Nigeria and are particularly evident in Rivers State. Available records indicate that the public revenue profile of Rivers State stood at ₦192.42 billion in 2015, ₦227.63 billion in 2017, ₦285.65 billion in 2018, ₦309.53 billion in 2019,

and ₦377.57 billion by 2022 (Office of the Accountant-General of Rivers State [OAGRS], 2021; Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission [RMAFC], 2021, 2022; Rivers State Budget, 2022). Within this period, a cumulative 87.6 per cent of the state budget was reportedly expended on capital projects, with infrastructure and human capital development as core components. There are also indications that infrastructure projects absorbed a substantial proportion of state revenue. Consequently, Onuchukwu and Nwobwuze (2023) averred that the Rivers State Government between 2015 and 2023 demonstrated consistent commitment to utilising internally generated revenue, federal allocations, and oil revenue for people-oriented development, recording what they described as sterling performance in infrastructure delivery—an effort that earned the administration the appellation “Mr Project” (Nsirim, 2022).

Expectedly, the scale of revenue available to Rivers State and the acclaimed magnitude of public expenditure on infrastructure development should have translated into enhanced capacity to attract domestic and international investment, maximise socio-economic benefits, and significantly reduce human misery. Empirical realities, however, suggest otherwise. Despite the substantial revenue inflows and reported infrastructure spending, socio-economic indicators in the state have not improved in a manner commensurate with expectations. It is against this contradiction that this study examines the impact of public finance utilisation and infrastructure project delivery on socio-economic development in Rivers State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2023.

Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions: What was the size of public revenue available to Rivers State during the period under review? What impact did the state’s revenue profile have on infrastructure project delivery? What impact did infrastructure project delivery have on socio-economic development in the state? What factors constrained effective infrastructure project delivery and socio-economic development in Rivers State between 2015 and 2023? Providing answers to these questions offers a systematic basis for describing and explaining the core issues underpinning the study.

3. Conceptual Review

The Concept of Public Finance and Public Finance Utilisation

Finance broadly implies the generation of financial resources, the allocation or distribution of income, expenditure, and the principles governing these processes. These financial operations may occur at the level of individuals, private institutions, public institutions, or international organisations. Accordingly, finance is often categorised into private finance, public finance, and international finance (Chuje, 2001). Public finance, therefore, specifically concerns government finance.

Public finance has been defined as the branch of economics that deals with the raising, spending, and management of public funds; essentially, the study of government taxation and expenditure for the benefit of the citizenry (Nweze, cited in Nwanne, 2015). Musgrave and Musgrave (cited in Gurdal, Aydin, & Inal, 2021) conceptualise public finance as the complex of financial systems that operate through the revenue and expenditure processes of the government budget. By this definition, the budget and budgeting process constitute the operational framework through which government mobilises revenue and undertakes expenditure. Ajibola (2008) further defines public finance as the aspect of financial administration concerned with determining government expenditures, identifying the means of raising funds to meet those expenditures, and analysing the effects of both revenue and expenditure measures on the economy. Ajibola’s definition is particularly instructive, as it underscores not only the efficiency of fund management for governance and infrastructure provision but also the broader economic and welfare implications of revenue mobilisation mechanisms such as taxation and resource exploitation for the governed population.

Government financial resources are derived from diverse sources. These include public receipts through which government mobilises revenue from various channels. In Nigeria, internally generated revenue (IGR)—derived from personal income tax, value added tax (VAT), rents on government properties, registration and licensing fees, and charges on land-related matters (particularly at the state level)—as well as statutory allocations from the Federation Account, constitute the two principal sources of public revenue. Additional sources include loans, borrowings, and grants (Anyanwu et al., 1997).

The allocation and distribution of federally collected revenue among different tiers of government in Nigeria follow two principal mechanisms: the vertical allocation formula (VAF) and the horizontal allocation formula (HAF). The VAF refers to the percentage-based sharing of federally collected revenue among the federal, state, and local governments, while the HAF governs the distribution of revenue among states and, subsequently, among local governments within each state (Ikunga & Wilson, 2013). Federal allocations—together with the 13 per cent oil derivation for oil-producing states—constitute the bulk of revenue available to sub-national governments in Nigeria. Despite oil being the dominant revenue base and its facilities and environmental impacts being most acutely felt by host communities, the sharing or direct allocation of revenue to these communities remains largely absent in Nigeria’s public financial administration framework.

Government revenue represents the principal source of public expenditure, although loans, borrowings, and grants may supplement it. Public expenditure, as a key instrument of fiscal policy, refers to the totality of funds expended by government to meet collective needs and provide public goods. It encompasses spending on social, economic, environmental, administrative, defence, infrastructure, and debt-servicing obligations. Public expenditure is conventionally classified into capital and recurrent expenditure. While capital expenditure involves long-term investments in socio-economic infrastructure and human capital development, recurrent expenditure covers the costs of administration, governance, salaries, and wages (Obeichina, 2020).

Public finance, however, only becomes meaningful when deployed for development and effective administration, hence the centrality of public finance utilisation. Public finance utilisation therefore refers to the efficient, effective, and purposeful use of public financial resources to achieve societal welfare and developmental objectives. Key objectives of public finance utilisation include social welfare enhancement, poverty reduction, employment generation, economic stability, and infrastructure development. The processes through which these objectives are pursued include revenue allocation, budgeting, expenditure management, monitoring, and financial reporting. Transparent utilisation and accountability in public financial management, particularly where outcomes positively affect socio-economic development indicators, remain essential to the legitimacy of governance and sustainable development in any society.

Infrastructure, Socio-Economic Infrastructure, and Infrastructure Project Delivery

There is little contention in the conceptualisation of infrastructure, aside from differences in scholarly phraseology. Fulmer (2009) defines infrastructure as the physical elements of interconnected facilities that provide the commodities and services necessary to aid, sustain, or improve societal living conditions. Okpalaoka (2021) describes infrastructure as the fundamental physical and organisational elements that enable a society to function, including roads, bridges, health institutions and services, industries, buildings, water supply systems, national electricity grids, and telecommunications networks. Shehu (2018) similarly conceptualises infrastructure as the technical structures that support society, such as roads, water supply systems, drainage, electricity, and telecommunications. Impliedly, infrastructure represents a system of interconnected support structures that underpin development and serves as a key parameter for assessing a society's developmental status.

Infrastructure has been categorised in various ways. One classification distinguishes between hard and soft infrastructure (Nair & Kumar, 2005; Oyedele, 2014), while another differentiates between physical and social infrastructure (Olaseni & Alade, cited in Kabiru, 2016; Sheffrin, 2003). Hard infrastructure refers to tangible physical networks essential for production and operational activities, including roads, railways, electricity, and telecommunications. Soft infrastructure, on the other hand, encompasses institutional and organisational systems that sustain societal functioning, such as health systems, economic and financial institutions, judicial systems, and security architecture. Physical infrastructure largely overlaps with hard infrastructure, while social infrastructure—often including roads, potable water, housing, and communication facilities—supports and strengthens social services such as education and health. Together, these constitute public infrastructure, which forms the backbone of economic activity in any country.

Economic infrastructure refers to those structures and systems that directly support production and economic exchange, such as power, transportation, and communication networks (UKEssay, 2018). Power infrastructure stimulates and facilitates industrial and commercial production; transportation systems enable the movement of goods and services; while communication systems enhance marketing, coordination, and distribution processes. Social infrastructure, such as education and health facilities, plays a central role in social transformation through learning, skills development, capacity building, and the maintenance of a healthy and productive population. Functional socio-economic infrastructure, provided in adequate quantity and quality, ensures the availability of the human capital required for the operation and management of production and service sectors. Collectively, economic and social infrastructure constitutes the socio-economic fabric of societal progress. It is this category of socio-economic infrastructure—rather than vanity or white-elephant projects—that facilitates sustainable economic growth and meaningful socio-economic development.

Infrastructure projects, according to Foster and Pustak (2011), refer to planned initiatives to build, maintain, and upgrade infrastructure facilities, systems, and services. These include road construction, power plant development, sewage system maintenance, and the provision of potable water. In a related sense, infrastructure project delivery entails direct public investment in infrastructure projects—both hard and soft—that generate intermediate inputs for production and enhance productivity across other sectors of the economy (Akinyosoye, 2010).

Public infrastructure delivery constitutes a core mandate of government. However, it extends beyond mere city beautification to encompass the attraction and retention of investment, reduction of production costs, facilitation

of the movement of people, goods, and services, removal of productivity constraints, improvement of service delivery, and enhancement of economic competitiveness for growth and development (World Bank, n.d.). The manner in which public infrastructure projects are planned, financed, and executed has profound implications for a country's economic capacity, human capital development, social inclusion, and reduction of socio-economic misery, including poverty, hunger, unemployment, inequality, and discrimination. Consequently, infrastructure projects are expected to deliver maximum public benefit by improving the social and economic conditions of the populace.

Socio-Economic Development

Development, in its broad sense, remains a nebulous and multi-dimensional concept. Its nebulosity stems largely from its multifaceted nature. Ntete-Nna (2011) defines development as the process of creating conditions conducive to the realisation of human personality. This conception highlights the social dimension of development, encompassing freedom, happiness, identity, and the actualisation of human potential. Similarly, development has been conceptualised as the general improvement in the economic, social, and political conditions of society, reflected in reductions in poverty, inequality, injustice, insecurity, ecological imbalance, and unemployment within the context of economic growth (Filani, 2000).

Socio-economic development represents one dimension of development, alongside political, cultural, and technological dimensions. Development is fundamentally a continuous and progressive process involving both quantitative and qualitative improvements in the overall quality of life of the population. Social development refers to the transformation of social institutions—particularly education and health systems—to enhance the capacity of individuals to fulfil their legitimate aspirations (National Institute of Open Schooling [NIOS], 2023). Economic development, on the other hand, denotes the sustained process through which an economy's productive capacity increases over time, resulting in higher levels of output and income (Smith, 2019).

Socio-economic development therefore entails the progressive strengthening of the social and economic organisation of society toward improved overall well-being. It reflects the extent to which economic growth—often facilitated by the availability and effective utilisation of socio-economic infrastructure—translates into tangible welfare outcomes. These outcomes must manifest in reductions in poverty, unemployment, and inequality; declines in overall human or social misery; increases in literacy levels and life expectancy; and improvements in the human development index.

4. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The central concern of this paper is development, with specific emphasis on the utilisation of public financial resources for infrastructure development and its implications for socio-economic development. Given the problematique articulated in the introductory sections of this study, the resource curse theory provides a particularly appropriate and analytically robust framework for interrogating the issues under investigation.

The resource curse theory, as advanced by Auty (2000) and later refined by Sachs and Warner (2001), describes a paradoxical condition in which countries or regions endowed with abundant natural and material resources simultaneously exhibit persistent underdevelopment, poverty, weak economic growth, infrastructure deficits, and poor social welfare outcomes. These characteristics are commonly associated with many natural resource-rich developing countries. The theory posits that resource-rich societies often exhibit structural and institutional dysfunctions that impair their capacity to effectively mobilise and utilise natural resource endowments and the financial rents accruing from them. Rather than channel these resources into purposeful, focused, and well-coordinated investments—particularly in infrastructure as a catalyst for socio-economic development—such societies tend to experience misallocation, inefficiency, and rent-seeking behaviour.

Contextually, Rivers State, and Nigeria more broadly, exemplifies the core assumptions of the resource curse thesis. Rivers State is an oil-rich state whose public revenue base is overwhelmingly dependent on natural resource rents. The financial resources accruing from these endowments are substantial. However, the state and its political leadership have demonstrated limited extractive and institutional capacity to judiciously, efficiently, and effectively utilise these resources in the provision of socio-economic infrastructure capable of attracting investment, stimulating economic growth, and enhancing social welfare. Instead, the benefits of natural resource endowments have largely manifested in adverse outcomes, including social conflict, environmental degradation, and the entrenchment of kleptocratic and prebendal political practices.

Empirically, increases in public revenue derived from resource rents have tended to accentuate rent-seeking behaviour, kleptomania, and primitive accumulation tendencies among the political elite managing public resources in Rivers State. Consequently, rising revenue profiles have not translated into improved developmental outcomes but have instead reinforced materialism and extractive accumulation among the ruling class. This dynamic aligns closely with the core propositions of the resource curse theory, which links resource abundance to governance failure, elite capture, and developmental stagnation.

Against this backdrop, the persistent rhetoric of commitment to infrastructure delivery for socio-economic progress increasingly assumes the character of political spectacle rather than substantive development policy. A dispassionate examination of the political economy of contract awards and project execution in Rivers State during the period under review reveals that infrastructure delivery has often functioned as a well-orchestrated conduit for the exploitation of public resources through inflated contract costs and poorly executed projects. It is the position of this paper that infrastructure project execution has been driven largely by the private material gains accruable to political actors and contractors, rather than by the intrinsic economic and social value of such projects to the state.

This situation has produced a marked disconnect between capital expenditure—particularly on infrastructure—and the actual quality, functionality, and quantity of infrastructure delivered. In essence, the substantial quantum of public revenue accruing to Rivers State has failed to manifest in commensurate infrastructure development outcomes. Instead, it has heightened public profligacy amid persistent infrastructure deficits and weak socio-economic performance. This paper therefore argues that the substantial financial resources available to Rivers State, alongside the dominant infrastructure delivery narrative during the period under review, have not translated into significant socio-economic development or improved welfare outcomes for the citizenry.

Methodology and Study Locale

Methodologically, the study adopted a descriptive research design. The research relied on both qualitative and quantitative data. Primary qualitative data were generated through oral interviews, while quantitative and qualitative secondary data were sourced from academic journals, periodicals, official government publications, and policy documents. Budgetary data were carefully sorted, collated, and computed to facilitate systematic analysis. The data were subjected to critical content analysis and interpreted against the empirical realities of public finance size, infrastructure project delivery patterns, and levels of socio-economic development in Rivers State.

Rivers State, with its capital in Port Harcourt, constitutes the geographical focus of this study. It is one of the thirty-six states of the Nigerian federation, created on 27 May 1967 through Military Decree No. 19 during the military administration of General Yakubu Gowon. The state occupies a landmass of approximately 11,077 square kilometres (4,277.5 square miles) (Rivers State Factsheet [RSF], 2023) and has a projected population of 9,567,892 (National Population Commission [NPC], 2023). It is bounded to the south by the Atlantic Ocean; to the north by Anambra, Imo, and Abia States; to the east by Akwa Ibom State; and to the west by Bayelsa and Delta States. The major ethnic nationalities in the state include Ikwerre, Ijaw (Andoni, Ibani, Kalabari, Opobo, Okrika), Abua, Ogoni, Ekpeye, Ogba, and Etche, among others. Administratively, Rivers State comprises 319 electoral wards distributed across 23 local government areas, 32 state constituencies, 12 federal constituencies, and three senatorial districts.

Economically, Rivers State is one of the most resource-endowed and economically significant states in Nigeria. As the hub of Nigeria's hydrocarbon industry, it hosts several multinational corporations, including Shell Petroleum Development Company (now Renaissance Energy Ltd), Total E&P, Chevron, Mobil, Nigerian Agip Oil Company, Indorama Petrochemical and Fertiliser Company, as well as two petroleum refineries operated by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL). The state also hosts the Onne Seaport and several other jetties, further enhancing its economic potential and strategic importance. Beyond hydrocarbons, Rivers State remains largely agrarian, with approximately 65 per cent of its population residing in rural areas and engaged predominantly in farming and fishing, supported by fertile land, adequate rainfall, and abundant water resources.

Politically, Rivers State has been governed by eleven military administrators and six democratically elected governors. The governor during the period covered by this study was Chief Barrister E. N. Wike. At the time of this study, the incumbent governor was Sir Siminalayi Fubara, GSSRS, whose tenure was affected by a six-month state of emergency during which a sole administrator, Vice Admiral (Rtd.) Eketé Ibas, superintended the affairs of the state.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The size of public revenue available to Rivers State within the period under review:

To empirically situate the analysis of infrastructure development and its socio-economic implications, it is imperative to first establish the size and trajectory of public revenue available to Rivers State within the period under review. Public revenue constitutes the material foundation upon which development planning, capital expenditure, and infrastructure delivery are predicated. Accordingly, this study examines the magnitude of financial resources at the disposal of the State as a critical explanatory variable in assessing the apparent disjuncture between revenue inflow and development outcomes.

Table 1: Actual Revenue Profile of Rivers State, 2015-2023.

S/No	Year	FAAC (N B)	IGR (₦B)	Total
1.	2015	108.32	82.10	190.42
2.	2016	104.15	85.48	189.63
3.	2017	138.15	89.48	227.63
4.	2018	172.87	112.78	285.65
5.	2019	169.13	140.40	309.53
6.	2020	149.75	117.19	266.43
7.	2021	170.70	141.40	391.10
8.	2022	209.16	112.09	321.25
9.	2023	339.53	203.56	543.09
Total		1.58.32Trn	1.121.62 Trn	2.708.58 Trn

Sources: OAGRS, 2021; RMAFC, 2015-2023; BudGIT, 2015-2023; RSG, 2015-2023

***The figures in Table 1 above did not include aids and grants. For instance, Rivers State received ₦15.62 Billion in aid and grants in 2023 alone. This was not captured in revenue figures above, for the most reason that they were tied to specific obligations that are not within the context of this study.

In determining the size of public revenue available to Rivers State, this study takes into consideration two principal revenue streams, namely: statutory federal allocation (inclusive of the 13 per cent derivation fund accruable to oil-producing states) and internally generated revenue (IGR). These two sources represent the core fiscal pillars of sub-national governance in Nigeria and jointly account for the bulk of public finance available to Rivers State. The period covered spans from 2015 to 2023, a timeframe that captures sustained high revenue inflows driven largely by oil rents, alongside successive administrations that consistently articulated infrastructure development as a central policy objective.

The choice of this period is deliberate, as it enables a longitudinal assessment of revenue availability vis-à-vis infrastructure delivery and socio-economic performance. By aggregating and analysing federal allocations and internally generated revenue over this period, the study provides a robust basis for interrogating whether the quantum of public revenue received by the State reasonably corresponds with the quality, scale, and socio-economic impact of infrastructure projects delivered. The revenue data for the period under review are therefore presented below to underscore the financial capacity of the State and to foreground the central argument of this paper—that the challenge confronting Rivers State is not revenue scarcity, but the inefficiency, misutilisation, and politically driven deployment of abundant public resources.

The data presented above demonstrate that Rivers State maintained a robust financial outlook and an expansive revenue profile within the period under review. Empirical evidence indicates that, as an oil-producing state, Rivers State consistently received a sizeable share of allocations from the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC), inclusive of the 13 per cent derivation fund. These allocations generally followed an upward trajectory, with observable fluctuations occurring primarily between 2019 and 2021, a period coinciding with the global COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant economic disruptions. The post-pandemic years, however, marked a recovery phase characterised by renewed growth in revenue inflows.

Cumulatively, FAAC revenue accruable to Rivers State within the period stood at One Trillion, Five Hundred and Eighty-One Billion, Thirty-Two Million Naira (₦1.581 trillion). A disaggregated analysis reveals annual FAAC receipts of ₦108.32 billion in 2015, ₦104.15 billion in 2016, ₦138.15 billion in 2017, ₦172.87 billion in 2018, ₦169.13 billion in 2019, ₦149.75 billion in 2020, ₦170.70 billion in 2021, ₦228.34 billion in 2022, and ₦339.53 billion in 2023. The remarkable surge in FAAC allocation in 2023 is strongly attributable to the removal of petrol subsidy on 29 May 2023, which significantly altered the fiscal dynamics of revenue sharing and enhanced sub-national allocations, particularly for oil-producing states such as Rivers State.

With regard to internally generated revenue (IGR), the State also recorded a generally steady and progressive increase over the period under review, except for the year 2020, which witnessed a sharp decline owing to the economic slowdown triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The total IGR generated by Rivers State between 2015 and 2023 amounted to One Trillion, One Hundred and Twenty-One Billion, Sixty-Two Million Naira (₦1.121 trillion). Notably, Rivers State ranks as the second-highest IGR-generating state in Nigeria, trailing only Lagos State, an indication of its strong economic base and revenue-generating capacity.

The annual breakdown of IGR shows receipts of ₦82.10 billion in 2015, ₦85.48 billion in 2016, ₦89.48 billion in 2017, ₦112.78 billion in 2018, ₦140.40 billion in 2019, ₦117.19 billion in 2020 (reflecting the pandemic-induced contraction), ₦141.40 billion in 2021, ₦211.09 billion in 2022, and ₦203.56 billion in 2023. The post-pandemic rebound in IGR underscores the resilience of the State's internal revenue architecture and further reinforces the argument that Rivers State is fiscally endowed with substantial financial resources.

In aggregate terms, the total public revenue profile of Rivers State for the period under review stood at Two Trillion, Seven Hundred and Eight Billion, Fifty-Eight Million Naira (₦2.708 trillion), comprising FAAC allocations and internally generated revenue. The annual total revenue figures were ₦190.42 billion in 2015, ₦189.63 billion in 2016, ₦227.63 billion in 2017, ₦285.65 billion in 2018, ₦309.53 billion in 2019, ₦266.43 billion in 2020, ₦312.10 billion in 2021, ₦377.57 billion in 2022, and ₦543.09 billion in 2023.

Taken together, these figures clearly establish that Rivers State possessed enormous fiscal capacity within the period under review. The magnitude, consistency, and growth of public revenue inflows fundamentally challenge any narrative of resource inadequacy. Rather, they foreground the central paradox interrogated by this study—namely, the persistent disconnect between substantial public revenue and the observable deficits in infrastructure development and socio-economic welfare. This contradiction lends empirical credence to the resource curse thesis and reinforces the argument that the developmental challenges of Rivers State are rooted not in revenue scarcity, but in governance deficits, inefficient allocation, and the politically motivated utilisation of public resources.

Impact of the Revenue Profile of Rivers State on Infrastructure Development

To clearly demonstrate this relationship, analytical emphasis is placed on the total revenue of Rivers State as presented in Table 1 above. This approach is premised on the understanding that capital expenditure represents the principal budgetary mechanism through which state governments translate public revenue into infrastructure project delivery. Accordingly, the table below juxtaposes the total revenue of Rivers State (excluding aids and grants) with capital expenditure, with a view to examining the extent to which the State's substantial revenue inflows were committed to infrastructure development within the period under review.

Table 2: Total Revenue and Capital Expenditure of Rivers State, 2015-2023

S/N	Year	Total Rev. (₦B)	CAPEX
1	2015	190.42	127.54
2.	2016	189.63	107.65
3.	2017	278.23	155.19
4.	2018	285.63.	101.97
5.	2019	309.53	219.97
6.	2020	226.43	129.36
7.	2021	391.10	305.89
8.	2022	377.57	314.9
9.	2023	544.6	569.4
Total		2.793.14 Trn	2.031.87 Trn

Sources: OAGRS, 2021; MBEP, 2021; BudGIT 2021-2023

The data presented in Table 2 above show that Rivers State received a total actual revenue of ₦2.793.14 trillion between 2015 and 2023. Of this amount, ₦2.031.87 trillion was expended on capital expenditure, the bulk of which was ostensibly devoted to infrastructure project delivery. This expenditure pattern indicates that the fiscal orientation of the Rivers State Government during the period under review was heavily skewed towards infrastructure development, with comparatively limited attention accorded to human capital development and the welfare of the State workforce.

More fundamentally, the evidence suggests that the central challenge confronting infrastructure delivery in Rivers State was not the inadequacy of financial resources. Rather, it lay in deficiencies in coordination, strategic prioritisation, and the effective integration of infrastructure projects into a coherent development framework capable of translating capital investment into measurable socio-economic development outcomes for the State and its citizenry.

Impact of Infrastructure Project Delivery on Socio-Economic Development of Rivers State

Table 1 presented the actual revenue profile of Rivers State between 2015 and 2023, with the total revenue for the period standing at ₦2.708 trillion, derived principally from FAAC allocations and internally generated revenue (IGR). However, Table 2 indicated a total revenue figure of ₦2.793.14 trillion for the same period. The observed differential between the two figures may be attributed to loans obtained from diverse sources to finance budget deficits. It is instructive to recall that in 2023, total capital expenditure exceeded total revenue, necessitating the procurement of a ₦200 billion loan from Access Bank Plc to finance the Port Harcourt Ring Road project. These loan inflows, alongside other financial adjustments, plausibly account for the variations observed in the reported revenue figures.

Notwithstanding the substantial volume of public revenue and capital expenditure, there are strong indications

that infrastructure project delivery did not translate into significant improvements in the socio-economic development of Rivers State during the period under review. The infrastructure drive between 2015 and 2023 was overwhelmingly concentrated on physical infrastructure, with comparatively limited attention paid to human capital development and welfare provisioning required to optimise the developmental impact of such infrastructure. This reflects a familiar development paradox in many developing economies, where the visible artefacts of development—such as buildings, paved roads, flyovers, and bridges—are often mistaken for development itself. While physical infrastructure constitutes an important driver of development, its contribution is ultimately contingent on its capacity to positively influence core socio-economic indicators.

A critical reflection on the remarks of His Excellency, E. N. Wike, delivered at Chatham House on 6 November 2017, further illuminates this contradiction. He stated:

Although access to education and healthcare was relatively available, there were severe problems with infrastructure and quality before we assumed office. Consequently, we increased public spending on education from 4.2% to about 10% on average. We deployed substantial resources to renovating and equipping over 180 primary and secondary schools across the state and improved the quality of education. We constructed, upgraded and rehabilitated several buildings, lecture halls, workshops, student hostels; we renovated 13 general hospitals and constructed three regional health facilities (Wike, cited in Beredugo, 2023, p. 313).

A critical interrogation of this statement reveals a conceptual conflation and superimposition of physical infrastructure with human capital development. The construction or renovation of schools and hospitals, in and of themselves, does not automatically improve access to education or healthcare. Physical structures alone are insufficient to deliver social outcomes without the functional elements—namely, adequate manpower, recruitment, training, motivation, and institutional capacity. There is little empirical evidence to suggest that corresponding investments were made in the recruitment and continuous training of teachers, doctors, nurses, and allied professionals necessary to operationalise these facilities and enhance service delivery. Consequently, the infrastructure provided remained largely under-functional in terms of delivering sustained socio-economic benefits to the population.

Empirical evidence further corroborates the limited socio-economic impact of the extensive physical infrastructure investments made during the period under review. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) clearly demonstrate deterioration in key socio-economic indicators in Rivers State. The poverty rate increased from 21.1 per cent in 2017 to 23.91 per cent in 2018, rose sharply to 38.7 per cent in 2020, and escalated further to 62.4 per cent in 2022 (NBS, 2023). Similarly, unemployment stood at 41.3 per cent in 2017, declined marginally to 36.4 per cent in 2018, but rose again to 41.59 per cent in 2020 and reached 59.22 per cent in 2022 (NBS, 2023). These trends are clearly incongruous with the scale of capital expenditure reportedly committed to infrastructure development and do not reflect the expected outcomes of sustained infrastructure-led growth.

The implication is that the prevailing pattern of infrastructure project delivery failed to attract sufficient economic investment capable of stimulating growth, generating employment, and expanding income-earning opportunities within the State. Investment is a critical catalyst for employment creation, economic diversification, and multiplier effects across sectors of the economy. The absence of these dynamics offers a plausible explanation for the persistent and rising levels of unemployment and poverty, particularly in the context of limited public-sector absorption capacity. Evidently, while the capital expenditure component of the State's budget expanded significantly, investments in human capital development and workforce welfare were marginalised. As a result, socio-economic indicators deteriorated rather than improved. This raises a critical question: what factors accounted for this negative trajectory?

Factors Confronting Effective Infrastructure Project Delivery and Socio-Economic Development in Rivers State, 2015–2023

It has been persuasively argued that the challenge of infrastructure delivery in Rivers State cannot be attributed to a paucity of financial resources. Rather, the impediments to effective infrastructure project delivery and its translation into socio-economic development include the absence of a comprehensive and coherent infrastructure development policy; inadequate needs assessment and limited public participation in the design, implementation, and execution of infrastructure programmes; corruption and misallocation of public funds; and weak responsiveness, transparency, and accountability in infrastructure financing and project execution. Collectively, these factors undermined the developmental efficacy of infrastructure investments and constrained their capacity to generate sustainable socio-economic outcomes for the State.

5. Discussion of Findings

Poor Infrastructure Development Policy

A critical examination of the infrastructure governance landscape in Rivers State during the period under review

reveals the absence of a well-articulated, coherent, and faithfully implemented infrastructure development policy. Evidence from fieldwork corroborates this position. This was explicitly confirmed by the Public Relations Officer of the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), Rivers State Branch, during an oral interview granted to the researcher. He remarked:

Many unapologetic partisan politicians would argue that Rivers State invested massively in infrastructure development during the period when Governor Nyesom Wike held sway. Yes, there were a few flyovers and roads here and there. But what was the infrastructure policy thrust of the administration? Were the infrastructure delivery plans responding to the needs, yearnings, and aspirations of the people? Was there professional input from relevant stakeholders in the choice, design, and implementation of infrastructure projects? The answer is an absolute no, and that is why many of the projects did not satisfy their intended objectives (if indeed there were any). It does appear that some of these projects were executed primarily for their aesthetic value (Vikina, oral interview, 30 September 2025).

This testimony strongly suggests that the infrastructure development drive of the Rivers State Government within the period under review was not the product of systematic needs assessment, professional input, or participatory planning. Rather, infrastructure delivery appeared largely discretionary, reactive, and detached from clearly defined development priorities. The findings further affirm that infrastructure investment was not guided by a coherent development vision anchored in socio-economic needs analysis.

More importantly, it is evident that national policy frameworks such as the National Infrastructure Development Action Plan (2010–2020) and the National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan were largely ignored during the period under review. At the sub-national level, the Rivers State Infrastructure Development Policy of 2008—which gave rise to the Public-Private Participation in Infrastructure Development Law No. 5 of 2009, the Greater Port Harcourt Development Authority Law No. 2 of 2009, and other coordinated development initiatives—was effectively jettisoned. The abandonment of these frameworks implied that the State operated without clearly defined infrastructure objectives, policy benchmarks, or measurable development targets.

Ideally, a well-conceived infrastructure development policy would have provided strategic direction, coordinated both short- and long-term socio-economic objectives, and harmonised the roles of government agencies, professionals, private investors, and development partners. Such a policy would also have established performance benchmarks for evaluating progress, outcomes, and failures in infrastructure-led development. The absence of this policy architecture meant that infrastructure decisions were largely driven by executive discretion and personal idiosyncrasies, with limited regard for their broader socio-economic implications.

Consequently, the absence of a participatory infrastructure development policy and roadmap significantly undermined the effective utilisation of the enormous ₦2.031 trillion reportedly expended on infrastructure project delivery during the period. This reinforces the central argument of this study: the challenge of infrastructure delivery in Rivers State was not the scarcity of financial resources, but rather the misutilisation of abundant public revenue in ways that failed to generate sustainable socio-economic development.

Disjointed and Poorly Coordinated Pattern of Infrastructure Project Delivery

Another critical factor that undermined effective infrastructure delivery for socio-economic development in Rivers State was the disjointed and poorly coordinated pattern of project execution. Infrastructure projects were implemented in isolation, without clear sectoral linkages or structural integration capable of stimulating productive activities across the economy.

For instance, rural infrastructure development was not strategically aligned with agricultural productivity enhancement, nor was the agricultural sector deliberately positioned to stimulate cottage industries, agro-processing, employment creation, or export earnings. Owing largely to this lack of strategic vision, previously established agricultural initiatives—such as the Songhai Farm at Bunu Tai, the Banana Farms in Tai and Khana Local Government Areas, and the Buguma Fish Farm—were abandoned. These abandonments had immediate and adverse consequences, including loss of employment, erosion of productive capacity, and reduction in government revenue.

Indeed, one need not look beyond these policy failures to understand the rising levels of food insecurity, poverty, and unemployment recorded during the period under review. Many of the infrastructure projects undertaken assumed the character of white-elephant projects, delivering limited economic value and failing to attract significant private investment into the State. Yet, it is well established that well-coordinated infrastructure development can attract investment, stimulate productive activities, and generate positive multiplier effects for income growth and employment creation. The reinvestment of such income ordinarily triggers sustained economic growth with positive implications for socio-economic development and improved living standards. This virtuous cycle, however, was largely absent in Rivers State during the period under review.

Additionally, the geographical and spatial distribution of infrastructure projects was uneven and poorly balanced. This assertion is reinforced by the locational spread of sixty-three (63) major infrastructure projects executed during the period, as illustrated in Table X below. The concentration of projects in specific urban centres, to the neglect of rural and economically productive areas, further weakened the developmental impact of infrastructure investments and deepened spatial inequalities within the State.

Table 3. Some Landmark Infrastructure Projects in Rivers State and their Geographical Spread, 2015- 2022

S/No	Projects	Location (LGA)
1.	Okoro-nudo Flyover/Bridge	Obio/Akpor
2.	Resibi Flyover/Bridge	Port Harcourt
3.	Okoku-Azikiwe Flyover	Port Harcourt
4.	Tank/Elimgbu Flyover	Obio/Akpor
5.	Rumuola Flyover	Obio/Akpor
6.	G.R.A Junction Flyover	Obio/Akpor
7.	Garrison/Ogbunnubali Flyover	Port Harcourt
8.	Kaduna CTC Flyover	Port Harcourt
9.	Rumuopirikom Flyover	Obio/Akpor
10.	Location/Ada George Flyover	Obio/Akpor
11.	Rumuokwuta Flyover	Obio/Akpor
12.	Artillery/Rumuogba Flyover	Obio/Akpor
13.	Sakpenwa-Bori-Kono	Tai/Gokana/Khana
14.	Trans Kalabari Road	Degema/Asari-Toru
15.	Urban Renewal Road Reconstruction	Port Harcourt
16.	Construction of Nigeria Law School	Obio/Akpor
17.	Mother & Child Hospital	Obio/Akpor
18.	Completion of Kpokie-Bori Road	Gokana
19.	Bodo General Hospital	Gokana
20.	Bori General Hospital	Khana
21.	Remodeling of GSS Rumuokuta	Obio/Akpor
22.	Remodeling BMGS, Bori	Khana
23.	Remodeling of GSS, Kpor	Gokana
24.	Remodeling of GSS, Eneka	Ikwerre
25.	College of Basic Medical Science	PHC
26.	Dr. P.O. Odili Cancer & Cardiovascular Diagnostic and Treatment Centre	Obio/Akpor
27.	RSU Emuoha Campus	Emuoha
28.	RSU Ahoada Campus	Ahoada
29.	Construction of Elelenwo-Akpajo Road	Obio/Akpor
30.	Construction of Aluu – Omagwa Road	Ikwerre
31.	Construction of Tombia Street Road	PHC
32.	Construction of Chokocho-Igbo-Etche	Etche
33.	Construction of Etche/Abara RSU Campus	Etche
34.	Construction of Faculty of Law Audition, RSU	PHC
35.	Zonal Hospital Degema	Degema
36.	Reconstruction of Forces Avenue Internal Road	PHC
37.	Construction of Obi Wali	Obio/Akpor
38.	Construction of Ohiaiini Road	Obio/Akpor
39.	Construction of Ahoada Street	PHC
40.	Construction of Ogbunuabali Internal Road	PHC
41.	Construction of Ochochiri Internal Road	Okrika
42.	Construction of Evo/Woji Road	Obio/Akpor
43.	Rehabilitation/Maintenance of some Roads and Drains, Tagged "Operation Zero Potholes" in Port Harcourt Metropolis	PHC
44.	Reconstruction of Diobu Roads	PHC
45.	Rehabilitation of Agip Gate to Eagle - Island-Iloabuchi link Road Junction and Wike Road in Obio/Akpo L.G.A	PHC

46.	Rehabilitation of Abuja By pass, Mile III Diobu, Port Harcourt	PHC
47.	Rehabilitation of SARS (Nelson Mandela) Road, Rukpakwolushi - Eligbolo Road and Agip Road	Obio/Akpor
48.	Rehabilitation of Industry Road	PHC
49.	Construction of Internal Roads and Drains in G.S.S Rumuokwuta in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area	Obio/Akpor
50.	Construction of Eneka-Rumuapu - Rukpokwu and Miniorlu - Mgbuakara - Eliaparawo Roads	Obio/Akpor
51.	Reconstruction of Rumuaghalu - Airport Road "A" L=2550m Spur to Nkpolu East/West Road "B" L=1170m and Spur to International Market Road "C" L=1675m	Obio/Akpor
52.	Dualization of Oil Mill-Elelenwo-Akpajo Road	Obio/Akpor
53.	Reconstruction Of Eliozu-Rumuduru Oroigwe-Elimgbu Road/Bridge In Obio/Akpor	Obio/Akpor
54.	Reconstruction of Woji Road from Old Aba Road to Alcon Road, Woji Town in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area	Obio/Akpor
55.	Consultant, Design and Supervision of Reconstruction of Eliozu- Rumuduru-Oroigwe- Elimgbu Road	Obio/Akpor
56.	Reconstruction of Igwuruta-Chokocho Road terminating at the Bridge	Etche
57.	Construction of Rumualugo- Alakahia and Igbugo Choba Roads	Obio/Akpor
58.	Construction of Ozuoba- Rumuosi & Rumuokparali- Choba	Obio/Akpor
59.	Construction of Second Nkpogu Bridge	Obio/Akpor
60.	Justice Mary Odili Judicial Institute	Port Harcourt
61.	Nigeria Law School	Obio/Akpor
62.	Port Harcourt Water Project	Obio/Akpor & PHC
63.	Port Harcourt Abattoir	Obio/Akpor

Source: Rivers State Ministry of Work, 2023.

From the sixty-three (63) landmark projects executed by the administration, thirty-one (31) were located in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, twenty (20) in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area, while only twelve (12) projects were distributed across the remaining twenty-one (21) Local Government Areas of the State. Beyond the evident spatial imbalance in project distribution, these infrastructure interventions failed to target the ignition and utilisation of the vast economic potentials resident in the rural areas of Rivers State.

Outside the oil and gas sector, the economic fortune of Rivers State lies predominantly in agriculture. As earlier established, strategic investment in rural infrastructure—particularly feeder roads, storage facilities, irrigation systems, rural electrification, and agro-processing infrastructure—could have served as an economic catalyst with significant multiplier effects. Rather than harness this potential, infrastructure delivery remained largely urban-centred and consumption-oriented.

Similarly, critical economic corridors and infrastructure of strategic value received little or no attention. Roads such as the Reclamation Road and Bundu-Ama Road, which interconnect the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) Port Harcourt Wharf, Abonnema Wharf Road, and the Onne axis of the East–West Road—key economic nerve centres of the State—were largely neglected. The argument that the Onne axis of the East–West Road fell exclusively under federal jurisdiction is untenable, particularly given that the Rivers State Government had previously undertaken similar federal road projects and subsequently secured reimbursement. The neglect of such strategic economic infrastructure, alongside inadequate investment in electricity generation and distribution as incentives for private investment, further substantiates the argument that infrastructure delivery during the period lacked economic rationality and development foresight.

Decrepit Political Leadership and Bad Governance

At the core of these challenges was the prevalence of poor political leadership and bad governance in Rivers State during the period under review. This leadership deficit undermined the formulation and effective implementation of an infrastructure development policy grounded in systematic needs assessment. It also

resulted in minimal stakeholder engagement and weak citizen participation in infrastructure governance, while simultaneously encouraging the misutilisation of infrastructure budgets, weak accountability, poor public stewardship, and a fragmented, poorly coordinated infrastructure development drive characterised by inequitable spatial distribution of projects.

More fundamentally, the nature of political leadership during the period was marked by overbearing self-interest and rentier tendencies. The leadership exhibited predatory, transactional, non-transformational, and largely uncharismatic attributes that prioritised personal and elite gains over collective welfare. What prevailed was a political economy of infrastructure delivery driven more by the material benefits accruable to project executors than by the socio-economic value of such projects to the citizenry. This perspective offers critical insight into why multi-billion-naira projects—such as the Dr Peter Odili Cancer and Cardiovascular Disease Diagnostic and Treatment Centre, the Mother and Child Hospitals, and similar flagship initiatives—were reportedly completed and commissioned but remained grossly underutilised. The disjunction between project completion and functional service delivery exemplifies how infrastructure investment, when divorced from governance, human capital planning, and operational sustainability, fails to translate into socio-economic development.

6. Summary and Conclusion

Infrastructure development transcends aesthetic appeal; it constitutes the fulcrum of socio-economic development in any society. While the provision of infrastructure is contingent upon the availability of financial resources, the effectiveness of infrastructure delivery and its capacity to stimulate socio-economic development are fundamentally dependent on the character, quality, and orientation of the political leadership driving the process.

The case of Rivers State, as demonstrated in this study, presents a particularly perplexing paradox. The State exhibits classic symptoms of the resource curse phenomenon. Despite possessing enormous financial resources—clearly evidenced by the robust revenue profile recorded between 2015 and 2023—it has been unable to deploy these resources in ways that significantly improve the socio-economic conditions of its citizenry. Empirical evidence from this study shows that over 77.1 per cent of the State's total revenue within the period under review was allocated to capital expenditure, with infrastructure development constituting the dominant component. Yet, this substantial investment did not translate into commensurate socio-economic gains. Rather than improvements in welfare outcomes, the period witnessed a deterioration in key socio-economic indicators. Poverty levels, unemployment rates, and inequality gaps—the core components of the human misery index—expanded significantly. This widening socio-economic distress underscores the disjunction between infrastructure spending and development outcomes in the State.

The findings therefore reinforce the central argument of this paper: the fundamental challenge confronting infrastructure project delivery and socio-economic development in Rivers State is not the paucity of financial resources, but the prevalence of poor political leadership and bad governance. These deficits manifested in the absence of a coherent infrastructure development policy, weak planning and coordination, limited stakeholder engagement, misutilisation of public funds, spatially skewed project distribution, and the prioritisation of politically expedient projects over economically productive infrastructure. Consequently, infrastructure investment became an end in itself rather than a means to achieving sustainable socio-economic development.

7. Recommendations

Based on the data presented, the findings of the study, and the conclusions reached, the paper makes the following recommendations:

Immediate Reactivation of the 2008/2009 Infrastructure Development Policy and Roadmap of Rivers State

The Rivers State Government should urgently discontinue the politicisation of infrastructure development and mandate the Ministry of Works and the Office of the Surveyor-General of Rivers State to reactivate and implement the well-articulated, professionally designed, and coordinated Infrastructure Development Policy and Roadmap of 2008 and 2009. These policy instruments should provide the strategic framework for coherent and integrated infrastructure project delivery aimed at attracting and retaining economic investment.

Central to this reactivation should be the enforcement of the principle of project continuity as embedded in the policy documents. This would mitigate the persistent problem of abandoned projects, reduce wastage of public resources, and ensure that infrastructure investments yield sustainable socio-economic returns.

Improved and Targeted Investment in Socio-Economic Infrastructure

The study established that infrastructure delivery during the period under review was insufficiently targeted at critical economic infrastructure, particularly electricity generation and distribution, which constitute major drivers of industrialisation and productivity. Rivers State should leverage the unbundling and full liberalisation

of the power sector, alongside its abundant gas resources, to develop independent power generation and distribution systems within the State. Strategic investment in reliable electricity infrastructure would serve as a strong magnet for private investment, stimulate industrial activity, generate employment, boost productivity, create wealth, and ultimately improve the socio-economic conditions of the citizenry.

Effective Geo-Spatial Distribution of Infrastructure Projects for Balanced Development

The Rivers State Government should ensure that infrastructure project delivery is not spatially skewed or disproportionately concentrated in a few urban centres. Rather, projects should be equitably distributed across the State and deliberately designed to link rural areas with key economic corridors and growth centres. Such geo-spatially balanced infrastructure development would unlock rural economic potentials—particularly in agriculture—enhance connectivity, attract investment, reduce regional inequalities, and promote coordinated and inclusive socio-economic development across the State.

Conscious Citizens' Engagement and Demand for Accountability in Infrastructure Governance

Infrastructure delivery is inherently a function of governance. The processes of project identification, prioritisation, financing, and execution in Rivers State have for too long excluded citizens through deliberate institutional practices. There is therefore a need for conscious and organised civic engagement aimed at demanding inclusion, transparency, and accountability in infrastructure governance.

Citizens must assert their right to participate in development decision-making processes and demand responsible stewardship from political leaders. Inclusive governance is not granted benevolently; it is a right that must be actively claimed and defended. Sustained citizen engagement will strengthen accountability mechanisms, curb misutilisation of public resources, and enhance the developmental impact of infrastructure investments.

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