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

Barigbon Christopher Barisi PhD
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria.
christopher.barigbon@iaue.edu.ng

Abstract

The overall problem of this study was that the huge financial resources supposedly invested in infrastructure delivery Rivers State has not attracted significant economic investment for enhanced socio-economic development via poverty reduction, employment and equality. The study adopted the resource curse theory as a theoretical framework and adopted the descriptive research design. Both quantitative and qualitative data from primary and secondary sources were used and subjected to critical content analysis. The findings showed amongst others that despite the comparatively reasonable size of public revenue of Rivers State, same has not been effectively utilized to drive robust and guided infrastructure development. These are due largely to the absence of an infrastructure development policy and roadmap; leading to distorted, disjointed and poorly coordinated pattern of infrastructure project delivery incapable of attracting economic investment, enhance agriculture productivity and industrialization and ultimately reduce the human misery index of the state. All these were manifestation of decrepit political leadership accentuating the resource curse phenomenon in Rivers State. Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommended amongst others for: immediate reactivation and implementation of the 2009/2009 Infrastructure development policy and roadmap of Rivers State; committed improved investment in socio-economic infrastructure; effective geo-spatial and coordinated multi-sectoral distribution of infrastructure projects; conscious citizens' engagement on infrastructure governance and demand for transparency and accountability from political leadership as pathways to socio-economic development of the state.

Keywords

Public Finance Utilization,

Infrastructure Delivery,

Resource Curse,

Decrepit Political Leadership,

Socio-Economic Development.

1. Introduction

Public finance is concerned with how government raise, spends or manage funds to the benefit of its citizenry. It also refers to all revenue accruable and received by governance, which are used to carryout it functions and duties to the citizenry as well as for the running and maintenance of the instrument of the state. The sources of these funds (public finance) include revenue receipts, loans, borrowings and grants.

Infrastructures are the backbones of a progressive society and economy. They are the physical elements of inter-connected systems that support production and service delivery in the economy; and sustain or improve meaningful standard of living for the citizenry. The cost and time of transportation are reduced by efficient transportation network. Large scale and quick communication and efficient information flow are made possible by high-capacity telecommunication networks. Oil and gas facilities guarantee continuous energy availability both for domestic consumption as well as export for foreign exchange earnings. Efficient power generation supply and distribution system enhance production of good and services. All of these infrastructure elements considerably improve workforce productivity, population well-being and the overall growth and economic development (FRN, 2020).

Socio-economic development on the other hand is the qualitative and quantitative improvement as well as positive transformation in the socio-economic well-being of the entire population of a society, which is manifestly indicated by drastic reduction in poverty, unemployment, inequality and overall human or social

misery index. The provision of infrastructure development is therefore a sine-qua-non for the socio- economic development of any given society. Impliedly, the provision of socio- economic infrastructure such quality roads, rail, water and air transport system, electric power generation, communication facilities, human capital development infrastructure such as schools and hospitals etc in the appropriate quality and quantities are not only drivers of development, but in some sense, indicators of the level of development of a given society (Eremie, Hart & Barigbon, 2019).

Meanwhile, infrastructures are not God given natural resources such as river, land etc. They are products of a combination of human efforts and financial resources. This brings to the fore, the fundamental issue of public finance utilization. The administration of development therefore accentuates the importance of efficient, effective, transparent public revenue mobilization and utilization in well planned, coordinated and guided infrastructure development or infrastructure project delivery. The nature of public finance utilization and pattern of infrastructure project delivery is expected to be designed and implemented in manners that stimulate economic growth and development. It is against this background, that this study investigates the level of public revenue availability to Rivers State, the nature of public finance utilization, the pattern of infrastructure project delivery and their impacts on the socio-economic development of the State from 2015 to 2023.

2. Statement of the Problem

The question of how to provide the people (citizenry) with their basic needs, and how to achieve accelerated economic growth and development are the fundamental question confronting any organized society. The availability, mobilization and attitude to utilization of resources (public revenue) are key issues in the determination of the impacts of infrastructure project delivery on economic growth and sustainable socio-economic development. In reality, infrastructure serve as both foundations of economic growth and gauge for measuring the performance of a country (Aschauer, 1989; World Bank, 1994), hence the focus on socio-economic infrastructure delivery. To be sure, numerous studies such as Fatai et al (2010), Ozumba (2021) Sahoo et al (2010) Okpalaoka (2021) had shown the correlation between infrastructure delivery, economic growth and development. These studies argued that infrastructure spending has direct impact on economic growth. Impliedly, a nation or society with weak or inadequate infrastructure is a nation with weak economic foundation.

There have been the disputable arguments that poor revenue profile is largely responsible for infrastructure deficit in Nigeria (Diamond, 1990; World Bank, 1994). Okpalaoka (2021) succinctly argued that developing nations such as Nigeria has experienced sluggish economic growth and development due to lack of required infrastructure to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). Okpalaoka however, held that ineffective and decrepit leadership does not have infrastructure project delivery as a priority within their mandates. Albeit they are mostly enamored to the delivery of white elephant projects in order to gain cheap political and electioneering points.

Conversely, there are arguments that the problem of poor infrastructure investment is not poor revenue base but lack of vision, commitment and excellent leadership. Undoubtedly the revenue profile of Nigeria qua Rivers State appears to have comparatively improved over the years. Yet the infrastructure development profile had been decrepit and unimpressively below expected global benchmark of 70%. To be sure, core stock of infrastructure makes up 35.0% of the GDP as at 2015 (AFDB, 2023). As such, the majority of resources allocated to infrastructure development have either being insufficient, inflated, diverted and embezzled. At some points, the mantra of infrastructure project delivery only serves as conduit of siphoning public fund, embezzlement and money laundering. This exemplifies the lack of commitment to development.

The above with other points that shall be conversed explains the political economy of infrastructure project delivery in Nigeria and particularly Rivers state. Infact, the case of Rivers state is perplexingly instructive in this regard. 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 (OAGRS, 2021 RMAFC, 2021, 2022, Budget, 2022). Within the period, cumulative of 87.6% of the budget was purportedly spent on capital expenditure (with infrastructure and human capital development as the core components). There are also indications that infrastructure project greater portion of the state revenue, consequent upon which Onuchukwu and Nwobwuze (2023) averred that the Rivers State Government within 2015 to 2023 showed avowed commitment and was "consistent in utilizing internally generated fund, (Federal allocations) and oil revenue allocation to the state by the federal government for people oriented development" (p. 101), with sterling performance in infrastructure development and service delivery; an effort which earned the man at the saddle at the time the "distinguished award in infrastructure delivery "as" Mr. Project (Nsirim, 2022).

Expectedly, the quantum of revenue available to Rivers State and acclaimed public expenditure on infrastructure

development would have led to decreased capacity for hosting international investments; translate into maximization of social and economic benefits and minimization of social economic misery for her population. The reality rather points to a different direction. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the impact of public finance utilization and infrastructure project delivery on socio-economic development in Rivers State, Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. To following questions guided the study: What was the size of public revenue available to Rivers State within the period under review? What was the impact of the revenue profile of the state on infrastructure project delivery? What was the impact of infrastructure projects delivery on socio-economic development in the State? What factors confronted effective infrastructure project delivery and socio-economic development in Rivers State from 2015 to 2023. Providing answer to these questions help describe and explain the issues of the research.

3. Conceptual Review

The Concept of Public Finance and Public Finance Utilization

Finance here implies the generation of financial resources, allocation or distribution of income and expenditure and the underlying principles regulating these operations. This could operate at the level of private or individual, public institutions or international organization. As such there is private finance, public finance, and international finance (Chuje, 2001). Public finance therefore deals with government finance.

Public finance has been defined as the aspect of economics which deals with the raising, spending and management of public fund; the study of taxation and expenditure of government or management of government fund to the benefit of the citizenry (Nweze cited in Nwanne, 2015). Musgrave and Musgrave cited in Gurdal, Aydin and Inal (2021) defined public finance as the complex of financial systems, which operate through the revenue and expenditure process of the budget. By Mugrave and Musgrave definition, budget and budgeting provide the operational framework for government revenue and expenditure. For Ajibola (2008) it is the aspect of financial administration or economics that deals with the determination of government expenditures, and the ways by which funds to carry out the expenditure and revenue measures are raised; and the effects of the expenditure and revenue measures on the country. The definition by Ajibola aptly and incisively touches on the efficiency in the management of the fund for the administration of government and infrastructure, the impact of the measures of the raising the funds (such as taxation and resource exploitation) on the economy and the well-being of the governed (citizenry).

The financial resources of government come from diverse sources. These include the public receipt with which government collect revenue from all sources. Literally internally generated revenue (IGR) through such sources as: personal income tax, value added tax (VAT), rent on government properties, fees from registration, licensing, charges on land matters (particularly for states) and statutory allocation from the federation account are the two main sources. Others are loans, borrowings, and grants (Anyanwu et al 1997).

The established allocation and distribution flow of federally collected revenue to the centre and sub-national units are: vertical allocation formula (VAF) and horizontal allocation formula (HAF). The VAF refer to the sharing of federally allocated revenue to the sub-national level of government in a country based on percentile allocation. The horizontal allocation (HAF) which applicable to states and local government provides a platform for the sharing of revenue amongst the state and how the state distributes the revenue amongst the local governments within it (Ikunga & Wilson, 2013). From federal allocation (and 13% oil derivation for oil producing state) comes the bulk of revenue for any level of government in Nigeria. Oil as the dominant revenue base, it facilities and environmental impacts are most felt in the communities; yet sharing or allocation to communities is silent in the public financial administration of Nigeria.

The revenue of government is the major source of public expenditure, even though loans, borrowings and grant may constitute part. Public expenditure as an instrument of fiscal strategy is therefore the totality of funds expended by a government to provide for or meet collective needs or public good. These involve major spending on social, economic, environmental administrative, defense, infrastructure and debt services. Public expenditure is however classified basically into capital and recurrent expenditure. While capital expenditure includes long –term expenses on socio-economic infrastructure and human capital development, recurrent expenditure covers expenses on administration, governance, salaries and wages (Obeichina, 2020).

Largely, public finance only become meaningful when used for development and administrative purpose, hence the need for effective public finance utilization. To this end, public finance utilization is therefore the efficient and effective use of public financial resources to achieve societal good and the objectives of development. Some of these key objectives of public finance utilization are social welfare, poverty reduction, employment generation, economic stability and infrastructural development. The process of achieving these objectives, include revenue allocation, budgeting, expenditure management and financial reporting. The transparent utilization and accounting of public financial outcome in ways that positively impact on the indicators of socio-

economic development should be germane to every individual and sane society.

Infrastructure and Socio-Economic Infrastructure and Infrastructure Project Delivery

There are no contentions in the definition of infrastructure, except for different scholars using different phraseology to describe the same thing. For instance, Fulmar (2009) defined infrastructure as the physical elements of interconnected facilities that provide commodities and service necessary to aid, sustain or improve societal living condition. Okpaloaka (2021) say it is the fundamental physical and organisational element that enable a society to function, such as roads, bridges, health institutions and services, industries, building, water supply, national electricity grid and telecommunication system. Shehu (2018) simply refers to infrastructure as the technical structures that support a society such as roads, supply, drain, electricity, telecommunication amongst others. Impliedly, infrastructure is a set of interconnected supporting structures of development. It is also a parameter for measuring any society development status.

There are different catergorisation of infrastructure. There is the categorization into soft and hard infrastructure (Nair & Kumar, 2005, Oyedele, 2014). There is also the second dimension of categorization into physical and social infrastructure (Olaseni & Alade cited in Kabiru 2016; Sheffirin, 2003). Hard infrastructure refers to the extensively physical networks needed for operational and production activities such as: roads, railways, electricity, telecommunication etc. Soft infrastructure on the other hand encompasses all organization required to preserve a country such as: health, economic and economic systems, judicial systems as well as security system. The physical infrastructures are those things described as hard infrastructure. What may somewhere be described as social infrastructures falls within the category of hard infrastructure in as much as they include roads, pipe borne water, telecommunication, housing etc. which have the capacity to strengthen such social services as health and education herein otherwise described as soft infrastructure. All there constitute public infrastructure which are the back bone of economic activities of any country. What then is infrastructure project delivery?

Economic infrastructures are those elements and structures that support production and economic exchanges such as power, transportation and communication (UKEssay, 2018). Power has the capacity to stimulate and facilitate production. The transportation system enhances the movement of manufactured goods and services and while communication system facilitates the marketing and distribution of goods and services. These structures serve as the foundation of the economy. Social infrastructure such as educational become core element of social change, including learning, skill development, capacity building and the health institution enhance healthy productive population. The functional socio-infrastructures enhance the availability in their right quantity and quality, the human capital required for the operation and management of the production and service sectors of this economy. The economic and social infrastructure therefore constitutes the socio-economic fabric of social progress. It is socio-economic infrastructure, not vein or white elephants project facilitate economic growth and development and socio-economic development.

Infrastructure project according to Foster and Pustak (2011) is the proposed plan to build, maintain and upkeep infrastructure facilities, system and services. It entails building of new roads, construction of power plants, maintaining sewage system, providing quality drinking water etc. Conjointly, Infrastructure project delivery is the direct investment in projects or provision of social goods (both hard and soft infrastructure) that could lead to the development of intermediate inputs for production and the improvement of productivity levels of other sectors of the economy (Akinyosoye, 2010).

Public infrastructure delivery constitutes a major mandate of government. It is however beyond city beautification, as it targets the attraction and retention of investment, reduction in production cost facilitation of physical movement of persons, good and service, removal of productivity constraints, improved service delivery and increased economic competitiveness for economic growth and development (World Bank, n.d). The point is that the way and manner of carrying out public infrastructure project delivery (PIPD) has high and direct implication for a country economic capacity, human capital development, social inclusion and reduction of economic and social misery (poverty, hunger, unemployment, inequality, discrimination etc.). As such, once a project is planned, finance and executed, it is expected to maximally benefit the people in ways that improve their social and economic conditions.

Socio-Economic Development

Development writ large is a nebulous concept. It multifacetedness or multi-dimensionality accounts for its nebulousness. However, Ntete-Nna (2011) defined development as the "process of creating conditions that are conductive for the realization of human personality (PIIO). The realization of human personality brings out the social- component of development and raises the issues of enhancement of freedom, happiness, identity, actualization of potentials etc. These are better expressed or conveyed in the definitions of development as the general improvement in the economic, social and political conditions of the whole society in terms of reduction

or elimination of poverty, inequality, injustice, insecurity, ecological imbalance and unemployment within the concept of economic growth (Filani 2000).

Socio-economic development is a component or dimension of development. The other dimension or components are: political, cultural, technological etc. Albeit, development is the continuous and progressive (both quantitative and qualitative) transformation or improvement in the overall quality of life of the people. Social development as a part or component is the process of transformation of social institutions (educational and health systems) for the enhancement or improvement of the capacity of members of the society to fulfill their genuine aspirations (NIOS, 2023). While, economic development is the steady process by which the productive capacity of an economic is increased overtime to bring about raising level of national output and income (Smith, 2019).

Socio-economic development is therefore the progressive reinforcement of the society and economic organisation of the society towards quantitative and qualitative improvement in the overall wellbeing of the people of a community. Socio-economic development is all about how a society's economic growth occasioned or facilitated by the availability of socio-economic infrastructure enhance overall well-being of members of the society. This well-being must manifest in reduction in the conditions, poverty, unemployment, and inequality, reduction of overall human or social misery, and increase in literacy level, life expectancy and overall human development index.

4. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The issue of the paper is development. It is centred around the utilization of public resources (revenue) for infrastructure development and its impact on socio-economic development. Considering the problematique of the study as articulated in the introductory sections of this paper, the resource curse theory (thesis) offers itself as a veritable and potent tools and framework for nuanced explication the of the issues of this study.

The resource curse theory as theorized by Aunty (2000) and later Sach and Warner (2001) describes a conundrum or perplexing situation of simultaneous presence of abundance of human and material resources and underspend indices of underdevelopment, poverty, poor economic growth, infrastructure deficit These are common characteristics of most natural resources rich third world countries. The theory argue that resource rich countries have some dysfunctional qualities or deficiency in their ability to mobilize and utilize natural resource endowments, the material (financial) resources gained from them to facilitate and accelerate development such as through purposeful, focused, meaningful, dedicated and well-coordinated investments in infrastructure development as drivers of socio economic development.

Contextually, Rivers State and Nigeria by extension is an oil resource rich state and country. The bulk of the public revenue for Rivers State comes from natural resources rents. The material (financial) resource accruing from the natural resource endowments are enormous. However, the State and its leadership is bereft of the extractive capacity ability of judicious, efficient and effective utilization of these resources in the provision of socio-economic infrastructure that attracts investment, stimulate economic growth and development and for improved social welfare of the population. Unfortunately, the gains of natural resource endowments are misutilized and instead of social progress; social conflict, environmental externalities, encouragement of leadership kleptomania and prebendal behaviour has the most outcomes. Apparently, increases in public revenue from resource rent rather accentuate kleptomanic and seeking mentality of the managers of the public resources for the State. Thus, increasing revenue profile accentuates the grass materialism and primitive accumulation tendencies of the ruling class in Rivers State, Nigeria. Their rent seeking behaviour and primitive accumulation mentality increases with the growing revenue profile of the state.

In the light of above, the mantras of commitment to infrastructure delivery for socio-economic progress present itself as a cacophony and some macabre dance on the gullibility of the unquestionable followers or citizens of the state. A dispassionate examination of the political economy of contract awards and project execution in Rivers State within the investigative period largely exemplify those efforts as well orchestrated conduit for the exploitation of the state through inflation of contract figures. It is the position of this paper that the execution of infrastructure projects has rather been driven by the personal material gain accruable to the executor of the projects and not necessarily the economic values of such project to the state. This is such that there less commensuration between capital expenditure (mostly for infrastructure) component of the budget and the quality and quantity of the infrastructure projects delivered. The crux of the matter is that magnificent quantum of public revenue (resource) accruable to the state has not manifested in the expected level of infrastructure development in the state, but has only heightened public profligacy in the face poor economic performance. The paper therefore argues that the huge financial resource or public revenue of the state and the infrastructure project delivery mantra of the period under review has not translated to significant socio-economic development or improved socio-economic welfare of the citizenry.

In terms of methodology, this study adopted the descriptive research design. The primary qualitative data from oral interview and some other quantitative and quantitative data largely collected from secondary sources such as journals, periodicals and government publications aided this work. To be sure, the data on budget were carefully sorted, collated and calculated for the purpose of this paper. The data were subjected to critical content analysis and explained against existential reality of size of public finance, infrastructure project delivery and level of socio-economic development of the state.

Rivers State, with capital in Port Harcourt, the locale of this study is one of the 36 states of the Nigerian federation; created on the 27th May 1967 via a Military Decree No. 19 of 1967 during the military administration of Gen. Yakubo Gowon. The state occupies a land-mass of 11,077km (4,2775qmi) (RSF, 2023) and a projected population of 9,567,892 (NPC, 2023). It is bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the North by Anambra, Imo and Abia States, to the East by Akwa Ibom, and to the West by Bayelsa and Delta States. The most prominent ethnic nationalities in the State are Ikwerre, Ijaw (Andoni, Ibani, Kalabari, Opobo, Okirika) Abua, Ogoni, Ekpeye, Ogba, Etche, amongst others. Administratively, the State 319 electoral wards spread across 23 local government areas, 32 state constituencies, 12 federal constituencies and 3 Senatorial Districts.

Rivers State, an oil and gas rich state is one of the largest and wealthiest economies in Nigeria. As the heartbeat of the hydro-carbon industry in Nigeria, the State hosts many Multinational Corporation such as Shell Petroleum Development Company (Now Renaissance Energy Ltd), Total E&P Ltd, Chevron, Mobil, Nigeria Agip Oil Company, Indorama Petro-chemical and Fertilizer Company, 2 Petroleum Refineries operated by the Nigeria National Petroleum Company Ltd (NNPCL) etc. It also has a seaport- Onne Seaport and other landing jetties. All these enhance the economic potentials and viability of the State. Meanwhile the state is also agrarian with 65 percent of its population in the rural areas largely engaged agricultural activities (predominantly farming and fishing) given the abundance of cultivatable land, adequate rainfall and water resources.

Politically, eleven (11) Military Administrators and six (6) democratically elected Governors have ruled the state. The Governor of the state within the period covered by the study was Chief Bar. E.N Wike. The current Governor of the state at time of this study is Sir Siminalaye Fubara, GSSRS, through his truncated was affected by a 6-months state of emergency within a Sole Administrator, Vice Admiral Rtd Ekatte Ibas superintended.

Data Presentation and Analysis

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

To determine the size of public revenue available to Rivers State within the period under review, we take into consideration, Federal allocation (including 13% derivation) and the internally generated revenue of the State from 2015 to 2023. This is presented as follows:

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 figure 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.

The data presented above showed that Rivers State had a robust financial outlook and revenue profile within the period under review. There is evidence that Rivers State got a sizeable portion of FAAC allocation as an oil producing state. These allocations also experience some level of increase except in 2019, 2020, 2021- the period of global Covid-19 pandemic, after which came years of recovery. To be sure, the FAAC revenue accruable to Rivers State stood at a total One Trillion, Five Hundred and Eighty-One Billion, |Thirty-Two Million Naira (1,581.32 Trn). The breakdown showed ₦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, N170.70 Billion in 2021; N 228.34 Billion in 2022; and N339.53 Billion in 2023. There are strong indications that the increase in 2023

revenue from FAAC was consequential to the petrol subsidy removal on May 29th 2023.

In the area of internally generated revenue, the state has enjoyed steady increase except also for 2020. The total IGR of Rivers State within the period was One Trillion, One Hundred and Twenty-One Billion, Sixty –Two Million Naira (₦1,121.62 Trn). Rivers State is second highest IGR State in Nigeria, tailgating Lagos. The breakdown of IGR showed ₦ 82.10 Billion in 2015, ₦ 85.48 Billion in 2016, ₦ 89.48 Billion in 2017, N 112.78 in 2018, ₦ 140.40 Billion in 2019, ₦117.19 Billion in 2020, (sharp decline following Covid-19 pandemic); ₦ 141.40 Billion in 2021, ₦11.09 Billion in 2022, and ₦ 203.56 Billion.

In total, Rivers State revenue profile for the period stood at two Trillion, Seven Hundred and Eight Billion, Fifty-Eight Million Naira. This comprised of FAAC and IGR. The breakdown also showed as follows: ₦ 190.42 Billon in 2015, ₦ 189.63 Billon in 2016, ₦ 227.63 Billon in 2017, ₦ 285.65 Billon in 2018, ₦ 309.53 Billon in 2019, ₦ 266.43 Billon in 2020, ₦ 312.10 Billon in 2021, ₦ 377.57 Billon in 2022, and ₦ 543.09 Billon in 2023.

Impact of the Revenue Profile of Rivers State on Infrastructure Development

To clearly demonstrate this, greater attention shall be placed on the total revenue of Rivers State as extracted from table 1 above. This is also done against the understanding that the capital expenditure of a state budget largely goes into infrastructure project delivery. The table below showed total revenue (less aids and grants) against the capital expenditure of the State.

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 above showed that Rivers State received a total of ₦2.793.14 Trillion in actual revenue from 2015-2023. From the figure N 2.031.87 Trillion was spent on capital expenditure, majority of which ordinary was spent on infrastructure project delivery. To be sure the predisposition of the Rivers State Government focus from 2015-2023 was largely on infrastructure project delivery with less attention on human capital development or welfare of the State workforce. What is more, the problem of infrastructure delivery was not the paucity of fund. It was rather a problem of coordination, ensuring the project delivery translate into improved socio-economic development of the states 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 from 2015-2023. The figure for the period stood at N 2.708 Trillion. This is from FAAC and IGR. The revenue position on table 2 showed N 2.793.14 Trillion. Loans from diverse sources to finance budget deficit may account for the differentials in the figures on revenue. Recall that in 2023, total capital expenditure exceeded the total revenue; the same the State took a ₦ 200 Billion loan from Access Bank Ltd to finance the Port Harcourt ring road project. This and other in and outflows could account for differential in the total revenue profile as set out above.

There are indications that infrastructure project delivery has not significantly improved the level of socio-economic development of the Rivers State within the period under review. The infrastructure project delivery drive of 2015 to 2023 concentrated so much on physical infrastructure with less attention on human capacity building to effectuate the essence of physical infrastructure. This is a common problem in the third world, where the artifacts of development (building, paved road etc.) are mistaken for development. While these are drivers of development, they count significantly to the extent that their presence improves on the indicators of development. A critical review of the remark of HE E.N Wike at the Chatham House on November 6th 2017 could help strength our assertion. He noted:

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 improve quality of education. We constructed, upgraded and rehabilitated several buildings, lectures halls, workshops, student hostels; we renovated 13 general hospitals, constructed 3 regional health facilities (Wike, in Beredugo, 2023, p. 313).

A critical examination of the above quote shows confusion and superimposition of infrastructure for human capital development. Building schools and hospital would not improve access to education and health care. The physical structure in them cannot improve access to education and healthcare. The physical structure in them cannot improve such access without the functional element which is the manpower. There are no indications of recruitment and training of the doctors and teachers to make the health and educational institution or infrastructure to deliver on their mandate, which is the overall improvement in the socio-economic of the citizenry.

To be sure, there is empirical evidence that the time and public resources expended on the provision of physical infrastructure such as the roads, schools, hospitals, overhead bridges etc. did not translate to improved socio-economic condition of the people within period or immediately after. An available record from the National Bureau of Statistics on Rivers State clearly bears this out. The records showed that poverty rate in Rivers State rose from 21.1% in 2017 to 23.91% in 2018, 38.7% in 2020 and 62.4% in 2022 (NBS, 2023). Unemployment which was at 41.3% in 2017 marginally dropped 36.4 % in 2018 but rose to 41.59% in 2020 and stood at 59.22% in 2022 (NBS, 2023). These are not encouraging figures in terms of socio-economic development of a State that purportedly invested largely in infrastructure development.

The point is that the pattern of infrastructure project delivery has not attracted significant economic investment to drive economic growth and development in the state. Investment has potential for employment creation, boost economic activities and trigger income generation ventures with attendant multiplier effect on the economy. The absence of these provides some explanation for the increasing level of unemployment and poverty in the state, particularly in the face of the limited capacity to provide sufficient employment opportunity. Manifestly, while capital expenditure component of the state budget received blossomed, the human capital and welfare component was neglected hence the socio-economic indication journeyed downhill. What were the factors responsible for this negative trend?

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

It has been strongly canvassed that the problem of infrastructure delivery in Rivers State is certainly not the problem of paucity of financial resources. The problem of infrastructure project delivery for socio-economic development are: lack of a comprehensive infrastructure development policy, absence of proper need assessment and public participation in the design implementation and execution of infrastructure development programmes, corruption and misallocation of funds; and lack of responsiveness, transparency and accountability in the infrastructure financing and project delivery. All these factors militate against effective infrastructure project delivery for socio-economic development.

5. Discussion of Findings

Poor Infrastructure Development Policy

A deep search showed the absence of a well-articulated and faithfully implemented policy document to drive the infrastructure development in the state within the period. This position was confirmed by the public relation officer of the Nigeria society of Engineers (NSE) Rivers State branch in an interview granted to the Researcher. His remark was clear. He noted:

Many non-apologetic partisan politicians would say Rivers State invested massive infrastructure Development within the period when Governor Nyesom Wike held sway in Rivers State. Yes, there are 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 aspiration of the people? Where there professional input from relevant stakeholder in the choice, design and implementation of the infrastructure projects delivery? The answer is absolute no, and that is why many of the project did not satisfy their desired objective (if at all there was any). ...It does appear some of these were built for their aesthetic values (Vikina, Oral interview, Sept. 30th, 2025).

The above is indicative of the fact that the infrastructure development drive of the Rivers State government within the period under review was not a product of systematic need assessment. Furthermore, the result affirmed that the infrastructure development policy was not guided by a development prospect and need assessment. What is more? There is no gain stating the obvious that the National Infrastructure Development Action Plan 2010-2020 and National Integrated Infrastructure Master plan was not given required attention within the period. The Rivers State Infrastructure Development Policy of 2008 that birthed the Public-Private Participation in Infrastructure Development Law No. 5 of 2009, the Greater Port Harcourt Development

Authority Law of No. 2 of 2009 and other coordinated development policies and programme were all jettisoned and abandoned. Impliedly, the state lacked a defined objective and policy target on the infrastructure development within the period under review.

It is opposite that only a well-designed infrastructure development policy would have taken into consideration and coordinated the short and long term socio-economic benefits of the infrastructure projects. To be sure, the beauties of infrastructure development policy the provision of direction and projection development focus of all stakeholders and development partners. It equally provides standard for measurement of progress, success and failure of economic development policies of the government. Because these were lacking, the administration influenced by personal idiosyncrasies only ruled and ruled out project without recourse to their socio-economic implications.

Similarly, the absent of an infrastructure development policy and roadmap evolved from a stakeholder participatory process undermined the diligent utilization of the enormous ₦2.031 Trillion supposedly spent on infrastructure project delivery in a manner that drive socio-economic development of the state. In which case, availability of financial resources was not and has not been the bane of infrastructure for socio-economic development, but rather mis-utilization of abundant financial resources.

Disjointed and Poorly Coordinated Pattern of Infrastructure Project Delivery

One other factor that undermined effective infrastructure delivery for socio-economic development in Rivers state was the disjointed and poorly coordinated pattern of infrastructure project delivery. The efforts were poorly coordinated without of structural linkages. Rural infrastructure was not targeted to boost agricultural productivity, neither was the agriculture sector targeted for boost investment in cottage industries, job creation and generation of foreign exchange. For lack of vision, hitherto existing agricultural projects such as the Songhai Farm at Bunu Tai and Banana Farm in Tai and Khana L.G.As, Buguma Fish Farm etc. were abandoned with immediate implication of loss of employment (structural unemployment) and revenue for government. One does not need to look elsewhere for the causes of the food hunger, raising poverty and unemployment for the period. The white elephant infrastructure project of the administration did not attract significant economic investment for the state. It is trite that well-coordinated infrastructure delivery attracts investments, with attendant positive multiplier effect for income generation. The further re-investment of generated income triggers economic growth with implications for socio-economic development which will manifest in improved living condition and standard of living of the citizenry. This unfortunately was not the case within the period under review.

There is equally the issue of the poor geographical and locational spread of the projects. This assertion is emboldened by the spread of 63 major projects of the period as evidenced in the table below.

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 Ohiaini 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/Maintenanceof 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-Illoabuchi 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 Mandala) 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 Igbogo 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 above 63 landmark and projects of the administration, 31 were cited in Obio/Akpor, 20 in Port Harcourt City and 12 were across the remaining 21 L.G.As of the state. Apart from the fact that the projects were not evenly distributed, they never targeted at ignite and utilization of the economic potentials that lies in the rural areas of Rivers State. Apart from oil and gas, the economic fortune of Rivers State lies in agriculture. As earlier identified, attention to rural infrastructure could be an economic magic wand. Similarly, roads such as the reclamation and Bundu-Ama roads interconnecting the Nigeria Port Authority (NPA) Port Harcourt Wharf, Abonnema Wharf Road, Onne Axis of the East-West which connect economic nerve centres of the state received no attention. The argument that the Onne axis of the East-West was within the purview of Rivers State was untenable, since had executed similar federal project and got refund. Negligence to such economic infrastructure as of electricity generation and these strategic roads as incentive for economic investment help substantiate our argument.

Decrepit Political Leadership and Bad Governance

The crux of the matter is that Rivers State suffered poor political leadership and bad governance within these years. This undermined the formulation and implementation of an infrastructure development policy based on need assessment, absence of stakeholders' engagement and citizen participation in infrastructure governance; and encouraged misulitisation of infrastructure budget, poor accountability and stewardship, disjointed and uncoordinated infrastructure development drive, poor pattern and geographical spread of projects, other challenges.

In fact, it was the negative over bearing self-serving, rentier, predatory, transactional, uncharismatic, non-transformational character of the political leadership that undermined socio-economic development of the state. What prevailed was "the political economy of infrastructure delivery for the personal gains for the executors of the projects, and less about the socio-economic gain derivable to the citizenry. This could provide some understanding why multibillion dollars' project such as the Dr. Peter Odili Cancer and Cardiovascular Disease Diagnostic and Treatment Centre etc, Mother and Child Hospitals, were supposedly completed and commissioned without their utilization.

6. Summary/Conclusion

Infrastructure development is not just for their aesthetic values. They are the fulcrum of socio-economic development of any society. While their provision is a function of the available of financial resources at the disposal of a given society; it effective delivery and utilization to drive socio-economic development is dependent on character and quality of political leadership driving the process.

Unfortunately, the case of Rivers State in the above instance has been rather perplexing. The state suffers a resource curse. With it enormous financial resources as evidenced by the hard-fact on the financial health status of the State and it inability of utilize same for the improved socio-economic condition of her citizenry. Despite the fact that over 77.1% of the total revenue of the state has been spent on capital expenditure, particularly infrastructure, significant socio-economic development has not been occasioned in the state. There has not been a significantly improved in the well-being of the citizenry. The misery index (poverty index, unemployment rate and the inequality gap) rather widened within the period. Poor political leadership and bad governance is the bane of poorly coordinated infrastructure project delivery and socio-economic development in Rivers State, not want of financial resources.

7. Recommendation

Based on the data presented, findings and conclusion reached, the papers offer the following recommendations:

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

The Rivers State government must stop the politicization of issue of infrastructure development and quickly cause the Ministry of Works and the Office of the Surveyor General of Rivers State to reactivate the well-articulated, design and coordinated infrastructure development policy and roadmap of 2008 and 2009 to guide coordinated infrastructure project delivery in the state for the attraction and retention of investment. The principle of continuity of projects as contained in the policy document should be reactivated and implemented to avoid the abandon project syndrome and wastage of public resources.

Improved Investment in Socio-economic Infrastructure
It was observed that the infrastructure project delivery was not targeted at critical economic infrastructure such as electricity generation and distribution as a major stimulant of industrialization and productivity. Rivers State must take advantage of the unbundling and full liberalizations of the power sector and the enormous gas resources in to develop its independent power and of course distribute same within the state. Improved electricity power infrastructure magnets economic investments, generate employment, boast productivity create wealth and improved socio-economic condition.

Effective Geo-Spatial Distribution of Infrastructure Project for Even Development of the State
The Rivers State should ensure that the pattern of Infrastructure project delivery is not skewed or concentrated in one part of the state but rather spatially distributed across the state and to the link the rural areas and other economic nerve centers of the state. This will also attract investment and boast the coordinated development of these areas.

Conscious Citizens' Engagement and Demand for Accountability in Infrastructure Governance
Infrastructure delivery is a product of governance. The process leading to the selection and execution of projects has gone for a long without the people (citizens), by way of deliberate exclusion. A deliberate push by the citizens for inclusion as a matter of right will create room for transparency, accountability and stewardship on the part of political leadership. The push for inclusive government is a right to be demanded, and struggled for and taken. It is not one that is given on platter. Citizen must take up this responsibility.

References

AFDB (2010). Infrastructure development action plan for Nigeria, 2010-2020. African Development.

AFDB (2020). African infrastructure development index (AIDI). African Development Bank.

Anyanwu, J. C (1993). Monetary economics: Theory, policy and institutions. Hybrid Publishers Ltd.

Aschauer, D.A. (1989). Is public expenditure productive? Journal of Monetary Economics 23, 177- 200.

Aunty, R.M. (2000). How natural resources affects economic development. Development Policy Review, 18, 347-364.

Beredugo, A. (2023). Transformative speeches of Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike. Matlhouse.

Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) (2003). Nigeria: http://2/6/5/71/10/3171. Menu/ D=3. March, 2007.

CBN (2014). Statistical bulletin. CBN.

Eremie, V.T, Hart, A. & Barigbon, C.B. (2019). Economic transformation within the Asian tigers: What is behind the mask? International Journal of Operational Research in Management, Social Sciences and Education. 5(2), 151-161.

Fatai, O. O; Omolara, Y.J. & Taiwo, A.B (2010). Infrastructure finance and development in Nigeria. Arabia Journal of Business and Management Review, 3 (12), 44-54.

FGN (2010). 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (As amended). FGN Press.

Foster, V & Pushak, N. (2011). Nigeria's infrastructure: A continental perspective. Policy Research Working Paper. WUPS 5686. World Bank.

FRN (2020). National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan (NIIMP). Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning.

Fulmer, J. (2009). What in the world is infrastructure? PEI Infrastructure Investor, 30-32. https://30kwe1si3or29z2y020bgbet-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wpcontent/uploads/2018/ 03/what-in-the-world-is- infrastructure.pdf.

Gurdal, T., Aydin, M., & Inal, V. (2021). The relationship between tax revenue, government expenditure, and economic growth in G7 countries: new evidence from time and frequency domain approaches. Economic Change and Restriction, 54(2), 305-337.

Ikunga, S.A & Wilson, G. (2013). The politics of revenue allocation and socio-economic development of Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, 3(3), 90-94.

Kabiru, S. A. (2016). Socio-economic infrastructure and national development: An analytical assessment from Nigerian perspective, IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), 21(4), 36-42.

Kalu, I.E., (2022) Elusive growth and development in Nigeria: What did we do wrong? University of Port

Harcourt Printing Press Ltd.

Nair, P., Kumar, D. (2005). Mumbai urban transport project — Development and challenges. Urban/Regional 0505006, University Library of Munich.

National Population Commission (2023). Projected population of Rivers State. NPC

Nsirim, P. (2022). Wike's distinguished award on infrastructure delivery: An affirmation of excellence in governance. Guardian, Oct. 24.

Ntete-Nna, N.J (2011) Leadership and development crisis: The Ogoni experience. In Ekekwe, E.N(Ed). Nigeria, leadership and development: Essays in honour of Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi (Pp 104-120. Author House.

Nwanne, T. F. I. (2015). Implications of government capital expenditure on the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. European Journal of Accounting, Auditing and Finance Research, 3 (10), 19-23.

Obiechina, M.E (2010). Analysis of revenue generation as a tool for socio-economic and infrastructure development in Nigeria. CBN Bullion, 34 (4), 41-54.

Ofiice of the Accountant General of Rivers State (OAGRS) (2015- 2023). Audited accounts and annual reports of Rivers State. Ministry of Finance.

Okpalaoka, C. (2021). Infrastructure challenges in Nigeria and the effect on the Nigerian economy: A case review of literature. Environmental and Earth Sciences Research Journal, 8(4), 159-162.

Onuchukwu, O. & Nwobueze, G. C. (2023). Leadership and sustainable development in Rivers State, Nigeria, 2015-2023. In Onuchukwu, C. & Mmon, P. C., Leadership, governance and sustainable development in Nigeria: A book in honour of His Excellency Nyesom Ezenwo Wike. Pearls Publisher International Ltd.

Oyedele, A. A. (2014). The challenges of infrastructure development in democratic governance. FIG Working Paper. Oyedele, O. A. (2012). The challenges of infrastructure development in democratic governance. Constructive Economics and Management, 1(6119), 1-15.

Ozumba, L.N. (2021). Leadership, public finance, accountability and national development in Nigeria. International Journal of Public Administration and Management, 7 (2), 29-38.

Revenue Mobilisation Accounts and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) (2015- 2023). Federal allocations accounts committee annual reports. RMAFC.

Rivers State Government (RSG) (2015-2023). Appropriation law (approved estimates). Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning.

Sach, J.D & Warner, A.M. (2011). The curse of natural resources. European Economic Review, 45(4-6), 827-838.

Sahoo, P, Dash, R.K & Nataraj, G. (2010). Infrastructure development and economic growth in china. IDE Discussion Paper No. 261.

Shehu, A. (2018). Infrastructural dilemma and Nigerian Development: An exploration study. International Journal of Current Innovations in Advanced Research. 1(3), 30-38.

UKEssays. (2018). Economic and social infrastructure. https://www.ukessays.com/essays/economics/economic-and-social-infrastructure-economics-essay.php?vref=1

World Bank (1989). Sub-saharan Africa: From crisis to sustainable growth. World Bank.

World Bank (1994). Investing in infrastructure- World Bank Development Report. Oxford University Press.