

The Impact of Leadership on Infrastructural Development in Benue State, 1999-2023

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of leadership on infrastructural development in Benue State. The primary aim was to analyse how successive leadership have impacted infrastructural progress, with a focus on sectors such as transportation, water, health and energy. Employing a mixed-methods approach, including surveys of 400 respondents across diverse demographic groups and qualitative interviews with community leaders, the research integrates quantitative data analysis with thematic qualitative insights. Data collection involved questionnaires, interviews, and secondary sources, which were then analysed using statistical and thematic methods to derive meaningful insights. The theoretical framework is anchored in Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasises visionary, inclusive, and ethical leadership as drivers of sustainable development. Findings reveal that leadership contributions since 1999 have been modest, with most infrastructural projects rated as poor in quality and limited in impact, largely due to systemic issues such as mismanagement, inadequate funding, and poor maintenance. Despite efforts across various administrations, infrastructural deficits persist, hampering socio-economic growth and community resilience. The study concludes that effective, transparent, and sustainable leadership is crucial for transforming infrastructural challenges into catalysts for long-term development. Recommendations include strengthening governance, increasing community engagement, prioritizing sustainable solutions like solar systems, and enhancing project management capacities, especially in rural areas, to foster inclusive and durable infrastructural growth in Benue State.

Keywords: Leadership, governance, development, infrastructure and rural areas.

INTRODUCTION

The influence of leadership on infrastructural development in Benue State is both significant and complex, reflecting broader patterns of political, economic, and social transformation across different epochs of governance. Leadership fundamentally determines the strategic direction, prioritization, and implementation of infrastructural projects, thereby shaping the developmental trajectory of the state. Historically, the early military administrations in Benue State laid critical foundational infrastructure that provided the basis for subsequent development efforts. For example, Colonel Abdullahi Shelleng's administration (1976-1978) focused on establishing administrative structures and basic infrastructure, particularly in the state capital, Makurdi, which set the stage for future expansion (Igirgi, 2004). The subsequent civilian government under Aper Aku (1979-1983) marked a significant turning point, as his administration prioritized industrialization, agricultural development, and educational expansion, establishing key institutions such as Benue Brewery Limited, Taraku Mills, and the Benue State University. These initiatives underscored a leadership-driven approach to infrastructural and socio-economic development, aimed at fostering self-sufficiency and economic resilience (Nwachukwu, 2017).

Over the decades, leadership changes ranging from military coups to democratic transitions have influenced the pace, scope, and sustainability of infrastructural development in Benue State. For instance, during the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s, military administrators often focused on implementing federal

directives, which led to both infrastructural decline and sporadic growth in areas such as road construction and education (Hagher, 2002). The brief democratic administration of Reverend Father Moses Adasu (1992-1993) initiated some infrastructural projects, including the establishment of Benue State University and cultural initiatives, but limited financial resources and the short tenure constrained broader infrastructural gains (Olamide, 2015). Similarly, the military regimes of the 1990s, under leaders like Aminu Kontagora, prioritized urban infrastructural projects with limited focus on rural development, which perpetuated infrastructural disparities across the state (Ugbaja, 2019).

In the contemporary period, leadership in Benue State has increasingly recognized infrastructure as a cornerstone of sustainable development. The democratic governments from 1999 onward have formulated and implemented strategic policies aimed at addressing infrastructural deficits and fostering socio-economic growth. Notable among these are the *Benue Advance Plan* (1999–2007), the "*Our Benue, Our Future*" blueprint (2007–2015), and the "*Our Collective Vision for a New Benue*" (2015–2023), which collectively aimed to galvanize infrastructural and human capital development through targeted projects in transportation, health, education, and agriculture. These policies reflect an increasing emphasis on comprehensive planning, governance, and resource mobilization driven by political leadership committed to transformative development.

In scholarly terms, leadership acts as both a catalyst and a determinant of infrastructural advancement, shaping the policies, resource allocation, and institutional frameworks necessary for development (North, 1990; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). In the case of Benue State, the evolving leadership styles from military to democratic have significantly influenced infrastructural outcomes, either accelerating growth or constraining progress through mismanagement or neglect. As such, this study seeks to critically examine how leadership has historically and contemporaneously impacted infrastructural development in Benue State, recognising that effective leadership is indispensable for translating developmental policies into tangible infrastructural realities that underpin sustainable growth and socio-economic stability.

Conceptual Review

Leadership: The concept of leadership is a many-sided and dynamic construct that has been extensively explored across various disciplines, including organisational behaviour, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (House & Aditya, 1997; Avolio, 2005; Bass, 1985). Leadership has been defined and redefined through different theoretical perspectives, with Northouse (2018, p.18) positing that it is "a process where an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". This definition highlights the core aspects of leadership, including influence, relational dynamics, and goal-oriented behaviour. Other scholars have also underscored the complexities of leadership, with Yukl (2006) arguing that effective leadership involves a range of skills, including communication, decision-making, and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, Burns (1978) has distinguished between transactional and transformational leadership styles, emphasizing the significance of inspiring a shared vision and fostering organisational change. Overall, the literature suggests that leadership is a nuanced and adaptive concept that requires ongoing theoretical and empirical exploration to fully capture its essence and implications.

Infrastructure Development: The concept of infrastructure development is a critical component of economic growth and social progress, encompassing the creation, enhancement, and maintenance of fundamental facilities and systems that support societal functions (Aschauer, 1989; Calderón & Servén, 2004). Infrastructure includes transportation networks, energy supply, water and sanitation systems, communication technologies, and social infrastructure such as healthcare and education facilities (World Bank, 1994). Scholars have emphasized that infrastructure development acts as a catalyst for economic productivity by reducing transaction costs, improving access to markets, and fostering technological innovation (Flynn & Malik, 2014). Additionally, infrastructure investment is often viewed as a means of promoting equitable development and reducing poverty, especially in developing countries where infrastructural deficits hinder socio-economic advancement (Briceno-Garmendia, Estache, & Rode, 2004). In recent literature, there is a growing recognition of the multidimensional nature of infrastructure, which not only involves physical assets but also institutional capacity, policy frameworks, and sustainable practices (OECD, 2017). Moreover, infrastructure development is increasingly linked to issues of environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change, necessitating integrated planning and innovative financing mechanisms (Sachs et al., 2019). Overall, the scholarly discourse underscores that infrastructure

development is a multifaceted process essential for fostering economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability, particularly in contexts with infrastructural deficits (Calderón & Servén, 2004; World Bank, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts transformation leadership as its framework of analysis. Transformational Leadership Theory first emerged in the late 20th century, primarily attributed to Burns (1978). Burns distinguished between transactional leadership, which focuses on exchanges and rewards, and transformational leadership, which involves elevating followers' motivation and morality. He conceptualised transformational leadership as a process where leaders and followers inspire each other to reach higher levels of performance and ethical standards. Bass (1980) further developed these ideas by introducing the concept of "full-range leadership," providing a structured framework that identified specific behaviours and attributes associated with transformational leadership. This evolution made the theory more applicable across various organisational and societal contexts.

In addition to Burns and Bass, scholars such as Kouzes and Posner (1995) contributed to popularising the theory by emphasising the importance of vision, inspiration, and fostering collaboration. Researchers like Avolio and Gibbons explored how transformational leaders could create environments conducive to innovation and change. The theory quickly gained traction beyond political leadership, especially within organisational studies, as researchers sought to understand how leadership could influence employee engagement, organisational success, and cultural change. Its application across sectors like education, healthcare, and business, supported by empirical evidence, demonstrated positive effects on employee satisfaction, performance, and organisational effectiveness, highlighting its relevance to broader societal development.

The development of Transformational Leadership Theory has been characterised by its ongoing evolution and diverse applications. Initially rooted in political leadership analysis by Burns, it was soon adopted in organisational settings to explain how leaders could influence followers to achieve collective goals. Over time, core components such as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, as proposed by Bass (1985), were identified and operationalised. This refined framework enabled practitioners and scholars to implement transformational leadership in various settings, including government, non-profit, and corporate sectors, where it proved effective in fostering change, innovation, and organisational growth. Its adaptability to different contexts underscores its importance as a leadership paradigm for driving development.

Fundamentally, Transformational Leadership Theory is based on several core assumptions about how leaders influence followers. It posits that transformational leaders inspire through charisma, vision, and emotional appeal, creating a profound influence that motivates individuals to transcend personal interests for a shared purpose. They are seen as visionaries who articulate compelling future states, fostering commitment and enthusiasm among followers. The theory also assumes that leaders should focus on developing their followers' potential by recognising individual strengths and fostering a supportive environment, which is essential for motivation and organisational commitment. Furthermore, trust, ethical behaviour, and emotional intelligence are central to effective transformational leadership, facilitating open communication, relationship-building, and moral conduct, all of which are crucial for sustainable development and organisational success.

In the context of infrastructural development, transformational leadership holds significant relevance, particularly in regions like Benue State. Leaders embodying transformational qualities can mobilise communities towards shared development goals by articulating a clear, inspiring vision for sustainable growth. They prioritise projects based on community feedback and long-term needs, organising forums and consultations to ensure inclusive decision-making. Such leaders also promote innovation in infrastructure, education, health, and employment by fostering collaboration among stakeholders and encouraging entrepreneurship. For example, they may support vocational training and small business initiatives, creating jobs and reducing unemployment, while infrastructure projects like roads and schools are aligned with community priorities. Overall, transformational leaders play a vital role in galvanising collective efforts, driving inclusive development, and improving the quality of life through strategic, visionary leadership.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey research design, which effectively collected comprehensive quantitative data from a diverse population across Benue State. This method enabled representative sampling and facilitated the analysis of patterns and relationships related to leadership and development, supporting reliable policy recommendations. The population encompassed a broad demographic, socio-economic, political, and geographic spectrum, estimated at over six million people. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select respondents across the state's three senatorial zones and local government areas, with a sample size of 400 determined through Yamane's formula. Disproportionate sampling ensured that key subgroups were adequately represented, enhancing the accuracy and relevance of the findings.

Data collection combined primary sources structured questionnaires and key informant interviews with government officials, traditional leaders, and entrepreneurs and secondary sources, such as official documents and scholarly materials. The analysis integrated quantitative methods like frequency tables and visual charts with qualitative thematic analysis of interview transcripts. This mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive understanding of leadership and development issues in Benue State, resulting in well-rounded, evidence-based conclusions that can inform policy and development strategies effectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Leadership and Infrastructural Development in Benue State

Effective leadership and robust infrastructural development are critical components for the sustainable growth and stability of Benue State. Strong leadership ensures good governance, accountability, and the implementation of policies that foster socio-economic progress. Simultaneously, infrastructural development encompassing roads, healthcare, education, and other essential services lays the foundation for improved quality of life and economic opportunities for the people of Benue.

Table 1: The extent has leadership contributed to infrastructural development in Benue State, since 1999

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Significantly	33	9
Moderately	136	36
Slightly	144	39
Not at all	62	16
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data presented in Table 1 indicates that the contribution of leadership to infrastructural development in Benue State since 1999 has been varied, with the majority of respondents perceiving only modest progress. Specifically, only 9% of respondents believe that leadership has contributed significantly to infrastructural development, suggesting that substantial advancements are limited. A larger proportion, 36%, feels that leadership has contributed moderately, indicating some progress but not enough to meet the expectations of many citizens. The largest group, comprising 39% of respondents, believe that leadership has slightly contributed to infrastructural development, reflecting minimal impact. Meanwhile, 16% feel that leadership has not at all contributed, highlighting a segment of the population that perceives little to no influence of leadership on infrastructural growth.

The implications of these findings for development in Benue State are significant. The perception that leadership has only marginally or barely contributed to infrastructural development suggests that governance is ineffective or insufficient in addressing critical infrastructural needs such as roads, healthcare facilities, schools, and utilities.

Table 2: Infrastructural Projects Have Seen Significant Progress under successive leaders in Benue State, since 1999

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Roads and bridges	91	24
Health facilities	76	20
Educational institutions	56	15
Water supply	82	22
Power and energy	70	19
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data presented in Table 2 indicates that infrastructural development in Benue State has experienced significant progress across various sectors since 1999, reflecting the efforts of successive leaders in the state. Among the key areas, roads and bridges stand out with the highest frequency (91), accounting for 24% of the total projects. This suggests that transportation infrastructure has been a primary focus, which is critical for facilitating movement of people, goods, and services within the state. Improved roads and bridges can reduce travel time, lower transportation costs, and promote economic activities such as trade and agriculture, which are vital for Benue's development.

Health facilities constitute 20% of the infrastructural projects (76), highlighting a commendable effort to improve healthcare access for residents. Better health infrastructure can lead to improved health outcomes, reduced mortality rates, and increased productivity by ensuring a healthier workforce. The focus on health is especially significant in rural or underserved areas, where access to quality healthcare can dramatically improve the quality of life and economic well-being of the population.

Educational institutions account for 15% (56) of the projects, reflecting an understanding of the importance of education in fostering human capital development. Expanding and improving educational infrastructure can enhance literacy rates, skill acquisition, and overall socio-economic development in Benue State.

Water supply projects, representing 22% (82), are essential for ensuring access to clean and safe water, which directly impacts health, sanitation, and overall well-being. Adequate water infrastructure can reduce waterborne diseases and improve living standards, especially in rural communities where such amenities may be scarce.

Power and energy infrastructure, constituting 19% (70), are crucial for supporting industrialisation, technological advancement, and daily household activities. Reliable electricity supply can attract investments, improve productivity, and enable the use of modern technology, all of which are vital for sustainable development. Holistically, the data implies that successive leaders in Benue State have prioritized infrastructural development across multiple sectors, recognizing its importance in fostering socio-economic growth. The balanced focus on roads, health, water, education, and energy suggests an integrated approach towards development.

Table 3: Rating the quality of infrastructural development under successive leaders in Benue State, since 1999

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Excellent	21	6
Good	45	12
Fair	123	33
Poor	186	49
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data presented in Table 3 indicates the perceived quality of infrastructural development in Benue State under successive leaders since 1999. According to the survey, only a small proportion of respondents (6%) rated the

infrastructural development as excellent, while 12% considered it good. A significant portion, 33%, viewed the development as fair, whereas the majority, 49%, perceived it as poor. The remaining respondents, 375 in total, reflect a predominantly negative assessment of the state's infrastructural progress over the years.

This distribution suggests that infrastructural development in Benue State has largely been inadequate and below expectations. The fact that nearly half of the respondents rated the development as poor indicates persistent challenges in building and maintaining essential infrastructure such as roads, healthcare facilities, schools, and water supply systems.

Infrastructural Development under Successive Leaders in Benue State (1999-2023)

Excellency George Akume's administration (1999-2007)

His Excellency George Akume's administration (1999-2007) marked a significant phase in Benue State's political development, notably through the introduction of the "Benue Advance Plan," a comprehensive blueprint aimed at socio-economic transformation. This plan focused on enhancing investment, boosting revenue, fostering self-employment, and implementing various infrastructural and social projects across key sectors such as roads, electricity, water, education, health, and agricultural resource development (Atim, 2007). The approach underscored the importance of a multi-sectoral strategy for sustainable development, targeting broad-based growth and economic diversification.

Empirical assessments revealed a mixed record of achievements. The administration accomplished notable infrastructural milestones, including the construction of housing estates, township roads, rural electrification, and health facilities such as hospitals and clinics (Atim, 2007; Pine, 2010). Additionally, it launched industrial initiatives like a juice company, plastic industry, and agro-processing facilities, demonstrating efforts to diversify the economy (Pine, 2010). Public-private partnerships played a role, particularly in water infrastructure projects such as the Greater Makurdi Water Works and numerous boreholes, reflecting significant fiscal commitments aimed at expanding access to water supply in both urban and rural areas (Akwaya, 2009).

Despite these investments, questions regarding the sustainability, coverage, and impact of these projects persisted. While substantial capital was allocated to water projects such as rehabilitating the Makurdi Water Works and drilling boreholes the actual operational status, community acceptance, and socio-economic benefits remained uncertain (Genyi, 2012). Reports indicated recurring issues like maintenance deficits, misallocation of funds, and limited community engagement, which compromised the long-term effectiveness of infrastructure initiatives. The reliance on solar-powered systems, though environmentally friendly, also raised concerns about technological robustness and cost-effectiveness, necessitating a critical evaluation of their outcomes and contributions to development (Akwaya, 2009).

In summary, the Akume administration's infrastructural efforts reflected a proactive drive towards addressing basic needs and economic diversification. However, the sustainability and broader impact of these projects were hampered by implementation challenges, funding gaps, and operational issues. A thorough evaluation of the projects' long-term functionality and socio-economic benefits remains essential to understand their true contribution to Benue State's development, particularly in rural water supply and infrastructural resilience (Genyi, 2012).

The leadership of Governor Gabriel Suswam (2007–2015)

The leadership of Governor Gabriel Suswam (2007–2015) introduced the "Our Benue, Our Future" blueprint, which prioritized poverty eradication and resource management through principles of fiscal discipline, productivity, service delivery, and sustainable resource utilization (Jibo, 2014; Agbinda, 2012). His administration undertook significant infrastructural projects, including the construction of seven rural highways spanning 248.26 km, connecting key local government areas such as Katsina-Ala, Ukum, and Logo, thereby enhancing rural accessibility and economic integration (Pine, 2010). Additionally, substantial investments were made in water infrastructure, notably the N4.9 billion reconstruction of the Greater Makurdi Water Works and repairs to existing facilities at Makurdi, Katsina-Ala, and Otukpo, aimed at improving water supply in the region (Doki, 2008).

Water projects during Suswam's tenure expanded significantly, with efforts to address water scarcity in rural communities. These included the sinking of 446 boreholes across 23 local government areas, with over 117 boreholes repaired and 100 newly drilled, as well as the installation of hand-propelled pumps and solar-powered boreholes (BERWASSA, 2015). From 2007 onwards, there was a notable shift toward renewable energy solutions, with an increasing number of solar-powered boreholes, reaching 64 by 2014, distributed across various local government areas such as Okpokwu, Ushongo, and Agatu. This strategic focus on solar energy aimed to ensure more sustainable, reliable water access, reducing dependence on manual pumps and promoting environmentally friendly practices, which contributed to improved water access and community health.

In the health sector, the Suswam administration completed 11 hospitals, procured ambulances, diagnostic equipment, and supplied essential medicines, reflecting a commitment to improving healthcare services (Akwaya, 2009). However, questions remain about the distribution, utilization, and long-term sustainability of these facilities, especially in rural and underserved areas. While these development initiatives demonstrated clear policy objectives, there remains a gap between intentions and tangible outcomes. Critical evaluation suggests that, despite substantial infrastructural investments, the extent to which these projects have alleviated poverty, enhanced health outcomes, or fostered sustainable economic growth requires further exploration, particularly regarding maintenance, coverage, and socio-economic impacts.

Samuel Ortom's administration (2015–2023)

During Samuel Ortom's administration (2015–2023), significant efforts were made to improve infrastructural development across Benue State, especially in roads, electricity, and water supply. The government completed numerous road projects, including roads in Gboko, Makurdi, Otukpo, and Ukum, with all listed projects reaching 100% completion (Ministry of Water Resources and Environment, 2019). These projects aimed to enhance transportation, facilitate economic activities, and improve access to essential services. Additionally, in the energy sector, various projects such as transformer installations and rural electrification initiatives were undertaken, contributing to expanded electricity access in both urban and rural localities (BERWASSA, 2019). Despite these achievements, some projects, notably several roads like the Low Cost Road and Makurdi-Yogbo-Udei-Udei Branch Road, remain uncompleted, highlighting ongoing challenges in project management and resource allocation, which can undermine public confidence and restrict socio-economic development (Interview, 2025).

In the water infrastructure sector, the Ortom administration made notable progress by constructing numerous motorized boreholes and hand-pumped wells from 2016 to 2018. For instance, in 2016, 35 motorized boreholes and 372 hand pumps were installed across various localities such as Tarka, Buruku, and Konshisha, reflecting a strategic focus on expanding water access (Ministry of Water Resources and Environment, 2019). The introduction of solar-powered boreholes in 2018 marked a move towards sustainable and environmentally friendly solutions, improving reliability and reducing reliance on manual pumps. By 2018, a total of 622 hand pumps and 53 boreholes had been constructed, demonstrating a sustained commitment to public health and sanitation. However, despite these investments, challenges persist, especially in urban centers and rural communities, where infrastructure often suffers from poor maintenance, frequent breakdowns, and inadequate operational management, which hinder consistent water supply (BERWASSA, 2019).

The water supply challenges in Benue State are compounded by issues such as rapid urban population growth, environmental factors, and governance problems. Many urban water systems remain non-functional or operate below capacity due to equipment failures, vandalism, and lack of funding for maintenance, leading to intermittent supply and public dissatisfaction (Interview, 2026). Rural areas face even greater difficulties, relying heavily on outdated, poorly maintained infrastructure, or unsafe water sources, which cause health risks and limit socio-economic activities like farming and trade. Factors such as inadequate technical expertise, political corruption, and environmental variability further exacerbate these issues, leaving many communities vulnerable to water scarcity, especially during dry seasons. Despite infrastructural investments, the water supply system in Benue remains fragile, requiring improved management, sustainable funding, and stronger governance to ensure long-term access and health security for all residents (Ministry of Water Resources and Environment, 2019).

The interview responses reveal a stark reality of infrastructural neglect in Benue State, with community leaders expressing deep concern over the state of roads, water supply, healthcare, and electricity. James Mbabov from

Wadata, Makurdi, highlighted that the roads are in a deplorable condition, often riddled with potholes and impassable during the rainy season, which isolates communities and hampers economic activities. He also emphasized that access to clean and portable water remains a persistent challenge, with many boreholes non-functional or nonexistent, forcing residents particularly women and children to travel long distances to unsafe sources, thereby increasing health risks such as waterborne diseases (Interview, 2026). These infrastructural deficiencies not only impair daily life but also hinder economic growth and community development by limiting access to markets, schools, and healthcare facilities.

Similarly, Abraham Orngu from Katsina-Ala expressed concern over broader infrastructural shortcomings, including inadequate healthcare facilities, unreliable electricity, and poor sanitation systems. He pointed out that in rural communities, government projects are often abandoned or poorly executed, further exacerbating these issues. He noted that these infrastructural gaps limit opportunities for youth and small-scale farmers, as poor roads lead to perishable produce and unreliable water affects agricultural productivity. Orngu stressed that infrastructural development should be a priority for leadership, as neglect and lack of political will have left communities in a state of underdevelopment, hampering socio-economic growth and the well-being of residents (Interview, 2026). These leaders' responses underscore how systemic infrastructural decay directly impacts the socio-economic fabric of Benue State, affecting livelihoods and community resilience.

James Adoji further elaborated on these issues, emphasizing that inadequate infrastructure has far-reaching implications for the state's overall development. He explained that poor roads hinder farmers and traders from transporting their produce, leading to post-harvest losses and reduced income, which stifles local economic growth. Additionally, the lack of reliable water and sanitation infrastructure contributes to the prevalence of waterborne diseases, increasing healthcare costs and reducing productivity, especially among women and children. Adoji highlighted that inadequate healthcare and electricity supply limit access to essential services and hinder the operation of small businesses, thereby perpetuating a cycle of underdevelopment. He concluded that infrastructural deficits are both a cause and consequence of poverty, leaving communities isolated, with limited opportunities for health, education, and economic advancement, ultimately impeding efforts to diversify the economy and achieve sustainable growth (Interview, 2026; Williams, 2026).

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings reveal that leadership in Benue State has contributed only modestly to infrastructural development since 1999, with most respondents perceiving progress as either slight or insufficient. While some sectors like roads, water, health, and electricity have seen infrastructural projects, the overall impact remains limited, and the quality of infrastructure is predominantly rated as poor. Successive administrations have made efforts across multiple sectors, including roads, healthcare, water, education, and energy, with notable achievements such as the construction of roads, water facilities, and health centers. However, many projects remain incomplete or poorly maintained, and systemic issues like mismanagement, inadequate funding, and lack of political will continue to hamper sustainable development (Field Survey, 2026).

The findings also highlight the persistent challenges faced by Benue State, especially in rural and urban communities, where infrastructural decay impairs daily life and economic activities. Leaders and community members alike emphasize the deplorable condition of roads, unreliable water supply, inadequate healthcare, and erratic electricity, which collectively hinder socio-economic growth and community resilience. Water infrastructure, in particular, suffers from non-functional boreholes and poor maintenance, leading to health risks and limited access to clean water. These deficiencies exacerbate poverty, reduce productivity, and limit opportunities for small-scale farmers and youth, thereby perpetuating cycles of underdevelopment and social inequality.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, despite some infrastructural efforts, the overall progress in Benue State has been inadequate, with systemic issues and governance challenges preventing the realization of comprehensive socio-economic development. The poor state of infrastructure hampers access to essential services, economic growth, and social well-being. To address these issues, it is essential for leadership to prioritize sustainable infrastructure

development, improve project management, ensure proper maintenance, and foster transparency and accountability. Strengthening governance and increasing commitment to rural development are critical to transforming infrastructural deficits into drivers of long-term growth and stability in Benue State.

To improve infrastructure in Benue State, transparency and accountability should be prioritized throughout project planning and maintenance. Emphasizing sustainable solutions like solar water systems can ensure long-term benefits, while increasing funding and technical capacity especially in rural areas will enhance project management and upkeep. Additionally, community engagement and targeted policies addressing specific needs in health, water, roads, and electricity are essential for fostering ownership, ensuring sustainability, and promoting inclusive socio-economic growth.

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