



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS IN AKWA IBOM STATE.

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### Abstract

The study assessed the rural development innovations and socio-economic impacts in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The hypothesis of the study was stated in null form that rural development innovations have no significant socio-economic impacts in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State. Survey design was adopted and questionnaire was used for data collection. Systematic random sampling technique was used while Multiple Regression Analysis was employed in testing the hypotheses. The result of hypothesis testing yielded a correlation coefficient (R-Square) value of 91% meaning that the availability of rural development innovations accounted for 91% improvement in the life of the rural inhabitant. Furthermore, the hypothesis testing shows that rural development innovations have significantly influence the socio-economic life of the rural inhabitants. Thus, the major economic impact is in the expansion of the rural economy, increase access to employment opportunities, increase in agricultural production, among others. Therefore, it was recommended that since over 70% of Nigerian population live in the rural areas and produce the greatest wealth of the nation, the rural areas should be accorded more recognition in terms of budgetary provisions and provision of social and economic amenities.

**Keywords:** Rural areas, Development, Innovations, Social, and Economic Impacts.

### Introduction

Rural development is a process whereby a set of social, technical, cultural and institutional measures are being put in place for inhabitants of rural areas with the objectives of improving their socio-economic condition in order to accomplish balance both on the national and regional levels. Rural development innovation is a drastic transformation of the rural areas through development innovations and programmes, hinge on eradication of poverty, enhancing living standard, income, and productivity. Sustainable rural development innovation is an integrated approach towards food production, and institutional infrastructural provision for the basic goal of qualitative and quantitative change that aim at improving the living standard of the rural populace and economy of its nation within the context of sustainable development goals.

Sustainable rural development innovation is the process of increasing per capital income and the quality of rural dwellers life to enable them become prime movers of their own destiny through food security, employment, and skill acquisition among others (Ijere, 2019). Sustainable rural development innovations involve creating and widening opportunities for rural individuals to realize their full potentials through education, sharing in decision making and action which affect their lives (Ogidefa, 2017). Also, it is the effort towards increased rural output and create

employment opportunities while eliminating fundamental or extreme cases of poverty, diseases and ignorance as stipulated in sustainable development goal one. Therefore, combining all the important elements of development, rural development can be termed the integrated approach to food production as well as physical, social and institutional infrastructural provisions with an ultimate goal of bringing about both quantitative and qualitative changes which result in improved living standard of the rural population (Ogidefa, 2017).

Rural development in Nigeria has been of great concern to the different levels of government due to the rate of rural-urban migration. As a matter of fact, Onah (2017), observed that Nigeria has had many Development Plans including the 1st National Development Plan (1962-1968); 2nd National Development Plan (1970-1974); 3rd National Development Plan (1975-1980); 4th National Development Plan (1981-1985); the three Rolling Plans 1990-1992, 1993-1995, 1996-1998. There was also Vision 2010 and Nigeria 20:20, and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) among others. Onah (2017) highlighted that the strategies have been rather numerous and not too many successes have been recorded.

Nigerians have experienced numerous rural community development innovation initiated by successive civilian and military governments beginning with the National Development plans which have not yielded desired results. It is also noted that rather than being a process of evolution from one stage of strategy to another stage and thus a process of building on past programmes, innovations and experience, it has been a process of total change from one strategy to another. It is on this premise the study assessed rural development innovations and socio-economic impacts in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Rural development is crucial for the structural transformation and economic development of Nigeria. Notwithstanding the role of rural development in the country's development is crucial and indispensable, it is obvious that even in not-too-distant past, the virtual neglect of these areas and their population has led to widespread poverty, underdevelopment and inequality. The recent phenomenon of massive importation of food and growth of slums in our major cities along with its attendant social, political and economic consequences have been the result of the collapse of the rural economy and infrastructure. There is little doubt that Nigerians have reaped more deficits than dividends of rural development innovations. Several methods to remove rural urban development gap have been carried out in Nigeria with little success, therefore the rural areas still remain highly underdeveloped in comparison with the urban areas Eboh (2011).

Furthermore, in a quest to alleviate this problem from the masses, various policies, innovations and programmes have been put in place by governments, NGOs and corporate organizations. However, such policies, innovations and programmes have been found to end up with the regime that introduced them as it faces lots of bottleneck during its operation. Also, various agricultural policies and innovations, which differed in nomenclature and perhaps, organizational structure and advisory procedures, have been carried out in Nigeria, yet, the country is still striving to feed her citizens. On this note, there is urgent need for this research to assess the rural development innovations and its socio-economic impacts in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

The exploration of rural development and their socio-economics impacts has garnered significant attention. Mabogunje (2018) observed that rural development is concerned with the self-

sustaining improvement of rural areas and implies a broad-based re-organization and mobilization of the rural masses so as to enhance their capacity to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with the change's consequent upon this. In the opinion of Gana (2020), rural development is important not only for its impact on rural places and people but also for its contribution to the overall development of the nation. In line with Uba (2018), who observed that, the Nigerian experience where bulk of the people and land are rural, and where the level of rural output is very low, while rural mobilization provides the quickest and most direct route to national development. This would require the adoption of appropriate technology for raising rural productivity and efficient utilization of resources, creation of efficient transport network for rural and urban areas to ensure easy transportation of agricultural produce for massive food production and supply of industrial raw materials.

Thunder (2019), also observed that the ambit of rural development is very wide indeed, and it requires a comprehensive approach. It includes generation of new employment, more equitable access to arable land, equitable distribution of income, widespread improvement in health, nutrition and housing, creation of incentives and opportunities. It also involves the ability of the local government to create wider opportunities for individuals to realize their full potentials through education and sharing in the decisions and actions which affect their lives. The development of efficient basic infrastructure would enhance the access for social communication devices, the growth in economy and the environment sustainability (Lokesha & Mahesha, 2018). Also, Lokesha & Mahesha (2018) emphasize the importance of the infrastructure development towards the village communities which is to change the policy of isolation and seclusion. This can be realised with the availability of road network that allows contact to other people. Access to communication devices such as telephones which enhanced the rural community's communication with the outside world, including borderless world. This view is in tandem with (Anderson and Taylor, 2019), definition of globalization as a process that increases the network and inter-dependency between communities. The World Economic Forum (2018), emphasized on the importance of enhancing the basic infrastructure as the advancement in this aspect would reduce the isolation among different areas and it can also integrate the local market and the local economy with minimal cost incurred unlike in the past.

Rajwani & Zakiyah (2019), on the impact of infrastructure development on rural communities in Utara and Sintok, Malaysia. The study viewed the relationship between social wellbeing and provision of complete infrastructure facilities. It was revealed that infrastructural facilities contributed immensely towards the enhancement of the living standard of some rural inhabitant. Rural development projects are an important element and a sure way to the speedy development of the rural areas of Nigeria and is well attested to in development literature (Okafor 2017, Udoeye 2015, Muoghalu 2019 & Agboola 2016). The need to develop rural areas to a large extent would reduce the contrasting scenario of urban opulence and rural decadence. It has equally received ample documentation in literature, (Hansen & Schulz, 2019). Strategic option for the liquidation of these imbalances traceable to social class distinctions, regional disparities in economic development and intra urban variations in achievement of economic well-being have been recommended (Solomon 2016, Friedman 2016, FGN 2016).

The development of the basic infrastructure in the rural areas is seen as a holistic approach where it could be the solution for the problems of inequality and social justice for rural areas in general.

The importance of infrastructure for rural areas has also been discussed by (Adeyoye, Yusuf, Balogun and Carim-sanni, 2018). The lack of basic amenities is the main factor that can affect the quality of life of rural communities as well as the factor that can undermine the effort in enhancing the rural communities' economic transformation which generally rely on the agricultural resources. Aziz (2019) who did a study on the relationship between the infrastructure and the economic growth in India revealed that the basic infrastructure is essential for a good quality of life especially in the socio-economic aspect. The lack of basic amenities in the rural areas has direct negative impacts on the village residents such as increasing the rate of poverty, declining the agricultural products and hindering the ability to continue living a good life. All these negative impacts will definitely affect health services and has access to education for the village communities. The need to develop the basic amenities for rural areas should be considered as a part of an overall development which needs to include the economic growth, the increase in the health services, access to education and the community development itself.

The provisions of sufficient and good quality of infrastructure can maintain the balance in the quality of life between rural and urban areas (Bulus & Adefila, 2018). The provision of sufficient and efficient basic infrastructure is the basis of a good quality of life among rural communities. The development of basic infrastructure in the rural areas such as roads can be considered as the medium of communication between the rural communities with the outside communities (Sangwan, 2019). According to Yusoff, et.al, (2017) rural areas also have distinctive demographic characteristics such as social aspects, infrastructure or basic amenities as well as economic production scales Hlavsa, (2018). Basic infrastructural facilities such as roads, clean water supply and communication are the main keys to the wellbeing of a community, notably those in the rural areas. The matter of infrastructural development, specifically those that pertain to the provision and improvement of basic amenities in rural areas have long been considered by the government. Several policies have been advocated and implemented to ensure that the much-needed development takes place (Yusoff, Talib, & Pon, 2017).

United Nation (2017) noted that, the advancement in the aspect of basic infrastructure for rural communities is seen as an accelerator for the growth of the rural communities' economy which it will give a positive impact for the quality of life for the community as a whole (Ale, et al., 2020). At the same time stated that, the development of the infrastructure such as road infrastructure is seen as the key for the development in the rural areas because by having these developments, basic amenities such as clean water, electricity and communication network will be brought into the rural areas as well (Straka & Tuzova, 2016). The Nigeria government is committed to develop the rural areas by establishing various relevant Ministry of Rural Development. This shows that the government is aware of the importance of developing the infrastructure, utilities and basic amenities to enhance the well-being of the rural communities (Portal, 2017).

The impact of the infrastructural development is also related to the quality of social services especially in the aspect of education, health and the quality of life of rural communities in general. This is in-line with the study carried out in Nigeria by Egbetokun, (2019) who found that, basic infrastructure is an integral part of the rural development strategies. This is because the infrastructural development is integrated with all other aspects, including agriculture, education, health, nutrition, electricity and clean water, which subsequently be developed as well. The development of the basic infrastructure in the rural areas is seen as a holistic approach where

it could be the solution for the problems of inequality and social justice for rural infrastructure for rural areas has also been discussed by (Adeyoye, Yusuf, Balogun & Carim-sanni, 2019).

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This can be realised with the availability of road network that allows contact to other people. Access to communication devices such as telephones which will enhance the rural community's communication with the outside world, including borderless world. This view is in tandem with (Anderson and Taylor, 2018) definition of globalization as a process that increases the network and inter-dependency between communities. The World Economic Forum (2018), emphasized on the importance of enhancing the basic infrastructure as the advancement in this aspect will reduce the isolation among different areas and it can also integrate the local market and the local economy with minimal cost incurred unlike in the past. The supply of treated clean water is one of the necessary facilities for rural communities.

Global Energy Network Institute (2014) & Fong (2020), explained that most of the rural communities that do not have access to electricity supplies are among those in the developing countries. Since Nigeria is a country classified as a developing country Yusof (2019), explained that, the government has initiated several efforts to improve the quality of the people's life, be it those in the urban or rural areas. Nevertheless, there is a huge gap between the population living in the urban and rural areas. Geographical, educational, income, gender and ages, as well as language and race gaps are some of the gaps that need to be bridged in Nigeria (Mohamed, Mohamad, Judi, Noor and Yusof, 2019). The gaps are closely related to accessibility aspects and the level of quality of life of the community, most notably those who live in the rural areas. (Ali, et.al, 2018).

Tenuche (2017), opined that, the need to develop the basic amenities for rural areas should be considered as a part of an overall development which needs to include the economic growth, increase in the health services, access to education and the community development itself. Seers, (2020), also viewed that, the rural communities with no access to electricity supplies is seen as having a low quality of life compared to their counterparts in the urban areas because electricity supply is a necessity for everyday life. Fong (2020), in the same study done before also revealed that, there are several negative implications caused by the absence of electricity supplies in rural areas such as the inability to store materials in the cold storage facilities especially food and medicines, low exposure of lightings which can impact the education sector and economic productivity, the hindering of modernization process and the limitation of communication network and its effects during emergencies.

Mosca (2018), accepted that the development of basic amenities is essential for a better quality of life. The reduction inefficiencies in the provision of basic infrastructures such as roads, clean water supply, electricity supply and communication systems can affect the quality of life of the rural communities. It is pertinent to develop the network of basic amenities in the rural areas in order to reduce the gap between rural and urban areas community. Furthermore, it is necessary to close this gap in order to maintain the quality of life in general.

### **Research objectives**

The objective of the study is to; assess the rural development innovations and socio-economic impacts in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### **Research Hypothesis**

Hypothesis generated to guide the study.

H<sub>0</sub>: Rural development innovations have no significant socio-economic impacts in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Method**

Akwa Ibom's 6,900 sq Km land area is located between Cross River, Abia, and Rivers on the sandy coastal plain of the Gulf of Guinea. It is bordered on the south by the Atlantic Ocean which stretches from Ikot Abasi to Oron. A sprawling volume of water seemingly kissing the skyline from flank to flank. Akwa Ibom State lies between latitude 4° 32' and 5° 03' North; and Longitudes 7° 25' and 8° 25' East. In terms of structural make up, Akwa Ibom is triangular in shape and covers a total land area of 8,412 km<sup>2</sup>, encompassing the Qua Iboe River Basin, the western part of the lower Cross River Basin and the Eastern part of the Imo River Basin. With an ocean front which spans a distance of 129 kilometers from Ikot Abasi in the west to Oron in the east, Akwa Ibom presents a picture of captivating coastal, mangrove forest and beautiful sandy beach resorts (Bissala, 2019). The main economic activities of the people are fishing (for riverine and coastal dwellers), farming (mostly for upland dwellers), trading, artisanship and white-collar services. A robust public sector employs significant proportion of the State labour force.

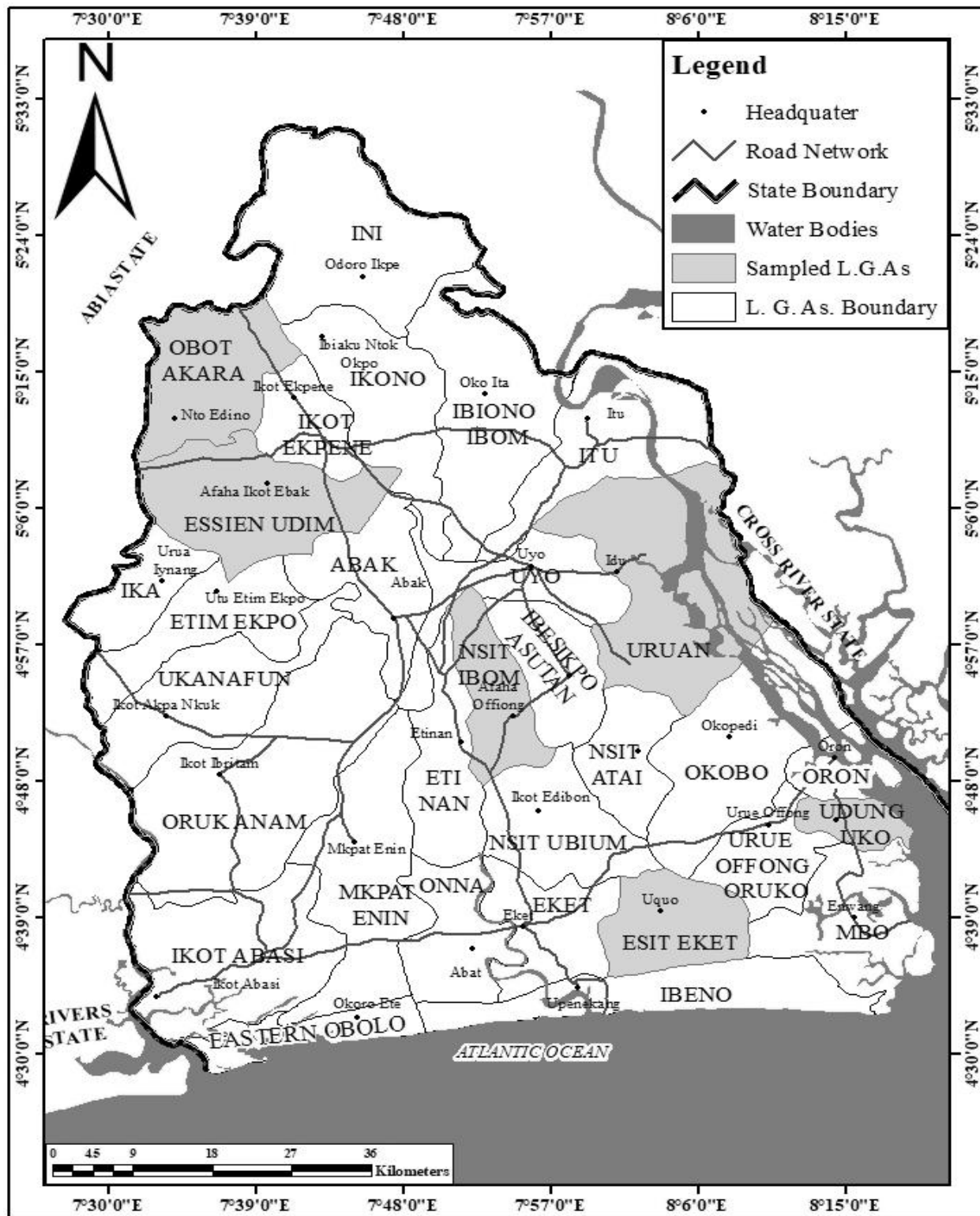


Figure 1: Akwa Ibom State Map Showing the Study Area

Source: Ministry of Lands and Town planning

The survey research design was adopted for this study because sample that can represent the whole population of the study was chosen and inferences drawn from the results of analysis of data. It involved the collection of data using observational method such as questionnaires to accurately and objectively describe variables as related to socio economic impact of rural development programmes in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source was generated from the questionnaires developed by the researcher sources included academic journals, government bulletins, magazines, articles, internets and work of other researchers. The total projected 2023 population of the selected six local government areas was 938,059 (Figure 3.2). Thus, Taro Yamane's formula for finite population was adopted in determining sample size.

$$N_0 = \frac{N}{1 + (Ne)^2}$$

Where:

$N_0$  = Sample size

$e$  = Level of significance = 0.05

$e^2$  = Error level = 0.0025

$N$  = Finite population = 938,059

= 399.9, Approximately 400

Out of the 400 questionnaires administered 315 were correctly filled and retrieved by the researcher from the respondents.

**Table 1 : Number of Allocated Questionnaires per LGA**

S/N	LGA	2006 population	2021 population projection	No. of Administered Questionnaire	% of Administered Questionnaire
1	Obot Akara	147286	202518	86	21.59
2	Essien Udim	193257	265728	113	28.33
3	Nsit Ibom	108095	148631	63	15.84
4	Uruan	117169	161107	69	17.17
5	Esit Eket	63358	87117	37	9.29
6	Udung Uko	53060	72958	31	7.78
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>255834</b>	<b>938059</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The sampling techniques adopted for this study was systematic random sampling technique. This technique becomes necessary to give all the rural communities in the selected local government areas from three senatorial district equal and independent opportunity of being. The procedure for data collection involved a written request by the researcher to the village heads for permission to administer the questionnaire instrument on the residents. On granting the request, the researcher met with the respondents in their houses for the administration of the copies of questionnaire. The copies of questionnaires were administered to the respondents in their various houses by the researcher with the help of a research assistants. To ensure confidentiality, the respondents promised that the information provided will only be used for academic purposes and



not on political reasons. The researcher also explained issues and answered questions raised by the respondents. Out of the 384 questionnaires administered, 315 representing 81.2 percent were correctly filled and retrieved by the researcher from the respondents.

### Analysis and Discussion of findings

Multiple Regression Analysis was employed in testing the hypothesis. The reason for employing multiple regression is because of the interest in assessing the extent to which different social and economic determinants (variables) impacted (effect) on rural development innovation. Hence, rural development is the dependent variable while the social and economic factors are the independent variables.

Rural development innovations have no significant socio-economic impacts in Akwa Ibom State. The variables here include: increase in the demand for local products (X1), expands the rural economy (X2), increases farming and local income (X3), create new business investment opportunities (X4), improve access to employment opportunities (X5), decrease traveling cost (X6), ensures long-term business profitability (X7) and increase agricultural production (X8) and rural development programme (Y).

**Table 2: Inter-correlation Matrix of the Variables**

	Rural development innovations	Improve access to employment opportunities	Increases farming and local income	Increase agricultural production	Create new business investment opportunities	Expands the rural economy
Rural development innovations	1.000					
Improve access to employment opportunities	.494	1.000				
Increases farming and local income	.473	.241	1.000			
Increase agricultural production	.575	.095	.393	1.000		
Create new business investment opportunities	.422	.071	-.081	.390	1.000	
Expands the rural economy	.426	.139	-.028	.044	.217	1.000
<b>Mean</b>	3.3127	3.4984	3.3619	3.2603	3.4381	3.4000
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	.57983	1.20343	1.16578	1.28273	1.27387	1.32059

Table 2 shows that multicollinearity is not present among the variables predictor variables to include increase in the demand for local products, expands the rural economy, increases farming and local income, create new business investment opportunities, improve access to employment opportunities, decrease traveling cost, ensures long-term business profitability and increase agricultural production and rural development innovation because the zero-order correlation are less than 0.85. More importantly, none of the correlations among the variables is greater than 0.85. The result in Table 2 shows that the combinations of the above mentioned predictor

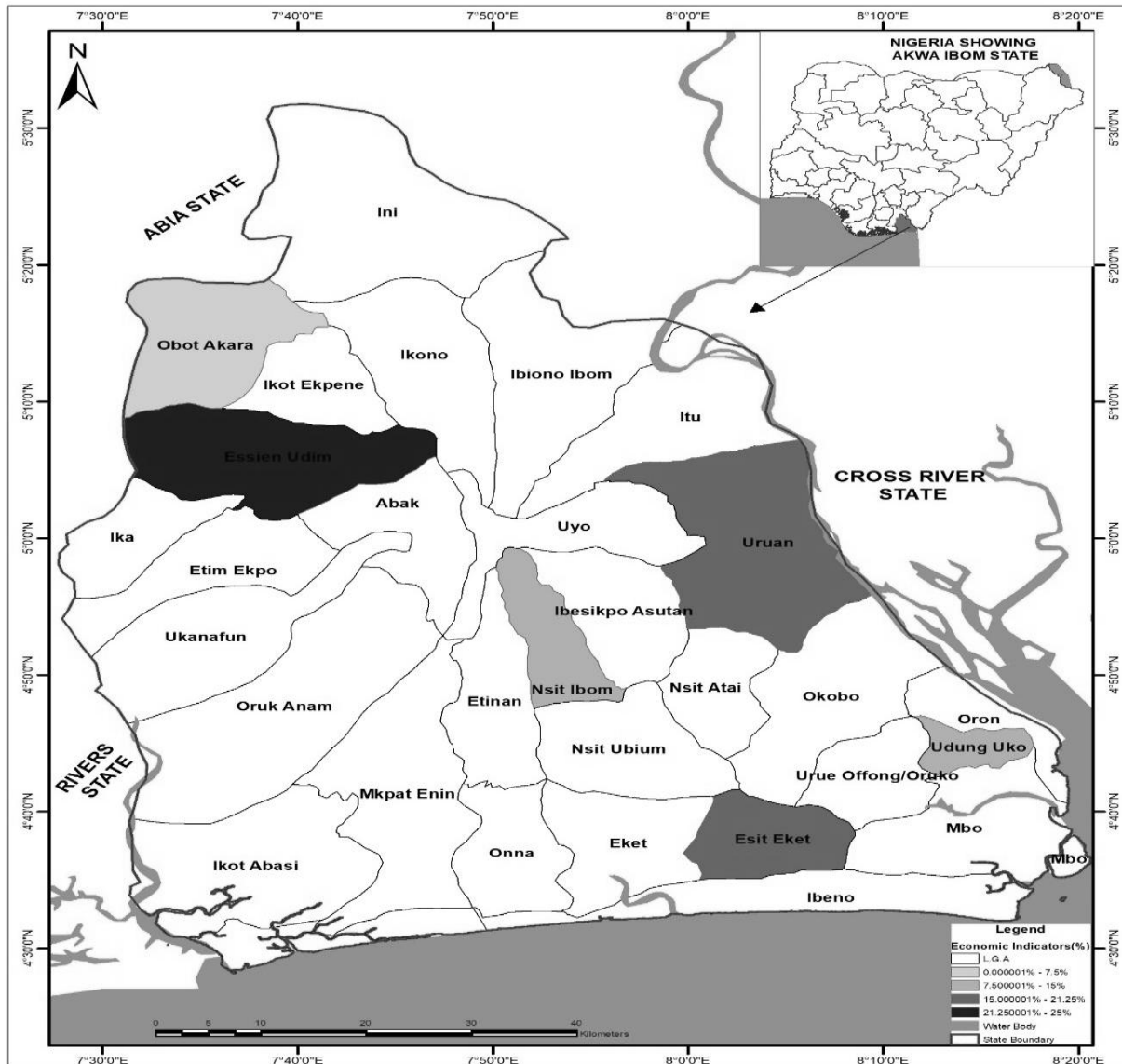
variables are joint predictors of rural Development Innovation. The predictors accounted for 56.8% of the variance in rural Development Innovation.

**Table 3: Model of the Regression Analysis**

					Change Statistics			
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	
	.969 <sup>a</sup>	.940	.938	.14437	.940	594.902	8	
Model	Sum of Squares			Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	99.189			8	12.399	594.902	.000 <sup>b</sup>	
Residual	6.377			306	.021			
Total	105.566			314				
			Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients				
Model				B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)				.191	.047		4.038	.000
Improve access to employment opportunities				.112	.007	.233	15.446	.000
Increases farming and local income				.117	.008	.236	14.176	.000
Increase agricultural production				.116	.008	.258	14.799	.000
Create new business investment opportunities				.100	.007	.219	13.369	.000
Expands the rural economy				.117	.007	.267	16.691	.000
Ensures long-term business profitability				.124	.007	.275	16.790	.000
Decrease traveling cost				.119	.007	.268	16.799	.000
Increase in the demand for local products				.111	.007	.256	15.314	.000

**(Source: Researcher's Field Survey)**

Table 3 is the model summary with R-Square value of 0.940 which indicates that the predictors (independent variables) accounted for 94% effect on the dependent variable. Furthermore, Table 3 indicates an F-value of 594.902, degree of freedom (df) of 8 and a significant value of 0.000 ( $H_0$  rejected). This therefore implies that rural development programmes have a significant impact on the economic life of the rural areas in Akwa Ibom State



**Figure 2: Economic Indicators of Rural Development in the Study Area**  
**Source: Field Survey (2024).**

The economic indicators of rural development were rated based on improve access to employment opportunities, increases farming and local income, increase agricultural production, creation of new business investment opportunities, expansion of the rural economy, long-term business profitability, low traveling cost and increase in the demand for local products. As shown in the map (Figure 2), the economic indicators were dominant in Essien Udim and Esit Eket local government areas. In Esit Eket for instance, the availability of vast land for agriculture and water bodies for fishing as well as crude oil has boosted the economic viability of the local government area. In Essien Udim, the availability of good road network, increase demand for local products (such as raffia) and new business opportunities are the major economic indicators in the area. Other local government areas are: Uruan, Nsit Ibom, Udung Uko and Obot Akara respectively.

In the light of the above result, numerous economic activities such as provision stores and other forms of trading, oil palm processing and other agricultural activities were observed across the study area. These activities remain the major source of income for the rural dwellers which they depend for their family upkeep, maintain their standard of living, among other demands. Similarly, the result of the study shows various economic impacts of rural development innovations witnessed in the state include: improve access to employment opportunities, increases farming and local income, increase agricultural production, create new business investment opportunities, expands the rural economy, ensures long-term business profitability, decrease traveling cost, increase in the demand for local products, among others.

In testing the formulated hypothesis, the result shows that economic variables determine 94% effect on rural development. This result is in accordance with of Aziz, (2018), who did a study on the relationship between the infrastructure and the economic growth in India revealed that the basic infrastructure is essential for a good quality of life especially in the socio-economic aspect. The lack of basic amenities in the rural areas has direct negative impacts on the village residents such as increasing the rate of poverty, declining the agricultural products and hindering the ability to continue living a good life. All these negative impacts will definitely affect health services and halt access to education for the village communities. It was also observed in a study that the need to develop the basic amenities for rural areas should be considered as a part of an overall development which needs to include the economic growth, the increase in the health services, access to education and the community development itself. The provisions of sufficient and good quality of infrastructure can maintain the balance in the quality of life between rural and urban areas (Bulus & Adefila, 2017).

## Conclusion

In assessing rural development innovations and its socio-economic impact in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, the result shows that most of the rural development innovations include: government agricultural programmes, electrification programme, water supply scheme, government credit scheme, public health care facility, public transportation programme and low-cost housing project, among others. These innovations were observed to have played a pivotal role in improving the quality of life and overall social and economic development of the people. These innovations executed in the rural areas are carried out by the government agencies, non-governmental organizations, cooperative society, World Bank, and World Health Organization among others. In spite of the interventions, the rural development innovations are undermined with several challenges which among others include: lack of political will, inadequate funding and poor management.

## Recommendations

Base on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made;

- 1) Since over 70% of Nigerian population live in the rural areas and produce the greatest wealth of the nation, the rural areas should be accorded more recognition in terms of budgetary provisions and provision of social and economic amenities;
- 2) Rural development in Nigeria should not be the concern of only Federal, State and local governments. It is important that individuals, communities, corporate organizations, nongovernmental organizations and international organizations and agencies must be

- deeply involved in the efforts at eradicating poverty, enhancing rural development and the overall national development of the country.
- 3) The rampant and endemic corruption, greed and mismanagement associated with institutions for rural development should be ripped in the bud. This requires the intensification of the crusade against these vices by the government and her agencies like EFCC, ICPC, among others. This requires the change of attitude by the political leaders to deal with the situation squarely. Therefore, the Nigerian state should make deliberate efforts to create a virile and credible institutions and structures that would enhance rural development;

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