GET TO WORK

A YOUTH LED INITIATIVE DESIGNED TO CHAMPION GOOD GOVERNANCE IN ABIA STATE

"Our generation embodies data-driven action over mere dialogue. We are not defined by blame or complaints; rather, we epitomize proactive engagement. As stewards of positive change, we shoulder the responsibility of embedding good governance practices in Abia State, Nigeria, and across Africa. This 'Get to Work' document stands as a resolute testament to our generational commitment."

Ekejiuba Daberechi Kingsley

FOR A PROGRESSIVE ABIA, NIGERIA AND AFRICA

Get to Work

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Executive Summary

The Get-to-Work Document presents a holistic evaluation of Abia State's current landscape, spanning various sectors and ministries. Its primary aim is to craft a strategic roadmap, shedding light on critical issues, obstacles, and promising pathways for socio-political advancement within the state. This document is the result of rigorous research, meticulous data analysis, and consultations with relevant stakeholders. Key insights are as follows:

1. ECONOMICS:
- Abia State's economic vitality hinges on agriculture, trade, mineral exploration and manufacturing.
- The agricultural sector holds untapped potential, particularly in palm oil, cocoa farming, animal husbandry, rice farming e.t.c.
- Abia State has mineral deposits in significant amount across the state. These include crude oil and natural gas in Ukwa East, Ukwa West and Isialangwa South, limestone in Umunnneochi, Arochukwu and Ohafia, Iron Ore in Isuikwuato, and Silica sand, Gypsum, Salt, Kaolin and Granite in other areas.
- Crucial infrastructure upgrades, such as road networks and power supply, are essential for attracting local and foreign investments.
- Simplifying bureaucratic processes and empowering the local workforce through skill enhancement are pivotal for facilitating a conducive business environment.

- Supporting the youths to learn hydroponics/soilless farming and encouraging the ministry of agriculture to embrace innovation in the agricultural sector is highly recommended to drive economic growth.
- Abia's economic climate is projected to advance with improved revenue mobilization systems. This, as captured in the automated revenue-generation concept is poised to improve the state's IGR.

2. EDUCATION SECTOR:
Despite several attempts at improving the standard of education in Abia State, with over 20,000 established primary and secondary school units across the 17 LGAs, the basic education system continues to struggle with inadequate staff, poor facility maintenance, and poor management.
- Accessibility to quality basic education is a pressing concern. However, ideas generated to standardize the foundational education system in this document targets curriculum enhancement and professional training for stakeholders.
- Prioritizing infrastructure, competent educators, and effective educational programs is imperative.
- Emphasizing vocational and technical education aligns students' skills with market demands. This is particularly established in the compulsory vocational assessment and training

program (COVAT PLUS) initiative designed to assess vocational gaps and provide students with requisite trainings.
- Forming partnerships with international educational institutions is recommended to enhance educational quality.

3. HEALTH SECTOR:
The healthcare sector in Abia State faces significant structural challenges, primarily characterized by dilapidated buildings and a shortage of modern medical facilities.
Consequently:
- Access to quality healthcare, especially in rural areas, is limited.
- Investments in upgraded medical facilities, skilled healthcare professionals, and better access to essential medicines are imperative.
- Prioritizing essential preventive care initiatives, such as health education campaigns and vaccination drives, is crucial.

4. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT:
There is huge infrastructure deficit particularly in sub-urban areas. Both the capital, Umuahia, and the commercial hub, Aba, confront substantial infrastructure hurdles resulting from years of neglect. The majority of roads suffer from deterioration, compounded by gully erosion and accumulation of waste in waterways.
Hence:
- Substantial investment in roads, water supply, and electricity infrastructure is urgently needed.
- Beyond its economic potentials, infrastructure upgrades will enhance Abia residents' quality of life and improve internal security.
Abia does not lack resources to handle its infrastructural deficiencies. The Alaoji power station, designed for full capacity production of approximately 1074 Megawatts, and Geometric's projected output of around 1000 Megawatts, disappointingly only yield 504MWs and 188MWs respectively. Additionally, the Mbalano power station in Isuikwuato is barely operational, exacerbating the shortfall in power generation capacity.
Notwithstanding, collaborative efforts and public-private partnerships are highly recommended to effectively address infrastructure gaps.

5. GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY:
Abia has been a prime beneficiary of bad governance and lack of accountability over the years. With the stark reality, rated 18th out of the 36 states in terms of fiscal performance by BudgIt in 2022, Abia needs a paradigm shift in the context of governance and accountability.
- Prioritizing transparency, accountability, and good governance is paramount to get Abia on a progressive path.
- Effective anti-corruption measures have been recommended to provide a conducive environment for business and public trust.

With evidence-based recommendations and strategic inputs on security, environmental sustainability, technology, and sustainable youth development, the groundwork for strategic interventions and actionable measures to uplift Abia State across economic, educational, healthcare, infrastructure, and governance spheres is contained in this document.
Its comprehensive insights aim to guide public leaders in steering Abia State toward a prosperous, equitable, and progressive future.

Contributors

- Ekejiuba Daberechi Kingsley
- Alexander Nwulu
- Wisdom Umezuruike
- Ruth Ihechimerem Benson
- Eluwa Tochukwu
- Ndubuisi Raymond
- OnuohaVictoria Chioma
- Oluchukwu Nwakor
- Ifere Ruhama
- Chibuike Emmanuel
- Mercy Chuks-Arinze
- Chigbu David
- Onyema Elite

- Happiness Nwokocha
- Daniel Nwankwo
- Agunwanba Miracle
- Johnbosco Ohizu
- Ibeabuchi Ndukwe
- Adiele Chinedu
- Anyaso Favour
- Onyekachi Chichi
- Ikechuckwu Chibuzo
- Emmanuel Nwokedi
- Chimobi Okoroafor
- Chimaobi Chinecherem

SECTORS

EDUCATION

OVERVIEW

Education entails the transfer of intellectual wealth or skill from a person (usually a teacher) to another (pupil/student). As a fundamental aspect of civilization, education requires absolute commitment and professional contribution from all stakeholders.

According to the federal ministry of education, there are 32,833 and 21,688 junior and senior secondary schools in Abia State respectively. Analysis by the Progressive Abia youths on the education system and its potential role in the development of Abia state gives an insight on the need to prioritize this critical sector.
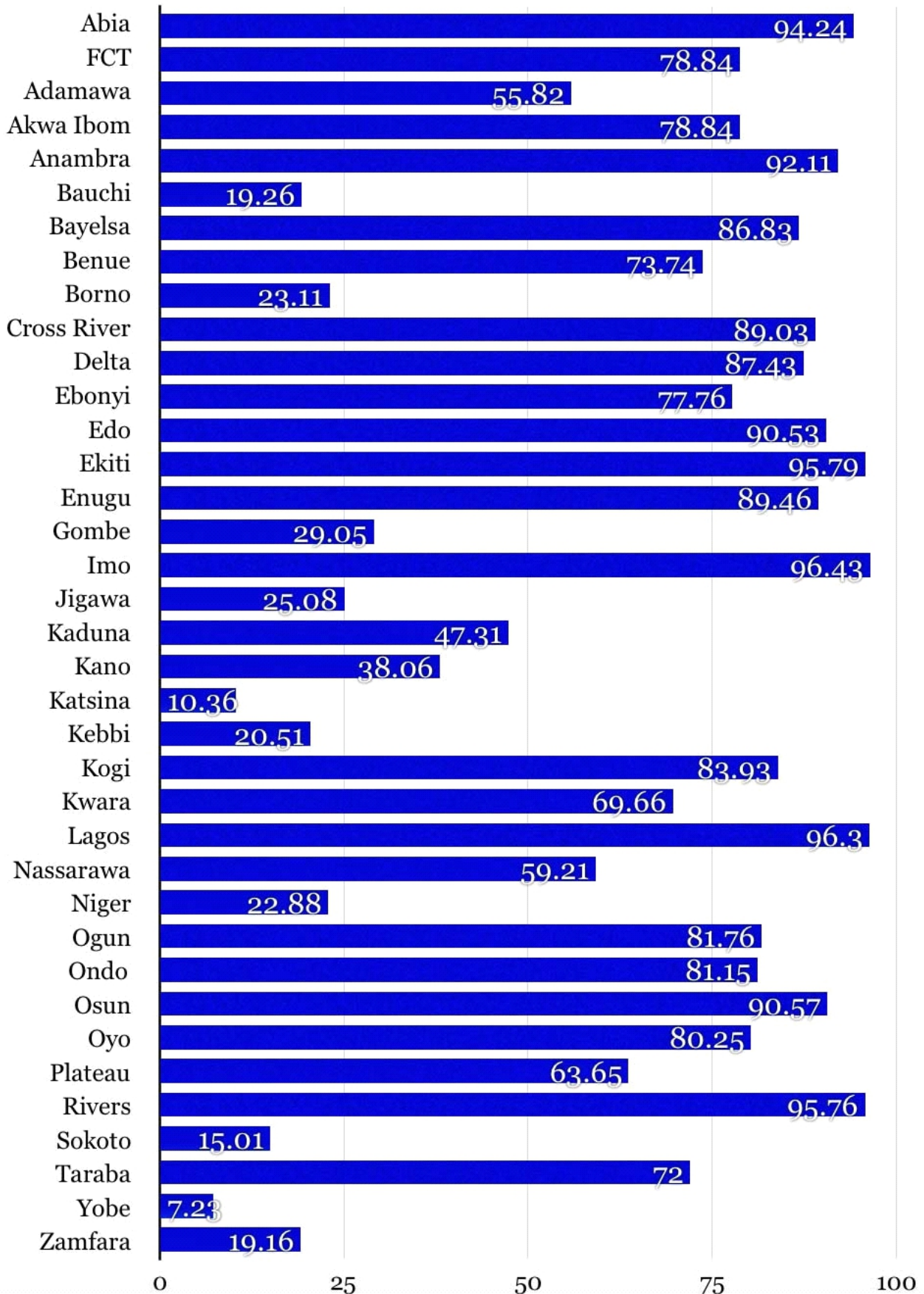
Issues such as low budgetary allocation (less than 25% at the moment) which does not comply with UNESCO's 26% recommended annual budgetary allocation for education continues to hamper progress in the sector. From poor infrastructure (dilapidated buildings) to shortage of standard facilities and equipments, and an understaffed workforce, the basic education system appears to be the major beneficiary of poor management and bad governance in Abia State and other parts of Nigeria. Save for financial limitations, most Parents/Guardians will not send their wards to these public legacy institutions

Welfare attempts like the "students free transport scheme" and the school feeding program championed by previous administrations proved to be ineffective. The introduction of these welfare programs became an avenue for politicians to loot public resources at the expense of qualitative education. As a result, over 60% of the classroom blocks are now dilapidated with over 90% of the public institutions lacking standard basic education facilities and equipments. While Abia boasts an impressive 94.5% literacy rate (NBS, 2017), there is a pressing need for substantial efforts to enhance the quality of education in the state

Evidence shows that advanced countries like Singapore invested heavily in education to leverage its dividends as the chief driver of sustainable development. Consequently, subsequent administrations in Abia State must prioritize education and, implement long term reforms to utilise abundant resources, talents and potentials to promote grass root education.

This document presents an objective analysis of the education sector in Abia State with evidence based recommendations.

Percentage of literacy in 36 states, including FCT

State	Percentage
Abia	94.24
FCT	78.84
Adamawa	55.82
Akwa Ibom	78.84
Anambra	92.11
Bauchi	19.26
Bayelsa	86.83
Benue	73.74
Borno	23.11
Cross River	89.03
Delta	87.43
Ebonyi	77.76
Edo	90.53
Ekiti	95.79
Enugu	89.46
Gombe	29.05
Imo	96.43
Jigawa	25.08
Kaduna	47.31
Kano	38.06
Katsina	10.36
Kebbi	20.51
Kogi	83.93
Kwara	69.66
Lagos	96.3
Nassarawa	59.21
Niger	22.88
Ogun	81.76
Ondo	81.15
Osun	90.57
Oyo	80.25
Plateau	63.65
Rivers	95.76
Sokoto	15.01
Taraba	72
Yobe	7.23
Zamfara	19.16

Source: NBS, 2017

CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS IN ABIA STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Teachers
- Students
- Local Government Education Authorities
- Inspectors/Supervisors
- Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT)
- Parents Teachers Association (PTA)
- Abia State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB)
- Secondary Education Management Board (SEMB)
- Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)
- Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP)
- College of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU)
- Administrative staff unions of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Abia State.

FUNDAMENTALS OF EDUCATION IN ABIA STATE

- Infrastructure
- Educational Curriculum & Management
- Staff Welfare
- Inclusive Education

INFRASTRUCTURE

Educational infrastructure is rated as a major prerequisite for intellectual development. For a student or pupil to learn very well, they need the right infrastructure like classrooms, teaching aids, learning materials, typewriters for blind students, computers and laboratory equipment.

Progressive Abia Youths in her educational intervention mission discovered that on average, each primary and secondary school in Abia State has about 2-6 and 3-10 classroom blocks respectively, with most of the buildings in bad shape. This huge infrastructure deficit caused a mass exodus of both teachers and students from public schools to private schools despite recent social intervention programs like the school feeding program pioneered by the federal government of Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari.

From leaking roofs to vandalised equipments, over 90% of primary and secondary schools visited in the 17 LGAs in the State lack standard infrastructure for a 21st century basic education. A look at Community Primary School Umuorie, Umuagbai Primary and Secondary School Aba, Community Secondary School Obehie, Umuobiala Community Secondary School and others affirm the need to declare a state of emergency in education in Abia State.

EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The term "Education Curriculum" refers to the process of organizing, coordinating, and planning educational activities while efficiently utilizing both people and material resources. It should prioritize the holistic growth of students, fostering their intellectual, emotional, and social abilities, going beyond the simple dissemination of knowledge to delve more deeply into the learning process, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, and equipping students with essential skills that extend beyond the boundaries of textbooks.

It was Nelson Mandela who said that education is the most powerful tool to change the world; conclusively, it is the education curriculum that determines the wave of this change.
In the light of the above, there is a grave need to review and improve the current Abia State education curriculum to reflect global standards.

While we acknowledge previous attempts at improving public education curriculum at both primary and advanced levels, the need for improved and updated education curriculum cannot be overemphasized. The intervention in curriculum should seek to promote and advance STEM and introduce essential innovations to make learning easy, including the prospect of teaching students in both English and Igbo languages.

STAFF WELFARE & MANAGEMENT

Education management in Abia State requires great attention. As an ecosystem of education professionals incorporating government ministries, academic and non academic unions, statutory boards, agencies, and schools, the education management system consists of political heads, principals, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, administrative personnel and others saddled with the responsibility of managing different aspects of education including staff welfare and overall performance assessment.

A major threat to the smooth management of education in Abia State remains non-payment of staff salaries. In the last fifteen years, the notion of owing teachers and lecturers has seen to the introduction of unpleasant concepts like 'core and non-core' civil servants, and accumulation of salary, pension and gratuity arrears for months and years across different parastatals. This trend is exemplified by the fact that staff of Abia State Polytechnic are owed over 30 months salary arrears, Abia State College of Education (Technical) Arochukwu (ASCETA) over 40 months, etc.

Beyond payment of salaries which should be the statutory right of every employee, the welfare of public servants in the education sector needs to be prioritized and opportunities provided for the school teachers, permanent secretaries, and top education management team to participate in education workshops and be constantly empowered to improve the quality of education in Abia State and make the desired impact.

Other entitlements and work incentives like pension and gratuity forms an integral part of the welfare package that civil servants in the education sector must be entitled. Aside these revelations, extra curricular activities like sports and routine exercises remains relevant for an active workforce.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Sustainable development goals SDG 4 makes provision for access to quality, inclusive education.

According to Mbah (1995), Inclusive education is a system of grouping average and able bodied children with special needs in the same class or learning environment for the purpose of instruction.

Inclusive education in real sense is necessary for a truly egalitarian society.

Previous efforts made by past administrations in Abia State to foster an environment conducive to inclusive education have shown minimal success. This is particularly evident in the scarcity of special schools catering to individuals living with disabilities. The lone notable institution, the special education school for the visually impaired in Afaraukwu, and a handful of others are grappling with significant challenges stemming from insufficient support, such as non-payment of subventions, and the looming issue of outstanding salary arrears owed to the school's staff.

Despite signing H.A.B 23: "A Bill for a law to establish the Abia State Welfare For The Disabled Persons" bill into law, implementation has been a great setback towards achieving the objectives of the law. An independent survey carried out by progressive Abia Youths shows that over 95% of students living with disabilities (SWDS) do not have access to the same academic environment as those without disability.

Challenges to inclusive education include: Inadequate facilities, lack of mobility devices (school buses, wheel chairs, etc) for ease of movement within and outside the school environment, unavailability of quality learning materials, poor funding and lack of caregivers. Additionally, providing vocational training for PWDs will keep them resourceful and help them cater for their daily needs.

In a world where knowledge is key to progressive empowerment, the vision of inclusive education becomes the beacon of hope, not just for the community of persons with disabilities but for Abians as a people. It is a vision that should transcend boundaries, bridging the gaps of social inequality, economic disparity, and physical limitations for the benefit of our society.

ROOT CAUSES OF UNDER-PERFORMANCE IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

- Insufficient Funding
- Poor working condition
- Ill equipped school laboratories
- Poorly equipped libraries
- Limited professional development studies
- Inadequate training for Primary and Secondary school teachers.
- Deplorable condition of infrastructure across board
- Non-existent security structure in the schools
- Insufficient learning materials
- Poverty
- Unsuitable learning facilities for individuals living with disabilities.
- Politicisation of education programs
- Unreviewed curriculum

SWOT Analysis for Education

Strength
- Government's capacity to invest in Education.
- Availability of resource persons for education management in Abia state
- Collaborative disposition of stakeholders i.e teachers, parents, Alumini
- Government's ability to initiate, implement and sustain educational policies.

Weakness
- Unreviewed curriculum that hinders development
- Mismanagement of existing infrastructure
- Award of contracts to unpatriotic and unqualified contractors
- Inexistent job security and limited career development opportunities
- Politicising appointment into the system and at management level under than competence
- Irregular payment of staff salaries and inadequate incentives
- Shortage of personnel or staff
- Corruption and lack of due process in administration

Opportunities
- Partnership opportunities from international government and non governmental organisations e.g UNICEF, UNESCO, GPE, UNDP, Save the Children, Plan International, Education International, Association for Childhood education International. .
- Increased Access to Education regardless of disabilities or economic limitations.
- Simplified education management system aimed at enhancing productivity.
- Availability of land resource structural adjustment.
- Availability of recruitable workforce.

Threats
- Poverty
- Insecurity (Sit-at-home)
- Civil unrest by host communities
- Encroachment and illegal take over of school properties by host communities
- Societal perception against education for persons living with disability.
- Lack of continuity by successive governments due to abandoned projects initiated by their predecessors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The subsequent suggestions are delineated to enhance the educational infrastructure in Abia State:

- Conduct a comprehensive audit of the public school system in Abia State. This should be independently done to get a credible report on the state of affairs.
- Renovate and rehabilitate existing buildings instead of constructing new ones
- Renovation of existing buildings (over 55,000 school buildings in Abia) will help the government provide standard school buildings at little cost.
- Create a conducive environment for school alumni bodies, and non-governmental organisations to improve infrastructure in the schools.
- Partner with community leaders and youth bodies of host communities to provide adequate security and protection of school infrastructure against vandalism; provide some incentives for participating youths
- Create tax credit opportunities for businesses and organisations to build and fund the maintenance of education facilities.
- Ensure due diligence in awarding contracts, and follow due process in procurement of equipments
- Utilize qualified local vendors for contract and procurement execution
- Augment the educational budget allocation to align with international benchmarks, as suggested by UNESCO, which recommends a 26% allocation for education funding, in order to adhere to global best practices and meet international standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM

- Introduce standard curriculum that is in line with global best practice
- Ensure that Teachers are adequately equipped with current teaching methods and strictly monitored to ensure compliance with the new scheme.
- Employ the best brains and introduce sustainable refresher courses for stakeholders
- Create career development opportunities through grants, scholarship programs and international studies for teachers
- Collaborate with private organizations and NGOs (e.g Fisher Education Development Trust) to provide learning materials that meets standard requirements.
- Adopt our local language and integrate our culture in teaching and learning
- Ensure that history is included in our curriculum for basic education.
- Embrace the use of emerging technology in teaching and learning.
- Revive basic school sports development programs and competitions as major extra-curricular activities in primary and secondary schools

RECOMMENDATIONS ON STAFF WELFARE

- Review salaries, pensions and allowance upward to meet prevalent economic realities.
- Ensure that all entitlements (Salaries, pensions, gratuities and leave allowances) are paid as at when due.
- Revisit outstanding arrears and conduct efficient audit in the education sector to ensure that all arrears are cleared and those responsible for the mismanagement of resources are prosecuted..
- Introduce academic and non-academic staff insurance scheme.
- Establish at least one teachers' training centre in each of the three senatorial districts for teachers' training.
- Utilize virtual professional development platforms like Khan Academy to provide constant workshops and seminars for staff.
- Encourage Transparency and accountability by promoting deserving staffs into leadership positions
- Revive the teachers Housing scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- Set up standard basic and tertiary institutions (affiliated to existing institutions like ABSU and Ibeku High School) for persons living with disability
- Encourage vocational training for persons living with disability
- Collaborate with local communities and non-profit organizations including religious institutions to establish and strengthen community-based education programs for PWDs.
- Introduce E-learning and ensure the use of technology-enabled learning initiatives for PWDs.
- Develop online platforms or learning management systems that provide access to educational resources, including e-books, online courses, and interactive learning materials for accessible education.
- Ensure that projects targeted at empowering persons living with disability follows due process and are free from political manipulations.

KEY PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

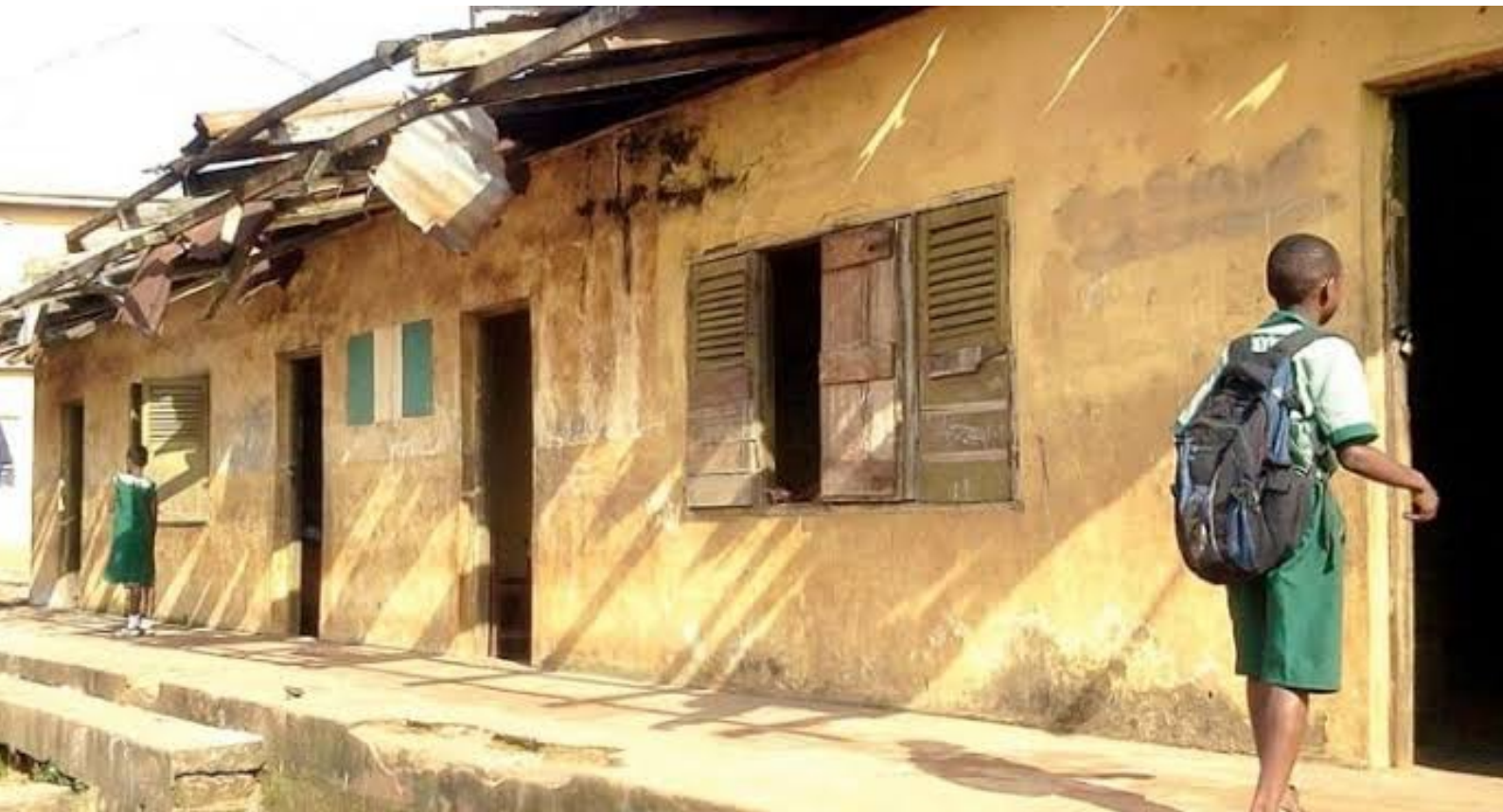|	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description & Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
1	Harmonize Abia state Education Board to meet global standards	Description: Seeks to ensure best practice in education administration across different boards. Responsible MDAs: Office of the permanent secretary, Ministry of education, Abia state	Will encourage accountability, Transparency and Unity of purpose Will enable administrative convenience and responsive management Will yield effective and efficient service delivery
2	Abia State Adaptative E-Learning Platform (ASAEP)	Description: Introduction of a hybrid learning portal that gives access to virtual learning. Responsible MDAs: Ministries of Education, Science and technology	Will give students the opportunity to learn at home Will improve the learning culture and make students accustomed to 21st century technology Will curb computer illiteracy
3	Abia State Professional Education Development Program (ASPED)	Description: A compulsory teacher development program for all current and aspiring teachers in Abia State. Responsible MDAs: State Ministry of education	• Technological empowerment of the teaching workforce. • Elimination of low teaching standards. • Promote professional development • Establish a unique continuous assessment platform for teachers
4.	Compulsory Vocational Assessment and Training Program (COVAT-Plus)	Description: Vocational Education for Primary and secondary school students Responsible MDAs: Abia State Ministry of education. State Education Management Board. Ministry of Science and Technology	• Equip students with on-demand skills • Increase students productivity • Create a conducive atmosphere for innovation • Promote creativity • Help students and schools generate revenue • Enhance technical and entrepreneurial knowhow among students • Increase problem solving and critical thinking ability of students

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
5	Abia State Revived Education curriculum development board	Description: Platform that oversees curriculum development in Abia State Responsible MDA: Ministry of Education	• Review as well as improve, regulate and standardize existing curriculum • Establish a platform that holds teachers accountable to abide by prevalent standards • Develop new curriculum to make pupils and students more productive.
6	Future Career Guidance Program (FCGP)	Description: A program that encourages children to choose careers and be psychologically prepared to pursue it Responsible MDAs: State Ministry of education.	• Help students make right career choices • Help students express their ideas • Build self confidence among the students
7	Abia Teachers Award (ATA)	Description: A program that seeks to promote excellence and encourage hard work. Responsible MDA: Ministry of Education	• Encourage Teachers to give their best in the profession • Motivate teachers to be outstanding ambassadors • Create a learning environment for teachers to assess themselves every academic year

Quick Wins on Education

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR
1.	Declaration of a State of emergency on the education sector
2.	Effective Probe into the systemic and endemic corruption affecting the payment of pensions and teachers salaries.
3.	Prompt assessment of backlog of salaries, pensions and gratuities

Medium and Long Term Expectations

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR	TIME OF EXECUTION
1.	Complete review of the educational curriculum	24 Months
2.	Rehabilitation of dilapidated school buildings	24 - 36 Months
3.	Establishment of advanced skill centres for the academically challenged and resuscitation of existing facilities.	24 - 36 Months
4.	Payment of backlog of salaries owed to teachers and staff of EMB	24 - 36 Months

State of most public Primary and Secondary Schools, in Abia State

AGRICULTURE

OVERVIEW

Agriculture as an 'art' and science of cultivating the soil involves growing crops, raising livestock, and includes the holistic preparation and distribution of plant and animal products. Data shows that if properly harnessed, agriculture has the potential to end extreme poverty by improving incomes and raising the standard of living for farmers and inhabitants of rural communities.

In Abia State, agriculture remains a major resource with production of cash crops, food crops and a host of agricultural products ranging from oil palm to cocoa, rubber, yam, cassava, rice, plantain, banana, maize and cocoyam produced in commercial quantities.
Fishing, poultry and livestock farming have become popular over time with subsequent governments making efforts to invest in this sector. Most popular among these is the 55,500 capacity Ultra Modern Poultry Cluster earmarked for Abia Central Senatorial Zone by the administration of Okezie Victor Ikpeazu.

While subsequent governments have shown considerable interest in Agriculture, statistics show that most of the functional Agric Hubs in Abia State are privately owned. Worthy of mention are: Livestock Feeds Plc, Achanwamba Farm, Euna Continental Company Limited etc.

According to Abia State ministry of agriculture, Abia produces 190,000 metric tonnes of palm oil per annum, 235, 000 tonnes of palm kernel and 175,000 litres of palm kernel oil.

Cashew and rubber production stands at 45,000 and 35,000 metric tonnes respectively, while cocoa production in the state stands at 25,000 metric tonnes yearly thanks to these private individuals who should be supported.

In 2013, Abia State became the 8th largest producer of cocoa among the 14 cocoa producing states of the country, while a citizen of the state, Chief David Onyenweaku, who started cocoa farming in 1952, became the country's largest producer.

Unfortunately, other states have overtaken the state in cocoa production, as many plantations are getting older and less productive, while young people are losing faith in Agriculture

In the Course of an Independent Survey Carried out by the Progressive Abia Youths, we Discovered the Following:

- Abia Palm plantation at Ohambele has been handed over at different times to banks, private companies and recently to another private group without any meaningful result. Same can be said about other palm plantations at various farm settlements in the State.
- Mbawsi Oil Mill, one of the largest palm oil processing facilities in Nigeria, was privatized multiple times and has now gone moribund.
- The Rubber Estate at Abam has also been privatized with no public account of the privatization process and proceeds.
- Subsequent governments invested in distribution of over 20 million tenera palm trees without conducting proper training and providing the support required to manage a palm plantation.
- The Abia Golden Chicken at Ukwa East has not been functional for several years, despite the huge resources invested and its enormous potential to create jobs and reduce poverty.
- Despite the large concentration of cashew nuts and cocoa seeds produced in the state, there is neither a cashew processing plant nor a cocoa processing factory in the state.
- Similarly, there are no world class palm oil refineries to improve the palm industry, create value and ensure that the product meets global standards.

Agriculture is a gold mine that is largely untapped in Abia State. Availability of abundant arable land and human resource outlines the need to improve this 'life-saving' sector.

FACTORS LIMITING AGRICULTURE IN ABIA STATE	CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF AGRICULTURE IN ABIA STATE
▪ Poor Infrastructure	• Mechanization
▪ Agricultural Illiteracy	• Agro-Technology
▪ Dormant Research and Record Keeping facilities in the state	• Infrastructure (Power, Road Network)
▪ Funding	• Commercialization
▪ Corruption	• Farm Settlements
▪ Lack of Mechanized equipment	• Agriculture management
▪ Land Encroachment	• Storage
▪ High Taxation	

ANALYZING THE CRITICAL COMPONENTS

● **Mechanization:** Mechanized agriculture simply involves the use of sophisticated and motorized equipment to perform agricultural operations. Mechanization is not yet popular in the agricultural space in Abia despite the huge potentials of mechanized farming. Although mechanization has not gained widespread popularity in the agricultural sector in Abia, recognizing its significant benefits is crucial. The importance of mechanization in fostering commercialized agriculture cannot be overstated, as it encompasses advantages such as ensuring the production of high-quality agricultural products, facilitating large-scale farming, and enhancing overall production efficiency. Equipments required to facilitate mechanized farming include tractors, harvesters, trucks, etc.

It is a clear fact that if farmers are provided with mechanized farm tools (on lease), agriculture in Abia State will take a positive turn.

● **Agro-Technology:** Agricultural technology refers to the use of technology in agriculture to improve yield, efficiency and profitability. It includes IoT-based sensor networks (used for climate monitoring), Digital Soil Analysis Devices, Automated Irrigation, Crop monitoring via satellite, etc.

While the opportunities abound in Agro-Tech, Abia State is yet to scratch the surface in taking advantage of these opportunities.

● **Infrastructure (power, road network)**: Over 60% of the farms in Abia state are situated in rural communities with poor road network. Because of this reality, farmers find it very difficult to move their product to markets and manufacturing companies within and outside the state. Thanks to the fragile nature of most agricultural products, essential infrastructure like good access roads linking communities within Ndoro and Ariam to Nkwo Ndoro and Ariam markets in Ikwuano LGA, Communities within Eke Uzuakoli, Nkwo Alayi in Bende LGA, Oriendu and Eke Amiyi in Isuikwuato LGA and Orie Ukwu, Amaoji in Isialangwa North LGA among others are essential. Electricity as the major source of power is required to preserve perishable agricultural products like pumpkins, water leaves, cucumbers, etc. Unfortunately, inadequate power supply makes it difficult if not impossible to achieve optimum results.

● **Commercialization:** Agricultural commercialization enhances trade and efficiency, leading to economic growth at all levels.There are, however, certain factors that hinder effective commercialization of agriculture in Abia state.
These include:
• Poor storage and processing facilities.
• Poor Funding
• Lack of basic amenities.
• Inadequate agricultural education and extension services.
• Ineffective implementation of Government Policies.

● **Farm Settlement:** As a government initiative designed by Dr. Michael Okpara to promote rural development by providing smallholder farmers with resources and land for commercial farms, farm settlements have become an essential part of agriculture in Abia State. Ulonna and Umuegwu Afugiri Farm settlements among others stands out as major agricultural hubs in the state providing essential resource (land) to government certified farmers.

According to an extenssive survey carried out by Progressive Abia Youths from December, 2022 to November 2023, it was discovered that all the farm settlements in the state are operating below 30% capacity with the host communities fighting over the ownership of these settlements. There seems to be no clear-cut direction on how these communities are compensated or included in the operational plan.

● **Agriculture Management:** Management and leadership has been a major challenge in public administration as it relates to agriculture in Abia State. For agriculture to work under the guidance of the state ministry of Agriculture, executive managers and civil servants must apply due diligence in the managerial process to achieve optimal productivity, efficiency, effectiveness and profitability. This management principle must be visible from distribution of government grants and agricultural intervention programs to professional training for farmers and acquisition of essential machines.

● **Storage:** Storage as a major component of agriculture in Abia State requires the creation of essential facilities like store buildings, silos, bans, cribs, underground grain storage pits, drums, cans, bags and sacks where different agricultural products are stored. Some of these facilities though common in Nigeria cannot be found in Abia State.
This is a major reason why farmers encounter a lot of wastes and make little profit in the State. Going forward, government would need to partner with farmers and private companies to provide quality storage facilities to aid small scale farmers, establish information and supply chain channels, and help cultivate the culture of sustainability by preserving unused products.

SWOT Analysis for Agriculture

Strength	Weaknesses
● Agricultural diversity ● Availability of large and fertile farmland ● Suitable geographical and climate condition ● Availability of viable seeds ● Availability of manpower	● Unavailabilty of agricultural credit scheme ● Lack of essential machines ● Unavailability of standard storage facilities ● Digital illiteracy ● Poor management
Opportunities ● Local and International Export ● Foreign direct investment (Unilever, IFAD, e.tc) ● High demand for agricultural products ● Grants and Agro support from donor agencies (world bank, ADB, e.tc) ● Production of raw materials for industries ● Industrial value of by-products ● Climate Smart Agriculture	**Threats** ● Climate Change ● Poor government policies in agriculture ● Insecurity ● Lack of interest (especially from young people) ● Insecurity (banditary, herders/farmers clash, land dispute) ● Urbanisation ● Lack of steady power supply ● Poor road network

RECOMMENDATIONS ON AGRICULTURE

To stimulate the Agricultural sector in Abia State, the following points are recommended:

- Promote mechanised farming by providing some machines for farmers on lease
- Make provisions for loan/credit facilities for farmers at single digit interest rates
- Make Agricultural Sciences an elaborate subject in the Primary and Secondary schools curriculum.
- Support the youths to learn hydroponics/soiless farming and encourage the ministry of Agriculture to embrace innovation in the Agricultural sector
- Invest in the development and maintenance of road networks leading to rural areas, to aid easy transportation of farm produce.
- Embrace technology as one of the important tools in agriculture
- Appoint seasoned agriculturists/managers to manage the ministry of agriculture.
- Resuscitate moribund agro-processing industries within the state.
- Probe the privatization of public agricultural assets and audit existing structures
- Work in Tandem with the bank of Agriculture and others to facilitate Agricultural growth in Abia State.
- Establish commercialised Silos and storage facilities in the state to reduce wastes.

KEY PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
1	Investment in Agritech	Ministry of Agriculture	Boost Abia's food production levels through the help of technology.
2	Fund The Farmers (FTF)	Min. of Agric. and Min. of Finance	Encourage farmers to go into large-scale farming in Abia State
3	Abia Agricultural Extension Services	Ministry of Agriculture	Provide information and relate new ideas developed by agricultural research stations.
4	Youths In Agric (YIA)	Min. of Agric. and Min. of Youth Dev.	Mobilize and empower the youths to embrace Agriculture.
5	Operation Feed Abia (OFA)	Ministry of Agriculture and Min. of Orientation	Create awareness on the importance of farming and encourage Abians to Farm

Quick Wins on Agriculture

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR
1.	Set up a Farmer's grant loan
2.	Establish Agricultural Programmes and Planning
3.	Setting up the Ministry of Agriculture with someone capable and deep in the field
4.	Enabling environment to access government loans and grants for agriculture from the AFDB et al
5.	Revamping and Re-evaluation of existing framework for sustainable agricultural development
6.	Effective consultation with stakeholders and research institutes in Abia State

Medium and Long Term Expectations

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR
1.	Resucitate agro-industries within the state
2.	Develop new roads and maintain existing roads in the state
3.	Develop an Agro-Innovation Hub that will be focused on introducing emerging technologies and research on special crop breeds and investment opportunities

CONCLUSION

This document provides an in-depth exploration of the Agricultural sector in Abia State, highlighting crucial areas that require government attention. Addressing issues such as revitalizing dormant infrastructures, offering financial support to farmers engaged in non-mechanized farming, and investing in agrotech are imperative.

Recognizing the indispensable role of Agriculture, it is imperative for the government to prioritize and invest in this vital sector. Leveraging the vast and fertile farmlands within the state can lead to increased production, providing sustenance for the state and its surrounding areas.

We assert that by implementing the recommendations outlined in this document and ensuring ongoing maintenance, the Agricultural sector in Abia state has the potential to become a benchmark for other states in Nigeria and across Africa, underlining the transformative impact of these initiatives.

Cocoa Farm at Bende, Bende LGA, Abia State

Cashew Farm at Isuochi, Umunneochi LGA, Abia State

Palm Kernel Processing Mill at Isialangwa, North LGA, Abia State

TECHNOLOGY

OVERVIEW

The role of technology in state development and governance is increasingly important in today's world. Technology has the potential to facilitate economic growth, improve public service delivery, increase transparency and accountability, and enhance citizen participation in decision-making processes.

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, Abia state has a population of approximately 3.7 million people, with a GDP of approximately $5.7 billion. Implementing AI, Blockchain, and IoT technologies could help improve various sectors in the state, leading to increased economic growth and improved quality of life for its residents. However, it is worth noting that implementing these technologies requires significant investments in infrastructure, talent, and regulatory frameworks.

According to the United Nations E-Government Survey 2020, the use of digital technologies by governments is steadily increasing worldwide. The report found that 71% of countries surveyed now have a national e-government strategy, and 91% have an online presence. Furthermore, 87% of countries provide at least one online service for businesses, and 81% provide at least one online service for citizens. In addition, the Global Innovation Index 2021, which ranks countries based on their innovation capabilities, found that innovation has become more digital and collaborative in nature. The report highlights the importance of digital infrastructure, such as broadband connectivity and cloud computing, in driving innovation and economic growth.

Moreso, Abia state has been embracing emerging technologies in various sectors to improve productivity, enhance service delivery, and promote economic growth. While the adoption of these technologies is still in its early stages, the state government's efforts are expected to yield positive results in the long term.

However, access to technology remains a challenge in many LGAs including Ikwuano, Ukwa East, Ukwa West, Umunneochi, Isuikwuato, Bende, Arochukwu, Ohafia, Isialangwa North, Isialangwa South and others, and there are concerns about the digital divide between urban and rural areas which has also contributed significantly in some sectors of the state as seen in subsequent aspects..

PRIOR ATTEMPTS

1. **Aba Industrial Cluster:** Aba is known for its bustling industrial cluster which dates back to the 1950s when the first handful of factories were established in the area. Today, the cluster is home to over 10,000 small and medium-scale enterprises producing a wide range of products including shoes, textiles, leather goods, plastics, and metal products. According to a report by the National Bureau of Statistics, Abia state had the highest number of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria in 2017, with the majority of them located in Aba.

2. **Enyimba Economic City**: In 2018, the Abia state government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a Chinese consortium to establish the Enyimba Economic City (EEC). The EEC is a planned industrial city that will cover over 9,000 hectares of land and will have a seaport, an airport, and a railway station. The project is expected to create over 700,000 direct and indirect jobs and will attract local and foreign investments in various sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, and technology.

3. **Technological Innovation Hubs**: Abia state has also made significant investments in technology hubs to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. In 2018, the state government launched the Abia State Innovation Hub, a co-working space for tech startups and entrepreneurs. The hub provides access to resources such as high-speed internet, mentorship, and funding opportunities. Similarly, the Abia State Polytechnic has a Technology Incubation Centre that provides training and support to students and graduates in the areas of software development and hardware engineering

4. **Education:** Abia state has a strong tradition of education, and this has contributed to its technological development. The state has several tertiary institutions, including Abia State University, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, and Abia State Polytechnic. These institutions offer courses in science, engineering, and technology-related fields and have produced a pool of skilled professionals who have contributed to the technological growth of the state.
Abia state has been leveraging on emerging technologies in education to improve access to quality education and equip students with the skills required for the 21st-century workforce but there is room for more advancement.

5. **Agriculture:** In recent years, Abia state has been exploring the use of emerging technologies in agriculture to boost productivity and improve food security. For instance, the state government partnered with the World Bank to launch the FADAMA III Additional Financing (AF) project, which aims to increase agricultural productivity by providing farmers with access to modern farming techniques and technologies. Under the project, Abia State Government was supposed to provide tractors, fertilizers, and other farm equipments to farmers, and train them on the use of innovative technologies such as precision agriculture, remote sensing, and geographical information system (GIS) mapping. Unfortunately, this laudable idea could not yield much.

6. **Healthcare**: Abia state has also been exploring the use of emerging technologies in healthcare to improve access to quality healthcare services. For instance, the state government in 2018

launched the Abia Telehealth Initiative (dial-a-doctor), which was designed to use telemedicine to provide medical consultations to patients in remote areas. The initiative was created to enable patients to consult with medical specialists using videoconferencing technology, reducing the need for travel and improving access to healthcare services. Just like past events, these initiatives failed to make the desired impact.

According to National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), there is a robust growth trajectory for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector, averaging 9.7% annually. This sector has become the fourth largest contributor to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) further underscores this progress, reporting a total of 205.25 million active mobile lines in December 2020, reflecting an impressive penetration rate of 103.91%.

Despite the appealing numbers, access to technology remains a challenge in many parts of Nigeria, particularly in rural areas. The NCC reports that broadband penetration in the country was just 45.07% as of December 2020, with many rural areas in Abia State lacking access to reliable internet connection.

Sufficient evidence shows that for Abia State to advance technologically, the State Government should pay optimum attention to these emerging trends in Technology and partner with service providers to improve the quality of service.

TECHNOLOGY AS A CRITICAL DRIVER TO DEVELOPMENT IN ABIA STATE

With the advancement and emergence of technologies like blockchain, artificial intelligence, web 3.0 , IoT , abia state can enhance and facilitate rapid development across her sectors if readily and duly applied in consolidation of the existing technology in the state. Some of these areas are:

IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

Adoption of AI and emerging IoT application provides a unique set of capabilities for infrastructure innovation, allowing for rapid and automated decision-making and improved network optimization. AI can track changes in traffic patterns, optimize power consumption and monitor security thresholds. Examples: includes Smart traffic management systems, connected and autonomous vehicles, intelligent transportation systems, etc
This is key to the actualization of sustainable development goal nine (SDG 9) which is industry, innovation and infrastructure.

IMPROVING HEALTHCARE

According to PWC report in 2017 insights into AI for healthcare, AI revolution in healthcare has been defining 'New health' with focus on improving training,research, keeping good and well-being status, having earlier detection, making clear cut and informed decisions on diagnosis, treatments and end of life.
It is paramount for Abia State Government to enable digital transformation, promote and

foster capacity building and the right skill set for medicine precision to best adapt and deliver the smart AI governance in healthcare.

AI enables greater access and democratisation of quality healthcare which is optimally expressed in accurate electronic health records, tele-medicine, health monitoring devices, AI-powered diagnosis and treatment, etc..

IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY

The digitalization of security operations leads to a more network and data-led approach. AI technologies helps identify patterns and enabled a data driven decisions with minimal human intervention applicable to the government and public-sector institutions, police and emergency services among others.

- Examples: Surveillance systems, crime prediction and prevention, emergency response systems, etc.

IMPROVING GOVERNMENT SERVICES VIA E-GOVERNANCE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

E-Government is an effort by governments to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) through the adoption of blockchain and other emerging technologies to automate public services and facilitate their use by citizens (G2C),businesses (G2B) and intergovernmental (G2G), such as secure data transfer, e-procurement,filing tax returns, identity management, electronic voting, chatbots, AI-powered decision-making tools, etc. The purpose of this effort is to integrate public services electronically, in which the service of citizens and businesses to be done safely, transparently and with trust in a decentralised way without the involvement of public authorities and to eliminate bureaucracy, improve transparency and accountability between the government and the citizens.

According to the United Nations E-Government Survey 2020, the use of digital technologies by governments is steadily increasing worldwide. The report found that 71% of countries surveyed now have a national e-government strategy, and 91% have an online presence. Furthermore, 87% of countries provide at least one online service for businesses, and 81% provide at least one online service for citizens.

In addition, the Global Innovation Index 2021, which ranks countries based on their innovation capabilities, found that innovation has become more digital and collaborative in nature. The report highlights the importance of digital infrastructure, such as broadband connectivity and cloud computing, in driving innovation and economic growth.

SPORTS

Technology can have a significant impact on sports in Abia, particularly in soccer. The use of data analytics and technology in sports has helped improve player performance and decision-making. For example, the Indian Premier League (IPL) uses player tracking technology to analyze player performance and provide insights to coaches and players. The use of technology has also helped improve the fan experience, with live streaming and virtual reality experiences becoming increasingly popular. According to a report by KPMG, the Indian sports technology market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 20% between 2020 and 2025. The ministry of sports in Abia State can leverage technology to provide professional services to coaches and players

AGRICULTURE

Technology has the potential to revolutionize agriculture in Abia by increasing productivity, reducing wastage, and improving farmer incomes. For example, precision agriculture technologies such as drones and satellite imagery can help farmers optimize crop yields and reduce input costs. In addition, digital platforms such as agri-marketplaces can help connect farmers with buyers, reducing intermediaries and increasing farm gate prices.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Technology has the potential to improve human development outcomes in Abia by increasing access to education, healthcare, and financial services. For example, online learning platforms such as BYJU's, Coursera, and Khan Academy have helped improve access to education, particularly in rural areas. In addition, tele-medicine platforms such as Practo and Portea have helped improve access to healthcare services. Digital financial services such as mobile wallets and UPI have helped increase financial inclusion, with the number of digital transactions in India growing from 923 million in January 2020 to 3.3 billion in December 2020.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Technology can impact on tourism development in Abia, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital platforms such as MakeMyTrip and OYO have helped improve the booking experience for travelers, while virtual reality experiences have helped promote destinations to potential tourists. Through technology and online adverts, Abia State ministry of tourism can promote beautiful sights and historical artifacts to attract tourists from different parts of the globe.

SWOT Analysis for Technology

Strengths	Weaknesses
• High interest in technology especially from the youths • Presence of tech talents and skilled human resource • High level of awareness • Availability of gadgets and internet	• Lack of access to technology infrastructure • High cost of implementing Tech initiatives • Poor digital literacy • Security and privacy risks • Poor IT Infrastructure
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Angel investments and grants • Broadband expansion • Artificial Intelligence research institutes • Tele-medicine • Smart transportation • SSEAN investors	• Poor government policies on technology • Poor patronage of homegrown tech products • Lack of funding • Lack of adequate regulations on technology • Political sabotage

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are necessary for a functional technological space in Abia State:

1.   Prioritize privacy and security: Government should prioritize privacy and security when using technology, especially when collecting and storing sensitive data about citizens. Use secure and reliable technology solutions that comply with privacy and security regulations.

2.   Promote open data: Promote the use of open data by making essential information freely available to the public in machine-readable formats. This can lead to increased transparency, accountability, and innovation.

3.   Ensure accessibility and Eliminate Bureaucratic Bottlenecks: Ensure that technology is accessible to all citizens, regardless of their age, abilities, or socioeconomic status. This includes using inclusive design principles and providing training and support for those who needs it. Create an appealing atmosphere for tech-enthusiasts to showcase their products

4.   Foster innovation: Encourage collaboration between the public and private sectors, investing in research and development, and supporting startups and small businesses that are developing new technologies.

5.   Use technology to improve public services: Use technology to improve services, such as healthcare, education, transportation, and public safety. For instance, data analytics can be used to identify areas of high crime rates and deploy police resources more effectively.

6.   Involve Abia Youths in tech policy formation and decision-making: Abia State Government should involve citizens in technology decision-making by soliciting feedback and engaging in an open dialogue. This can help build trust and ensure that technological solutions are aligned with the needs and values of citizens.

7.   Incorporate Roust Long-term Plans: Government should plan for the long term when investing in technology. Prevalent local factors like religion and education, and other potential risks should be considered when adopting or recommending technology solutions. A robust mitigation plan should be maintained and updated over time.

8.   Invest in technology infrastructure to increase access and adoption of technology.

9.   Provide education and training programs to prepare the workforce for technological advancements.

KEY PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description and Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
1	Abia State Adaptive E-Learning Program (ASAEP)	ASAEP involves the use of artificial intelligence (AI), and virtual and augmented reality (AR & VR) to make teaching and learning more effective. The program is designed to feature virtual classrooms, virtual teaching and virtual library with an open-source system open to citizens Responsible MDA: Ministry of Education	• It will introduce faster, efficient and effective learning as it eliminates the bureaucracy of traditional classroom. • It improves learning as it will help students to understand their learning curve or graph and evaluate their area of improvement and strength in real-time and enhance their understanding. • This enhances students-teacher collaboration in a more practical and efficient manner. • The program will identify gaps and get real-time feedbacks in analysing students' academic performance and provide additional support where needed. • It will improve engagement and support learning for diverse groups.
2	Abia State digital literacy programme (ASDLP)	This programme is designed to increasing the digital literacy in the state through emerging technologies and its application via programmes like code4abia etc. Responsible MDAs: Ministry of Youth Development, Ministry of education Abia Tech Hubs and Ministry of science and technology	• This will improve the digital literacy of abians in the state through learning of digital skills such as coding, data science, data analytics and analysis , robotics , block chains and artificial intelligence and web 3.

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description and Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
3	Abia Broadband Plan (ABP)	Description: The ABP aims to improve broadband infrastructure and increase internet penetration across the State. It focuses on expanding broadband coverage to undeserved and unserved areas, promoting digital inclusion, and enhancing connectivity for economic and social development. Designated MDA: Ministry of Information and Ministry of Science and Technology	The program enhances access to information, supports e-commerce, improves digital literacy, enables online education, telemedicine, and e-governance, fosters innovation and entrepreneurship, and boosts economic growth.
4	Abia State E-Governance Initiative	The e-Government Initiative aims to digitize government processes, services, and interactions, making them more accessible, efficient, and transparent. It involves the implementation of online portals, digital platforms, and automated systems to streamline administrative procedures and enhance citizen-government engagement. Designated MDA: Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Technology, or dedicated e-Government departments.	The program will improve government service delivery, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, enhance accountability, reduce corruption, promote citizen participation, and enable efficient and effective governance.
5	Abia State Smart Cities Program	The Smart Cities Program focuses on leveraging technology and data to enhance the quality of life, sustainability, and efficiency of urban areas. It involves implementing smart infrastructure, intelligent transportation systems, energy management, digital governance, and citizen engagement platforms. Designated MDA: Ministry of Land Survey and Urban Planning	The program will improve urban planning, transportation, energy efficiency, waste management, public safety, and citizen services in Aba and Umuahia. It will attract investments, promotes innovation and enhance the overall livability and competitiveness of the major cities.

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description and Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
6	Abia State Innovation and Research Strategy	The Abia Innovation and Research Strategy aspires to cultivate a robust culture of innovation, research, and development. This strategic initiative involves the creation of conducive ecosystems, the provision of funding for research initiatives, establishment of research institutions for the sole promotion of entrepreneurship." Designated MDA: Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Education	The program will stimulate scientific advancements, technological innovation, and product development. It will boost competitiveness of young entrepreneurs in Abia and create high-value jobs.
7	Abia State Cybersecurity Initiative (ASCI)	The Cybersecurity Initiative focuses on safeguarding the state's digital infrastructure, networks, and systems from cyber threats. Designated MDA: Ministry of Information Security, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, or dedicated Cybersecurity agencies.	The program will protect critical infrastructure, sensitive data, and digital transactions. It will enhance trust in digital services, foster a secure digital ecosystem, prevent cybercrime, and supports the growth of Abia's digital economy.
8	Abia State Youth Empowerment and ICT Digital Job Creation Program	The Youth Empowerment and ICT Digital Job Creation Program is designed to provide training in areas such as software development, web design, digital marketing, and entrepreneurship. Designated MDAs: Ministry of Youth development , Ministry of Works and Ministry of Science and Technology	The program will help to address the problem of youth unemployment by equipping Abia youths with digital skills. This will increase the number of youths who are employable in the digital economy and also help to build a pool of skilled digital entrepreneurs who can create innovative solutions to local challenges.

RISKS AND MITIGATION PLAN

S/N	RISKS	MITIGATION PLAN
1.	Malware and system outdates	Institutionalize Information and data management (information inventory, access management, data loss prevention, data integrity, and threat monitoring)
2.	Data Bridges	Ensure adequate device management (physical and environmental security, Network security, storage security).
3.	Cyber attack	Initiate system and application routine surveillance
4.	Data leaks	Recruit qualified personnel with unquestionable character and track record for data management
5.	System failures	Continuously update the systems and replace every damaged part

Quick Wins

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR
1.	Digital Infrastructure Assessment Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the State's digital infrastructure, including broadband coverage, connectivity gaps, and the quality of existing technology infrastructure. This assessment will provide valuable insights into areas that require immediate attention.
2.	Broadband Expansion Develop a plan to expand broadband access to rural communities within the State. This could involve partnering with internet service providers, leveraging government networks to mount masts and other facilities for increased broadband
3.	Cybersecurity Measures Enhance cybersecurity measures across government agencies, critical infrastructure, and digital services. Expressly conduct security audits, implement robust data protection policies, raise awareness about cyber threats, and establish response protocols for incidents.
4.	E-Government Services Streamline and digitize government services to improve efficiency, accessibility, and citizen engagement. This may involve developing online portals for services like permits, licenses, and tax payments, enabling online voting for certain processes, and adopting digital signatures for document authentication.

Medium and Long Term Expectations

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR	DESCRIPTION
1.	Infrastructure Development	Invest in improving the state's technological infrastructure, including expanding broadband access to underserved areas, upgrading network capabilities, and supporting the development of smart cities.
2.	Education and Workforce Development	Implement initiatives to enhance technology education and skills training programs to meet the demands of emerging industries. Foster partnerships between educational institutions, businesses, and technology organizations to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.
3.	Innovation and Research Hubs	Establish and maintain innovation and research hubs that bring together academia, startups, corporations, and government agencies to collaborate on cutting-edge technologies. These hubs can attract investments, drive technology transfer, and foster a culture of innovation within the state.
4.	Support for Startups and Tech Companies	Create a conducive environment for startups and technology companies through tax incentives, grants, and streamlined regulations. Encourage the growth of local tech ecosystems, fostering collaboration and attracting venture capital investments.
3.	Digital Skills Training:	Launch initiatives to enhance digital literacy and skills within the youth community. This can include partnering with local educational institutions, offering free or affordable digital skills training programs, and promoting online resources for learning.
4.	Open Data Policy:	Implement an open data policy that encourages government agencies to make information publicly available in standardized formats. This promotes transparency, accountability, and enables developers and entrepreneurs to leverage the data for creating innovative solutions and services.

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR	DESCRIPTION
5.	Startup and Innovation Ecosystem	Foster the growth of a vibrant startup and innovation ecosystem within the State by providing incentives, creating incubators or accelerators, and facilitating connections between startups, investors, and industry experts. This can attract talent, drive economic growth, and encourage technological advancements.
6.	Smart City Initiatives	Deploy smart traffic management systems, intelligent waste management, energy-efficient infrastructure, and promote the use of Internet of Things (IoT) devices for improved public services in Aba and Umuahia metropolis. This concept can be cascaded to emerging urban areas like Ohafia and Osisioma.
7.	Collaboration and Partnerships	Establish strategic partnerships with technology companies, research institutions, and various levels of government to harness their expertise, resources, and funding opportunities. This collaborative approach aims to expedite technology development, attract investments, and enrich the overall ecosystem.
8.	Stakeholder Engagement	Initiate proactive communication and collaboration with technology stakeholders, including industry leaders, local tech communities, and citizen groups. This effort is essential to comprehensively grasp their needs, collect valuable feedback, and engage them in the decision-making processes concerning technology development initiatives."
9.	Emerging Technologies	Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, and renewable energy are mainstream conversations. Adequate support, research and development in these areas will encourage adoption, and attract companies working on these technologies to the state.
10.	Sustainable Technology	Promote the development and adoption of sustainable technologies, including renewable energy sources, energy-efficient infrastructure, and green transportation solutions. Invest in clean technology research and support companies working on sustainable solutions.

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR	DESCRIPTION
11	Cybersecurity and Data Privacy	Enhance cybersecurity measures to protect critical infrastructure, government systems, and citizen data. Establish robust cybersecurity policies, promote awareness, and collaborate with industry experts to ensure the state remains resilient against cyber threats.
12	Smart Infrastructure	Embrace the concept of smart infrastructure by integrating technology into transportation, energy grids, water management systems, and public services. This includes initiatives like smart traffic management, efficient energy distribution, and real-time monitoring of resources.

Conclusion

Incorporating technological advancements can yield substantial positive effects across diverse sectors in Abia state. Subsequent administrations must embrace a comprehensive and strategic approach, placing priority on technology initiatives. This involves investing in digital infrastructure, cultivating human capital, and fostering an enabling environment to propel technological progress and leverage its potential for the overall improvement of the state and the well-being of its residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

OVERVIEW

Environmental sustainability involves a spectrum of initiatives and practices dedicated to safeguarding and conserving natural resources, ecosystems, and the environment generally.

Abia State faces both challenges and opportunities in the realm of environmental sustainability. According to recent data exclusively obtained by Progressive Abia Youths, the state grapples with issues such as deforestation, soil erosion, and inadequate waste management practices. Deforestation rates have been notably high due to factors like agricultural expansion and logging, which poses a threat to biodiversity and exacerbe the impact of climate change. Additionally, soil erosion, a persistent problem in the state, negatively impacts agricultural productivity, leading to devastating consequences for local communities. However, amidst these challenges, there are promising signs of progress. Community and youth-led initiatives like PAY's 'A day with History'and other programs championed by non-governmental organizations, are emerging to address these environmental concerns. Efforts to promote afforestation, sustainable land management practices, and waste recycling programs are gaining traction, but more has to be done to raise awareness on the importance of environmental sustainability .

There is an opportunity to harness the natural assets embedded in Abia for sustainable development, such as eco-tourism initiatives that not only preserve the environment but also stimulate economic growth. By integrating data-driven strategies and innovative policies, and engaging with communities in Isuochi, Ukwa East and others harbouring the dire consequences of mining and oil exploration, Abia State can chart a course towards a more environmentally sustainable future, ensuring the well-being of its citizens and the preservation of its unique ecosystems.

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN ABIA STATE

Water Resource Management
Sanitation & Hygiene
Waste Management
Climate Change
Resource Management
Renewable Energy
Environmental Education And Awareness
Bio-diversity Conservation
Sustainable Agriculture

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Over time, water resource management in Abia State has been marked by insufficient planning, inadequate infrastructure, and governance systems, leading to notable challenges and deficiencies in the effective management of water resources. The following provides an overview of the issues associated with water management in Abia State:

- **Limited Access to Clean Water:** A significant portion of the population in Abia State lack access to clean and safe drinking water. Many rural communities and even some urban areas struggle with water scarcity, unreliable water supply, and the absence of proper water treatment facilities.
- **Limited Water Supply Infrastructure:** Abia State faces challenges in its water supply infrastructure, marked by outdated systems, insufficient capacity, and inadequate maintenance. Aging pipelines, substandard storage facilities, and a scarcity of water treatment plants collectively contribute to issues such as water shortages, leaks, and contamination.
- **Water Pollution and Contamination:** The water sources in Abia State face heightened vulnerability to pollution and contamination arising from diverse origins such as industrial activities, agricultural runoff, substandard sanitation practices, and improper waste disposal. Consequently, these factors contribute to a significant deterioration in water quality, fostering the propagation of waterborne diseases in the region. Addressing these challenges necessitates comprehensive measures to mitigate the impact of human activities on water sources and ensure the provision of safe and clean water for the residents of Abia State.
- **Inefficient Water Distribution:** Unequal water distribution and ineffective water management systems contribute to disparities in water access. Certain regions face recurrent water shortages, while others have an excess supply. This uneven distribution not only intensifies water scarcity challenges but also acts as a hindrance to economic and social development.
- **Insufficient Sanitation Infrastructure:** The absence of adequate sanitation facilities, encompassing toilets and wastewater treatment systems, compounds the complexities of water management. Insufficient sanitation practices result in the contamination of water sources, exposing communities to health risks and perpetuating a cycle of compromised water quality and diseases associated with inadequate sanitation.
- Addressing the issues related to poor water management in Abia State requires a multi-faceted approach. It involves investing in water infrastructure development, improving water treatment and distribution systems, strengthening governance and institutional capacity, promoting water conservation practices, raising public awareness, and implementing sustainable water resource management strategies. Collaboration among government agencies, community organizations, and stakeholders is crucial for developing and implementing effective solutions to improve water management in the state.

Water treatment Plant, 1 Isiama, Afara Road, Umuahia
source: *https://www.abswsc.org/gallery/#link*

SWOT Analysis For Water Resource Management

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Abundant Water Resources • Government's perceived commitment to water resource management • Existing facilities and equipments • Public interest	• Inadequate Infrastructure • Poor planning and strategy execution • unavailability of trained personnel with expertise in water resource management • Poor water engineering infrastructure and architecture
Opportunities	Threats
• Advanced technology for water resource management • Communities, industries, and agricultural willing to take responsibility • Tourism and Transportation eg Azumini Blue River • International organizations like WHO and WTO willing to partner	• Climate change leading to variabile rainfall patterns, • Rapid population growth and urbanization • Industrial activities and agricultural practices leading to water pollution • Poor drainage system • Abuse of facilities and equipments

SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Abia State urgently requires government intervention in vital areas such as Water Supply, Public Sanitation, Hygiene, Waste Management, Resource Management, and Climate Change. These interconnected facets of environmental sustainability significantly impact the daily lives of Abians. A thorough analysis of these components is imperative to foster resilient and informed communities in Abia State, and promote a healthy living environment.

The monthly sanitation practice on the last Saturday has not yielded substantial improvements in sanitation. Government initiatives have primarily focused on urban centers, indicating a necessity to extend the waste management model to local communities.

Dirty sight at Ngwa Road, Aba

source: Nairaland

▊SWOT Analysis For Sanitation and Hygiene

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Existing hygiene and sanitation initiatives • Community interest in sanitation and hygiene • Existing government policies • Presence of local partnerships	• Inadequate facilities and equipments (trucks, ppe, etc) • Limited Resources • Inadequate or poorly designed drainage systems • Ineffective waste recycling system
Opportunities	Threats
• Public-Private Partnerships • Technological Innovation • International funding from donor agencies such as WHO and WTO	• Climate change impact • Urbanization and population growth • Limited Funding • Political Instability and Conflict • Urban-Rural Divide

▊SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Solid waste management has been an issue in Abia for a long period of time. Irresponsible dumping of refuse and open defecation in some areas of Lokpanta, Ossah and Aba have been a common occurrence.

To deal with this menace, Progressive Abia Youths outlines the following Solid Waste Management Strategies:

- **Prompt Waste Collection:** This involves the organized gathering and removal of waste materials from their origin points for proper disposal or treatment. It encompasses the systematic collection of various waste types, including household, commercial, industrial, and hazardous waste, ensuring their secure and environmentally responsible management.

- **Waste Segregation:** Implementing waste segregation ensures the separation of different types of waste at the source to facilitate proper handling and disposal. This includes categorizing materials into recyclables (e.g., paper, plastic, glass, metal), organic waste (e.g., food scraps, yard waste), and non-recyclable/non-biodegradable waste. Segregation enhances the efficiency of recycling, composting, or treatment of specific waste streams.

- **Recycling and Waste Recovery:** Transforming waste materials into new products or raw materials is a key strategy. This approach aims to reduce the consumption of virgin resources, conserve energy, and minimize the amount of waste sent to landfills.

- **Landfill Management:** Utilizing engineered landfills designed for the disposal of non-recyclable and non-recoverable waste ensures proper waste containment and management.

- **Waste-to-Energy Projects:** Converting waste materials into usable energy, such as electricity or heat, offers an innovative solution for both waste reduction and energy generation.

- **Public Awareness and Participation:** Recognizing the crucial role of public engagement, educational campaigns and community outreach programs are essential. These initiatives help raise awareness about waste segregation, promote recycling practices, and emphasize the importance of reducing overall waste generation.

- **Policy and Regulation:** Effective waste management hinges on supportive policies and regulations. Governments play a pivotal role in establishing waste management frameworks that define responsibilities, set targets for waste reduction, promote recycling, and regulate waste disposal practices.

SWOT Analysis For Solid Waste Management

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Government Support for waste management initiatives • Existing Institutions (ASEPA) • Community awareness and education • Existing tools for recycling solid waste	• Inadequate Infrastructure (compact trucks and other ppe) • Funding Constraints • Informal Waste Sector • Poor public participation • Limited Recycling Facilities
Opportunities	Threats
• Economic opportunities from recycling • Technological Advancements • Public-Private Partnerships • Policy and regulatory advancements • International Support (UN ecological fund)	• Urbanization and Population Growth • Health and Environmental Hazards • Policy and regulatory changes

URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Urban planning and development in Abia State embodies a multifaceted process that should systematically organize and design smart cities and urban areas. This comprehensive endeavor is geared towards establishing functional, sustainable, and livable communities.

The key components of urban planning and development in Abia State include:
1. Land Use Planning:
  - Allocation and zoning of land for various purposes, such as residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational areas.
  - Integration of green spaces and parks for environmental aesthetics and community well-being.

2. Infrastructure Development:
   - Construction and maintenance of essential urban infrastructure like roads, bridges, water supply, sewage systems, and utilities.
  - Focus on creating resilient infrastructure to withstand environmental challenges.

3. Transportation Planning:
  - Designing efficient and accessible transportation systems, including roads, public transit, and pedestrian-friendly pathways.
  - Integrating sustainable transport options to reduce congestion and environmental impact.

4. Environmental Considerations:
   - Incorporating environmentally friendly practices to mitigate the impact of urbanization on ecosystems.
   - Implementing waste management strategies, green building standards, and conservation of natural resources.

5. Social Equity:
  - Ensuring fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities among diverse social

groups.
   - Promoting inclusive housing policies and community development programs to address social disparities.

6. Economic Development:
   - Fostering economic growth through strategic planning of commercial and industrial zones.
   - Encouraging investments and job creation to enhance the economic well-being of the urban population.

Urban planning and development in Abia State should adopt a holistic and interdisciplinary approach, taking into account various factors such as:
   -Social Dynamics: Understanding and responding to the needs and aspirations of the diverse urban population.
   -Economic Considerations: Balancing economic growth with sustainable development to create vibrant urban economies.
   - Environmental Sustainability: Prioritizing practices that minimize the environmental impact of urbanization and promote ecological balance.
   - Cultural Heritage: Preserving and integrating cultural elements to maintain a sense of identity and community pride.

In essence, the overarching goal should be - to create well-designed, sustainable, and inclusive urban areas that not only meet the immediate needs of Abians but also contribute to the long-term resilience and prosperity of Abia State. This approach requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, urban planners, community members, and private sector entities, to ensure a coordinated and effective development strategy.

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Disaster risk management is mostly overlooked in this part of the world. People mostly wait for events to occur before thinking of how to deal with them. In Abia State, there is need to incorporate an agency that will manage environmental emergencies and oversee disaster management. This will involve systematic efforts and strategies designed to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

The priority areas should include:
*   Risk Assessment and Mapping
*   Early Warning Systems
*   Infrastructure and Physical Measures
*   Preparedness and Response Patrol
*   Public Awareness and Education
*   Coordination and Collaboration
*   Recovery and Rehabilitation Strategies
*   Policy and Institutional Frameworks

With these areas fully covered, Abia State will enhance its resilience to disasters, reduce potential impact on communities and the environment. The government's commitment to continuous improvement in disaster risk management strategies should reflect a proactive approach to strengthening the overall resilience of the state.

EXISTENTIAL THREATS (Flooding, Erosion, Deforestation, and Pollution)

Abia State faces a range of existential threats, including flooding, erosion, deforestation, and pollution, which collectively pose substantial challenges to the environment, ecosystems, and the well-being of its inhabitants.

Below is a detailed overview of these threats in Abia State:

Flooding:

Abia State is highly susceptible to flooding, particularly during the rainy season. Contributing factors include poorly designed drainage systems, inadequate urban planning, and encroachment on floodplains. These issues elevate the risk of flooding, impacting communities and infrastructure.

Erosion:

Significant erosion challenges are prevalent in Abia State, especially in areas characterized by steep slopes and suboptimal soil conservation practices. Deforestation, improper land management, and unregulated construction activities exacerbate erosion risks, leading to soil degradation and compromising the stability of landscapes.

Deforestation:

Abia State has witnessed extensive deforestation, primarily driven by agricultural expansion, logging, and urbanization. The consequences of this loss of forest cover are far-reaching, contributing to soil erosion, compromising the natural regulation of water flows, and causing a decline in biodiversity. Addressing deforestation is crucial for the overall ecological balance.

Pollution:

Pollution emerges as a prominent environmental concern in Abia State, particularly within urban areas and industrial zones. Industrial activities, inadequate waste management systems, agricultural runoff, and vehicular emissions collectively contribute to pollution of air, water, and soil. This contamination poses risks to public health, ecosystem integrity, and the overall quality of life.

In response to these existential threats, it is imperative for the State to adopt comprehensive and sustainable strategies. These may include improved urban planning, enhanced drainage systems, effective soil conservation practices, reforestation initiatives, stringent environmental regulations for industries, and the promotion of eco-friendly practices. Furthermore, public awareness and community engagement are essential to guard against these threats. By addressing these challenges systematically, Abia can work towards creating a more sustainable and resilient environment for the current and future generations.

A gully erosion site in Isuikwuato LGA
Source: AFN News

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a global phenomenon that is impacting regions worldwide, and Abia State in Nigeria is no exception. The evident consequences of climate change in the state include widespread gully erosion and the persistent overflooding of the Niger River. These environmental changes have direct and adverse effects on the local population.

The 28th United Nations Conference on Climate Change sparked in-depth discussions on the far-reaching impacts of climate change in the world. It highlighted how climate change has disrupted means of livelihood, led to land degradation, caused significant loss of properties, damaged infrastructure, and even posed threats to lives. While some progress has been achieved, there is a pressing need for sustained efforts to fortify climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. This includes an emphasis on improving monitoring and data collection systems and integrating climate change considerations into various sectors of Abia State's development planning.

By actively addressing the challenges posed by climate change, Abia State has the opportunity to enhance resilience, protect its natural resources, and foster sustainable development for the well-being of its residents. Continuous commitment to climate action will be pivotal in navigating the complexities and safeguarding the state's future against the impacts of a changing climate.

Heavy flood at Ariaria, Aba, Abia State
Source: AFN News

KEY PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description and Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
1	Declare a state of emergency on waste management, sanitation and environmental sustainability	• Abia State Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA) • Ministry of Environment • Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project (NEWMAP) • State Emergency Management System	Declaring a state of emergency on the environment would raise public awareness about the urgency and seriousness of environmental issues facing Abia State. Declaring a state of emergency could foster collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, environmental organizations, communities, and businesses
2	Re-commission environmental health officers who should act as environmental police	Abia State Government	• Enhanced Enforcement • Improved Compliance • Prevention of Environmental Crimes • Education and Awareness
3	Integrate Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Risk Reduction into Abia Development Plan	• Ministry of Environment • Nigeria Erosion And Watershed Management Project (NEWMAP)	• Enhanced Resilience • Reduced Losses and Damages • Institutional Coordination and Collaboration • Community Engagement and Empowerment • Improved Data and Information Systems
4.	Establish Abia Smart City Board (ASCB)	Ministry of Urban and Regional Planning Ministry of Environment	• Effective and efficient transitioning of Abia Housing scheme through adoption of technology • Effectively revamp Abia urban planning to meet modern realities. • Enhance effective public and private partnership

RISKS AND MITIGATION PLAN

S/N	RISKS	MITIGATION PLAN
1.	Pollution and Waste mismanagement:	● Establish effective waste management systems, promote waste reduction and recycling, enforce regulations on industrial emissions and waste disposal, and educate the public about responsible waste practices
2.	Deforestation and Land Degradation leading to loss of biodiversity	● Implement afforestation and reforestation programs to restore degraded areas and increase forest cover. ● Enforce regulations against illegal logging and deforestation activities. ● Risk: Deforestation and land degradation can lead to loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, and reduced ecosystem services
3.	Soil Erosion	● Promote the use of cover crops and soil conservation practices. ● Conduct awareness campaigns on the importance of soil conservation among farmers and landowners.
4.	Water/Airborne Disease Outbreak	● Improve waste collection infrastructure and establish recycling facilities. ● Promote public awareness campaigns on waste segregation, recycling, and responsible consumption.

Quick Wins

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY SECTOR
1.	Establishment of a waste alert hotline for citizens to call in when a waste bin is full
2.	Establishment of Abia Waste-to-Wealth Initiative to create opportunities for proper recycling and attraction of investors in biotechnology
3.	Re-assessment of existing environmental laws and speeding adjustment/enforcement

Medium and Long Term Expectations

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE ENVIR. SUSTANABILITYSECTOR
1.	Develop and implement land-use plans that prioritize sustainable practices Foster collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, community groups, and the private sector to promote environmental sustainability.
2.	Integrate environmental education into the curriculum at all levels of education, promoting awareness and understanding of environmental issues Establish effective waste management systems that encompass waste reduction, recycling, and proper disposal techniques
3.	Enhance enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

▌RECOMMENDATIONS

For effective and efficient waste management practices in Abia state, the following suggestions are recommended

- Establish an emergency line for waste accumulation alerts
- Invest in grass-roots and community engagement through conventional and new media with a focus on "Abia Environmental Watch"
- Establish effective communication channels for information dissemination
- Ensure conversion of wastes to wealth through biogas technology and recycling. This will create jobs and reduce youth unemployment
- Maintain adequate enforcement of all stipulated laws and regulations
- Erect warning signs in strategic locations to dissuade people from dumping waste in gutters
- Establish mobile courts for immediate prosecution of defaulters
- Place monitoring units and CCTV cameras in Aba and Umuahia and follow observations promptly
- Ensure that law enforcement agents imbibe transparency, equity, fairness and accountability in carrying out their duties.

OVERVIEW

In Abia State, various security agencies are charged with the responsibility of protecting lives and properties. The Nigerian Police, the State Security Services (SSS), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSDC), the Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigerian Army, the Abia State Vigilante Group, and the Abia State Neighborhood Watch, amongst others share in this responsibility. These agencies work together to provide security for the people of Abia State, and are holistically responsible for preventing crime, responding to emergencies, and investigating crimes.

The increasing insecurity in Abia State, compounded by factors such as police brutality, has eroded residents' trust in the government's capacity to ensure the safety of millions of Abians and their properties. Various conflict issues, ranging from communal tensions to violent criminal activities, land disputes, armed robbery, kidnapping, human trafficking, and ethno-nationalist agitations, pose a significant threat. These challenges have the potential to exacerbate the relatively low conflict incidents and fatalities recorded in Abia State since 2016.

Communal tensions, ethnic nationalist sentiments, and land disputes persist as enduring features of the conflict landscape in Abia State. A report from the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) revealed an increase in reported conflict risk and violence incidents in Abia State from April to June 2020 compared to the preceding quarter.

Although Abia was considered one of the less violent states in the Niger Delta during the period, particularly based on reported fatalities, specific areas such as Ikwuano and Aba North LGAs experienced elevated levels of lethal violence in the last quarter of 2016.

A major source of concern is the rampant cases of kidnapping, robbery, and criminal activities along the Isuikwuato-Okigwe-Umunneochi axis, where non-state actors terrorize innocent citizens. This alarming trend was exemplified by the high-profile kidnapping of a Methodist prelate, who was released only after a substantial ransom was paid.

Addressing these complex challenges requires a comprehensive security approach that integrates both public security and peacebuilding perspectives. The involvement of the government, community leaders, youths, and agitating groups is crucial for an effective and sustainable solution.

Abia State, with its 17 local government areas and over 500 communities, spans approximately 6,320 square kilometers and shares borders with Enugu and Ebonyi to the north, Akwa Ibom to the east and southeast, Rivers to the south and southwest, and Imo and Anambra to the west. With a population of about 4.2 million people, the state is susceptible to insecurity emanating from neighboring states, necessitating collaborative efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of its residents.

CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS OF SECURITY IN ABIA STATE

- Federal & State Government
- The Nigerian Police
- The Military
- Local Vigilante Groups
- Paramilitary Agencies
- Traditional Rulers/ Community Leaders
- Youth Organisations
- Market Unions
- Religious Organisations

PIVOTAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ABIA STATE SECURITY

1. Welfare, Security, Education and Overall Support for Security Personnel
2. Personnel Professional Conduct (PPC)
3. Facilities and Equipment

WELFARE AND SUPPORT

In a workplace where the well-being of employees is not given priority, a noticeable gap emerges in the organization's productivity and impedes its overall progress.

According to an assessment conducted by the Progressive Abia Youths on the security outfits in Abia State, it has been discerned that a continual reassessment of the welfare framework for security agents is imperative to align with the prevailing economic and technological landscape. Specifically, there is a pressing need for substantial enhancements in the salary structure and allowances provided to uniformed personnel. Moreover, the state of police quarters and hospitals requires comprehensive renovation and modernization.

Considering the rapid evolution of technology in the security sector, it is crucial to institute regular local and international training and retraining programs for personnel across all security agencies. This approach ensures that security personnel remain adequately equipped with digital and technological skills, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in safeguarding the community.

PERSONNEL PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

A recurring challenge within security agencies in Abia State revolves around the consistent display of unprofessional and unethical behavior by certain personnel while executing their duties. This issue is notably manifested through widespread intimidations, violations of citizens' rights, endemic corruption, and instances of extortion, among other reprehensible acts.

The incident involving Izuchukwu Mbakwe, purportedly murdered at De-Choice restaurant on March 26, 2023, by a member of the vigilante group, serves as a stark illustration of the inadequate professional conduct exhibited by some security personnel. Additionally, media reports in June 2021 highlighted cases of human rights abuses, house burnings, property losses, and other atrocities reportedly committed by Nigerian Army personnel in Amangwu Ohafia, Abia State. The death of Damsel on August 17, 2022, stands as just one of numerous extrajudicial killings attributed to security agencies.

These recurring occurrences significantly erode public confidence and trust in security agencies, laying a problematic foundation for the potential breakdown of law and order, ultimately leading to widespread anarchy. It is imperative to address and rectify these issues promptly to restore public faith in the security apparatus and uphold the principles of justice and accountability.

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENTS FOR SECURITY OUTFITS

Insufficient facilities and equipment stand out as a significant factor contributing to the underperformance of security agencies. The absence of well-equipped training centers, complete with shooting ranges, tactical training zones, and simulation rooms for scenario-based exercises, hampers the effective skill development of personnel. A key aspect often overlooked is providing adequate accommodation for personnel during training. Furthermore, the absence of crucial tools such as radio communication equipment, computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems, DNA analysis kits, fingerprint analysis tools, ballistics testing equipment, and crime scene reconstruction tools undermines the agencies' investigative capabilities. Additional deficiencies in electronic surveillance equipment, monitoring rooms for CCTV cameras, secure storage for firearms and ammunition, maintenance areas for weapon care, and emergency response centers further compound the challenges faced by security agencies.

Addressing these gaps in facilities is paramount for enhancing the operational efficiency of security forces. This includes ensuring the availability of essential resources such as uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as providing access to desktops, laptops, and specialized software for effective record-keeping and data analysis. Additionally, the provision of first aid kits, defibrillators, and other emergency medical supplies is crucial for immediate response in critical situations. Equipping security personnel with a diverse range of firearms, including handguns, rifles, shotguns, and specialized weapons, is equally important to meet the dynamic demands of their roles. By addressing these deficiencies comprehensively, security agencies can significantly improve their overall performance and effectiveness in maintaining public safety.

SWOT Analysis for Security

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Existing security structures(Army Navy, Police, e.tc) • Political tolerance/Local vigilante groups • Government support for security • Existing security laws • High level of Social Capital • High number of personnel and national network	• Insufficient resources and funding • Inadequate infrastructure • Poor facilities and equipments for kinetics • Poor communication network • Poor conduct from personnel • Lack of public trust/support • Corruption
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Collaboration with security experts in the private sector • Community engagement (Joint-task force operations) • Technology adoption • International and local training opportunities	• Political instability • Unemployment • Social inequality • Insurgency and terrorism • The states proximity to other unstable regions poses security risk • High Crime Rate

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   The state government should work with neighboring states to share resources and intelligence. This would help to combat the flow of arms and criminals across borders.

2.   The state government should invest in economic development to create jobs and reduce poverty. This would help to address the root causes of crime and violence.

3.   The state government should work with the private sector to develop new security solutions; this should include installing CCTV cameras in public places, and using advanced technology to track criminals.

4.   The state government should strengthen the capacity of the police force by providing adequate financial and social support, training, equipment, and resources.

5.   The state government should work with traditional rulers and community leaders to build trust and cooperation. This would help to deter crime and violence, and to resolve disputes peacefully. Additionally, the State Government should allow autonomous communities to select their leaders without interference. This will ensure political stability at the grassroots level.

6.   The State Government should invest in public awareness programs through conventional and new media. This will help enlighten the public on critical aspects of security such as cybersecurity and tech based security concepts.

7.   The State Government should restructure the Abia State Vigilante Group to meet up with the best global standards by training the security personnel in gathering, sharing and dissemination of intelligence and providing quality management for the outfit.

8.   The State Government should Increase welfare incentives for security operatives and their wards paying special attention to their health, education and overall well-being.

9.   Strict disciplinary measures should be taken against security agents who are guilty of professional misconduct, abetting crimes, fraud activities and illegal extortion. This would boost public confidence on security operatives.

10.   The ministry of homeland security should be revived and security experts engaged in its administration

KEY PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
1	Strengthening Community Policing	Ministry of Homeland Security	1. Bring the community closer to police 2. Effective decentralisation of security architecture 3. Proactive participation by citizens in enhancing security 4. Drastic reduction of crimes
2	Periodic security townhall meeting with community and youth leaders	Ministry of Homeland Security	1. Build the fast eroding confidence of the citizens in the security system 2. Enhances accountability and transparency 3. It's an avenue for intelligence sharing as security is a grassroot matter. 4. Motivation to all active players and keyholders
3	Periodic orientation and security briefing on all media platforms	Ministry of Communication Ministry of Homeland Security	1. Bringing Security agencies closer to the people 2. Prevent potential threats and Security breaches 3. Build confidence in the Security system 4. Bridge Communication gap between the poor and the rich 5. Drastic reduction in crime rate
4	Operation Light Up Abia	Ministry of Works Ministry of homeland security Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development	1.Illuminates dark area whereby enhancing visibility and reducing crime 2. Improvement of surveillance and identification of potential threats
5	Abia Social Security Database (ASSED)	Ministry of Science and technology Ministry of Information Ministry of Homeland Security Ministry of Local government and chieftaincy affairs	1. Proper profiling of citizens on the database 2. Reduction of the increasing rate of malicious Prosecution in the state 3. Track individual earnings and benefits for social security purposes 4. Easy tracking of fleeing criminal suspects
6	Insecurity Whistle Blowing Policy (See something, Say something)	Ministry of Science and technology Ministry of Information Ministry of Homeland Security Ministry of Local government and chieftaincy affairs	1. Increase citizen participation in the security system. Security is everyone's' business 2. Proactive assessment and detection of security breaches 3. Track promoters of insecurity for immediate action

Quick Wins

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE SECURITY SECTOR
1.	Qualitative briefing and stakeholder mapping by Security agencies
2.	Setting up a task force and local security feedback channels
3.	Training of vigilante groups and local Security outfits
4.	Independent assessment of security facilities
5.	Meeting with traditional rulers and relevant stakeholders (e.g Youths) for security discuss.
6.	Periodic Security update and orientation for citizens on all media platforms (BCA, Flo FM, etc.). To be carried out at least twice a week.

Medium And Long Term Expectations

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE SECURITY SECTOR	TIME FOR EXECUTION
1.	Light up Abia	12 - 24 Months
2.	Set up CCTV cameras in strategic locations	18 - 36 Months
3.	Provide adequate equipments (Vans, Trucks, Fire arms) for security personnel.	6 - 36 months

INFRASTRUCTURE

OVERVIEW

Infrastructure plays a very crucial role in the economic and social structure of every Nation. The concept of infrastructure being designed in this document is focused on public structures that simplifies life and improves economic activities. This ranges from roads, markets, schools, hospitals, museums and monuments, recreational centres etc.

In Abia State, over 90% of the socio-economic environment requires some infrastructural intervention; a good example is the judiciary that requires functional infrastructure to function across the 17 LGAs.
While we agree that institutions of government have to create sustainable means to maintain their ecosystem, the government has a crucial role to play in ideation and execution of infrastructural projects.

Despite the claims that over 1,000 roads have been constructed from the administration of Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu to the administration of Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu, Progressive Abia Youths can confirm on the precipice of evidence (Faulks Road, State judiciary complex, Ngwa Road, e.t.c) that these structures did not meet minimum standards thanks to reoccuring factors of corruption, poor drainage system and absolute impunity. This document seeks to objectively analyze the current state of infrastructure in Abia State, with a view to make evidence-based recommendations.

CAUSES OF INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE IN ABIA STATE

- Poor maintenance culture
- Use of substandard construction materials
- Poor monitoring and evaluation system in the public space
- High tax regime
- Poor project planning and management
- Insufficient resource allocation
- Lack of oversight functions from the legislative arm
- Community interference and social instability
- Distorted infrastructural plan leading to abandoned government projects
- Political instability and lack of continuity by successive administrations

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN ABIA STATE
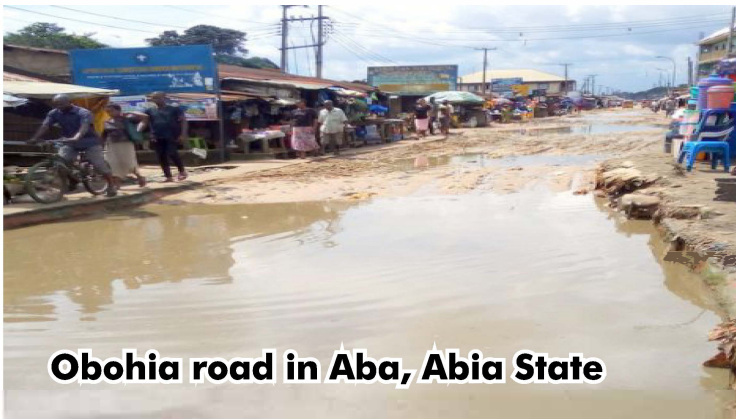Road construction and maintenance
Power
Rail

ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

With an estimated area of 6,320 km2, a population of 3.7million people and about 30,000 daily visitors, Abia State plays a critical role as a peaceful business destination in Southeastern Nigeria. The state is connected by roads and is known for its rich resources, including minerals and petroleum, as well as fertile arable land (Wikipedia, n.d).

The capital, Umuahia, and the commercial hub, Aba, both face significant infrastructure challenges due to years of neglect. Most roads are in poor condition, affected by gully erosion and waste piles. These cities lack proper waste disposal facilities, leading to waste accumulation, bad odors, pollution, and groundwater contamination. The water supply systems in both cities have also deteriorated.

The state is working on gully erosion control with World Bank funding, but more support is needed. Urgent priorities include rehabilitating urban roads, improving waste disposal, enhancing water supply and sanitation, and effectively managing gully erosion. The road network is crucial for economic development, especially since Abia is a business hub with international markets. Poor road conditions affect businesses, agriculture, and livelihoods.

Obohia road in Aba, Abia State

This is at the fulcrum of every economic development in the state. Abia being a business hub with major international markets can only experience an economic boomerang when there is an effective and efficient road network. This encompasses construction of new access routes to maintaining existing ones. A careful look at the road infrastructure in Abia state reveals a dismal situation. Aba and Umuahia being at the core of the administrative and economic existence of the State is not bereft of very poor road networks. This has become a major political campaign tool for politicians as they plunder on the situation to lure supporters who seem desperate for a change. A quick survey conducted by Progressive Abia Youths in the

course of this work shows that a greater percentage of Artisans, Business owners, Farmers, etc are much more interested in having pliable roads that will enable them undertake their ventures successfully than in anything else that has to do with the Abia State government. This according to them will in no little way, help their businesses and agricultural activities to thrive.

However, it is accurate to acknowledge that previous administrations have made some efforts, albeit falling short of meeting the expectations of Abians in terms of infrastructure. It is imperative to emphasize that, in parallel with construction efforts, lack of intentional maintenance of existing infrastructure holds equal significance. Proper maintenance not only curtails wear and tear but also ensures the sustained integrity of the infrastructure. Regrettably, a persistent issue in Abia State is the habitual neglect of public structures and infrastructure, lacking any established means of maintenance. The consequence of this negligence is an ongoing deterioration of these assets, perpetuating a cycle of decay amid the lack of attention and care.

SWOT Analysis for Road Construction and Maintenance

Strengths
- Availability of raw materials
- Cooperation of citizens during construction
- Good topography and soil structure.
- Easy access to construction materials
- Skilled manpower.

Weaknesses
- Poor management
- Poor contract design
- Lack of transparency in contract award and procurements
- Environmental impact
- Corruption and embezzlement of contract funds

Opportunities
- Availability of local and international construction companies
- Economic development in the state
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)
- National intervention on State and rural infrastructure
- Trade and economic boost

Threats
- Bureaucracy and Award Racketeering
- Insufficient budgetary allocation
- Political Instability
- Environmental hazard
- Community Resistance
- Rising cost of construction

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Road construction contracts should be awarded to reputable firms with proven track records.
- Nepotism and aggressive politicking should be eliminated to ensure optimum service delivery
- A standby, independent Road Monitoring and Evaluation Team (SMET) should be constituted to ensure quality and strict compliance.
- The topography of the state should be considered in order to ascertain the type of materials to be used.
- Road maintenance clauses should be inserted in road contracts and contractors held accountable to the terms of road contracts in Abia State.
- All grades of road should be constructed with adequate drainage and road signs
- Road capacity should be outlined and heavy duty trucks restricted from using low grade roads.
- Abia Citizens and Civil Society Organizations should follow up on all road contracts in the State and ensure that due process is followed across board.

POWER

Aba being the economic hub of the state has been nicknamed the JAPAN OF AFRICA, which is a testament to the visible and laudable feats by artisans in the State. With over one million (1,000,000) Micro, small and Medium enterprises in Abia State, Power supply is sine qua non to getting the desired result from these businesses as well as the resultant revenue that follows. A quick survey shows an erratic and unstable power supply which directly has a ripple effect on productivity despite the fact that Abia State is home to Alaoji Power Station and Geometric Power Station all in Aba, with Mbalano power station in Isuikwuato.

Alaoji power station in full capacity should produce about 1074 Megawatts, Geometric's projection is about 1,000 megawatts but the two produces a paltry 504MWs and 188MWs respectively with Mbalano power station in Isuikwuato barely functioning.

A vanguard newspaper report of April 22, 2023 shows that poor maintenance of power facilities and bloated estimated billing to customers in the city has continued to frustrate users. The company on the other hand attributed these challenges to the huge debts owed by its customers, vandalism of power equipment, metre bypassing and assault against General Electric staff carrying out their legitimate duties as major limitations.

Fortunately, with the recent electricity act, states can now generate, transmit and distribute power which will in no small measure boost economic growth if private investors and state government take advantage of this law in Abia State. The Law which also gives legal backing to renewable energy is an avenue for Abia State to solve the power shortage affecting businesses and Socio-economic activities.

SWOT Analysis For Power in Abia State

Strengths
- Presence of power generation stations
- Availability of natural resources like gas
- High consumer presence
- Existing metering structure

Weaknesses
- Outdated power facilities
- Lack of skilled personnel in the power sector
- Poor distribution network resulting to high transmission loss
- High cost of operation
- Lack of accountability and corruption

Opportunities
- High consumer presence
- Private-Public partnership and private investments in power
- Presence of multinational manufacturing companies
- Economic impact on neighboring States
- Multiple sources of power including renewable energy

Threats
- Vandalism and theft
- Climate factors (Rain, Lightning, e.tc)
- High taxation
- Poor government policies

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Power distribution companies in Abia State should ensure proper circulation of electronic meters for efficient metering.
- State government should create an enabling environment for local and foreign investors in the power sector to thrive.
- State government should Implement friendly policies.
- Community leaders should be engaged to provide adequate security against every form of vandalism.
- Abia State government should encourage the exploration of other forms and sources of power such as solar, biogas, biomass, wind e.tc

Quick Wins

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN INFRASTRUCTURE	TIME FOR EXECUTION
1.	Zero Porthole Policy	Quick repairs of potholes and critical road sections (construction of waterways) to improve immediate road conditions.
2.	Quality Street Lighting especially on major roads	Install quality street lights on major roads to aid night travel and improve security
3.	Public facility upgrade	Swift upgrades to public facilities such as major parks, bus stops, and markets for improved usability.

Medium and Long Term Expection

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN INFRASTRUCTURE	TIME FOR EXECUTION
1.	Improved Water Supply Systems:	Implementation and upgrade of water supply systems to ensure reliable and clean water access for residents in urban and rural areas of the State
2.	Renewable Energy Integration	Integration of renewable energy sources to improve power supply and reduce dependency on traditional sources.
3.	Construction of Overhead Bridges and Flyovers at strategic locations.	Construction of good overheads and flyovers to smoothen traffic in areas like Isi-Gate Umuahia, Ariaria and others
4.	Digital Infrastructure Development	Development of digital infrastructure, including the expansion of broadband access and e-governance solutions
5.	Rail and Transportation Networks:	Establishment of a comprehensive rail network and transportation systems to facilitate efficient movement of goods and people.
6	Smarter Aba and Umuahia City Initiatives	Implementation of smart city initiatives, incorporating advanced technologies for efficient security, traffic management, resource allocation, and public services.

KEY PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description and Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
1	No Drainage System, No Road Policy	A policy that will ensure that all types of road constructed in the State have adequate waterways Responsible MDA: Ministry of Works	Improve road durability Reduce impact of existential threats (Erosion, Flooding, Climate change) Ensure that all road construction meet best global standards
2	Abia State Internet Connectivity Enhacement Program (ASICEP)	Quick actions to improve internet connectivity in urban and suburban areas to boost communication and economic activities. Responsible MDAs: Ministry of Works Ministry of Science and Technology.	This will foster technologyical advancement by improving access to internet and ICT for abians. It will facilitate quick access to relevant information ASICEP will provide a platform for improved local security and intelligence gathering
3	Reclaim, Renew & Relaunch Initiative (Tripple R I)	Road rehabilitation projects to address major routes, improving connectivity and transportation across the three senatorial zones. Responsible MDA: Ministry of Works Abia State Road Maintenance Agency	Improve existing road infrastructure in the State
4	Abia State Smart Building System	A digital collection of Abia State building plan that is accessible and digitally available online Designated MDA: Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Works, Ministry of Technology	Will guide Estate developers and real estate mechants in land allocation and management Will help prevent demolition of establishments in the future since everyone will have access to a system that clearly describes the State building plan
5	Abia State Road Delineation and Management (ASRoDaM)	Enhancing the internal road infrastructure through a meticulous approach encompassing the classification and marking of roads based on types and their respective carrying capacities. Additionally, the strategic deployment of barriers is imperative to restrict access for heavy-duty vehicles to lower-grade roads, ensuring optimal traffic management and infrastructure sustainability Responsible MDA: Ministry of Works Ministry of Environmen	Will mitigate wear and tear, promoting longevity and resilience to ensure the sustained durability of the roads.

RISKS AND MITIGATION PLAN

S/N	RISKS	MITIGATION PLAN
1.	Inadequate Funding	Diversifying funding mechanism including PPP Excellent financial planning, forecasting and management.
2.	Natural Disasters	Effective project design incorporating prevalent climate conditions Solid construction and insurance to resist effect of climate change and natural disasters
3.	Political and Regulatory adjustments	Establish strong contracts that will outlive political regimes Solid construction and insurance to resist effect of climate change and natural disasters
4.	Delays and Scope Creep	Develop proper contingency plan and ensure that contractors keep to the terms of their contract

HEALTH CARE & WELFARE

▌OVERVIEW

The Healthcare industry, or medical industry, is a sector that provides goods and services to treat patients with curative, preventive, rehabilitative, or palliative care. With different sub-sectors and an interdisciplinary team of trained professionals and para-professionals, the healthcare industry is designed to meet the health needs of individuals and communities. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines welfare as the state of doing well especially in respect to good fortune, happiness, well-being, or prosperity.

A look at the foundational metrics of good fortune, happiness, well-being and prosperity in Abia State leaves a lot to be desired.

There are 760+ registered healthcare facilities in Abia State ranging from General Hospitals to Primary Healthcare centers. These facilities have provided services to millions of Abians (3.7million) in the last three decades. From Antenatal and Postnatal care to immunization, ENT treatments, diagnosis and, major and minor surgeries, these health facilities by definition were designed to play vital roles in the stabilization of healthcare in the state.

In a survey carried out by Progressive Abia Youths, It was discovered that Abia State Government has played little role in facilitating an environment that guarantees the welfare of her citizens over the years.

To put it in context, the failure of welfare programs which can be attributed to the non payment of pensions, salaries and gratuities in the Governments of Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu, Chief Theodore Orji and Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu takes a highlight in what looked like an innovative welfare program (**Dial-a-Doc Tele-health Initiative)** launched in 2018 by the past administration of Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu.

Under standard practice, a minimum of 25% of the annual budgetary allocation should be set aside for critical sectors like health care but unfortunately this is not the case in Abia State. Though we have over 760 registered health facilities in Abia State, less than 50 of them run on daily basis and are fit to render health care services. Issues around corruption and poor management of public health facilities abound in the healthcare industry in Abia State.

Indeed, successive administrations have failed to live up to the responsibility of catering for the healthcare and welfare of her citizens.

LIST OF SOME CERTIFIED GENERAL HOSPITALS AND PRIMARY HEALTHCARE CENTERS IN ABIA STATE

GENERAL HOSPITALS
University Teaching Hospital, Umunneochi
General Hospital, Aba
Abia State Teaching Hospital, Aba North
General Hospital Amachara, Umuahia South
Abia State Specialist And Diagnostic Center, Umuahia
Isuikwuato General Hospital, Mbalano

PRIMARY HEALTHCARE CENTERS
Amorji Health Centre, Umunneochi
Nsirimo Primaray Health Care Center, Umuahia South
Ogbodoukwu Primaray Health Care Center ,Umuahia South
Amuzukwu Primaray Health Care Center ,Umuahia North
Isingwu Ofeme Primaray Health Care Center, Umuahia North
Umuiku Asa Primaray Health Care Center, Ukwa West

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT
The major structural challenges facing the healthcare sector in Abia State are dilapidated buildings and lack of modern medical facilities. This is evident in Isuikwuato general hospital, Abam Primary Healthcare Center in Bende LGA, Umunwanwa Primary Healthcare Center in Ohiaocha village in Umuahia south LGA, Ohuru Amaisii Health center Obingwa, Amuzuoro Health Centre in Amaoforo Autonomous Community and Okwuta Primary Health care centre both in Umuahia North Local Government Area. Most of these facilities are below standard and do not qualify to be called health facilities.

Management
The overall operation of the medical system requires great management to thrive.
Staff mobilization, facility management, capacity building, accounting and resource control are essential areas that has suffered from poor management in the medical industry in Abia State.

Funding
Resource mobilization and effective management play significant roles in medical infrastructure development, purchase of medicines, distribution of vaccines, staff welfare and internal trainings. Apart from funding, finance management remains a major challenge in Abia State health sector. This accounts for the constant exodus witnessed in the health sector with most health professionals seeking greener pastures in private hospitals and oversees.
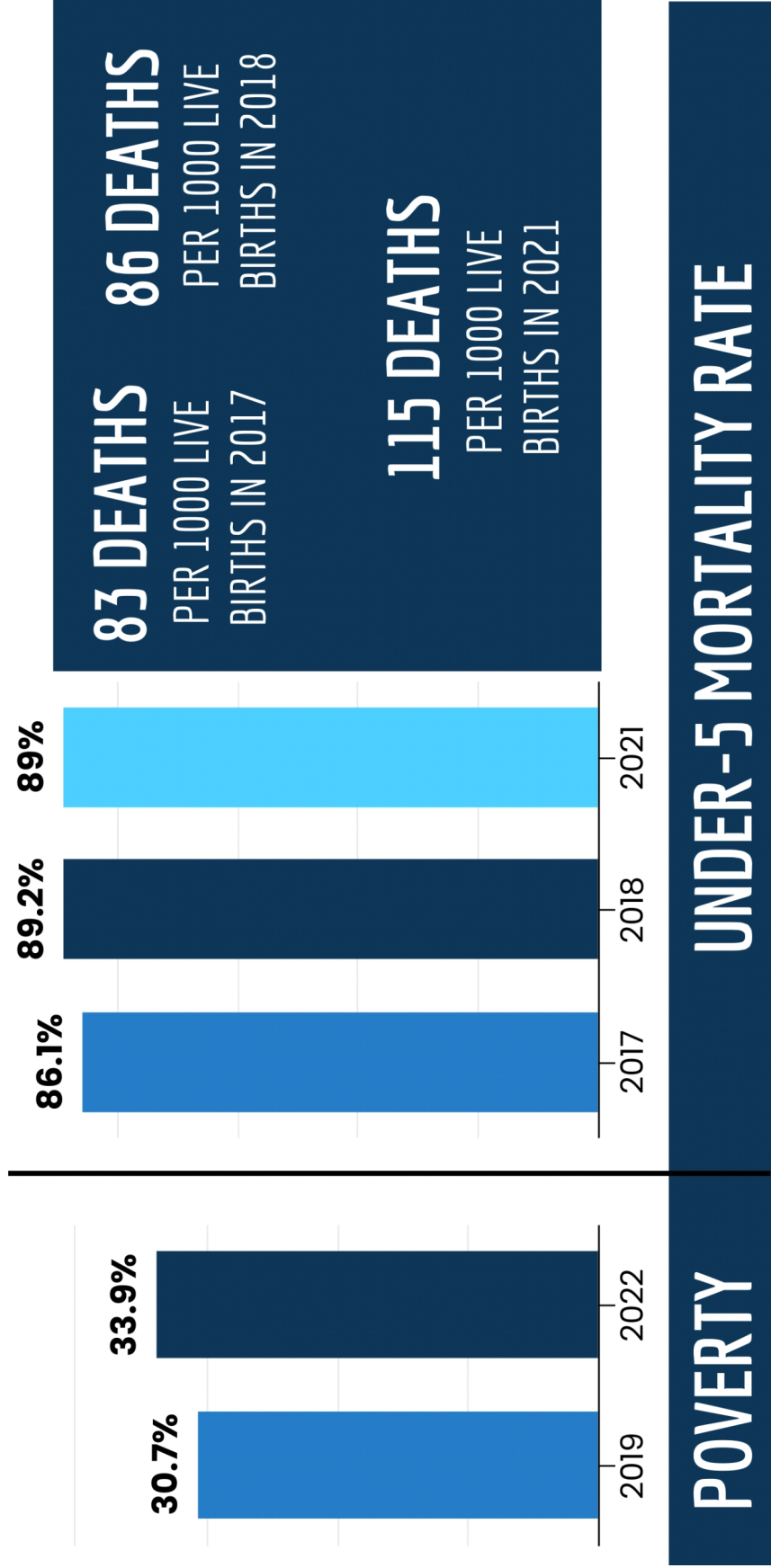
Capacity Building
Learning, Unlearning and Relearning is a continuum in this sector as discoveries and innovations are made on daily basis. Health care providers should be exposed to regular training and capacity building exercises in special areas like deliveries, immunization and child health, nursing care e.t.c

Procurement
The process of procuring medical equipments and drugs for the public hospitals is mostly clouded with secrecy. It was alleged on countless occasions that top management staff diverted funds and public medical equipments to their private hospitals making it difficult for the public health system to deliver qualitative service. The procurement process as a critical aspect of healthcare needs a great deal of attention.

Poverty and Under-5 Mortality Rate in Abia State

83 DEATHS PER 1000 LIVE BIRTHS IN 2017

86 DEATHS PER 1000 LIVE BIRTHS IN 2018

115 DEATHS PER 1000 LIVE BIRTHS IN 2021

UNDER-5 MORTALITY RATE

86.1% — 2017
89.2% — 2018
89% — 2021

POVERTY

33.9% — 2022
30.7% — 2019

www.premiumtimesng.com

State of General Hospital Umunnato, Alayi, Bende LGA

▌SWOT Analysis for HealthCare in Abia state

Strength
- Existing Primary Health care structures
- Community Participation
- Availability of records and references
- Dedication and selflessness from most health care personnel

Weaknesses
- Limited number of physicians
- Poor financial management
- Long patient waiting time
- Unskilled personnel
- Lack of technological infrastructure
- Inadequate capacity building programs
- Institutional corruption

Opportunities
- Healthcare intervention from international donor agencies like UNICEF, USAID, WHO e.tc
- Diaspora health intervention initiative and medical missions
- Medical Tourism
- National intervention programs eg, NHIS
- Community intervention programs on health and wellbeing

Threats
- Unhealthy Competition
- Unfriendly government policies
- Lack of basic amenities
- Lack of world-class research institutes within the State
- Insecurity

STAFF WELFARE

Caregivers, essential in safeguarding public health, face an alarming lack of care and support in Abia State, where the welfare of healthcare workers has fallen below acceptable standards. The absence of health insurance coverage compounds their challenges. The severity of the situation is underscored by the fact that health workers, particularly those under the state Health Management Board, have resorted to intermittent gate closures in protest of prolonged salary non-payment, spanning several months. This dire situation not only demoralizes healthcare professionals but also poses a significant threat to the overall stability of the healthcare system. Urgent attention and action are necessary to address these issues, ensuring the well-being of healthcare providers and sustaining a competent and motivated workforce crucial for effective healthcare delivery.

Staff of Health management board and some medical personnel protesting non payment of salaries and entitlements   *Source: Daily Post*

▪SWOT Analysis for Public Welfare in Abia state

Strengths
- Willingness of most citizens to participate in welfare programs
- Existing platforms for execution of welfare programs
- Government's interest in executing welfare programs

Weaknesses
- Endemic Corruption
- Poor Funding
- Lack of verifiable records and references
- Poor resource management and control
- Population density.
- Political bias
- Ineffective data storage and management system
- Lack of competence in management of welfare programs.

Opportunities
- National intervention programs eg, trademoni, N-Power.
- Welfare programs from international organisations eg, World bank, USAID,IMF.
- Public outreach by humanitarian and charity organizations like Rotary, PAY, and other NGOs

Threats
- Overblown wage bill
- High poverty rate.
- Abuse of authority.
- Redundancy of anti-graft agencies.
- Poor infrastructure.
- Economic instability.
- Scarcity of resources.
- Hyperbolic expectations of the ordinarypeople.

KEY PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description and Responsible MDAs to Execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
1	Hazard allowances for healthcare workers	A wage supplement paid to health workers as a result of exposure to danger while at work Abia state accounts department/Hospital Management board	Encourages healthcare worker to carry out their assignments with joy and excitement
2.	Free health care services for pregnant women and the under-5	A form of health insurance aimed at reducing maternal mortality and improving child health in the state Ministry of health, Abia state	Reduction of maternal mortality and improvement in the health status of children

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description and Responsible MDAs to Execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
3.	Revival of the Abia State Tele-health program	An ambulatory response program for emergencies open to everyone with special emphasis on those with disabilities	This can help people with disabilities and their families access healthcare services timely Ministry of Health
4.	Rural/urban equality program	The rural/urban equality program is designed to ensure that rural communities have access to essential medical services Ministry of environment/ Ministry of works and housing	Reduce rural/urban migration.
5	No work no pay policy.	Strict supervision carried out to reduce truancy among state health workers thereby increasing productivity Abia state civil service commission	Sustains workers integrity and enforces competence.
6.	End poverty now and zero hunger program.	A poverty alleviation exercise to improve citizens welfare through hunger reduction Ministry of Agriculture and ministry of Humanitarian affairs	Guarantees the minimal reduction of poverty and promotes sustainable living among the citizens

Quick Wins

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR	TIME FOR EXECUTION
1.	Rehabilitation of dilapidated health facilities	Commence within the first 12 Months
2.	Employment of more qualified personnel and retraining staff	16 - 18 months
3.	Implementation of strict adherence to professional conduct in services rendered at primary healthcare centres	12 Months

Medium and Long Term Expectations

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR	TIME FOR EXECUTION
1.	Implementation of free health care services for pregnant women and the 'under-5'	2-4 years
2.	Attraction of foreign investors in pharmaceuticals and Tele-medicine	1-2 years
3.	Building and rehabilitation of more General and Specialist hospitals	1-3 years
3.	Partnership with reputable NGOs to drive developmental projects in healthcare and public welfare	1-2 years

RISKS AND MITIGATION PLAN

S/N	RISKS	MITIGATION PLAN
1.	Resistance to urbanization by rural dwellers	Adequate sensitization and stakeholder engagement
2.	High-handedness	Ensure the rule of law
3.	Shortage of storage facilities for vaccines	Provision of standard storage facilities e.g cold room
4.	Conflicting ideas	Shortlist delegates to represent interest groups
5.	Inefficiency	Design technological solutions to align with local realities

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Restructure/Reposition the Abia state primary health care development agency's workforce to effectively and efficiently deliver her mandate of providing social and technical support to the various Local Government healthcare facilities
- Ensure proper disbursement and management of funds by Hospital Management Board and Abia State Primary Health Care Development Agency
- Constitute routine local and international refresher courses for personnel to improve medical services
- Ensure that essential drugs and vaccines from the state cold chain store are properly distributed
- Payment of salaries and other allowances should be done as at when due.
- An independent committee should be set up to oversee the affairs of medical practitioners and ensure defaulters are brought to book
- Medical personnel should be consulted when critical issues involving the sector are discussed
- Ensure that tech solutions in the medical field align with local realities for good results
- Provide access to mortgages for young civil servants working in the health sector

REVENUE MANAGEMENT & Transportation

OVERVIEW

Revenue collection and management is to a Government what a bone is to a dog. Without proper management of internal and external revenue, every institution is bound to fail. In the context of this document, revenue refers to the money or income received by a government from taxes and non-tax sources to enable it undertake public expenditures. Transportation is a major aspect of revenue generation in Abia State. Infact, it contributed majorly to the ₦38,670,000,000 (Thirty eight billion, six hundred and seventy million Naira) internally generated revenue recorded in Abia State 2021 fiscal year (BudgIT, 2022).

MAJOR REVENUE SOURCES INCLUDE:

- **Tax revenue:** Personal income, company tax, income duties, land revenue, stamps and registration fees, excise duties, sales tax [VAT]. Etc. In Abia State, the Abia State Board of Internal Revenue is charged with the sole responsibility of collecting statutory taxes.
- **Non-tax revenue:** grants and gifts, and administrative revenue like fees, licenses, fines, forfeitures, special assessments e.tc.

According to a Vanguard newspaper report, a total of ₦24 billion was projected as internally generated revenue for the 2022 financial year in Abia State. This figure though under-represented shows the enormous potentials of Abia State in terms of revenue generation.

With a population of about 3.7 million people, an active workforce of 14,983 and 5,372 pensioners, an IGR per capita of ₦3,957 shows that the state is not doing well in IGR generation and management (BudgIT). To quickly deal with emerging issues, effective revenue management which refers to full implementation of revenue programmes and proposals aimed at efficient assessment, collection and enforcement of revenue legally due, without unjustified cost to the government or the revenue payer in terms of money, time and convenience is of utmost importance.

Road, Water and Rail are the main transport channels in Abia State with road as a major source of transportation. In anticipation of overall growth in population size and urbanization, this document recognizes the importance of utilizing different transport channels to reduce gridlock and ensure smooth transportation of goods within and outside the state. With the huge revenue generation potentials of the transport sector, devising an efficient machinery for revenue collection and judicious utilization of collected revenue is imperative for a working State. To achieve this, evidence based policy making, efficient planning and execution, organisational leadership, coordination and control should suffice.

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF REVENUE COLLECTION AND TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT IN ABIA STATE

Revenue Mobilization & Management
Regulation and Enforcement
Automated Digital Payments

REVENUE MOBILIZATION AND MANAGEMENT IN ABIA STATE

Revenue mobilization and management is essential for the development of a state. As a sequel, efficient tax collection, human and natural resource management, and market friendly fiscal policies have become crucial topics in the business of governance.

Abia State boasts economic vibrancy, characterized by thriving markets such as the Ariaria International Market, high transport activities, large industries, SMEs, and a multitude of daily business transactions. Despite these promising features, the state's revenue generation does not align with its economic potential. Over time, a disconcerting pattern has emerged where revenue collectors possess unofficial receipts, some even issued by security agents, allowing them to divert state government funds for personal gain. Corruption has become a pervasive issue, manifesting in distorted revenue return receipts, embezzlement, and misappropriation of funds.

The critical challenge lies in poor financial management, a problem exacerbated by the inadequate work ethic and lack of integrity among revenue collectors. The state's ineffective strategies for enhancing internally generated revenue (IGR) further contribute to the overall deficiency in revenue generation. These human-related factors significantly hamper the state government's ability to generate the necessary funds.

The weak fiscal statistics observed are not isolated from the inconsistencies in fiscal management, leading to corresponding inadequacies in IGR management and overall fiscal performance. Recognizing that IGR is just one facet of the broader fiscal strategy, the existing weaknesses in fiscal management inevitably extend to impact revenue generation. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that addresses corruption, enhances financial management practices, and establishes effective strategies for boosting internally generated revenue. Only through such measures can Abia State unlock its full economic potential and achieve a more robust fiscal performance.

CURRENT SOURCES OF REVENUE MOBILIZATION IN ABIA STATE

- Individual Tax
- Corporate Tax
- Public Assets
- Income tax
- Corporate tax
- Payroll tax
- Sales tax [VAT]
- Property tax
- Capital gains tax
- Digital Tax
- Oil Proceeds (13% Derivation)

■ SWOT Analysis for Revenue Mobilization & Management in Abia State

Strengths
- Existing revenue mobilization system that can be improved upon.
  - Presence of unions and organized communities within the transport and commerce industries
  - Good relationship between stakeholders and government
  - Plethora of markets and businesses

Weaknesses
- Epileptic electricity supply
- Poor management
- Thuggery and uncoordinated collection system
- Multi-taxation
- Poor data management
- Misinformation
- Lack of transparency
- Overdependence on federal allocation
- Corruption

Opportunities
- High presence of commerce in Aba and Umuahia
  - Improved security of life and properties
  - Untapped potentials in tourism
  - Digital economy
  - Availability of reliable data management platforms
  - Availability of homegrown experts in public management
  - Industrialization

- **Threats**
  - Public resistance to revenue mobilization efforts
  - Poor road network
  - Tax evasion
  - Economic instability
  - Poor government policies and programs
  - High level of Unemployment

■ REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Revenue regulation entails the formulation, implementation, and adaptation of rules governing revenue mobilization. This collaborative effort involves government agencies, legislatures, and tax authorities working in unison to achieve a balanced approach to revenue generation. The objective is to minimize the burden on taxpayers, ensure fairness in taxation, and deter tax evasion while maximizing revenue for the government.

Abia State possesses an array of revenue regulations, boasting the enactment of approximately 27 laws to this effect. The introduction of the Abia State Tax (Codification and Consolidation Law, 2020) by the 7th House of Assembly represents a comprehensive regulation covering various aspects of revenue mobilization. Additionally, the significance of the Personal Income Tax Act (as amended 2011) cannot be overstated in guiding tax mobilization within Abia State. Thus, it is evident that the challenge in revenue mobilization does not stem from the absence of robust laws but may be attributed to the effectiveness of management and enforcement. A substantial leap in revenue mobilization could be realized through rigorous implementation of existing regulations.

Crucial to this process is the proper enforcement of tax laws, ensuring accurate reporting and payment of taxes by individuals and businesses. Effective enforcement is pivotal in safeguarding government revenue, curbing tax evasion, and fostering a just tax system. This involves employing measures such as audits, penalties for non-compliance, and leveraging technology for monitoring financial transactions.

A lack of robust enforcement mechanisms not only jeopardizes revenue generation but also opens the door to endemic corruption, potentially leading to systemic collapse. Therefore, it is imperative for Abia State to prioritize and enhance the enforcement of existing revenue

regulations to realize the full potential of its revenue mobilization efforts.

The Abia State Board of Internal Revenue (Amendment no.2) Law (No.2) of 2016 saddled the Abia State Board of Internal Revenue (ABIR) with the responsibility of assessing all persons chargeable with tax in the State to collect, recover and pay to the designated account any tax or levy due to the State under this law or any other enhancement.

To enforce payment of due taxes, it now behoves on the body (ABIR) to professionally and properly execute her functions as provided by law; which includes ensuring that individuals and businesses comply with tax laws and regulations set by the government.

The responsibility reposed on ABIR ranges from audits to penalties, investigations, and legal actions on offenders to ensure proper tax collection, discourage tax evasion, and maintain the smooth running of the agency on the one hand and eradication of corruption, multi-taxation, improper orientation, lack of accountability, and intimidation on the other hand. This must not be done perfunctorily

◼ SWOT Analysis for Revenue Mobilization & Management in Abia State

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Existing laws on revenue • Existing enforcement agency • Government's willingness to enforce revenue laws • Availability of personnel for enforcement agencies • Existing revenue mobilization structures	• Unprofessional conduct from personnel • Lack of awareness of revenue laws • Systemic corruption • Illegal staff recruitment and mobilization • Lack of transparency and accountability • Inadequate facilities and equipment
Opportunities • A coordinated and improved revenue system • Oversight from legislature • Citizen accountability framework • Increased economic activities • Improved infrastructure	**Threats** • Citizens' resistance to revenue laws • Poor government policies • Political instability • Ineffective legislature • Illegitimate punitive measures on defaulters • Thuggery • Government's executive interventions

◼ AUTOMATED DIGITAL PAYMENTS

The Abia State Board of Internal Revenue has taken steps toward the adoption of a fully automated digital payment system, as reflected on their website; however, the state is yet to achieve complete automation across all payment systems. The current objective focuses on channeling all payments through approved government banks, but there hasn't been significant progress in fully integrating the payment system to the extent that automated receipts are universally recognized as valid proof of payment. By curbing cash-based transactions and embracing digital payments exclusively, the government could effectively combat the black economy and eliminate the need for carrying physical currency or credit cards, mitigating the risk of theft or loss. Notably, the automated payment system in Lagos State, as reported by Premium Times in 2021, faced challenges under the smart mega city initiative. Despite these drawbacks, the advantages of a robust digital payment system outweigh the shortcomings, particularly in preventing fund shortages and minimizing financial leakages within government agencies.

SWOT Analysis For Automated Digital Payments

Strengths	Weaknesses
• User friendly • Efficient • Scalable • Cost effective	• Technical issues • Limited consumer protection • Uncoordinated regulation • Poor internet connectivity
Opportunities • Partnership with secure digital payment platforms (local and international) • Presence of a large market • Mutual trust and collaboration with multiple stakeholders.	**Threats** • Security risks • Lack of infrastructure especially electricity • Cyber attacks • Poor government policies

RECOMMENDATIONS

The SWOT analysis highlights the resilience of automated digital payments despite cyber threats, emphasizing its efficiency.

In response to these insights, the following recommendations suffice:

• Firstly, the state government should implement digital registration for all businesses, street vendors, market shops, commercial vehicles, companies, hotels, and eateries, assigning unique identification numbers to eligible taxpayers in both urban and rural areas.

• All tax payments should be directed to the state government's account through designated banks, eliminating cash transactions with revenue collectors. Enhancing public understanding of automated payment channels through training, demo videos, and infographics is essential. Adopting a central collection system for non-tax revenues is proposed for efficiency and transparency.

• The government must ensure cybersecurity for tax payment platforms and safeguard the data of Abia indigenes. Stringent legal measures should be taken against tax evaders, while training revenue collectors in civility is crucial. Creating a conducive business environment with incentives like grants, startup loans, and tax waivers will stimulate economic growth. Establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) with tax
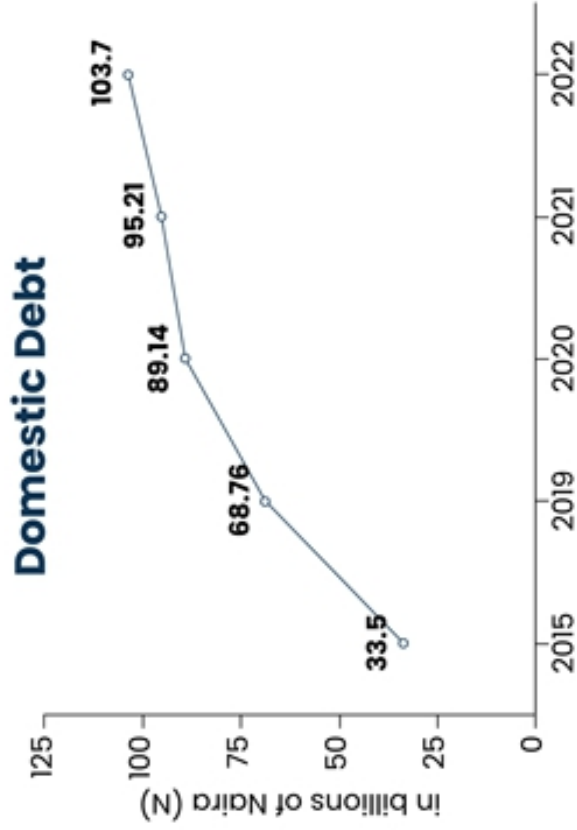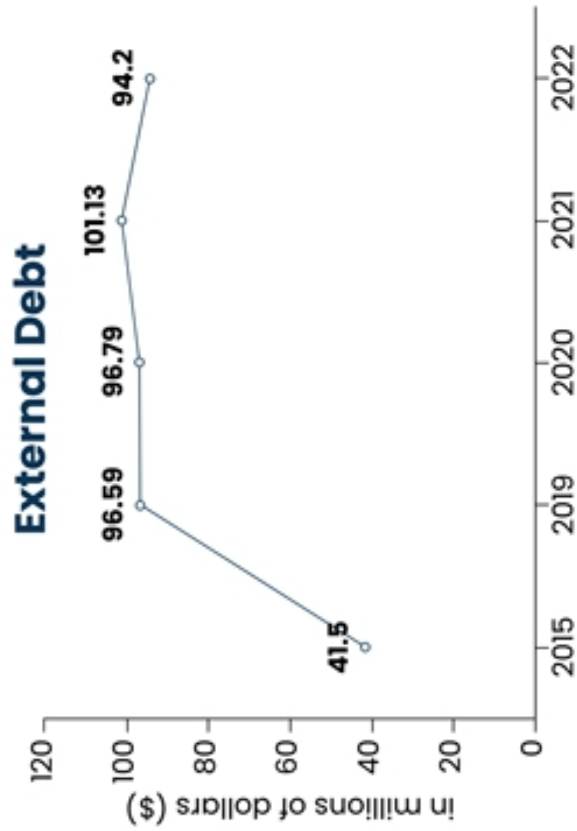
incentives can attract local and foreign investors. Reviving tourist sites and agricultural centers, managing natural resources, promoting SMEs, fostering industrial clusters, developing tourism infrastructure, preserving heritage, and diversifying revenue sources beyond oil and gas are recommended strategies. Instituting a revenue diversification think-tank within two years will further propel economic growth and attract private investments. Through these measures, the government aims to create a robust, diversified revenue base for sustainable development.

Abia State tax payment portal
@ https://abia.tax/

DEBT DYNAMICS IN ABIA STATE

The escalating debt profile in Abia State raises serious concerns about the state's financial stability and adherence to fiscal responsibility. Recent data underscores a troubling trajectory as the state's debt burden continues to mount, posing potential risks to Abia's economic sustainability. If not curtailed, this growing indebtedness could significantly constrain the State Government's ability to finance vital development projects, impeding crucial infrastructure upgrades and the delivery of essential public services in the foreseeable future. It is imperative to address the root causes of this mounting debt profile to safeguard the state's financial health, ensuring that borrowed funds are prudently utilized. Implementing effective fiscal management strategies is essential to mitigate the adverse effects on Abia State's economic prospects. In this context, Abia's leaders should explore innovative revenue-generation approaches to alleviate the need for extensive borrowing.

Abia State Debt Profile 2015- 2022

External Debt

in millions of dollars ($)

41.5 (2015)
96.59 (2019)
96.79 (2020)
101.13 (2021)
94.2 (2022)

Domestic Debt

in billions of Naira (N)

33.5 (2015)
68.76 (2019)
89.14 (2020)
95.21 (2021)
103.7 (2022)

www.premiumtimesng.com

Medium and Long Term Expectations

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE REVENUE & TRANSPORT SECTOR	TIME FOR EXECUTION
1.	Development of a Sustainable Public Transportation System: By the end of the fifth year, government should establish a sustainable public transportation system that prioritizes the use of clean energy and reduces carbon emissions. This will involve introducing electric buses, creating dedicated bicycle lanes, and integrating pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling. Government should also explore partnerships with private transport operators to introduce shared mobility services, such as ride-hailing and bike-sharing.	3-8+ years(longterm)
2.	Establishment of Special Economic Zones: Within five years, the government should establish and sustain special economic zones in strategic locations within Abia state, focusing on sectors that can drive economic growth and job creation. These zones will be equipped with world-class infrastructure, streamlined regulatory processes, and attractive incentives to attract local and foreign investors. This initiative aims to diversify the state's economy, create employment opportunities, and stimulate industrial development. The Enyimba Economic City (EEC) was an idea from the administration of Gov. Okezie Ikpeazu that never materialized. Subsequent governments must avoid a re-occurrence	3-8+ Years(longterm)
3.	Promotion of Smart Transportation Solutions: Over the next five years, the government should promote the adoption of smart transportation solutions to enhance efficiency and convenience. This will involve implementing intelligent traffic management systems, real-time public transport information systems, and mobile applications for smart ticketing and journey planning. These initiatives will not only improve the overall transport experience for residents and commuters but also contribute to reducing traffic congestion and emissions.	3-8+ Years(longterm)

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABLE EMPOWERMENT

OVERVIEW

The African Youth Charter defines a youth as an individual between the ages of 18 and 35, with some regional considerations extending this range up to 40.

Central to democratic leadership is the imperative of youth development and sustainable empowerment, entailing the nurturing, equipping, and fostering of young individuals through the provision of enduring growth enablers.

The concept of sustainable youth empowerment embodies definitive purpose that should be championed by leaders who answer the clarion call of providing opportunities for young people to learn and thrive.

Past administrations, in their pursuit of youth development in Abia State, have distributed lofty appointments to the youths as special assistants, provided vehicles, and sent selected youths to China for skill development in automated shoe making. Regrettably, these initiatives have proven unsustainable, yielding minimal impact.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, youth unemployment in Abia State exceeds 51%, with underemployment surpassing 65%, rendering previous youth development efforts ineffective.

This document aims to identify the root causes of failure in this critical sector and offers evidence-based recommendations to foster sustainable empowerment for the youth of Abia State.

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT and SUSTAINABLE EMPOWERMENT IN ABIA STATE

- EMPLOYMENT
- CAPACITY BUILDING
- ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
- SKILL AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
- INCLUSION
- SPORTS

UNDERLYING REASONS FOR THE SHORTCOMINGS IN DESIGNING AND EXECUTING SUSTAINABLE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES.

1. Inadequate formulation and implementation of policies targeting youth
2. Insufficient orientation and educational support
3. Social barriers hindering progress
4. Limited funding for youth empowerment programs
5. Lack of trust in political leaders
6. Disparity in dialogue between youths and the government
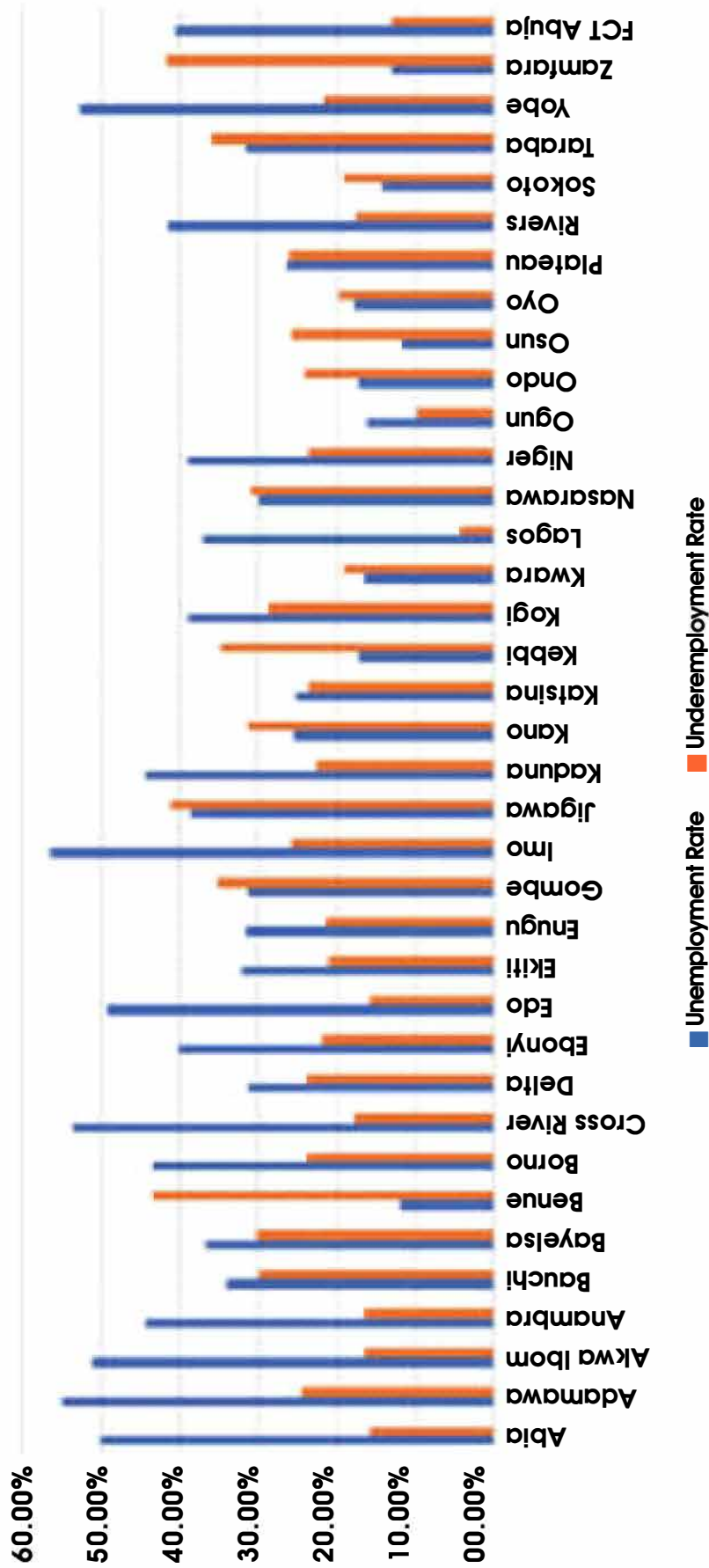7. Absence of essential infrastructures

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Youth unemployment and underemployment pose significant hurdles to sustainable youth development in Abia State. Recent data indicates an alarming 35% youth unemployment rate, reflecting the challenges faced by a substantial portion of the young population in securing stable and meaningful employment. Additionally, underemployment is rampant, with a staggering 51% rate, as many young individuals find themselves in roles that fail to fully leverage their skills and qualifications. This scenario not only curtails their economic potential but also hampers innovation and productivity within the state, compounded by the fact that most young people employed by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) earn below minimum wage despite their demanding responsibilities. Addressing this critical issue demands immediate and targeted action from the Abia State Government.

Prioritizing investment in vocational training and skill development programs can empower young individuals with the expertise required for emerging industries. Furthermore, creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship, including start-up incentives and access to affordable credit, can foster the autonomy of youth in generating their own employment opportunities. Effective collaboration between the government, private sector, and educational institutions is crucial to developing comprehensive strategies that not only promote job creation but also reduce unemployment rates, thereby unlocking the latent potential of Abia State's dynamic youth population.

These recommendations and others captured, require a robust action plan supported by ample political will to usher in an enlightened and empowered youth community in Abia State

Unemployment and Underemployment by State (%)

Legend: ■ Unemployment Rate ■ Underemployment Rate

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2021

States (top to bottom): FCT Abuja, Zamfara, Yobe, Taraba, Sokoto, Rivers, Plateau, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ogun, Niger, Nasarawa, Lagos, Kwara, Kogi, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa, Imo, Gombe, Enugu, Ekiti, Edo, Ebonyi, Delta, Cross River, Borno, Benue, Bayelsa, Bauchi, Anambra, Akwa Ibom, Adamawa, Abia

X-axis: 00.00%, 10.00%, 20.00%, 30.00%, 40.00%, 50.00%, 60.00%

■ SWOT Analysis for Youth Development and Sustainable Empowerment

Strengths
- Numerical strength
- Youth enterprise and innovation
- Passion and enthusiasm
- Openeness to dialogue
- Abundance of human and natural resources
- Presence of commerce in Aba

Weaknesses
- Lack of funding
- Irresponsible leadership
- Poor education
- Lack of vocational training
- Poor development in the state
- Skill gaps

Opportunities
- Federal Government Youth empowerment initiatives Business Grants, Jubilee Fellows Program, e.tc
- Youth Development programs from world bank and other international donor agencies
- State owned youth empowerment initiatives

Threats
- Insecurity
- Unemployment
- Favouritism
- Politicization of government programs intended for youth development.
- Poor implementation
- Lack of Trust

■ SPORTS

Sports, initially perceived as a physical activity contributing to overall well-being, has evolved globally into a lucrative business and a pivotal component of sustainable youth and community development. Ranging from track and field to badminton, weightlifting, boxing, swimming, cycling, and football, sports has become a thriving global industry. In Abia State, football takes precedence as the most popular sport, evident in the presence of professional football clubs such as Enyimba, Abia Warriors FC, and Abia Comets in the Nigerian Leagues.

Conversely, over 40% of individuals with disabilities in Abia State actively participate in various sporting activities. According to a recent survey by the Organization for Impact and Reform (OFIAR), involving persons with disabilities (PWDs) in sports has the potential to foster inclusivity and resourcefulness within the community. Recognizing the transformative power of sports, exemplified by young talents like Villareal's Samuel Chukwueze from Abia State, emphasizes the need to provide opportunities for sustainable youth development.

Numerous budding talents await a chance to showcase their skills, underscoring the importance of creating avenues for the youth and PWD community to flourish in Abia State.

■ SWOT Analysis for Sports

Strengths
- Availability of talent
- Youth participation in sports
- Existing infrastructure
- Presence of sports management professionals

Weaknesses
- Substandard facilities and equipments
- Poor funding
- Poor management
- Inconsistent local sports competition schedule
- Poor officiating
- Lack of expertise in sports ministry

Opportunities
- Government sponsored Sports Festivals including Para Games
- Nigeria professional football league
- Budding Sports academies
- Local/International scouts
- Continental and International competitions like olympics, commonwealth Games and African Games
- Corporate sponsorships and partnership for sports

Threats
- Insecurity
- Climate Change
- Lack of sponsors
- Doping and cheating
- Political manipulations

■ RECOMMENDATIONS

To reinvigorate sports in Abia State, the following recommendations are essential:

- Revive Abia State Sports Council and engage competent sports administrators to lead the sports council
- Set up a sports development committee under the sports council to do an independent assessment of available opportunities
- Acquire standard equipments for para games and basic sports
- Engage international football clubs to establish football academies in Abia just as Real Madrid has one in Rivers State.
- Give adequate support to Abia born Olympic medalists and support homegrown talents going for international competitions
- Ensure accountability and innovation in the sporting sector by encouraging external partnerships
- Set up a well prepared annual sports festival and seek partnerships for funding
- Establish grassroots sports programs that target secondary school students in urban and rural areas. These programs can help identify and nurture young talents, promote a healthy lifestyle, and provide equal access to professional sporting opportunities for all.
- Enhance Sports Infrastructure by investing in the development and maintenance of sports facilities, such as stadiums, arenas, and community sports centers.

KEY PRIORITIES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description and Responsible MDAs to Execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
1	Abia Youths Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship Scheme (AGUSS) **Focus:** 5 Youths per Community	A scholarship scheme provided for graduate and undergraduate students, empowering the youths academically. Responsible MDA: Ministry of Education	Boost Abia's human resource and provide a platform for bright Abia Youths to access educational opportunities for intellectual empowerment (drawn from Singaporean model)
2.	Skill up Abia Youths (SKUP Abia)	A skill empowerment program aimed at providing Abia Youths with necessary skills in manufacturing, agriculture, technology, IoT, entrepreneurship, etc Responsible MDA: Ministry of Youth Development	Training and capacity building will provide fundamental skills for Abia Youths in manufacturing, agriculture and information communication technology (ICT).
3.	Abia Youths in Governance (AYIG) Leadership Training and Capacity Building	An opportunity for Abia Youths to build themselves on how to run and work with the government. The future of Abia politics depends on what the youths know about it, so this is an opportunity to train them rightly. Responsible MDA: Ministry of Youth Development	Capacity building for young people in pubic office
4	Education for Employment for Youths (E4E4Y)	Equipping the youths with the necessary knowledge that makes them employable in society. Min. for Youth Dev. and Min. for Education	Equip youths with relevant skills and knowledge to make them employable

	Top Priorities, Policies and Programs (PPP)	Description and Responsible MDAs to execute the PPP.	Potential Impact of the Priorities, Policies and Programs
5	SME Grants and Micro Credit Scheme (SGMCS)	A financial grant for small business enterprise owners, designed to provide young entrepreneurs with micro loans that will enable them to start, sustain or expand their businesses. Responsible MDA: Ministry of Youths & SME	Encourage business owners to establish their businesses in Abia State and not take it outside the state
6.	Abia Youths Start-up Development Program (AYSDP)	A program designed to equip young entrepreneurs with necessary skills and knowledge to enable them start and manage businesses in different area. Relevant Ministry: SME development	Provide young people with relevant business management skills and knowledge Create opportunity for mentorship and professional guidance for young abian
7.	Mobilize, Energize and Manifest Solutions (MENS)	Mobilizing the youths to proffer solutions across different sectors in the state. Responsible MDA: Ministry of Youth Development)	Keep the youths actively involved in State and community development

RISKS AND MITIGATION PLAN

S/N	RISKS	MITIGATION PLAN
1.	Resistance to Government Programs	Proper sensitization and citizen buy-in
2.	Abuse of empowerment opportunities	Proper monitoring and evaluation
3.	Favouritism on the part of government officials implementing the programs	Creation of an independent feedback channel for beneficiaries to lay complaints
4.	Lack of inclusion	Ensure equal distribution of opportunities to include people living with disability
5.	Excess applications beyond required threshold	Execute programs in batches

Quick Wins

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE YDV SECTOR	DESCRIPTION
1.	Monthly Youth Town Hall Meeting	A one-on-one dialogue between the youths and the state leadership (Including the executive, legislature and judiciary) addressing the youths and providing solutions to prevalent issues within the youth community.
2.	Setting up the youth ministry with a youth as the commissioner for youth and sports development	Appointing a well grounded youth as the Commissioner for youth and sports development. This will make it easy for the government to know what the youths need and work well to address these needs.
3.	Creating a Reliable Database For Youths	A formal and thorough assemblage of the data of Abia youths, to help drive home youth empowerment initiatives.

Medium and Long Term Expectations

S/N	ACTIONS REQUIRED IN THE YDV SECTOR	DESCRIPTION
1.	Annual youth conference	A gathering of Abia youths for the purpose of discussing issues and ideas relating to the state, weighing the progress of the state as it relates to sustainable youth empowerment in the past year, and fostering new ideas for State and national development.
2.	Semestrial Report/updates	Updating young people on relevant government programs.
3.	Mentorship & Intergenerational Dialogue	A monthly virtual dialogue that invites succesful Abians to mentor the youths and provide opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritize Youth Engagement: Foster active participation of young people in decision-making processes by establishing youth councils or committees. Create platforms for youth to voice their opinion, concerns, and ideas, and ensure their inclusion in policy discussions. Do this by action and not mere words.

2. Support Sports Education: Collaborate with educational institutions to integrate sports education into their curriculum. Encourage physical education programs in schools, as well as the availability of specialized sports academies and coaching programs for talented individuals.

3. Provide Financial Support: Allocate adequate funding to support youth and sports initiatives. This includes funding for talent development programs, sports, scholarships, infrastructure maintenance, and training for coaches and instructors.

4. Strengthen Partnerships: Collaborate with local sports clubs, organizations, and private entities to leverage their expertise, resources, and networks. Form partnerships to organize sports events, training camps, and mentorship programs that can help nurture talent and create opportunities for young athletes.

5. Promote Sports Tourism: Highlight the state's sports infrastructure and events to attract regional and international sports tourism. Host national and international tournaments, showcase local sports culture, and invest in promoting the state as a sports destination.

6. Embrace Technology: Harness the power of technology to enhance sports development. Utilize digital platforms for talent scouting, online coaching, and sports analytics. Develop mobile applications to provide access to sports resources, training programs, and information.

7. Create an agency under the ministry of youth development to carter for Youths living with disability

8. Monitor and Evaluate, Always follow up: Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess the impact of youth and sports programs. Regularly measure progress, collect feedback, and make data-driven decisions to continuously improve the effectiveness of the ministry's initiatives.

9. The youths employed in various sectors and businesses within the state should receive monthly remuneration that adheres to, at the very least, the national minimum wage, which is not below Thirty Thousand Naira **(#30,000).**

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- Local Govt Autonomy
- Free, Fair & Credible Elections

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VISION
Our vision is to create a society where youth voices and actions champion positive democratic change that thrives on unity, love, integrity, and equal representation.

A Progressive Nigeria, A progressive Africa with Progressive Abia Youths remain our ultimate goal.

MISSION
Our Mission is to empower and nurture the next generation of leaders, raising unconventional youths who are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and passion to transform good thoughts into democratic actions. Through inclusive leadership, democratic programs and advocacy, we inspire young individuals to actively promote and uphold democratic ideals, fostering a society where their voices are valued, and where they play a significant role in shaping a progressive and equitable future.

MOTTO:
Unity & Progress