

## FADAMA III and Poverty Reduction Among Rural Farmers in Akwa Ibom State

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<https://doi.org/10.61090/aksujacog.2025.014>

### Abstract

*This study examined the FADAMA III agricultural development program in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, assessing its impact on poverty reduction, rural employment and economic development. The program was designed to benefit all Nigerian states, including Akwa Ibom, but it faced several implementation challenges. These challenges included, among others, corruption, misappropriation of funds, politicisation, and poor coordination between local, state, and federal authorities. Lack of infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities, restricted agricultural productivity and market access, further exacerbating rural poverty. Descriptive and documentary research designs were employed, and data were obtained from secondary sources. The study revealed that FADAMA III's limited success in Akwa Ibom was due to insufficient professional expertise in managing the program, the politicisation of resource allocation, and the lack of an effective monitoring and evaluation system. The paper offered recommendations for improving rural development initiatives, including better farmer participation, inclusive employment creation, prioritisation of rural infrastructure, and reducing political interference. By addressing these issues, future programs can better achieve their developmental goals.*

**Keywords:** Poverty, development, poverty reduction, FADAMA, rural poverty.

### Introduction

Poverty exists as a major regional and national problem which displays diverse effects on communities. Uzoma & Uzoma (2012) state that this social problem persists as the main global challenge affecting people across all life stages. Every nation exists under some form of poverty conditions. Levels of poverty differ between regions as well as their occurrence patterns (Okungbowa & Eburajolo, 2014). Countries across sub-Saharan Africa, together with South Asia and Latin America stand out as highly vulnerable to poverty since they consistently demonstrate the highest ratings on poverty evaluation scales and must confront interconnected issues involving restricted socio-economic growth in addition to elevated social insecurity and violent situations as well as nationwide underdevelopment (World Bank, 2022). The World Bank (2004), as cited by Davis & Sanches-Martinez (2014), describes poverty as an extreme decrease in overall welfare

that includes poor earnings alongside limited resource access, combined with insufficient health and education, poor sanitation and limited opportunities to improve socioeconomic status.

The Nigerian population has experienced constant poverty for many years because of declining economic growth, income inequality, corruption and limited sectoral development of agriculture and industry (Ekpe, 2011). The nation's large stock of resources does not mitigate the poverty challenges rural dwellers face. Development policies and programmes launched by the Nigerian government to combat these problems include the Fadama programme. World Bank-assisted Fadama became a development programme that focused on rural development and agricultural enhancement. The initiative implemented three successive stages (Fadama I, II and III) to increase food output while increasing rural power and standard of living. FADAMA III established itself as an improvement of FADAMA I and FADAMA II programmes, while adopting the approach of local community dominion to serve agriculturists and tradesmen and sensitive demographics consistently. The research evaluates how Fadama III works to combat poverty in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Other than agricultural development programmes, FADAMA III specifically included every state in Nigeria. In Akwa Ibom State, FADAMA III operated in twenty local government areas to achieve five objectives, including the promotion of non-oil economic growth while enhancing food availability, creating rural jobs and fostering rural economic expansion. FADAMA III has encountered several operational challenges, which include substandard administration, poor beneficiary focus and political intervention. Apart from that, other operational challenges stem from corruption, fund mismanagement, as well as fund misappropriation. The success of the FADAMA III programme was hindered because of political indifference, along with insufficiently trained professionals.

The programme's achievement has faced numerous obstacles because citizens display unfavourable attitudes toward government programmes. Nigeria's citizens see government empowerment platforms as entry points to national funds, through which programme funds get misdirected from their original purposes. The rural farmers in Akwa Ibom State face persistent economic problems because they lack good access to their farms and markets, in addition to missing contemporary storage solutions. Agricultural losses, together with income reduction, occur because middlemen benefit from exploiting the existing challenges. The study purposes to follow these key objectives in light of the identified issues.

### **Research Objectives**

- i. To examine how the implementation of FADAMA III improves the Living Standard and Income of Rural Farmers in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. To investigate the extent to which the introduction of FADAMA III helped in creating employment opportunities among rural dwellers in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. To assess the impact of FADAMA III on Rural Infrastructural development in Akwa Ibom State.
- iv. To examine the challenges facing effective implementation of FADAMA III in Akwa Ibom State.

## **Review of Conceptual Literature and Theoretical Framework**

### **Concept of Poverty Reduction**

Academic discussions have shown multiple interpretations of poverty reduction approaches. The systematic implementation of reduction and elimination programmes through national authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individual actors makes up poverty alleviation strategies. The World Bank (2018) explains poverty reduction as a systematic process which enhances social and economic welfare through expanded resource access to create effective life opportunities with improved living conditions and poverty-breaking solutions. Sen (2014) explains poverty reduction as a method which enhances human capabilities through service access, including healthcare and housing, which enables productive lives without deprivation.

Numerous poverty reduction initiatives have been introduced through governmental programmes across the globe. Multiple poverty alleviation programmes operate within Nigeria under the names National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Open Apprenticeship Programme (OAP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), and Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (You Win) (Dauda & Ajayi, 2019; Atakpa, 2024). In addition to these programmes, the Better Life Programme and the People's Bank with their Graduate Job Creation Loan Guarantee Scheme existed alongside agricultural sector employment schemes (Dauda & Ajayi, 2019). According to Adeola (2020) & Olalekan (2021), these programs demonstrate potential yet fail to assist the most vulnerable populations because systemic flaws exist in their implementation.

### **The Concept of Fadama in Agricultural Project**

The Hausa word "Fadama" describes flooded irrigation land which exists in river system valleys throughout Nigeria. Fadama regions get flooded during rainfall while maintaining wet conditions across the arid times. Fadama areas represent valuable economic prospects because they accept targeted investments to develop agricultural assets in addition to rural infrastructure and technical support systems. The potential of Fadama areas resulted in the creation of National Fadama Development Projects I, II and III. Fadama receives its names "Akuro" from Yoruba speakers and "Ude" and "Ala-mmiri" from the Igbo people (NFDPII 2014). Fadama has various traditional names among the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State, such as "Ibiok," "Ndioho" and "Edep-asat."

The National Fadama Development Project started operations to support continuous agricultural production through shallow water development of surface water resources. The initiative reaches this goal through technological implementation, which includes tube wells, wash boreholes and petrol-driven pumps (World Bank, 2014). Sustainable agricultural and rural development served as the primary goal of the initiative, which the World Bank designed along with the African Development Bank (AFDB) under the leadership of Nigerian government entities, state-level, as well as local support (Ibok & Ibanga, 2014). Through this programme, authorities promoted dry-season farming together with its connected agro-processing activities (Ovharhe, 2016).

### **Phases of the Fadama Programme in Nigeria**

The Fadama Programme established itself through various phases to enhance farming efficiency while boosting the countryside way of living and fostering sustainable progress in Nigeria. The Fadama Phase I programme lasted from 1992 to 1999 as a donor-funded project that centred on promoting rapid crop cultivation through groundwater extraction with surface water resources in flooded river valleys. The project delivered services in seven states, Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano,

Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara, but concentrated on agricultural production with no emphasis on downstream requirements for farm products preservation or rural market infrastructure development (Ekong, 2022; Akpan, 2018).

Phase II of Fadama (2003-2008) brought forward new targets after establishing successful practices from Phase I. Phase II pursued the successful empowerment of local communities as a means to sustain increased incomes while integrating animal husbandry into its non-crop sector focus. The programme established community development plans through Community Driven Development (CDD) while giving residents control of their advancement priorities. Thirty rural poor communities benefitted from Project Fadama when the programme spread to twelve states encompassing Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Imo, Kaduna, Kebbi, Lagos, Niger, Ogun, Oyo, Taraba and Abuja. The project emphasised services for excluded populations during this phase, including women (particularly widowed women), elderly individuals, physically challenged persons and those with HIV/AIDS to achieve social equality (Chidawa et al., 2021).

Each component of the Fadama III Project confirms the agricultural capacity built from the phases of the Fadama project (Sanusi & Gado, 2021). This project consists of supporting communication and information, small-scale community owned infrastructure, input support and advisory services, sponsored ADPs project research and demonstrations on the farm, asset acquisition for individual FUGs and EIGs, and project management with monitoring, evaluation and control of the environment. The elements were built to include features retained from previous phases to make sure the Fadama regions continue rural development, agriculture, and community-facilitating projects.

### **Goals of Fadama III**

The Project Development Objective (PDO) was to increase the earnings of rural land and water resource users sustainably to alleviate poverty and socio-economic challenges among rural people. The parameters of the project measured success in establishing key performance indicators and other targets towards higher agricultural productivity and community development. Counted among the primary targets of Fadama III was the 40% increase in income from other development aid productivity for approximately 75% of targeted beneficiaries by the regional markets (World Bank, 2018). An innovative aspect of the Fadama III Project was the Fadama Users' Equity Fund, which was established as a savings tool to help beneficiaries achieve financial autonomy and sustainability. The project sought groups that participated to set aside at least ten per cent of their net earnings from income-generating activities each year, starting from the second year of the program. This initiative enabled beneficiaries to have better coping strategies against financial hardships and also increased their investment in self-development (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, 2021).

Also, Fadama III focuses on the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of all its interventions, especially those concerning the management of infrastructure and assets. To check the maintenance and effective use of the physical properties of the project, physical verification activities are scheduled for both mid-term and end-of-term project evaluation. These randomised site visits were to investigate the infrastructure put up for the project and its maintenance to check for sustainability (IDA, 2010). In the context of the overarching framework for evaluation of the project, beneficiary satisfaction is important. Surveys were to be conducted at midterm and project completion, respectively, to capture the expected outputs and outcomes of the project (Sanusi & Gado, 2021).

### **Fadama III Agricultural Policy and Poverty Eradication in Nigeria: The Nexus**

There is no question about the claim that poverty is a major concern in Nigeria, and Akwa Ibom State, for some reason, stands out as having poverty, even when the state has a favourable endowment of oil, federal transfers, and self-revenues. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022), the state has an unemployment level of around 51%, while the poverty level is at 71.3%. This indicates that a huge section of the population is suffering economically. This is worsened by the fact that the region is over-reliant on the oil sector, which is capital-intensive and only employs less than 5% of the population. Furthermore, the size of the population in Akwa Ibom is big, but there is very little investment in the state, so economic development and job opportunities are stifled, which deepens the level of poverty in the area (Ndidi, 2018).

The Fadama III program was designed as a specific measure to address poverty with the assistance of the World Bank and the Nigerian government, and other participating states (World Bank, 1998). The focus of the project was to improve the living conditions of the rural users of land and water resources, especially through organizing Fadama User Groups (FUGs), which are further organized into Fadama Community Associations (FCAs). Those groups are crucial to the Fadama III project, and the FADU believe that by directly dealing with farmers, agricultural production and incomes may be raised.

The focus of poverty reduction isn't only the income itself, but rather the long-term structures that are put in place to alleviate poverty. Money invested in improving the socioeconomic condition of individuals needs to facilitate self-sustainability in terms of the economy. A good case in point is the famine that afflicted people in regions not constructed using contemporary agricultural practices, such as the use of fertilisers and irrigation systems. But overcoming poverty these days requires a lot more than economic expansion. It needs policies that promote land ownership, availability of finances through mobile banking, and liberalised, robust economies. Such policies also need to tackle corruption and political chaos, as they tend to deter investment. The breaking out of the poverty circle and the sustainable progressive growth are also assured through the active government input in the development (Ike, 2012).

Food insecurity is at the forefront of issues that Fadama III tackles in rural extension programs, looking into the industrial sector's raw materials, job creation, and support contribution towards foreign exchange. The program constructs markets for agricultural products out of rural areas, helping to enhance rural economies, which guarantees food security to the non-urban population. (Chikwendu, 2023).

The Fadama III programme is intricately linked with various approaches to poverty reduction, paying particular attention to education, health care, gender issues, the environment, and child nutrition. Fadama III understands that education is one of the most powerful tools to tackle poverty, therefore, it seeks to improve the educational prospects of children in rural communities. The programme seeks to improve literacy and numeracy skills, which allows children from these underserved areas to access better opportunities that were previously out of reach. In furtherance of the programme's objectives, Fadama III seeks to build the educational capacity of beneficiaries and their families, which will improve their livelihoods and further empower them in the long term (Wolfe, 2021).

In addition, clean water, which is also vital to eradicating poverty, is an important target within the framework of Fadama III. Rural communities' access to clean water prevents many waterborne diseases and ensures that households have reliable access to clean water. This also eliminates the arduous and often dangerous task of searching for water.

The fundamentals of eradicating poverty are universal healthcare services, and Fadama III has integrated this tenet into the strategy by seeking to improve the health status of farmers and

their families. Universal healthcare is critical for maintaining a productive economy and by decreasing the overall economic burden of an untended illness, the programme makes it possible for individuals to stay healthy and further allows them to partake in activities which enhance their family's economic status. The programme also undertakes measures to handle issues related to malnutrition. Fadama III tackles the long-term consequences of malnutrition that can greatly adversely affect productivity and development by enhancing nutritional health services coverage (Wolfe, 2021).

Equity of women is one of the most important components of social sustainability, which Fadama III enhances through the provision of agronomic education for women, especially in the hinterlands. The program equips women to facilitate increased agricultural output so that they are able to refrain from reinforcing hunger among their children or other family members.

The Fadama III programme incorporates environmental sustainability because agriculture remains highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. The rural economic sector that depends on agriculture remains exposed to major environmental damage as well as adverse climate events. Fadama III integrates environmental programmes into its poverty reduction strategy to create climate change resilience, which enables rural areas to handle environmental challenges better. The implementation strategy protects agricultural yields and makes the programme more sustainable (Wolfe, 2021).

Child nutrition improvement, as detailed in Fadama III's objectives, represents a highly efficient method to combat poverty. The Fadama III programme focuses on malnutrition prevention because proper nutrition protects human health while improving both development and economic capabilities, which subsequently lowers the societal stresses on people's finances. Adult society strongly relies on child nutrition because it leads future generations to achieve better educational outcomes and improved economic contribution to society, as well as better health status (Wolfe, 2021).

### **Empirical Literature**

Academic research has investigated Fadama III operations across multiple regions of Nigeria with emphasis on positive results, along with ongoing difficulties. Idongesit & Jeremiah (2019) evaluated FADAMA III project effectiveness from beneficiary viewpoints in Akwa Ibom State. The researchers conducted this investigation by adopting an expo facto research model with survey methods. The research analysed several negative obstacles experienced by Akwa Ibom State, which involved programme hijacking by powerful figures, while funding was insufficient and production expenses were high, and funds were not distributed on time. Because of these challenges, the study recommended that government institutions join forces with donor stakeholders to provide sufficient funding while actively monitoring project execution.

Obot (2020) assessed FADAMA III funding for farm household assets and service delivery across Akwa Ibom State using quasi-experimental methods that showed food security increased to about 78%, yet poor women and marginalised communities still lacked access to productive assets because of income inequality and gender discrimination. Community development organisations demonstrate success, so their support should be permanent, along with education on farm equipment use and helpful recordkeeping practise while maintaining government backing for farmers.

Yohana (2020) investigated the advantages alongside barriers that Niger State yam growers face when they participated in the Fadama III project (2020). The project data showed an enhanced benefit for yam farmers because it cut community travel durations and boosted household incomes according to the survey and secondary resource analysis. Yam farmers faced three major

challenges due to insufficient equipment, high transportation expenses and restricted agricultural input availability. Improvement of financial access and training on product preservation, together with rural infrastructure investments, constituted recommendations to boost project success.

Igbani (2021) assessed World Bank-National FADAMA III Development Project performance in Bayelsa State from 2009 to 2013. The research aimed to gauge the project's success level and identify points for enhancement. The research examined the initiative's precise characteristics through its base of qualitative methods, which included content analysis and thematic together with discourse analysis. The programme established 95 inland rural projects during this period, along with a 35% increase in Fadama user income and more than 20% improved yields for plantain and cassava and yam crops. The study presented these successes alongside the identified obstacles of project insecurity, as well as non-payment of financial commitments and funding mismanagement and inadequate maintenance of processing equipment and cold storage facilities. The state government needs to satisfy its financial responsibilities by creating a committee which will maintain oversight of World Bank assets used in local communities.

Igbani & Josephine (2021) researched on Bayelsa State's Fadama III project to verify successful outcomes from the initiative. Investigations revealed that Fadama users experienced a 35% growth in their profits along with more than 20% elevations in production outcomes that improved food security. The study confirmed the existing issues of insecurity, financial mismanagement and deterioration of assets. The research study proposed that World Bank assets should have a monitoring committee established, while counterpart funds should be paid on schedule to solve these issues.

Sunday et al. (2022) analysed efficiency gaps between participants of Fadama III in Kogi State. A questionnaire survey of farmers revealed that the research used Cobb-Douglas stochastic frontier and cost functions to evaluate efficiency metrics during the analysis. Technical efficiency levels showed greater performance among Fadama III beneficiary farmers compared to non-beneficiary farmers. The study identified uneven resource distribution across participants, which requires review to enhance farming practice performance. Farmer efficiency requires additional training, which must be supported by proper resources to achieve better results.

### **FADAMA III and Improvement in the Standard/Income of Rural Farmers in Nigeria. An Assessment**

Expert definitions and scholarly interpretations of income produce various meanings about this concept since no universal standard exists. Income exhibits different meanings according to the particular context in which it is employed. Economic income might not match the income determined by legal definitions for a particular person. Income represents the combination of consumption together with alterations in net worth (Adegbite et al. 2008). The potential amount of consumption, along with savings that a person or business earns during a measurement period, with monetary value, constitutes income. According to the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), income in financial reporting includes economic advantages that raise equity between reporting periods through asset growth and liability reduction and money inflows while omitting equity participant additions (Adeoye et al., 2011).

Agricultural enhancement became possible through the Fadama III programme, which aimed to improve Fadama Group members' earning potential. The financial benefits offered by the programme helped numerous farmers to increase their revenue. The COVID-19 stimulus funds given by the Akwa Ibom State Government reached 1,950 beneficiaries with N20,000 each to boost their agricultural capital (Etim, 2022). Through its conditional cash transfer programme, the Federal Government distributed funds worth N993 million to 24,929 vulnerable people across nine

local government areas of Akwa Ibom State, where each recipient obtained N30,000 to N40,000 (FADAMA, 2021).

Onna LGA benefits from profit generation through Fadama III and its natural resources. Palm oil, cassava, shellfish, raffia palm, rubber, citrus wood, silica, sodium chloride, sand, gravel, limestone and clay play a major role in the local economy. The average value of beneficiaries' productive income rose from 107,786 in 2011 (baseline) to 213,071 in 2014 (medium-term) and 250,700 by the end of the project. The acquisition value of assets maintained by both households and groups experienced significant growth during this period, indicating that household net worth elevated in Onna. Water-dependent farmers who venture into fishery or crab or mussel, or periwinkle harvesting received advantages from this policy (Akpan, 2019; Edet, 2014).

The main goal of Fadama III photovoltaic-pump investments is income growth in rural farming areas, and research demonstrates this advancement. World Bank research (2014) documented strong earnings growth among people who joined Fadama III. Participating farmers obtained financial grants, together with microfinance access to expand their agricultural business and adopt new farming methods through project funding. According to Onwubuya et al. (2013), farmers who joined Fadama III earned much higher incomes every year than farmers who did not join the programme. The project's success stemmed from supplying top-quality seed materials and fertilisers to boost agricultural returns and building processing centres that upgraded agricultural output values, thus improving market values.

More income brings about better living conditions for rural farm families. Farmers who earn more money can obtain better healthcare, quality education and improved nutrition for their household members. Fadama III programme invested in rural infrastructure development that resulted in transporting people, better access to markets and education while delivering healthcare facilities to society. Practises initiated as part of Fadama III brought improved life quality to both rural farming communities and all their residents (Nkonya et al., 2012). Ajibade & Dauda (2019) presented evidence which demonstrates that Fadama III brought positive improvements to the lifestyle quality of its participants.

### **FADAMA III and Employment Generation among rural dwellers in Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State Perspective**

Agriculture stands as Nigeria's economic backbone, which employs most of the population across rural territories. The economic development of Akwa Ibom State is inhibited by restricted marketplace access, poor infrastructure capabilities and financing constraints that create elevated unemployment rates. The following section analyses FADAMA III's work as an agricultural development initiative to create jobs throughout the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State.

The agricultural development programme FADAMA III established numerous job opportunities throughout different sectors of Akwa Ibom State through its investment in agricultural infrastructure. The investments made in irrigation systems, rural road construction and farming facilities have boosted agricultural productivity while increasing work requirements, which mainly affect crop production and livestock farming. Rising labour needs because of increased demand have generated positions for rural inhabitants who face fewer jobs in farming areas (Obot & Ogonna, 2020).

The FADAMA III initiative drives the setup of agribusiness units such as processing facilities and marketing collaboration groups. The businesses contribute dual benefits by enhancing agricultural value-added products while creating work opportunities from product production to distribution. Processing operations at the small-scale level create daily employment



opportunities so residents find work and help develop their rural communities (Akpan & Udoh, 2018).

FADAMA III in Akwa Ibom has achieved remarkable progress by enhancing job opportunities while raising rural living standards in local regions. The project has generated employment through the sectors of crop production, alongside livestock farming and agro-processing (Akaninyene et al., 2018).

### **FADAMA III and Rural Infrastructure in Akwa Ibom State**

Different societies understand rural infrastructure differently because they base their definitions on their specific cultural needs. Rural infrastructure designates the fundamental installations and amenities that aid in raising rural community members' living conditions. The fundamental facilities required for rural development include roads, electricity access, healthcare centres, educational buildings, police stations, postal services and markets and financial operations infrastructure. Rural communities need these essential facilities to reduce poverty levels while accessing overall economic advancement, particularly among families who farm.

According to Idachaba (1985), researchers define rural infrastructure as including physical components (roads and water resources and storage facilities, etc.), social elements (healthcare facilities, education and community services), and institutional entities (cooperatives, financial institutions and agricultural support organisations). Rural areas have experienced significant impediments to development and economic growth because there is no proper infrastructure. According to Ojide et al. (2015), rural areas comprising essential economic centres in developing nations encounter multiple obstacles in their effort to develop infrastructure initiatives. Rural poverty in Nigeria reached 63% nationally according to NBS 2023 estimates, and 51% in Akwa Ibom State has similarly been affected by this deficiency.

Various agricultural policies, together with Fadama, have become essential poverty reduction measures which Nigeria and other governments worldwide have developed. Various infrastructure development projects related to the initiative have included registering 4,920 rice farmers while developing 11,000 hectares of coconut plantations and planting 1,600 hectares of cassava. The establishment of 15 Agricultural Service Centres (ASCs) completed the order of facilities in Akwa Ibom State. Other strategic programmes focus on training 450 youths in cocoa farming and offering reduced-cost fertiliser benefits while distributing oil palm and cocoa seedlings and operating the weekly chick production system at Akwa Prime hatchery. Rice farming activities on 100 hectares alongside cassava cultivation on 2,100 hectares have become possible through the FADAMA III World Bank partnership (NGF, 2016).

Infrastructure initiatives include agricultural cooperative financing, together with 33 cassava micro-processing plants and 300 youth training sessions under the Graduate Unemployed Youths Programme (GUYS). Through these initiatives, the rural population in agriculture experienced economic advantages, and the establishment of large-scale plantations together with youth training programmes drove major agricultural growth (NGF, 2016). FADAMA projects conduct their development through community participation, which enables local communities to identify and select their infrastructure requirements. FADAMA III choosing essential infrastructure projects through local community consultations functions as the main support for the implementation of optimised development, alongside technical and financial backing by the World Bank (World Bank, 2014).

Rural roads improvement stands as a fundamental infrastructure development element under FADAMA III. Rural residents in Akwa Ibom State have benefitted from road rehabilitation projects through funding from this programme. The Ikot Akpabio to Ikot Obio Enang road rehabilitation project succeeded in improving farmer accessibility because it created faster paths

to market for their agricultural produce. The road infrastructure development enables rural households to access necessary services, including healthcare and education, which supports comprehensive rural development practices (Akpan & Udoh, 2018).

FADAMA III has emphasised developing irrigation systems. Various communities in Akwa Ibom State benefited from irrigation systems, which let farmers grow crops through all seasons without being subject to rainfall fluctuations. Through irrigation projects in Ikot Akpan Okure, local farmers achieved land transformation into agricultural success stories that raised local food security (Ajibade & Dauda, 2019; Obot & Ogonna, 2020).

FADAMA III investment programmes funded the development and revitalization of market infrastructure in rural areas. The markets in Akwa Ibom State play a central role in both agricultural trade and economic activities throughout the state. FADAMA III funded market infrastructure development through projects that included stall makeovers and road construction, together with storage facility improvements. The agricultural value chains achieved operational excellence because of these improvements, and farmers gained better market accessibility. The renovation of Ikot Abasi market initiated better trading activities along with increased farmer earnings (Akpan, 2018).

### **Challenges of the effective implementation of FADAMA III in Akwa Ibom State**

**i. Inadequate Funding and Financial Constraints:** The successful execution of FADAMA III in Akwa Ibom State faces its main challenge from insufficient monetary support. Due to funding delays and improper resource utilisation, the project schedule experienced delays from the World Bank and the Nigerian government's financial support. The World Bank (2014) observes, through the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), that inadequate funding creates slow development of infrastructure and blocks farmers and rural communities from achieving their demands. The farmers of Akwa Ibom State remain dissatisfied because their agricultural programmes face delays from postponed grants and postponed input subsidies and loans designed to boost productivity (Akpan & Udoh, 2018).

**ii. Poor Infrastructure and Accessibility Issues:** The FADAMA III initiative has enhanced rural infrastructure, but several essential facilities, including roads, remain insufficient as well as water supply and irrigation systems. Rubber Resources Limited operates in numerous rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, yet these zones remain off limits because of damaged and unbuilt roads. The poor infrastructure hinders farmers' capability to sell their products, so they cannot access vital infrastructure such as medical care and educational institutions. The road rehabilitation efforts by FADAMA III face numerous obstacles, particularly in secluded communities, because of existing obstacles and challenges. The insufficient infrastructure maintains hurdles that obstruct rural development because it reduces farmers' productivity and financing capacity (Obot & Ogonna, 2020).

**iii. Weak Institutional Framework and Governance Challenges:** The FADAMA project needs local government institutions, together with community structures, to execute its implementation plans. The FADAMA project implementation has suffered from execution inefficiencies because of insufficient coordination between different government levels and weak local institutions. The studies conducted by Akaninyene et al. (2018) demonstrate that inadequate project management transparency and a lack of accountability among local government personnel depreciated the effectiveness of the FADAMA programme.

**iv. Community Participation and Ownership:** The rural communities play an active role in FADAMA III's operation because the programme follows community-driven development principles. Some regions in Akwa Ibom State have not engaged in genuine community participation for project decision-making processes. Local communities struggle to actively participate in participatory decision-making processes under FADAMA III, according to the World Bank (2014), because of both unawareness and restrictive traditional leadership structures that hinder younger or marginalised community members.

**v. Technical Capacity and Skills Gap:** Numerous training activities, developing agricultural and business management capabilities, have been implemented by FADAMA III, yet many rural farmers in distant locations demonstrate noteworthy deficits in farming practices and business management competencies. Modern agricultural techniques and technologies receive opposition from rural farmers of Akwa Ibom State because they prefer to stick to their historical farming approaches. Akpan & Udoh (2018) demonstrate this in their research that farmer implementation of modern irrigation systems and new seeds remains sluggish because farmers lack sufficient technical expertise.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research utilised Social Protection Theory as its theoretical framework. Researchers Armando Barrientos and Stephen Devereux created this theory, which demonstrates how social safety nets protect vulnerable rural communities from poverty based on their work (Barrientos, 2009; Devereux, 2001). Social Protection Theory has undergone development throughout several years to establish that policy measures must provide basic support and protection mechanisms beyond agricultural productivity growth, specifically for rural groups facing social marginalisation.

Barrientos (2009), Devereux (2001) and other researchers demonstrated that social protection programmes hold vital importance for resolving distinct rural community issues (Barrientos & Hulme, 2010). Various forms of interventions make up social protection programmes, such as direct cash payments, food aid schemes, social insurance coverage and public employment programmes. The government implements these programmes to help people move out of poverty and improve nutrition while making them stronger to resist economic disturbances. Social protection measures that deliver targeted monetary support and service access play a fundamental part in decreasing poverty and creating rural development that includes all communities (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). These policies adapt to the requirements of three main vulnerable groups, which include smallholder farmers, landless agricultural workers and female-headed households. These populations form the focus of these policies, which produce enduring livelihood options and stimulate equal agricultural community growth (Barrientos et al. 2004). Through this method, developers protect minority groups by designing programmes targeting rural communities and their well-documented inequalities

### **Research Methodology**

The researchers used descriptive and documentary designs to complete the study objectives. Secondary data collection was used for this study by incorporating government bulletins with academic journals and textbooks, as well as FADAMA annual reports and relevant publications. The research materials delivered complete information about the study subject and helped identify essential patterns on crucial themes. A contextual analysis served as the method to analyse the data by providing a detailed examination of all available information. The thematic method allowed researchers to detect, categorise and interpret the recurring themes that emerged within the various

data sources. The established method delivered a methodical and comprehensive study of the research subject while identifying crucial findings and essential patterns throughout the data. The study used credible, diverse secondary sources to perform a balanced, well-rounded analysis, which added value to existing knowledge to assist future research and policy development.

### **Research Findings and Discussions**

This study investigated the FADAMA III programme's effects on Akwa Ibom State rural development by evaluating its success in standard of living enhancement, workforce generation, infrastructure construction, and political interference management.

Minimum living standard improvements resulted from the programme because essential decision-making processes excluded rural farmers. According to Effiong & Mfon (2021), inadequate participation of beneficiaries resulted in substandard intervention approaches that do not properly serve the unique requirements of programme participants. The programme suffered from two major problems: delayed payments and insufficient financial support, according to the analyses of Udoh & Aniekan (2020).

Job creation targets from FADAMA III encountered multiple constraints despite being among its main goals. The targeting system of FADAMA III benefits generated unequal distribution (Adebayo & Ojo, 2020) because numerous rural residents and farmers fell through the gaps. The absence of inclusive practices during FADAMA III operations restricted rural communities' ability to obtain sustainable economic opportunities, thus preventing their economic empowerment.

The basic needs of roads, irrigation systems and storage facilities combined with electricity access remained insufficient throughout numerous communities. Nwosu & Okorie (2021) describe essential infrastructure deficiencies as the main reason behind agricultural productivity limitations and economic stagnation. Infrastructural projects under FADAMA III faced two significant limitations, according to Ibekwe (2020). They mainly occur at random times and lead to uncoordinated efforts because community stakeholders were not sufficiently involved in project development.

Political interference represents a major harmful problem for the FADAMA III programme. The distribution of resources as well as project ranking followed partisan reasons instead of development requirements. Omeje & Ibeanu (2018) highlighted programme corruption when they explain how money and support get allocated to voters based on political ties, which creates unfair outcomes that damage the FADAMA III programme's mission. FADAMA III faced implementation difficulties because of how the system performed inefficiently, while also excluding people from access and lacking essential infrastructure and making resources reach late, while politicians interfered. The problems facing FADAMA III restricted its abilities to advance rural areas by developing living standards, generating work opportunities and building economic strength in local communities. The programme needs a participatory design to implement target-based distribution methods with timely funds alongside political influence removal from decision-making to fulfil its purpose effectively.

### **Conclusion**

The research exposed multiple organisational factors which strongly obstructed FADAMA III programme achievements in Akwa Ibom State. The FADAMA III initiative had multiple implementation setbacks, which prevented it from reaching its target goals of bettering rural life conditions, creating employment avenues and building infrastructure. When farmers failed to participate in decision-making, the programme lost valuable connection to the population's needs,

thus diminishing its effectiveness. The programme resulted in weak performance because delays in both funding distribution and budget releases prevented the execution of essential tasks at the proper times. Different rural areas received insufficient infrastructure support from the programme because the programme failed to sufficiently develop rural roads, together with storage facilities and power systems. Due to political meddling, the situation worsened and led to systemic inefficiency, resource mismanagement and unaccountable decision-making. Political interventions throughout the programme led to the breakdown of beneficiary trust while disturbing equitable service distribution among participants.

Rural development initiatives will achieve success in future applications when they use inclusive decision-making procedures and fix existing infrastructure gaps while blocking potential political manipulations. These systemic issues need to be handled so future rural development initiatives can properly implement their goals, thus bringing enduring enhancement to rural areas.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study recommendations merge research goals and observed findings into two fundamental actions:

- i. The programme should increase farmer engagement and direct assistance programmes: The decision-making processes should include farmers through scheduled consultation activities, meeting sessions and evaluation surveys. This method will help stakeholders obtain proper attention so supported beneficiaries receive specific financial assistance and training, which enhances their productivity and income levels.
- ii. Foster Inclusive Employment Creation: The FADAMA III programme needs to focus on training programmes for women and youth to improve rural employment potential. The programme should implement work-based initiatives which focus on producing agro-products while promoting rural business start-ups and managing small farming operations.
- iii. Prioritise Rural Infrastructure Development: The programme needs to focus on developing vital rural infrastructure, which includes building roads, storage facilities and providing dependable electricity access. Every implemented project requires simultaneous practicality and sustainable operations over the long run.
- iv. Reduce Politicization for Effective Implementation: An unbiased monitoring system should be created through independent bodies to check the distribution of funds and resources among beneficiaries. The programme must fulfil its goal through proper monitoring to deliver benefits to the targeted population groups. Anticorruption efforts will be enhanced by the implementation of written guidelines, together with scheduled audits, which promote both fairness and transparency in government accountability to its officials through consequences.

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