

**DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND
INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EBONYI STATE NIGERIA: 1999-
2020.**

Elem, Emmanuel Obona

Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Ebonyi State University, P.M.B.053, Abakaliki.
elem.obona@yahoo.com08036790688

Abstract

The return of democracy in Nigeria in 1999 ushered in positive hope as people believed that the problem of sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development in Nigeria which was attributed to decades of military rule would be solved. This paper explored the extent to which democratic governance has contributed to sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development in Ebonyi State of Nigeria since 1999 to 2020. The specific objectives include; to find out the relationship between democratic governance and socio-economic and infrastructural development, the challenges of democratic governance in Nigeria and the way forward. The study adopted stewardship theory as its framework of analysis. The data for the study were collected from documentary sources, media commentaries, scholarly inputs and direct observation, while content analytical approach was adopted. The findings show that there is a significant relationship between democratic governance and socio-economic and infrastructural development in Nigeria. It equally shows that there are challenges confronting democratic governance in Nigeria. It again shows that Nigeria has the resources to achieve sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development. The study recommends among other things that Nigeria should strengthen and consolidate its nascent democracy for better democratic governance that would enhance sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development.

Key words: Democracy, Governance, Socio- Economic Development, Infrastructure, Ebonyi State Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of Democracy in Nigeria has continued to generate mixed feeling among scholars, citizens and development experts. The reason for this is not farfetched as the country has been under military regime for long years after its independence in 1960. Since democracy is regarded as one of the best forms of government (Nkwede& Elem, 2017), it is believed generally that the problem of development in Nigeria in the areas of sustainable socio-economic and infrastructure

is as a result of nonexistence of democratic governance in the country over the years. This has been of general concern since the general agreement as noted by Agubamah (2009), that development of any country requires the attention of every government in the provision of schools, healthcare facilities, good road network, electricity among others that would enable the citizens improve their living standard whether in the developed or developing countries.

Nigeria with the endowed natural and human resources and being the 6th largest oil producing country in the world (Geogr-Genyi, 2013) was seen by the world community as a leading role in terms of sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development in African continent, but unfortunately she has continued to be regarded as one of the least developed countries in the world despite all these abundant natural and human resources. The 2020 UN report indicates that Nigeria is the poverty capital of the world as it exceeded India with the largest rate of people living in extreme poverty. This is as a result of lack of access by the citizens to socio-economic and infrastructural facilities such as good road network, electricity, healthcare facilities, jobs, education among others as noted by Elem (2016). Federal Bureau of Statistics (2020) noted that unemployment in Nigeria grew steadily from 1991 to 1999 at 3.71, 3.75%, 3.81%, 3.83%, 3.83%, 3.83%, 3.83% and 8.85% respectively, while rate of adult illiteracy rose from 32.5% in 1991 to 40% in 1999. These alarming indicators triggered the agitation for return to democracy which was actualized in May, 1999.

Ebonyi State was created by the Military Administration of General Sani Abacha on 1st October 1996 from Abia and Enugu States (Elem, 2016). This creation gave a relief to the people as they believed that their continued stay in Abia and Enugu States were part of their lack of socio-economic and infrastructural backwardness as noted by Winifred (2012). However, in 1999 before the return of democracy in Nigeria, development indicators such as good road network, healthcare facilities, electricity, and education among others as noted by EB-SEED (2006) were still lacking in the new state.

The daunting challenges of redressing the palpable state of underdevelopment of the state was prominent, prompting the state to replicate all the national development programs in Ebonyi State, which became a major platform for sustainable socio economic and infrastructural

development in the state under the military. Most of these programs as noted by Nkwede and Elem (2017), were designed to among other things:

- a. Upgrade the provision of infrastructure in the areas of health, education, electricity, and water sectors.
- b. Build multipurpose infrastructure in the rural communities including feeder roads and bridges.
- c. Improve access to the supply of social-economic services
- d. Improve the management and services of natural resources
- e. Enhance safety nets support

This was in line with the blue print developed for the development of the young state. This process continued until 1999 when the country returned to democratic governance.

With barely twenty four years since the creation of Ebonyi state and twenty one years since the return of democracy in Nigeria, it is generally believe that Ebonyi State would have measured high in terms of socio-economic and infrastructural development which ought to improve the living standard of the people that have all along been known for her backwardness in education, access to good road network, healthcare facilities, housing, market infrastructure among other necessities of life especially when compared to other states within the South East geopolitical zone and Nigeria in general. This expectation is not the case as the latest release by Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2019) shows that the state is the fourth poorest state in the whole country. This alarming information calls for serious concern, prompting this study to focus at exploring the extent to which democratic governance has contributed to sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development in Ebonyi State between 199 -2019, with the view to exposing the constraints on democratic governance that must be surmounted to ensure the attainment of sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development in Ebonyi State and Nigeria in general.

Conceptual Clarifications.

Democracy

Democracy is seen as system of government that is focused on giving the people the opportunity to be part in decision making on issues that concern them. It is based on equal participation of all people in the country irrespective of class, gender or status in the society. The practice of democracy is associated with equal right, justice, peace and the rule of law. Here the citizens in all ramifications are regarded as partners in deliberating on issues that affect their lives with government officials, both at the rural community, state and central levels (Nkwede& Elem, 2017).

As a system of government, democracy has been an age long practice. Odo (2015) explains that a certain rudimentary democracy existed in pre- historic hunter-gatherers society where little outside interference and assumption of equality prevailed. As man started settling in large group, certain degree of hierarchy started emerging into their governance. He further emphasized that the real democracy emerged at about 500BC when the Greeks and the Romans established systems of government based on popular participation. After the fall and decline of Greek city state and the Roman system, democracy declined and only resurfaced in the early 12th century in the city state of Northern Italy. Others that practiced democracy included; the Phoenicians and the Egyptians.

What is paramount in the concept of democracy both ancient and modern democracy is that they all emphasized on the concept of representative governance, placing participation as the factor. Though democracy has different meaning to different people, depending on the angle one looks at it, but in our scope, democracy is examined from the position of allowing the citizens the freedom to actively participate in issues that affect them and in determining what they need. As a concept, democracy connotes the show of human quest for autonomy, hence Edoh (2003) opines that democracy portrays rule by the people which upholds the doctrine of autonomy. Though this opinion of seeing democracy as rule by the people have been criticized by scholars who argued

that the level of autonomy enjoyed by citizens in democratic setting is not guaranteed in all democratic governance. This prompted Allison (1994) to argue that the word democracy had become a tool of propaganda as those who defend the type of government they practice tend to use the word democracy as a cover up while in the real sense of the meaning, what they practice is far from the real meaning of democracy, especially in those places where the citizens were not given equal right, equal opportunity to participate on issues that concern them or grant justice, equity and rule of law. This conflict in the term prompted Ogundiya (2010) to observe that the only first call for democracy is the assent that all people are equal in some important respect since it is only on this ground that all should be treated equally in certain political respects. This brought about the rise of what constitute democracy and how democracy is measured. This is to avoid isolating the core principles of democracy which would serve as bases for measuring democracy, as virtually every government claim to be democratic politically.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development refers to the type of development where the use of available resources meet the need of the citizens and still conserve such resources for further use (UNDP, 2015). This portrays that such resources are used in a manner that both present and future needs of the citizens are met. The term is equally regarded as the type of development that is capable of meeting with the needs of the people at present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs (Ebohand Uma, 2010). Ebohand Uma argue that the term sustainability varies, depending on who is using it. This shows that there are various approaches to the discussion of sustainability. However, while there is different views on the concept of sustainable development and the specific policy and practice options for achieving it as noted by scholars, there is an agreement on some of its principles such as: the ability to meet the basic needs of citizens fairly and efficiently, reserving alternative for use in the present and future generation to be able to meet their own needs, promotion of the well-being of the community dwellers by allowing them to participate and be active in matters that concern them, maintaining that differences and productivity of nature, managing and using available resources in such a way that it would yield the desired outcome, connecting various aspect of sustainable development such as , political , social and economic aspects, being accountable to the people,

reduce waste, having a long time view of every developmental program and fostering cooperation and shared responsibilities among all concerned.

It was based on this that Ozo (2012) maintains that the concept of sustainable development are efforts geared towards the improvement of the natural resources to enhance the human living standard in such a manner that the needs of the future generation will equally be guaranteed. Remarkably this shows that sustainable development is the ability to maintain the resources of the state for the collective use of the citizens while good efforts are simultaneously made to reserve such resources for the use of the coming generation.

Infrastructural Development

The word infrastructure has been used in French since 1875 and in English since 1887, originally referring to the installations that form the basis for any operation or system. The word originated from French where it was used for establishing a roadbed of substrate material, required before railroad tracks or constructed pavement could be laid on top of it. The word is a combination of the Latin prefix "infra", meaning "below" as many of these constructions are underground, for example, tunnels, water and gas systems, and railways. The army use of the term achieved currency in the United States after the formation of NATO in the 1940s, and by 1970 was adopted by urban planners in its modern civilian sense (Elem, 2016).

In line with other social and management sciences concept, the term infrastructural development has been viewed by different people in different ways, thereby making it very difficult to have one concise definition. However, what is paramount is that all emphasizes on the availability of physical and functional structure, prompting the view that Infrastructural development is the construction and improvement of foundational services with the intention of enhancing economic growth and improvement in people's living standard as noted by Nweke and Elem (2019). It equally refers to the basic systems and services that a country or organization needs in order to function optimally, which includes all the physical systems such as the road and railway networks, utilities, sewage, water, telephone lines and cell towers, airports, bridges, healthcare

facilities, educational facilities, water schemes among others, which are required for investments to enhance productivity in an economy.

Similarly, infrastructural development equally refers to all those things the economy requires to function as outlined by Ebohand Uma (2010), Georege - Genyi (2013) Nkwede& Elem, (2017), to include;

- a. Road & railway systems, tunnels, and bridges.
- b. Mass-transit systems, including buses, subways (UK: underground trains), elevated trains, etc.
- c. Energy-generating facilities including power stations, wind farms, hydro-electric plants, etc.
- d. The national power grid; electrical power lines and connections.
- e. Telephone cables and mobile phone towers.
- f. Reservoirs and dams.
- g. Pumping stations and levees.
- h. Ports, airports, waterways and canals.
- i. Hurricane barriers.
- j. Fire-fighting equipment and personnel.
- k. Health services, hospitals, clinics, and emergency response systems.
- l. Education, including schools, colleges, universities, and other adult education facilities.
- m. Police and correctional centers.
- n. Waste removal and sanitation facilities.

In Keynesian economics, the term ‘infrastructure’ referred only to public assets that facilitate production and failed to include private assets of the same purpose, but today, as a result of private sectors involvement in provision of some public facilities, infrastructure therefore includes the internal framework in any technology system or business organization. A comprehension of infrastructure therefore spans not only these public works facilities, but also the operating procedures, management practices, and development policies that interact together with societal demand and the physical world to facilitate the transport of people and goods, provision of water for drinking and a variety of other uses, safe disposal of society's waste

products, provision of energy where it is needed, and transmission of information within and between communities (Ogundiya, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Stewardship theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. This is based on the body of the work within the area of analysis of the issues discussed here and arising from the position of other theories of democratic governance and sustainable socio-economic infrastructural development.

Stewardship theory, is a theory developed by Donaldson and Davis (1991 & 1993). It is a new perspective to understand the existing relationships between ownership and management of institutions of organizations. This theory arises as an important counterweight to Agency theory. It is a framework which argues that people are intrinsically motivated to work for others or for organizations to accomplish the tasks and responsibilities with which they have been entrusted. It is of the view that people are collective minded and pro-organizational rather than individualistic and therefore work toward the attainment of organizational, group, or societal goals because doing so gives them a higher level of satisfaction. Stewardship theory therefore provides one framework for characterizing the motivations of managerial behavior in various types of organizations.

A steward is one who takes on the responsibility of caring for something on behalf of another person or group of people. Therefore, stewards do not have ownership of what they have responsibility to take care of, but must, nevertheless, carry out their duties conscientiously since they have to render account of what they have done. The Steward theory as noted by Donaldson and Davis (1991 & 1993) contends that governance is a call to service and that those elected to govern the people owe it as a duty to see to the welfare of the masses, in the areas of seeing that people have access to decent transportation system, telecommunication, health care, education, drinking water, good road network among others. Since those who govern in democratic system are accountable to the electorates as servants of the people, it is their duty to give priority to the needs of the citizens in such issues that would improve their living standard by enhancing economic development. This creates enabling environment for people to do their businesses with

ease and equally contribute to the development of the state. This can only be enhanced when these servants in their stewardship, provide socio-economic and infrastructural facilities in the state. Unlike the military, democratic governance call for citizens participation as they table their needs to those elected to govern them, who owe it as a duty to accomplish those tasks and to achieve this, every program of government is aimed at achieving the desires of the citizens. Since those elected see themselves as stewards, they are accountable to the people.

Democratic governance unlike the military, is accountable to the people since leaders got to power by the peoples' mandate. In service, the servant is expected to follow the dictates of his master, which in this case are those socio-economic and infrastructural development needed by the electorates. The citizens while participating in such development programs, see the programs as theirs and would continue to collaborate with other government institutions to protect and sustain it. Del-Campo (2006) states that one of the proponents of Stewardship theory reciprocally connected the idea of interaction, representation, communication, transaction, growth and development, time, and space into stewardship theory which deals with adherent to the needs of the people for the betterment of their living standard. This is achieved through infrastructural development, which shows that to attain any goal, that those concerned irrespective of their levels in knowledge should come together to harness their individual or group ideas to attain the desired goal. The success or otherwise of organizational objective is determined by those who are elected to govern. While the government acts as the steward, the citizens act as the masters whose needs need to be satisfied.

In as much as the citizens are the masters, they elect the servants to carry out the responsibilities of using the common resources to provide for the needs of the people, in the areas of socio-economic and infrastructural facilities such as; good road network, healthcare facilities, electricity, educational institutions, drinking water, communication, among others. The leaders here as portrayed by this theory are the citizens, while the stewards are the elected ones who now serve the citizens.

The Dialectical Link between Democratic Governance and Sustainable Socio-Economic and Infrastructural Development.

Democratic governance is respected and regarded as one of the best forms of government all over the world due to its principles of human right, respect for human dignity, justice, equity, participation and accountability (Elem&Nweke, 2019). In democratic governance, people's right are respected in terms of right to live, own property, belong to any legitimate association of their choice, right to fair hearing, equal right among others. The citizens equally have the right to decide those that will serve them through election, and reserve the right to change their representatives through election as well. When those elected by the people understand that they are elected to serve the people and that the people they serve reserve the right to change them during election, the elected representatives would be more committed and accountable to the citizens. Being accountable and committed entails transparency and delivery on the people's mandate. This is more reason why democratic governance and sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development are seen to go hand in hand in any state that wishes to develop.

Democratic governance is associated with the following characteristics as outline by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and collaborated by Elem, (2018) as follows;

1. Participation
2. Rule of law
3. Transparency
4. Responsiveness
5. Consensus Oriented
6. Equity and Inclusiveness
7. Effectiveness and Efficiency
8. Accountability.
9. Regular free and fair elections

Agubama (2009), opines that where these principles and rules are strictly observed, such a government is adjudged to be democratically constituted, but where the reverse is the case and

there are breaches irrespective of its efforts to address the welfare needs of the people, such regime is regarded to be undemocratic.

Ozoh (2012), notes that the essence of democratic governance is to ensure social justice, equity, peace, rule of law, citizens' participation, human rights and improved living condition of the citizens. This could only be achieved when the people are given the opportunity to elect their representatives who understand their needs and are accountable to the people. It is this expectation that forced the citizens to fight for the return of democracy in Nigeria which materialized in 1999.

Socio-Economic and Infrastructural Development in Ebonyi State

The role of socio-economic and infrastructure development is broadly admitted to be vital for economic achievement in any state, as it leads to economic growth, either at the domestic or national level. Its significance has long been acknowledged and accepted by researchers and development experts. Ozo (2012) states that without adequate socio-economic and infrastructural development, that modern commerce characterized by production specialization and exchange across markets would grind to a halt. Economic globalization would not take place without the reduction in communication and transportation costs brought about by the progress achieved in the development of infrastructure within and across countries. With the creation of Ebonyi State in 1996 and the return to democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999, the young state realized the need for socio –economic and infrastructural development to develop the young state and move the people out of its backwardness in term of illiteracy, health care challenges, lack of access to good drinking water which had caused the infection of the area with guinea worm, access to road, participation in governance and representation at the national levels, electricity, communication, transportation, commerce and other economic activities ((EB-SEED, 2006). In order to achieve this, the state came up with a blue print on how to develop the state, especially as it concerns socio-economic and infrastructural facilities (EB-SDF, 1997). This is occasioned by the mass movement of people from Abia and Enugu states from where this state was carved out, which brought with it tremendous pressure on the existing infrastructure especially in Abakaliki the state capital which many analyst had described as a glorified town due to its

developmental nature. This posed serious challenges for governance especially due to its lean financial resources, receiving one of the lowest federal allocation.

However, after twenty one years of democratic governance in the young state, one would expect to witness reasonable socio-economic and infrastructural development in the state, but the state had her fair share of unexpected democratic governance dividends, as the state has continued to be rated the fourth poorest state in the country (NBS, 2019). This has regenerated the arguments of political scholars that the major problems of development in Nigeria is the problem of governance. This is without doubt when governance is seen in its proper context of fair and equitable allocation of resources, for the achievement of the end or purpose of the existence, which is the promotion of the common goal (George - Genyi, 2013).

That notwithstanding, the government of Ebonyi State has since the return of democratic governance in 1999, demonstrated its desire to provide the state with sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development. The efforts of the administrations of Dr. Sam OminyiEgwu, Matins Elechi and the present governor, Engr. David NwezeUmahi played various roles in uplifting the state in their little ways, in the areas of education, healthcare facilities, agricultural development, electricity, roads network, transportation system, market infrastructure, housing, skills acquisition, manpower development, employment generation among others.

Educational Sector

Government in Ebonyi State since 1999 has shown the desire to manage the affairs of the people by the democratically elected leadership. This is shown in some remarkable progress made in the educational sector. Since independence of Nigeria, the area known today as Ebonyi state, comprising of old Afikpo and Abakaliki blocks, have been noted to be one of the most backward area in terms of education, especially the Abakaliki block. The situation did not change much until the creation of the state in 1996 and the coming in of democratic governance in 1999. Before the creation of Ebonyi State in 1996 and return of democracy in 1999, Ebonyi State had only College of Agricultural Science which was a campus of the then Anambra State University of Science and technology, and later in 1992 the Enugu State University of Science and Technology following the creation of Enugu State. However, upon the return of democracy in

1999, the Ebonyi State University was established, this was followed by the establishment of Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo in 2011, now Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Federal College of Education (Technical) Isu, King David College of Medicine, Uburu and upgrade of other tertiary institutions such as AkanuIbiam Federal Polytechnic, Federal College of Agriculture, ishiagu, Ebonyi State College of Health and Midwifery, Uburu, Ikwo College of Education as well private university; Evangel University, Akaeze which is (Ogunji, 2020).

Seeing the educational situation on ground and the poor household income of the citizens in the state which have hindered families from sending their wards to school, the first democratically elected government of the time, Dr. Sam Egwu declared free and compulsory education from primary to secondary school levels in the State. This was followed by awards of scholarships to qualified indigenes to study abroad (Nwosu, 2009). This policy motivated the citizens to go into education which to a large extent has transformed the state that it can comfortably compete with any other state in the country in term of manpower resources in every sector. This policy has remained sustained by various government in the state. The establishment of these tertiary institutions in the young state is complemented with the establishment of more primary and secondary schools as there is no any village in Ebonyi State today without primary school, while every community boasts of at least one secondary school (Elem, 2016). Number of primary schools both public and private rose from 957 in 2005 to 1790 in 2021. The availability of schools and the sustenance of the free and compulsory education at the primary and secondary level increased school enrollment in Ebonyi State. This has helped to reduce the rate of illiteracy in the State

Health Care Sector

With the return of democracy in Nigeria, Ebonyi State government embarked on the construction of General Hospital in all the 13 Local government Areas of the state, and upgrading of some cottage hospitals to General Hospitals. This followed the handing over of the Ebonyi State University Teaching Hospital to the Federal government in 2011 which has been upgraded to Alex Ekwueme Federal University Teaching Hospital upon the establishment of Federal

University in the State in 2011 (Winifred, 2012). In replacement of the State Teaching Hospital, the state is currently building State's Teaching hospital at Uburu in Ohaozara Local Government Area of the State. The construction of these hospitals in these Local Government Areas has enabled the rural communities have access to health care services as records show that mortality rates especially the infant and maternal mortality in the rural communities has reduced by 40% (Elem, 2016). This indicates that the building of healthcare centers by democratically elected leaders have guaranteed sufficient, sustainable and effective health care services in the state.

Road Construction

It is very substantial and noticeable in all the nooks and crannies of the State capital that there has been a great improvement in road construction of the capital city since the democratic dispensation. This was started by the first democratic administration of Dr. Sam Egwu in a way to give the capital city a face lift. This effort was maintained by the administration of Martin Elechi who embarked on construction of bridges across the state to link different local Government Areas and communities that were cut off by rivers across the state. Engr Dave Umahi who took over from Elechi, aggressively embarked on road construction across the state, linking the capital city to all the local government areas in the state. With the introduction of fly-over bridges at strategic junction within and outside the state capital, the road construction in the state received a boost.

This was followed by the completion of International market started by the previous government of Martin Elechi. It is a massive infrastructure of world class standard that would boost economic transactions in the state and attract outsiders to invest in trading (Elem, 2019). The Abakaliki ring road was originally conceptualized and constructed in 1982 to decongest intra-city commuting and enable ease of evacuation of agricultural and natural resources. The ring road was further elongated and made orbital by the administration of Dr. Sam Egwu, in 2001. The road spans 198km, and cuts across and encircles 8 Local Government Areas (Abakaliki, Izzi, Ebonyi, Ohaukwu, Ezza North, Ezza South, Ishielu&Ikwo LGAs) of Ebonyi State, thus covering approximately 62% of the total LGAs in the state (Nwosu, 2009). The ring road as highlighted by Nwosu, effectively serves the population of about 2,700,000, corresponding to 62% of the total population of the state as estimated by Ebonyi State Planning Commission for 2016 fiscal

year, while Several businesses, schools, hospitals and other commercial ventures sprang up and flourished along the entire lengths and breadths of the ring road after its completion in 1982. However, the dilapidation of the ring road during the military administration in the country has created untold hardship to the people who solely depend on the road for commuting as well as socio-economic activities, while many businesses have been stifled(EB-MA, 2018). This has consequent adverse effect on the micro- and macro-economy of the state and has robbed it of the much desired Internally Generated Revenue (IGR).

The ring road if reconstructed will; Promote economic development, extend trade, and improve state's competitiveness through an efficient and affordable integrated transport system. Encourage and remove all barriers towards the private sector participation in the development, provision, maintenance, operation, and upgrading of transport infrastructure and services; promote the use of public transport over private cars. As a result of the importance of the road which was abandoned by the past military administration, the present government of Engr. Dave NwezeUmahi has embarked on the reconstruction of the road which started in February 2021 and expected to be completed in 2022 according to state government projection.

The construction of flyover intersections embarked upon by Engr. David Nweze's administration is also another infrastructural development in the state with the return of democracy, as it will reduce accidents and save travel time, promote a culture of maintenance and continuous upgrading of transport infrastructure and services, promote competition and efficiency and cost reduction of transport services in Ebonyi state. It will equally improve the safety, security, reliability, quality and speed of movement of goods and people, at state and local government and community levels. It will as well develop transport infrastructure that ensures environmental sustainability and internationally accepted standards; support local government areas and the state capital territory in the development and promotion of urban transport systems and the development and promotion of rural communities (Elem, 2019).

With the ongoing construction of Airport at Ebonyi Central Zone, the ring road if completed will go a long way in interconnecting the people of different areas of the state to the Airport.

Agriculture

The Ebonyi State government since the return of democratic governance in 1999 and due to the agrarian nature of the state has continued to come up with various policies and programmes aimed at assisting the farmers. This as noted by () was made possible through the creation of Ministry of Agriculture and Natural resources. The ministry is saddled with the responsibility of the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies and programmes of the state, with the vision to achieve an accelerated pace of agricultural development and make it a major revenue earner for the state. It is equally aimed at raising the farmers' purchasing power by increasing their real income and improving the quality of life and living standard of the farmers and rural dwellers, increase in food production to ensure attainment of a level of food security that will generate availability and affordability of food commodities to the populace. Explaining further, the Commissioner for Agriculture and natural Resources, Dr. Ogodo Ali Nomeh states that among the vision of the ministry in the state, is the promotion of crop production, processing, preservation, packaging, storage and marketing. Adding further that the state was ready for the promotion of increased application of modern/improved technology and management to agricultural production, to make agriculture to be more responsive to the demand of other sectors of the state economy (EB-MA, 2018).

The above vision of the state in agricultural sector prompted the democratic administration of the state to embark on the training of some tertiary institutions graduates who were sent to Songhai in Mali to study the modern agricultural practices in animal husbandry, aquaculture, and poultry management while others were trained in the act of modern rice farming among others (Omeje&Ogbu, 2015). Those trained were given soft loans to start up their individual farms with the intent of training others. After training some selected individuals on modern rice farming, the state government embarked on private sector participation. The current production capacity of Ebonyi State under private sector participation as noted by the Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dr. Nome, is about 150,000 MT/annum, while production is expected to scale up to 1,000,000 MT/annum in the next 5 years. The state government established 5 numbers of rice mill in the three senatorial zone of the state with combined production capacity of 20MT/hour which are fully operational. Clusters of local rice millers with combined

production capacity of 150MT of milled rice per day also exist in the state (Nomeh, 2018). Nomeh notes that the state government has injected over ₦30BN in the last few years in partnership with local farmers towards rice farming, while milling capacity would be upgraded and expanded beyond 60MT/hour within the next 5 years and 300MT/day for private millers. Ebonyi State has 4BN initial matching grant to support small and medium agriculture and solid mineral enterprise which is made available to all Ebonyi people with useful business proposals. This initiative is expect to create a minimum of 400,000 direct jobs and over 1 million indirect jobs (EB-MA, 2018). To encourage the patronage of the popular Abakaliki rice in Ebonyi State, the present democratic administration led by Engr. Dave Umahi, banned the importation and consumption of foreign rice in Ebonyi State. This has assisted rural farmers who now see rice production as sustained means of income, as people come from all parts of the country including some neighboring countries to Ebonyi state to buy Ebonyi rice.

Conclusion

This paper has examined democratic governance and sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development in Ebonyi State Nigeria. With the creation of the state in 1996 and return of democratic governance in 1999, the activities of various democratic administrations has been examined in comparison to the state of Ebonyi during the military administration. Itis discovered that the level of development witnessed in the state were as a result of democratic governance. The level of transformation in the areas of socio-economic and infrastructural development since the return of democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999 has shown the impact of democratic governance on sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development in Ebonyi State.

The study realized that democracy has come to assume a new aura of significance in the modern world affairs. This is based on the interest of the world to embrace democracy, given that it is perceived to address the challenges of bad governance which would consequently address the issues of sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural facilities in the country. Though, democracy is totally misinterpreted and wrongly practiced in some countries especially the developing world in the areas of mismanagement of public fund, poor economic and

developmental policies, lack of maintenance culture, lack of accountability, corruption among others, it is still assumed to be the bridge builder in terms socio-economic and infrastructural development. Most importantly, democracy has a better opportunity to facilitate the provision of sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural facilities and equal distribution of resources and basic needs of man, and as such the government of Nigeria at all levels should sustain its democratic governance.

References

- Agubamah, E. (2009). Accountability and good governance: A prerequisite for democratic politics in Nigeria. In Edoh, T & Wuam T. (Eds.), *democracy, leadership and accountability in post-colonial Africa: Challenges and possibilities*. (pp. 212-234). Makurdi. Aboki Publishers
- Allison, L. (1994). On the gap between theories of democracy and theories of democratization, *Journal of Democracy*, 1 (1) 8-26.
- Del-Campo, R. G. (2006). The influence of culture strength on person-organization fit and turnover. *International Journal of management*, 23(3), 465-469
- Eboh, F.E & Uma, K.E. (2010). Rural infrastructural development: A panacea for poverty alleviation in Nigeria. *African Journal of Professional Research in Human Development*, 6(3), 39-45
- EB-SDF (1997). Blue Print for the Development of Ebonyi State: March, 1997.
- EB-SEED (2006). Ebonyi state economic empowerment and development strategy. Lagos, Mbeyi and Associates (Nig) Ltd, 138 P.
- EB-MA (2019). Ebonyi State Ministry of Agriculture and natural resources; Vision and Mission.
- Edoh, T. (2003). Poverty and the survival of democracy in Nigeria: *Nigerian Journal of political and Administrative studies*. 1 (4), 17- 24.
- Egonmwan, J.A. (1991). Public Policy Analysis Concepts and Application. Benin, Resyin (Nig) Company, 221P.
- Elem, E.O. (2016). Effective implementation of public policies in Nigeria: *Issues and challenges*. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*. 9 (1), 1-15.
- Elem, E. (2019). Rotational Presidency: A Panacea for even and sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria. *South East Journal of Political Science*. 5(1). 168-188.
- Elem, E. & Nweke, E. N. (2019). Women and socio-economic development in rural communities in Ebonyi State Nigeria: An Assessment. *Scholarly Journal of Business Administration*. 8(2), 38-44.
- Geogr-Genyi, M.E. (2013). Democratic Governance and Sustainable Development in Benue State of Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3 (12), 155-160

- Mohammed, A.A. (2006). Reflections on the victory and crisis of Democracy in Saliv, H.A. ET at (eds) Democracy and Development. UNILORIN
- Moti, U.G. (2012). *Development plans and visions as a Strategy for sustainable development: the experience of Nigeria. Development of public administration*, University of Abuja Nigeria.
- National Bureau of Statistics (2019). *Annual abstract of statistics*, Abuja; NBS Press.
- NKwede, J.O. & Elem, E.O. (2017). Types of government and ideologies. In E.N. Nweke, A. Itumo, J.O. Nkwede & H.N. Nwobashi (Eds.), *A Handbook on citizenship and state* (pp. 331-356). Abakalki: WillyRose&Applessed Publishing Coy
- Nwosu, E. (2009, June 11). Development strides in Ebonyi state. Retrieved from <http://www.vangurad.com>
- Odo, L. U. (2015). Democracy and good governance in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science*. 15(3), 1-7.
- Ogundiya, I. (2010). Democracy and Good governance: Nigeria's Dilemma". African Journal of Political Science and International Relations 4(6), <http://www.academicJournals.org/ajpsir>. Accessed, 11th November 2010.
- Okoli, F.C. (2002). Politics of development and under development: Theories of development. Enugu: Ingenious Creations Services Ltd.
- Omeje, N.P. & Ogbu, M.O. (2015). Rural development and food security programmes in Nigeria: issues and challenges. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*. 9(2), 121-133.
- Ozoh, F. O. (2012). Constituent's welfare and public expenditure immoderation in Nigeria: A graphical survey. *The Nigerian Electoral Journal*, 5(2), 36-54.
- Ujebe, M.E. (2018). Impact of Electoral Violence on Rural Development in Nigeria. Unpublished B. Sc. Project. Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.
- UNDP-HDI (2015). Human development Report Nigeria 2008-2009. UNDP publication, Abuja Nigeria
- Winifred, O. (2012). Federal government takes over Ebonyi state university teaching hospital. Leadership Newspapers. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201201060374.html>.