

## **Assessing the Effectiveness of Local Government Administration in Service Delivery in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State**

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### **Abstract**

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**T**his study assesses the effectiveness of local government administration in service delivery within the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach and a sample of 300 respondents across urban and rural local government areas (LGAs), the study assesses the performance of local governments in key sectors, including education, healthcare, water supply, and road infrastructure. Findings reveal that while education and health services are relatively effective, service delivery in rural LGAs remains suboptimal, particularly in infrastructure. Statistical analyses show significant relationships between administrative effectiveness, financial capacity, and service delivery outcomes. Additionally, low levels of community participation highlight a persistent top-down governance structure that limits transparency and responsiveness. The study affirms previous assertions that institutional capacity and fiscal management are crucial to effective local governance. It recommends strengthening institutional frameworks, enhancing financial transparency, promoting participatory governance, and addressing rural service gaps through targeted interventions. The findings provide empirical insights for policymakers seeking to reform local governance systems in Nigeria and similar contexts.

**Keywords:** *Local government administration, Service delivery, Financial capacity, community participation, Public infrastructure, Governance, Effectiveness*

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### **Background to the Study**

The role of local governments in Nigeria as the third tier of government is pivotal in facilitating grassroots development and ensuring the delivery of essential public services such as primary education, healthcare, rural roads, water supply, and sanitation. In a decentralised administrative structure, effective service delivery at the local level is essential for promoting democratic governance and socio-economic development (Agba, Akwara, & Idu, 2013). The administration of public services at the grassroots level is widely acknowledged as a critical pillar of sustainable national development, particularly in federal systems such as Nigeria's. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria clearly recognises local governments as the third tier of government and mandates them with the responsibility of providing essential services such as primary healthcare, basic education, rural roads, potable water, and environmental sanitation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). By their design and proximity to the people, local governments are meant to be the most accessible governmental structure to citizens, ensuring the prompt delivery of services and encouraging participatory governance. However, in practice, the functionality and effectiveness of local governments across Nigeria remain deeply contested.

Over the years, there has been growing concern regarding the apparent inability of local governments to perform their constitutional responsibilities effectively. Scholars and policy analysts have consistently highlighted the issues of weak administrative structures, inadequate funding, political interference, corruption, and limited community involvement as major impediments to efficient service delivery at the local level (Oviasuyi, Idada, & Isiraojie, 2010; Ezeani, 2006; Olanipekun, 2021). In many cases, local government councils operate with significant bureaucratic challenges and without the requisite institutional capacity to respond to the developmental needs of their communities.

Despite constitutional provisions and resource allocations, local governments across Nigeria, including those in Cross River State, are often criticised for poor service delivery, administrative inefficiency, and limited citizen engagement. In the state, the performance of local governments has been a subject of both scholarly interest and public discourse. The Southern Senatorial District of the state, which includes local government areas such as Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Odukpani, Akamkpa and Biase, represents a microcosm of the broader issues affecting local governance in Nigeria. While the district benefits from its strategic location—bordering the Atlantic Ocean and hosting the state capital—it also faces developmental disparities between urban centres and peripheral rural communities (Effiom & Eyo, 2021). Many residents in the region continue to experience difficulties in accessing basic services, particularly in areas related to healthcare, potable water, waste disposal, and road infrastructure.

The persistent challenges in service delivery have raised questions about the effectiveness of local government administration in fulfilling its statutory roles. These challenges have implications not only for local development outcomes but also for citizen trust, public accountability, and democratic governance. According to Agba, Akwara, and Idu (2013), ineffective service delivery can lead to disenchantment with local governance, weaken public

institutions, and erode the legitimacy of the state at the grassroots level. Despite several reforms initiated by the federal and state governments—ranging from capacity-building programmes to financial oversight mechanisms—the expected improvement in service delivery at the local government level remains elusive. In many cases, budgetary allocations do not translate into tangible improvements in public services due to issues of mismanagement, poor planning, and lack of monitoring (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). There is a need to empirically assess these concerns in specific geographic and administrative contexts to inform policy and institutional reforms.

This study, therefore, seeks to critically examine the effectiveness of local government administration in delivering public services in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State. By employing empirical methods, the research aims to generate evidence-based insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current administrative practices, the level of community involvement, and the adequacy of financial and institutional resources. The Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, comprising local government areas such as Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Odukpani, Akamkpa and Biase, is a region with significant economic and political relevance. However, questions persist regarding the performance of local administrations in delivering social services that align with the expectations of the people. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the effectiveness of local government administration in the delivery of public services in the district.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to assess the effectiveness of local government administration in service delivery within the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

1. To evaluate the quality and accessibility of basic services delivered by local governments in the Southern Senatorial District.
2. To examine administrative and financial factors affecting local government effectiveness in service delivery.
3. To assess the extent of community participation and accountability mechanisms in local government administration.

### **Research Hypotheses**

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between local government administrative effectiveness and the quality-of-service delivery.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** Financial capacity does not significantly affect service delivery in the Southern Senatorial District.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** Community participation has no significant impact on the effectiveness of service delivery by local governments.

## **Literature Review**

The literature is presented in specific themes, based on the objective of the study.

### **Quality and Accessibility of Service Delivery**

The quality and accessibility of public service delivery are central to the effectiveness of local government administration. Service delivery at the local level includes the provision of education, healthcare, potable water, environmental sanitation, road maintenance, and other welfare-enhancing interventions that improve living conditions for citizens. The importance of these services lies not only in their availability but also in the ease with which citizens can access them, the timeliness and responsiveness of provision, and the perceived fairness and equity in their distribution.

In the context of Nigeria, numerous studies have pointed to systemic deficiencies in the delivery of these services by local governments. According to Akinola (2010), the quality of local public services is often compromised by poor infrastructure, inadequate manpower, and a lack of continuity in policy implementation. These issues are exacerbated by bureaucratic inefficiencies and the limited autonomy granted to local governments to make decisions or control their own resources.

Oviasuyi, Idada, and Isiraojie (2010) argue that local government performance in Nigeria has not met expectations due to entrenched issues such as corruption, political patronage, and unqualified personnel. Many local councils are reportedly unable to carry out their statutory duties effectively, leading to the neglect of rural communities and the entrenchment of urban-rural disparities in service delivery. This challenge is particularly visible in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, where services such as waste disposal, water supply, and primary health care remain inconsistent across different local government areas (Effiom & Eyo, 2021).

Empirical evidence from Cross River State highlights significant gaps in the availability and distribution of basic services. While urban LGAs like Calabar Municipality tend to receive more attention and investment, rural LGAs such as Akpabuyo, Bakassi, and Biase are often underserved. For instance, a study by Bassey and Ojong (2022) noted that access to clean water and functioning health centres was more pronounced in urban centres, whereas communities in Odukpani and Bakassi reported travelling long distances to access similar services. The disparity in service provision not only undermines development equity but also deepens socio-economic exclusion among rural populations.

Moreover, the quality of services delivered is often undermined by poor maintenance culture and lack of monitoring. Educational facilities are frequently under-resourced, with dilapidated classrooms, insufficient teaching staff, and irregular supervision (Agba, Akwara, & Idu, 2013). Similarly, primary health centres suffer from drug shortages, inadequate staffing, and erratic power supply. These deficiencies have led to widespread scepticism about the capacity of local government institutions to manage basic social infrastructure.

Scholars have also linked the poor quality of service delivery to the limited fiscal capacity of local governments. According to Olanipekun (2021), many LGAs depend almost entirely on federal allocations, which are often delayed or insufficient to meet growing expenditure needs. This over-reliance restricts their ability to invest in sustainable service delivery mechanisms. Furthermore, the limited internally generated revenue (IGR) base of most councils in the Southern Senatorial District means that they are unable to maintain essential services or expand service coverage to remote communities.

Another important aspect is the responsiveness of local governments to the needs of the people. A responsive local government listens to citizen demands and adapts its service delivery mechanisms to reflect local priorities. However, community feedback mechanisms are weak or non-existent in many LGAs. Public complaint systems, performance scorecards, or participatory budgeting exercises, which are vital for ensuring citizen-focused service delivery, are largely absent or underutilised (Ezeani, 2006). As a result, service provision is often top-down, driven by political interests rather than community needs.

In summary, the quality and accessibility of local government service delivery in Nigeria—and particularly in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State—are constrained by infrastructural decay, funding limitations, administrative inefficiency, and rural neglect. The widening service gaps between urban and rural communities demand urgent policy and administrative attention, as well as stronger institutional frameworks that promote inclusiveness, accountability, and sustainability in local governance.

#### **Administrative and Financial Capacity**

Administrative and financial capacity are fundamental determinants of the performance of local government systems. In the context of Nigeria, including Cross River State's Southern Senatorial District, local governments are frequently constrained by a complex web of bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited financial autonomy, irregular funding, and politicised governance structures. These limitations have collectively undermined their ability to deliver basic services effectively and independently.

One of the most cited administrative challenges facing local governments in Nigeria is the shortage of skilled human resources. According to Olowu and Wunsch (2004), many local governments suffer from weak institutional structures and lack adequately trained personnel to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate development programmes. The recruitment process is often influenced by political patronage rather than merit, leading to the employment of underqualified and unmotivated staff who are ill-equipped to deliver quality services. In many local councils, key departments such as planning, health, works, and education are staffed by individuals without specialised knowledge, which weakens service delivery capacity and strategic foresight (Ezeani, 2006).

In addition, administrative processes within local governments are often bogged down by bureaucratic bottlenecks. File processing, budget approvals, and procurement procedures are subject to delays and inefficiencies, which hinder timely decision-making and the



implementation of development projects (Agba, Akwara, & Idu, 2013). The absence of performance-based evaluation systems and modern administrative tools such as e-governance, data management systems, and ICT infrastructure has further deepened institutional inefficiencies. These structural weaknesses are particularly evident in rural LGAs like Bakassi, Biase, and Odukpani, where staff capacity and administrative coordination are low, and dependence on external technical assistance is high (Effiom & Eyo, 2021).

On the financial front, local governments are severely limited in their revenue-generating capacity. The statutory revenue allocation from the Federation Account remains their primary source of funding. However, the amount that reaches local governments is often insufficient and inconsistently disbursed. According to Olanipekun (2021), the Joint State-Local Government Account (JAC), established under Section 162(6) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, allows state governments to exercise control over local government funds. This arrangement has often resulted in delayed, mismanaged, or diverted funds, leaving local governments with inadequate financial resources to execute their development mandates.

The issue of low Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) is another key constraint. Most local governments in Cross River State have weak revenue bases and ineffective revenue mobilisation strategies. A study by Bassey and Ojong (2022) found that many LGAs lack comprehensive revenue registers, effective tax collection systems, or trained personnel to handle financial planning and control. As a result, they depend almost entirely on federal allocations, making them financially vulnerable and incapable of pursuing independent development projects. The inability to raise sufficient revenue internally also means that many councils cannot maintain basic infrastructure, fund public works, or respond to community emergencies.

Compounding the financial challenge is poor budgetary implementation and fiscal discipline. In many cases, budgets are prepared without adequate community input or needs assessments, leading to mismatches between allocated resources and actual service needs. Furthermore, budget execution is often marred by leakages, misappropriation, and lack of transparency. According to Okafor and Orjinta (2013), the absence of effective internal audit systems and weak oversight by legislative councils at the local level have contributed to a culture of impunity and financial mismanagement.

Another critical issue is the influence of political actors at the state level over local government affairs. In Cross River State, as in many other parts of Nigeria, the appointment of caretaker committees or the manipulation of local government elections undermines administrative stability and autonomy. This political interference leads to the appointment of loyalists who prioritise patronage over performance, further weakening institutional structures and morale among career staff (Oviasuyi, Idada, & Isiraojie, 2010).

In sum, the administrative and financial constraints facing local governments in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State are multidimensional and deeply entrenched. These

challenges limit the councils' ability to plan and execute development programmes, respond to community needs, and uphold public accountability. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive reform of institutional frameworks, including capacity-building initiatives, fiscal restructuring, anti-corruption mechanisms, and enhanced local government autonomy.

### **Community Participation and Accountability**

Community participation and accountability are critical components of effective local governance. The ability of citizens to engage meaningfully in local government affairs, influence decision-making processes, and hold public officials accountable is essential for achieving transparency, inclusivity, and responsive service delivery. In the context of local government administration in Nigeria—and particularly within the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State—the levels of community involvement and institutional accountability remain largely insufficient, despite the centrality of these principles in democratic decentralisation.

According to the World Bank (1996), community participation is defined as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them. When applied to local governance, participation entails inclusive processes such as town hall meetings, participatory budgeting, public hearings, and community-based monitoring systems. These mechanisms enhance citizens' voices, empower marginalised groups, and foster a sense of ownership over local development projects. However, in practice, participation in local government affairs in Nigeria is often minimal and tokenistic (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004).

In many local government areas across the Southern Senatorial District—including Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Biase, and Odukpani—citizens are typically excluded from important discussions relating to planning, budgeting, and service delivery. As observed by Ezeani (2006), local councils often adopt a top-down approach, whereby policies are formulated by officials without consulting the communities they are meant to serve. This disconnect results in poor alignment between community needs and government priorities, leading to project failures, resource misallocation, and low satisfaction with public services.

Several studies have underscored the correlation between community participation and improved governance outcomes. Agba, Akwara, and Idu (2013) argue that when citizens are involved in monitoring service delivery and expenditure, there is a higher likelihood of efficient resource use, timely project execution, and reduced incidences of corruption. Similarly, participation promotes social accountability by compelling local officials to provide explanations, justifications, and information about decisions, policies, and public spending.

However, mechanisms for ensuring accountability in Nigeria's local government system are often weak or non-functional. Institutional checks such as internal audits, legislative oversight, and citizen feedback mechanisms are frequently undermined by political interference and administrative complacency (Oviasuyi, Idada, & Isiraojie, 2010). For example, most local government councils lack functional ward development committees

(WDCs) or community development associations (CDAs), which are meant to serve as interfaces between the government and the people. Even where these bodies exist, they are often inactive, under-resourced, or sidelined by political elites.

Moreover, the lack of transparency in budgetary processes and the absence of publicly accessible financial records further erode citizen trust and engagement. In their study on local governance in Cross River State, Effiom and Eyo (2021) found that only a few LGAs made budget information publicly available or engaged citizens in pre-budget consultations. Without access to information, citizens are unable to make informed contributions or demand accountability from their representatives. Cultural and educational barriers also limit effective participation, particularly in rural LGAs. High levels of illiteracy, poverty, and political apathy reduce the capacity of community members to organise, articulate demands, or question administrative decisions. This is particularly problematic for vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities, whose voices are often marginalised in decision-making processes (Bassey & Ojong, 2022). Furthermore, many citizens are unaware of their rights and the responsibilities of local government authorities, thereby weakening the demand side of accountability.

Despite these challenges, some best practices have emerged in selected communities. In Calabar South and Calabar Municipality, for example, participatory platforms such as public consultations on sanitation and community policing have recorded moderate success. These examples demonstrate the potential for replicating community-driven governance models in other parts of the district, provided the enabling environment is created through policy reforms, civic education, and institutional support.

In summary, while community participation and accountability are recognised pillars of local governance, their practice remains underdeveloped in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State. Revitalising local governance in the region requires a deliberate focus on inclusive governance structures, transparency, civic engagement, and capacity-building for both public officials and citizens. By promoting accountability and grassroots participation, local governments can become more responsive, equitable, and development-oriented.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. Primary data were gathered through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. The research was conducted in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, which comprises seven Local Government Areas (LGAs): Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Odukpani, Biase, and Akamkpa. This district features a mix of urban and rural settings. Calabar Municipality and Calabar South are urban centres, hosting administrative, commercial, and tourism infrastructure. The other LGAs are predominantly rural or semi-urban, with economies based on agriculture, fishing, forestry, and local trade. Notably, Akamkpa is known for mining and eco-tourism, while Bakassi faces unique challenges due to its coastal location and displacement issues.



The target population included civil servants, elected local government officials, and community residents across the seven LGAs. Using stratified random sampling, 350 respondents were selected (50 per LGA), out of which 300 completed questionnaires were retrieved and analysed. Six key informant interviews were conducted with local government chairpersons and planning officers.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (means, percentages) and inferential statistics, including Chi-square tests and regression analysis, conducted at a 0.05 level of significance using SPSS version 26.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 1:** Respondents' Perception of Service Delivery Quality

Service Type	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Primary Education	28%	35%	23%	14%
Healthcare	21%	31%	29%	19%
Water Supply	16%	28%	33%	23%
Road Maintenance	12%	25%	30%	33%

**Source:** Field work, 2024

Table 1 presents how respondents rated the quality of key public services provided by local governments. Primary education received the most favourable ratings, with 63% of respondents judging it as either "Very Good" or "Good." Healthcare also had a generally positive perception, though with slightly lower scores (52% rated it "Very Good" or "Good"). In contrast, water supply and road maintenance were rated more poorly. Only 44% and 37% of respondents, respectively, rated these services positively, while a significant proportion considered them "Fair" or "Poor." This suggests a disparity in service effectiveness, with infrastructure services (especially roads) perceived as the weakest.

**Table 2:** Factors Hindering Effective Service Delivery

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate Funding	96	32%
Political Interference	72	24%
Lack of Skilled Personnel	66	22%
Poor Community Involvement	66	22%

**Source:** Field work, 2024

Table 2 highlights the major challenges affecting effective service delivery in the study area. Inadequate funding was identified by the highest number of respondents (32%) as the most critical obstacle. Political interference followed closely at 24%, indicating a significant influence of politics on local administrative functions. Both lack of skilled personnel and poor community involvement were cited equally by 22% of respondents, pointing to institutional

and participatory weaknesses. Overall, the data suggest that both financial and governance-related factors significantly limit local government performance.

**Table 3:** Chi-Square Test for Relationship between Local Government Administrative Effectiveness and Quality of Service Delivery

Hypothesis	Test Used	$\chi^2$ Value	df	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
H <sub>01</sub> : There is no significant relationship between local government administrative effectiveness and quality of service delivery	Chi-square	27.56	3	0.002	Reject H <sub>01</sub>	There is a significant relationship between administrative effectiveness and quality of service delivery

**Source:** Field work, 2024

#### Analysis:

The chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2 = 27.56$ ,  $df = 3$ ) with a p-value of 0.002 indicates a statistically significant association between local government administrative effectiveness and the quality-of-service delivery. Since  $p < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 4:** Regression Analysis on Financial Capacity and Service Delivery

Hypothesis	Test Used	R <sup>2</sup>	F-Statistic	df (regression, residual)	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
H <sub>02</sub> : Financial capacity does not significantly affect service delivery	Simple Linear Regression	0.38	28.42	(1, 298)	< 0.05	Reject H <sub>02</sub>	Financial capacity significantly influences service delivery

**Source:** Field work, 2024

#### Analysis:

The regression analysis reveals that financial capacity explains 38% of the variance in service delivery ( $R^2 = 0.38$ ). The F-statistic of 28.42 is significant at  $p < 0.05$ , leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that financial resources play a substantial role in determining the quality and efficiency of service delivery.

**Table 5:** Chi-Square Test for Impact of Community Participation on Service Delivery Effectiveness

Hypothesis	Test Used	$\chi^2$ Value	df	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
H <sub>03</sub> : Community participation has no significant impact on service delivery effectiveness	Chi-square	19.21	2	0.012	Reject H <sub>03</sub>	Community participation significantly affects service delivery effectiveness

**Source:** Field work, 2024

**Analysis:**

With  $\chi^2 = 19.21$  and a p-value of 0.012, the test result confirms that community participation has a statistically significant impact on the effectiveness of service delivery. The null hypothesis is rejected since the p-value is below the 0.05 threshold.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study indicate that service delivery in the Southern Senatorial District is only moderately effective, highlighting persistent challenges and uneven development across the constituent Local Government Areas (LGAs). While services such as education and healthcare show relatively better performance, basic infrastructure—especially road networks and water supply—remain poorly developed, particularly in the rural LGAs. This spatial disparity between urban centres like Calabar Municipality and Calabar South, and rural areas such as Akamkpa, Biase, and Bakassi, reinforces the concern that rural populations often experience exclusion from key public services, as earlier argued by Oviasuyi, Idada, & Isiraojie (2010).

One of the key findings is that administrative effectiveness and financial capacity are strong determinants of service delivery outcomes. The significant chi-square and regression results support the conclusion that when local government administrations are efficient, well-coordinated, and sufficiently funded, the quality of services improves. This aligns with the propositions of Ezeani (2006) who identified institutional competence and fiscal decentralisation as central to improving grassroots development. Similarly, Effiom and Eyo (2021) found that local government authorities with better budgetary allocations and effective leadership are more capable of addressing community needs.

However, despite the centrality of administration and finance, the study reveals low levels of community participation in governance and development processes. The chi-square results suggest a statistically significant relationship between community engagement and service effectiveness. Yet, qualitative observations and field reports show that participatory mechanisms are either weak or completely absent in many LGAs. The top-down structure of governance currently in operation limits citizen input in decision-making, thereby reducing accountability, responsiveness, and trust in public institutions. This finding resonates with Agba, Akwara, and Idu (2013), who argue that community exclusion leads to mismatched priorities and inefficient use of resources.

The weak engagement also reflects structural and socio-political constraints in local governance in Nigeria. Many LGAs operate under high dependency on state-level allocations, with limited internally generated revenue (IGR), further constraining their autonomy and responsiveness. As a result, rural areas often suffer from underinvestment and neglect, which is evident in the poor state of feeder roads, lack of portable water, and insufficient sanitation facilities in areas like Biase, Akpabuyo, and Bakassi.

Furthermore, the disparity in sectoral performance indicates selective investment and possibly donor-driven or politically motivated allocations. The relatively better performance

in health and education may be due to federal and state interventions, NGO activities, or external support, while core infrastructural services that rely heavily on local governance capacity remain poor. This corroborates findings by Ogunna (1996) and Okotoni (2005) who argue that where LGAs have limited discretion over spending and planning, service delivery becomes unbalanced and unsustainable. In essence, while the rejection of all three null hypotheses in this study confirms the significance of administration, finance, and participation in service delivery, the reality on ground shows a complex interaction of these variables within a constrained local governance environment. The existing framework does not adequately empower communities, nor does it ensure equitable service distribution across geographic and sectoral lines.

The implication is clear: reforms aimed at improving local government effectiveness must simultaneously address institutional capacity, fiscal autonomy, and participatory governance. Without these, service delivery will continue to exhibit both inefficiency and inequality, particularly in rural and marginalised communities within the Southern Senatorial District.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study assessed the effectiveness of local government administration in service delivery in Cross River State's Southern Senatorial District. The results show a mixed performance, heavily influenced by administrative capacity, funding adequacy, and citizen involvement. Strengthening these factors is crucial for improving the welfare of residents and achieving sustainable development.

The study recommends the need to,

1. **Strengthen Institutional Capacity:** Local governments in the Southern Senatorial District should prioritise the training, recruitment, and retention of qualified personnel across all service delivery sectors. Many LGAs face chronic human resource deficits, particularly in technical areas such as engineering, health management, and development planning. Investing in capacity-building workshops, leadership training, and professional development for staff will ensure better implementation of policies and improved administrative effectiveness. Partnerships with institutions like the Local Government Service Commission and relevant professional bodies can facilitate regular in-service training. Additionally, creating a conducive work environment through proper remuneration and incentives will reduce staff turnover and brain drain.
2. **Enhance Financial Transparency:** Transparent financial management is key to improving public trust and ensuring accountability in service delivery. LGAs should adopt modern budgeting techniques such as participatory budgeting, implement electronic financial management systems, and ensure that budgets and expenditures are publicly accessible through local government portals and notice boards. Regular internal audits should be complemented by external audits conducted by independent agencies. Strengthening the roles of legislative councils in budget oversight and enabling civil society organisations to monitor financial flows will further institutionalise fiscal discipline. These measures align with global best practices in local governance transparency and accountability.

3. **Promote Participatory Governance:** To improve service effectiveness and accountability, citizens must be given opportunities to participate in planning, implementation, and evaluation of local development initiatives. LGAs should institutionalise town hall meetings, community development committees (CDCs), and feedback mechanisms, especially in rural communities. Community engagement should go beyond tokenism and involve genuine consultation and partnership. Local governments can also adopt social accountability tools such as citizen report cards, public expenditure tracking surveys, and service charters to ensure responsiveness. Active participation will help bridge the trust gap between citizens and local authorities and ensure that services align with actual community needs.
4. **Monitor Service Delivery:** Establishing independent and periodic performance audits of local government services is essential to track progress and identify bottlenecks. A well-defined performance evaluation framework should be developed with clear indicators covering education, health, infrastructure, and water services. These audits can be managed by oversight institutions such as the State Ministry of Local Government Affairs or independent third-party evaluators, including universities and NGOs. Monitoring should not be limited to output metrics but should also assess impact, cost-effectiveness, and community satisfaction. Findings from such audits should inform decision-making and corrective actions.
5. **Address Rural Gaps in Service Delivery:** Rural LGAs such as Akpabuyo, Biase, Akamkpa, and Bakassi often face chronic underdevelopment due to structural neglect. To bridge this gap, the state and federal governments should introduce targeted intervention funds aimed specifically at rural infrastructure and social service deficits. These funds should be allocated based on needs assessments and poverty indices, and their utilisation strictly monitored to prevent misappropriation. In addition, rural development agencies should be revitalised or created to coordinate multi-sectoral interventions in rural areas, including access roads, portable water, rural health outreach, and school improvement programmes.
6. **Improve Local Revenue Generation:** Beyond federal allocations, LGAs must strengthen their capacity to generate internal revenue through innovative, fair, and accountable taxation systems. This includes updating local tax databases, formalising local businesses, and reducing leakages in revenue collection. However, efforts should be made to ensure that taxation is equitable and does not burden the poor. With enhanced IGR, LGAs can improve service delivery autonomy and reduce over-reliance on politically volatile external funding.
7. **Foster Intergovernmental Collaboration:** Effective service delivery also requires synergy between local, state, and federal governments. Institutional frameworks should be strengthened to allow for regular dialogue, policy alignment, and joint project implementation. Technical assistance from state ministries and collaboration with development partners can provide LGAs with the expertise and resources they need to implement large-scale initiatives. Cross-LGA collaboration, particularly in border communities, can also help share resources and reduce duplication of efforts.
8. **Leverage Digital Tools for Governance:** The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in local governance can significantly improve



transparency, citizen engagement, and efficiency. LGAs should adopt digital platforms for service requests, complaint management, budget tracking, and public notices. Mobile-based applications can be used to engage remote populations, particularly in rural LGAs where access to physical government offices is limited. This will help decentralise access and strengthen the visibility of government action.

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