



Social Protection Programmes and Human Capital Development in Akwa Ibom State: A Study of Akwa Ibom Enterprise and Employment Scheme (AKEES)

¹Ekpo, Michael Eugene., ²Umoh, Ubong Etim (PhD) & ³Utok, Nkereuwem Bassey

^{1,2&3}Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: ekpomichael@gmail.com

Abstract

Poverty and unemployment are major setback to human development in many countries in the world. To address extreme poverty mostly among developing countries like Nigeria brought about the idea of social protection/security policies aimed at improved economic status of the poor and vulnerable person caused by natural disaster, sickness, disability, old age, high population, unemployment, inequality and deprivation in allocation of resources etc. and this led to establishment of Akwa Ibom Enterprise and Employment Scheme (AKEES) for Human Capacity Development (HCD) through training and skills development for wealth creation, entrepreneurship, SMEs, and industrialization in Akwa Ibom State (AKS). The study examined the impact of social protection programmes on human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State with specific reference to Akwa Ibom Enterprise and Employment Scheme. Descriptive research and Survey of 7 selected MDAs and affected persons projected at population of 2033 with sample size of 322 determined using Krejcie and Morgan table 1970, and stratified sampling techniques employed to administer 10 items questionnaire on the respondents. Simple percentage and tabular presentation was adopted for data presentation and analysis while secondary data analyzed contextually. The study among others revealed the Social Protection Programme (SPP) through AKEES impact directly on human capacity development in AKS; SPP enhances access to education and health care in Akwa Ibom State; Social empowerment through AKEES encourages SMEs and employment in AKS by building individual skills for self-empowerment, job creation, per capita income/standard of living of citizens. It outlined weaknesses of AKEES to include: inadequate funding of the programme, policy inconsistency at the implementation, corruption and insincerity of the policy implementers, inequality and policy exclusion etc. It concluded that there is need to strengthen SPP through AKEES by making it people-oriented and targeted at poor. It recommended proper monitoring and evaluation of the programmes, proper funding to meet up ILO social protection baseline of 19 – 27% for HCM; diversification of economy from oil to agriculture, tourism, aviation, industrialization and entrepreneurship for more income and employment for the populace, provision of infrastructures, industries and peaceful environment for domestic and foreign investment to enhance jobs/employment opportunities to curb unemployment and youth restiveness.

Keywords: Social Protection, Programme, Human Capital Development, Employment, Enterprise Scheme

Introduction

The state and government exist to promote public good and provide essential services to the citizens in line with the principle of social contract. According to John Locke, the social contract entails a process in

which the people willingly surrendered their rights to a constituted authority (government) and elect for themselves a sovereign (leader) to help in making and implementing policies/decision that can lead to peaceful coexistence and furtherance of public goods, that is to say “the greatest happiness for the

greatest number of people as postulated by Jeremy Bentham perspective of utilitarianism (Udokang, 2004:149). The historical development of the concept of social protection can be traceable to the United Nations General Assembly Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Social Security Convention of 1952 (No, 102), and the 1995 World Summit for Social Development as instrumental to establishment of minimum standards of social protection system which is applicable to all countries (ILO, 2014 cited in UNDP, 2016). Social protection or security seeks to improve the economic status of the poor and vulnerable person caused by natural disaster, sickness, disability, old age, children, maternity, unemployment, inequality and deprivation in sharing of resources in the state (World Bank, 2012, United Nations, 2015; Ekpo, 2023).

In the same vein, Social Protection Programmes (SPP) in Akwa Ibom are well-designed policies of government aimed at creating conducive environment for the citizens to improve their living standard through education, skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, and empowerment of the people to be productive and self-reliance. Thus, every meaningful government plays crucial role in the development of its citizens and often put in place some social intervention policies to protect and promote the welfare of her citizens, and Akwa Ibom State is not left out in this process. Therefore, the social protection policy of the state is aimed at human capacity development that would lead to wealth creation through capacity and skills development for entrepreneurship, Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs), and industrialization through the establishment of Akwa Ibom Enterprise and Employment Scheme (AKEES) in March 2016 as entrepreneurial programme to train Akwa Ibom people in

skills acquisition and empowerment for job creation, enhanced employment opportunities, increase GDP of the state and improved standard of living of the citizens (Akwa Ibom Explore, 2022; AKSG Impact Akwa Ibom, 2022).

On the other hand, Human Capacity Development (HCD) is measured by human capital index which entail significant innovation on how the index measures the contribution of education and health to the productivity of individuals for survival and state development (World Bank, 2012, United Nations, 2015; Ekpo, 2023). Furthermore, most social protection programmes are designed to reduce poverty, hunger and unemployment which are major drawback to human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State. However, some SPP often failed at the implementation to address the goal in which it was meant to achieve.

Statement of the Problem

Poverty and unemployment are the major drawback to human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State, hence poverty is placed as the first item in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and this called for the development of social protection policy/programmes that will help to end poverty in all forms by 2030. Poverty as a multidimensional and multifaceted phenomenon can emanate from several factors such as unemployment, illiteracy, inequalities, natural disaster and poor health care etc. Social protection programmes such as State Social Safety Net programmes under ministries of economic development/women affairs and social welfare such as conditional cash transfer, education grant, health insurance and pension schemes, disabilities benefits and other forms empowerment under Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), N-CARE, AKEES, FEYREP, IBEDS etc. were designed by state government to close the gap

in the sharing of the state resources in order to reduce poverty, inequality and unemployment rate in the state.

Poverty from all ramifications is an obstacle to development and it connotes a state whereby the people are deprived of good things of life and the inability to achieve the desired state of wellbeing and socially acceptable standard of living (UN, 2015). Incidentally, poverty prevalence is still high in the state, despite the implementation of some social protection policies as enumerated above, close to 60% of the state population still lives below the poverty line of \$1 per a day, with constricted social and infrastructural amenities. Records revealed that over 133 million Nigerian are poor, like wise 26.82% are Akwa Ibomites (NBS, 2022, as cited in Channel Television News on 17th November, 2022, BudgIT, 2021). Hence, the citizens cannot afford the basic needs of life such as food, clothing, housing, education, power, safe water and health care etc. Some scholars attribute the increasing rate of poverty in the Akwa Ibom State to the inequality in the distribution of the state resources which widen the gap between the poor and the rich. At the same time, most social protection programmes in the state often failed due to corruption and policy inconsistency at the level of implementation. To corroborate this assertion, the NBS (2021, as quoted in BudgIT, 2021) reported increase in unemployment rate in Akwa Ibom population to about 67.69% and maintained that more than half of the Akwa Ibom youths are unemployed and this seems to account for more reason for social crimes perpetrated by unemployed graduates and non-graduates alike in the State today. The accelerating level of prostitution, armed robbery, oil bunkering, cyber-crimes, drug addiction, trafficking, rape, kidnapping and other social vices can be largely attributed to the incidence of unemployment.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of social protection programmes on human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State with specific reference to Akwa Ibom Enterprise and Employment Scheme. Other specific objectives are:

- i. To find out whether there is any significant relationship between social protection programmes and access to education and health care services in the state;
- ii. To find out how social empowerment through AKEES encourages employment in Akwa Ibom State;
- iii. To examine the major constraints/weaknesses to implementation of social protection programmes for human capacity development and suggestion of some remedies to the problem of SPP and HCD in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent does social protection programmes impact on Human Capacity development in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. To What extent does social protection programmes enhance access to education and health care as indicators of human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. Does human empowerment through AKEES as a social protection programme encourage employment in Akwa Ibom state?
- iv. What are the weaknesses of social protection programmes implementation that hinders human development and possible solutions to the problems of social protection programmes and human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State?

Conceptual Review

(a) Concept of Social Protection

World Bank (2012) and UNDP (2016) opine that social protection also known as social security or social welfare goes beyond the scope of access to key social services such as education, healthcare, social work and social care to embrace other measures like labour market policies and laws that can create enabling environment for individuals and household economic survival and sustainability. The report added the main sources of financing public social protection schemes are individual/employers contributory schemes whose beneficiaries must be a contributor to the scheme for instance contributory pension, health insurance and housing schemes whereas in public tax-financed schemes, the beneficiaries may not necessarily be the major contributors since public taxes can be used to provide social services that benefits all the citizens, and it can also be used as social support and assistance to low income earners, unemployed persons and physically challenged persons in form of loan, subsidies and grants etc. hence, social protection conceived as policy instrument for the eradication of poverty and promotion of human development in the state.

In the same views, the concept of social protection centered on policy measures designed by government, targeted at providing socio-economic benefits to the citizens in cash or kind with the aims of improving their income security and access to education, health care service and advancement of the welfare of the populace in the state (Ekpo, 2023).

World Bank (2003) and United Nations (2015) enumerates the benefits of social protection programmes to include instrument of: poverty and vulnerability reduction; wealth creation and employment; social peace and inclusion, human capacity

development, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by year 2030.

In addition, scholars like (Eminue, 2009; ILO, 2010 cited in Umoh, 2012) assess the impact of social protection on human development to include:

- i. Reducing income poverty and inequality by encouraging accommodation of productive assets and investment in physical and human capital; easy access to credit helps household to meet essential needs and secure future livelihood as well as manage risks.
- ii. Reviving economic growth and development by increasing the GDP of the state.
- iii. Promoting social inclusion and equitable re-distribution of resource to poor in order to curb poverty and inequality in the state.
- iv. Improving other dimensions of human development such as access to education and health care by increase in school enrollment/attendance and access to improved health care of the people in beneficiaries household.
- v. Strengthening social cohesion: The legal guarantees enjoyed by all citizens as a result of social protection policy give them a sense of belonging and social justice.

On the contrary, those factors that constraint implementation of social protection programmes include poor leadership, corruption, poor funding misappropriation and diversion of funds, inaccessibility of SPP to the target social group who are poor and vulnerable, policy inconsistency at implementation stage, political interference, patron-clients relationship (godfatherism), gender inequality and discrimination, politicization, ethnicity and political instability, inadequate infrastructures, lack of access to

public services, lack of transparency and accountability, and lack of monitoring and evaluation are major problems of social protection programme in Akwa Ibom State (Eminue, 2009; Umoh, 2012).

(b) Concept of Development

Rodney (1969, as cited in Okereke and Ekpe, 2002) sees development as multifaceted process. At individual level, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing. At the state level, it refers to economic growth and socio-economic development of the state which is measured in Human Development Index (HDI), to include improved education, healthcare and per capita income/standard of living of the citizens. In the opinion of Umo (1989, as cited in Eminue, 2009), development is defined as “a process by which there exist a higher degree of self-reliant economic growth in a society, sustained over a long time and associated with substantial reduction in poverty, unemployment, inequality and external dependence”. Thus, economic growth is at the heart of development, and growth must be generated in the economy. Graham (2010 cited in Ita, 2020) wrote that HDI provides an opportunity for the international development community to reevaluate the ways by which welfare is measured and human progress. Graham defined it as a simple statistic of life expectancy, education and per capita indicators which are used to rank countries based on Human Development.

HDI is a three-dimensional tool used in measuring Human Development. Kovacevic (2011) and Graham (2010, as cited in Ita, 2020) opines that HDI was conceived using three basic dimensions and they are:

- Longevity (long and healthy life)
- Education
(knowledge/technology/innovation)

- Living standards (a decent standard of living).

From the above definitions, it is clear that development centers on human, because the fundamental aim of development is to extend the frontiers of human lives or advances the welfare of the people. Hence, the basis of assessment of development anchored on core values that leads to life sustenance of the people such as food, clothes, shelter, safe water, sanitation, power and other public goods/services like education and health care service; guarantee peoples' self-worth, respect for human dignity and realization by allowing them access to active participation in the capital formation process as well as the freedom to make choice without domination, misery or any form of servitude (Hicks and Streeten, 1979; Todaro, 2008 cited in Ekpo, 2023). In a nutshell, based on the objectives of development, criteria must be followed in assessing development which includes: it must be people oriented; a long term process (sustainable in nature); create the capacity for people to be productive and self-reliant; and measurable not as an abstract (Odishika and Bakare, 2017, as cited in Ekpo, 2023).

(c) Concept of Human Capacity Development

Tan (2014) defines human capital as productive wealth which is embodied in labour, skills and knowledge and it refers to any stock of knowledge or the innate acquired characteristics a person has that contributes to his or her economic productivity. Adelakun (2011, as cited Ita, 2020) opines that human capital is the stock of capital that increases in a period when only gross investment exceeds depreciation with the passage of time. Human capital corresponds to productivity. It enables us to think of not only the years of schooling but also of a variety of other characteristics as part of human capital investment. Human

capital or capacity development consists of the knowledge, skills, and health that people invest in and accumulate throughout their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society. Investing in people through nutrition, health care, quality education, jobs and skills helps develop human capital, and this is key to ending extreme poverty and creating more inclusive societies (World Bank, 2019). The World Bank report maintained that human capital or capacity development is at the center of our global strategy for development. Protecting and investing in people is one of three main ways we are working to reach our goals of ending extreme poverty by 2030 and boosting shared prosperity in all countries. It is closely integrated with our efforts to promote sustainable, inclusive growth and build resilience across developing states. The report added that human capital development is a global effort to accelerate more and better investments in people for greater equity and economic growth (World Bank, 2019). The Human Capital Index (HCI) is a summary measure of the amount of human capital that a child born today can be expected to acquire by age 18, given the risks of poor health and poor education that prevail in the state where they lives. A significant innovation is that the index measures the contribution of health and education to the productivity of individuals and State, anchored in rigorous micro-econometric studies. Ranging between 0 and 1, the index takes the value 1 only if a child born today can be expected to achieve full health (defined as number of stunting and survival up to at least age 60) and achieve his formal education potential (defined as 14 years of high-quality school by age 18).

(d) Concept of Employment

Employment is an important indicator of human development index as it helps to increase income and bring about economic prosperity. Many scholars maintain that employment has an inverse effect on human development and economic well-being of the citizens. The employment rate is the percentage of employed persons in relation to the comparable total population. Measure of employment rate can be calculated by working age, group and gender for example youth 18 – 35 or by gender like male or female (European Union, 2020 cited in Ekpo, 2023). Akwa Ibom State is gradually practicing business-minded approach to public sector governance, private-public partnership, and economic management; it committed to help young people develop their entrepreneurial and creative skills so that they may take advantage the various opportunities. The government indicated that encouraging ICT innovations and creativity were a top priority to achieve effective political leadership and good governance. The benefits of AKEES include: Building the environment for foreign direct and domestic investment in the state; encourage, develop, and work in collaboration with private sector for investment, and support business government dialogue; to get the investment climate right; support governments in creating a legal, regulatory, and administrative environment that encourages businesses at all levels to invest, grow, and create jobs; encourage business to respond; Improve Akwa Ibom State's image as an investment destination through a coordinated effort to publicize and improve the investment climate (Brady and Spence, 2010 cited in Ekpo, 2023, AKSG, 2022).

Social Protection Programme and Human Capacity Development in Akwa Ibom State

The state's social protection policy reiterated commitment in human capacity building

through training and empowerment of people to acquire skills for more productivity and built infrastructures to open opportunities to women and youths for the development of SMEs for self-reliance job creation to curb social unrest and insecurity which may be attributed unemployment, lack of training and empowerment and non-engagement of youths in gainful businesses by the state government. Akwa Ibom state social protection policy have led established Ibom Enterprise Development Scheme (IBEDS) for empowerment of entrepreneurs, and Akwa Ibom Enterprise and Employment Scheme (AKEES) to sustainable plans to curb youth restiveness and ensure the youths are gainfully employed and given the right training in schools to practicalize businesses and other ventures rather than concentrate on theoretical aspects, it will enhance the best interest of the society and called for a change in schools curriculum to bring in more of practical work (AKSG, 2021). In this regard, 11,990 SMEs was registered within the first quarter of 2021 with uyo senatorial district having 40%, Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District 33% and Eket Senatorial District has 28% (AKSG, 2021, Akwa Ibom Impact, 2022).

Entrepreneurial programmes in the state include: 500 youth entrepreneurs (My Entrepreneurs Goal Programme, MEGP); 2050 youths trained on web development and design, 200 youths trained on Oracle, 200 youths trained on micro works; 2234 trained on basic schools administration on Covid-19 prevention; training of 850 teachers and 150 head teachers (total of 1000 teaching staff) on jolly phonetic; 20 Bio-medical Engineers for maintenance of hospital equipment; 40,000 youths in solar installation, ICT and Agro-base venture; 2500 women empowerment in Dakkada Women Entrepreneurship and Mentorship Programme (DWEMP) in baking, food processing, tailoring, hair dressing and making, make up etc.; 3000 youth Ibom project 1st batch; 3000 youths trained in skills

acquisition in oil and gas; and the Ibom 3,000 Project 2nd batch, My Entrepreneurial Goal Programme, MEGP and the 2Billion Naira interest free loan to traders and SMEs, all aimed at creating jobs opportunities for the youths in the state (AKSG, 2022, Akwa Ibom Impact, 2022).

Empirical Review

Scholars like Bastagli and others (2016, cited in Ekpo, 2023) argues that cash transfer has no significant impact on employment instead it makes beneficiaries to be lazy. They added that some social protection programmes, if not properly implemented breed hatred and conflicts among the peoples in the society for instance conditional cash transfer in which people meets at the pay point to queue to collect the money can degenerate tension, conflicts and communal crises if they perceive any unfair treatment or injustice by the implementers.

Sulaiman (2012) studies incentive and crowding out effects of food assistance, and evidence from randomized evaluation of a food-for-training project in South Sudan. The study found out the effects of a food-for-training program, which comprised of food transfer, training and access to credit services, on labour supply and informal transfers. It observed no significant effect of the program on the hours of work or the type of economic activities of the adult members. However, there was a significant negative impact (about 20-25%) on per capita household income. It also found out, short-term food transfer assisted the households to invest in durable assets, mostly in housing, which is a means for the poor to spread gains from a short-term transfer program over their life-cycle. Further evidence suggests that these effects are primarily of food transfer component rather than training or credit component of the programme.

Nkpoyen, Archibong, Undelikwo, Obeten, and Ofem (2021) investigates development gap in social policy and social problem interaction by examining impact of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) on rural communities in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Ex-post facto research design was adopted to study communities in Akwa Ibom State, Using a multistage sampling procedure, data were obtained from 400 respondents and analysed using Chi-square (X2) statistical technique. Findings shows NAPEP did not significantly achieved its goal of poverty reduction in rural communities. It failed to elicit economic wellbeing priorities directly from target communities. The study suggested poverty can be reduced through accommodative and humanistic arrangements by allowing communities to identify welfare projects and eligible recipients.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts human capital theory for analysis of social protection in Akwa Ibom Enterprise and Employment Scheme (AKEES) in order to enhance human productivity and efficiency through training and education. The theory was first introduced by Becker (1962) and Rosen (1976) to discuss economic values that led to capital formation in the society. According to proponents of the theory, investment in human beings brings development of their skills and technical knowledge for to increase productivity and economic growth in the state. They opined that better educated population is the key to human development and economic growth. Giving much emphasis to education, built traits and skills that enhances employees' performance for increase productivity. It strives to retain organizational economy, efficiency and team work. It enables organization or state to evaluate the worth, values and efficiency of

her workforce in term of cost-benefit and participation in capital formation.

The theory was found most suitable in the sense that human capacity development is measured by human capital through its index which entails significant innovation on how the index measure the contribution of education and health to the productivity of individuals and state (UNDP, 2016; Ekpo, 2023). It maintains that development of peoples' skills and knowledge contributes immensely to the economic growth and development in the state. Its major concern is with the quality of education, enrollment and attendance, quality of health care, its availability and accessibility are very important investment that social protection programmes should tackle for improved human development in the state. The basic tenets of the HCT include:

- i. Building citizens' knowledge, technical and vocational skills for innovation and productive venture (manpower development for SMEs and industries.
- ii. Enhancing entrepreneurship development to boost economic growth and development of the state.
- iii. Encouraging self-confidence/reliance of the citizens/workforce to start SMEs for self-employment and job creation for others.
- iv. Increasing technology and innovations for increase productivity in the state.
- v. Improving quality of public services mostly in education, health, agriculture and other sectors of the economy.
- vi. Provision of modern infrastructure to the people of the state (Ekpo, 2023).

Human development also involves removing any obstacles which tends to block the freedom of people, the ability to make choices and truncating the right to use the ability to reason properly. Human Capacity Development is creating and ample channeling of opportunities and increasing the width and the ability in using human

capabilities. It is critical of the choices people make to ensure they have a sustainable livelihood. Human Capacity Development also focuses on the process of participation and inclusion in production (Ita, 2020). Therefore, it is a deliberate and holistic approach by the political leadership in the state to create AKEES to ensure training of the required manpower to drive the industrial revolution that has already commenced with the establishment of industries in the state. However, the flaws of the human capital theory can be seen in the way humans are used as asset or organization's property. It is also difficult to measure skills and abilities so as to determine the reward system for each employee and this may lead to favouritism and bias at workplace. Sociologists and anthropologists critique the theory of too simplistic in assumption or approach.

The AKEES open up employment opportunities as people no longer depend only on government for employment creation, private sector are now co-opted into industrialization policy of the state through Public-Private Partnership for more job creation. The people of the state were also trained on SMEs business and how to use the skills acquired to promote entrepreneurship and becoming self-employed while some become employers of labour in the state. For more priority on human capacity development, building capable and sustainable institutions which promote tolerance and

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, data obtained from literature (secondary) and survey (primary) methods are presented in tables, and the analysis based on the research questions that guided the study.

Table 1. Stylized Fact on Human capacity development indicators in Akwa Ibom State from 2015 - 2023

Years	Training & Skill Acquisition	Small and Micro Enterprises	Empowerment %	Access to Credit facilities	% Interest rate	Expenditure on HCD
2015 – 2019	76, 896	25,990	102,886 (8.12%)	20bn	3%	95,364Mn
2019 – 2023	317,000	222,167	539,167 (42.53%)	22.1bn	Repayable loan/interest free	22.1bn
Total	393,896	248,157	642,053			

Source: (Akwa Ibom State Impact, 2022, AKSG Explore, 2022, Researcher Computation, 2023)

inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability, constitutionalism and the rule of law, and policies geared towards combating corruption in the state.

Method and Materials

The study adopted survey and descriptive research methods in order to achieve its objectives. The indicators used as proxy for HCD include: Education, Health care and income level, training and skill acquisition, establishment of Small and Medium Enterprises, percentage of human empowerment, access to credit facilities and interest rate as well as expenditure on HCD taking political leadership regimes from 2015 – 2019; 2019 – 2023.

Survey questionnaire was used to elicit primary data from the projected population of the study about 2033 people (staff of affiliate MDAs of AKEES and beneficiaries of social protection programmes in Uyo as at July, 2023). Survey of 7 selected AKEES affiliate MDAs, with sample size of 322 determined using Krejcie and Morgan table (1970), and stratified random sampling techniques employed to administered 10 items questionnaire on the respondents. Simple percentage and tabular presentation was adopted for data presentation and analysis. Secondary data from textbooks, Government publications, Journals and internet materials etc. were analyzed contextually.

Table 1 show human capacity development as one of the major indicator of socio-economic development, the political leadership in Akwa Ibom State is becoming increasingly interested in building human capacity for self-reliance to curb with the state's high profile in poverty and unemployment rate. To this effect, about 76,896 people were trained in vocation and skill acquisition programmes within 2015 – 2019; about 222,167 people startup SMEs while about 102,886 people were empowered within 2015 – 2019, and about ₦20bn low interest were given to beneficiaries through AKEES. Similarly, about 317,000 people were trained in vocation and skill acquisition programmes within 2019 – 2023, about 25,990 people startup SMEs within 2015 – 2019 while about 539,167 people were

empowered, and about ₦22.1bn low interest were given to beneficiaries whereas a total of about **393,896** have been trained on various fields such as fashion design, welding, barbing, hair dressing, carpentry, craft work etc., and above **248,157** Small and Medium Enterprises have been established in the state through vocational training and skills acquisition programmes leading to job creation and employment opportunities. Over **642,053** people have been empowered in SMEs from 2015 – 2023 by the AKEES in AKS. About 8.12% of empowerment took place from 2015 – 2019; and increased to about 42.53% of empowerment recorded within 2019 – 2023 (Akwa Ibom State Impact, 2022; AKSG Explore, 2022, Researcher Computation, 2023).

Table 2: Average Percentage (%) of Education and Health development using School Enrollment/Literacy rate and Life Expectancy/Infant Mortality at 0-5 in Akwa Ibom State from 2015 – 2023

Regime	Education				Health care Service		
	Attendance of children 6-8	Attendance of children 15-17	Attendance of children 21-23	Literacy rate	Life Expectancy	Infant Mortality at 0-5	Stunted Children (Malnutrition)
2015 - 2019	93.18	78.45	18.0	78.1	52.8	96.43	20.00
2019 - 2023	91.65	73.95	14.5	78.1	53.1	108	18.5

Source: Computed by Researcher (2023), using data from UNESCO, 2012, Global Data Lab, 2022.

In table 2 data revealed decline in attendance of children 6-8 from 93.18% within 2015 - 2019 to 91.65% within 2019 – 2023; while attendance of children 15-17 was high to about 78.45% within 2015 – 2019 but declined to about 73.95% within 2019 – 2023. The attendance of children 21 – 23 which is at the higher institutions as observed was high to about 18.0% within 2015 - 2019 while it declined to 14.5% from 2019 – 2023, (Researcher computation, 2023). Data also revealed that within 2016 – 2018 the state had about 40% total enrollment while estimate of about 581,800 children dropped out from school making up about 23% out-of-school children thus, making the state highest out-of-school children in South-South region of

Nigeria as at 2020 and about 59% literacy rate and 41% illiteracy rate respectively as at 2020; as well as literacy rate of about 78.1% as at November, 2022 (NBS, 2020; Premium Times 2021, Global Data Lab 2022).

On the other hand, the health care sector has witnessed improvement in life expectancy from 52.8% within 2015 – 2019 to 53.1% as at 2022 (Global Data Lab, 2022). Infant Mortality at 0-5 was 96.43/1000 per live birth within 2015 – 2019 while 108/1000 per live birth from 2019 – 2023. Also, Stunted Children (Malnutrition) had 20.00% within 2015 – 2019 while declining to 18.5% from 2019 – 2023 (Global Data Lab, 2022). It agreed among health practitioners that adequate nutrition can drive human capital

development by preventing stunting and allowing children to reach their full potential,

leading to more productive and healthier lives

Table 3. Akwa Ibom State Human Development Index (2015 – 2022)

Years	Life expectancy for adult	Expected year of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (PPP\$)	HDI value
2015	56.4	10.0	5.9	2,259	0.564
2018	52.8	10.0	5.9	6,120	0.565
2022	53.1	10.0	6.0	7.77trn	0.608

Source: UNDP, 2012, 2016, NBS, 2018 as cited in State of state Kingmakers, 2022; BudgIT, 2021)

The table 3 contains data on human development index in Akwa Ibom State from 2015 – 2022. Data revealed that life expectancy at mean years as at 2015 was 56.4 but decreased to about 52.8, while improving again to about 53.1 in 2022. Hence, expected year of schooling ranges from 5.9 in 2015 – 2018 and to 6.0 in 2022. Concerning the

GNI/Per Capita Income, the state recorded about 2,259bn in 2015, and then to about 6,120bn within 2018 and about 7.77trn in 2022 (Akwa Ibom State Impact, 2022; AKSG Explore, 2022; UNDP, 2012, 2016, NBS, 2018 as cited in State of state Kingmakers, 2022; BudgIT, 2021).

Table 5. Respondents' perception of the impact of Social Protection Programmes on Human Capacity development in Akwa Ibom State

S/N	Questions	Responses/Percentage (%)	
		Yes	No
1	SPP improve HCD proxied by education, health and income level of people in Akwa Ibom State (AKS)?	270 (84.4 %)	50 (15.6%)
2	SPP through AKEES contributes to reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequality in AKS?	194 (60.6 %)	126 (39.4%)
3	SPP through AKEES promotes social inclusion and cohesion in AKS?	158 (49.4%)	162 (50.6%)
4	SPP through AKEES increases enrollment and attendance in schools for improved literacy rate in AKS?	207 (64.7%)	113 (35.3%)
5	Social Protection policy such as conditional cash transfer and palliatives promotes household income, health, nutrition, and survival people in AKS?	243 (75.9%)	77 (24.1%)
6	AKEES skills training and empowerment programmes encourage SMEs and employment in AKS?	213 (66.6%)	107 (33.4%)
7	My household have benefited directly from SPP including empowerment, pension, insurance and conditional cash transfer in AKS?	145 (49.4%)	175 (54.7%)
8	Vocational training, skill acquisition and human empowerment as instrument of SPP of AKEES encourage entrepreneurship and Job creation in AKS?	219 (68.4%)	101 (31.6%)
9	SPP through AKEES is adequately funded by AKS government and other donors?	144 (45.0%)	176 (55.0%)
10	Corruption and insincerity of the implementers/social care givers contributes to the failure of most social policies to meet set goals AKS?	205 (64.1%)	115 (35.9%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Moreover, to achieve the objectives of the study relevant questions were asked, and survey method adopted to gather data for analysis.

Research Question One

To what extent does social protection programmes impact on human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State?

In table 5, the perception of respondents to Q1, 2 & 3 provides answer to extend to which social protection programmes impact on human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State as 270 respondents which constitutes 84.4 % agreed that Social Protection Programmes (SPP) improve Human Capacity Development (HCD) proxied by education, health and income level of people in Akwa

Ibom State while 50 respondents, representing 15.6% disagreed. In the same vein, 194 respondents which represented 60.6 % agreed that SPP through AKEES contributes to reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequality in AKS while 126 respondents, representing 39.4% disagreed. To determine the level of social inclusion and cohesion in SPP through AKEES in AKS, 158 respondents which constitutes 49.4% shows satisfaction while 162 respondents which represented 50.6% expressed dissatisfaction with performance of AKEES. Going by the opinion poll, 84.4 % agreed that social protection programmes improve human capacity development proxied by education, health and income level of people in Akwa Ibom State. The implication of above data revealed that social protection programmes through AKEES have significant impact on human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question Two

To What extent does social protection programmes enhances access to education and health care as indicators of human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State?

The perception of respondents to Q 4 & 5 provide answer to the extent to which social protection programmes enhances access to education and health care as indicators of human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State, 207 respondents which represented 64.7% agreed that SPP through AKEES increases enrollment and attendance in schools for improved literacy rate in AKS while 113 respondents which made up 35.3% disagreed. In the same vein, 243 respondents which made up 75.9% agreed Social Protection policy such as conditional cash transfer and palliatives promotes household income, health, nutrition, and survival people in AKS while 77 respondents which represented 24.1% disagreed. Data also revealed that social protection programmes enhances access to education and health care as indicators of human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question Three

Does human empowerment through AKEES as a social protection programme encourage employment in Akwa Ibom state?

The perceptions of respondents to Q6 to 8 were adopted to assess the effect of AKEES as a social protection programme on employment in Akwa Ibom state. Concerning issues of AKEES skills training and empowerment programmes and how it encourage SMEs and employment in AKS, 213 respondents which made up 66.6% maintained that AKEES programmes encourage SMEs and employment whereas 107 respondents which constitutes 33.4% disagreed, thereby, implying that AKEES contribute to improved employment of citizens in the State. 145 respondents which constitutes 49.4% opine that their household have benefited directly from SPP including empowerment, pension, insurance and conditional cash transfer in AKS while 175 respondents representing 54.7% do not benefit from any form of social protection programme, therefore calling for more of social protection policies in the state and a wider coverage mostly to the poor rural dwellers in the state. The implication is that the high percent of 54.7% opinion poll is enough to proof that SPP needs wider coverage to rural area in the 31 LGAs in Akwa Ibom State. In addition, 219 respondents which represented 68.4% agreed that vocational training, skill acquisition and human empowerment as instrument of SPP of AKEES encourage entrepreneurship and Job creation in AKS while 101 respondents which represented 31.6% did not agree. The result showed 70.63% agreement which revealed 66.6% of respondents maintained that AKEES programmes encourage SMEs and employment in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question Four

What are the weaknesses of social protection programmes that hinder human development in Akwa Ibom State?

The perception of respondents to Q9 & 10 were used to assess the weaknesses of social

protection programmes that hinders human development in Akwa Ibom State. To this effect, 144 respondents which made up 45% agreed that SPP through AKEES is adequately funded by AKS government and other donors, whereas 176 respondents which constitute 55% disagreed. The high percent of 55% shows that SPP through AKEES is inadequately funded and this is a major constraint to the implementation of social protection programmes and this hinders human development in Akwa Ibom State, and if more funds are committed to the provision social protection programmes then there is need to AKEES properly. Finally, 205 respondents which represent 64.1% opined that corruption and insincerity of the implementers/social care givers contributes to the failure of most social policies to meet set goals AKS whereas 115 respondents which constituted 35.9% did not agree. The implication is that high percent of 64.1% shows that corruption and insincerity of the implementers/social care givers are setback to improved implementation most social policies to meet set goals Akwa Ibom State and by extension Nigeria.

Major Findings

Major findings of the study are:

- i. Social protection programmes through AKEES impact directly on human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Social protection programmes enhance access to education and health care as indicators of human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. Human empowerment through AKEES encourages SMEs and employment in Akwa Ibom State.
- iv. Poor funding and corruption by implementers of social protection programmes hinders human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

Akwa Ibom Enterprise and Employment was established to train the citizens mostly youths on capacity building programmes in various careers, technical, entrepreneurship, managerial skills in oil and gas, Agric-business, ICT and SME to address entrepreneurial sustainable development such as sewing, soap making, craft work, carpentry, clothes waiving, agriculture etc in the state with the goal to achieve global standard of education and decent work/economic growth as encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 8 which is targeted at ensuring education for all and sustained, inclusive productive employment and sustainable economic growth that will end poverty in 2030 (UN Department for Economic and Social Services, 2015)..

On the other hand, Akwa Ibom State is also at the top of the list of states in the country with the highest number of children out of school with about 581,800 (NBS, 2020; Federal Ministry of education, 2020 as cited Premium Times August 8, 2021). According to the DHS 2013, millions of children in Akwa Ibom State, about 60% are not in formal learning, and the number of out-of-school children has increased to about 40% since 1999. Hence, adopting AKEES alongside free and compulsory education policy to train more youths and adults in skills acquisition and vocational development for effective entrepreneurship has help and would continue to help in tackling poverty and unemployment in Akwa Ibom State and reducing it to the minimal.

Akwa Ibom State is ranked 4th in the ease of doing business in Nigeria (BudgIT Research, 2021). The rapid industrialization helps improved the standard of living of the people, sustainable economic growth, steady decline in rate of unemployment and poverty are the results that flow from steady access to quality and reliable electricity and other infrastructures. Infrastructural development in the state has improved as it to include over

500 rural development project across the 31 LGAs including feeder roads, water and electrification projects (AKS Impact, 2022). Also over 2000 Inter-ministerial Direct Labour projects executed include: building and renovation of class room blocks, hospitals, primary health care centres, civil centres, town halls, skills acquisition centres, market and solar water projects etc (AKS Impact, 2022). Data also revealed that social protection programme of AKEES helps to reduce the high level of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment in the state, and enhances skills for businesses startup for self-reliance, job creation and employment opportunities, which in turn improve the standard of living of the citizens and per capita income/GDP of the state.

In the year 2022, Akwa Ibom State government in collaboration with AKEES successfully trained over 40,000 adult (men and women) and youths in various skills including ICT, solar installation, agro-based ventures and SMEs (Explore Akwa Ibom, 2022). The conversion of the former technical college Ikot Ada Idem to a state of the art entrepreneurial and skills acquisition centre, and the establishment of high profile, well equip and modern adult education centre in Udo Udoma Avenue in Uyo to provide vocational training for adult learners shows the importance role of AKEES in education for entrepreneurial development in the state. Also the enrolment and training of about **393,896** people in various fields such as fashion design, welding, barbing, hair dressing, carpentry, craft work etc, and about **248,157** Small and Medium Enterprises have been established in the state through vocational training and skills acquisition programmes leading to job creation and employment opportunities. Over **642,053** people have been empowered in SMEs from 2015 – 2023 by the AKEES in AKS making up about 8.12% of empowerment which took place from 2015 – 2019; and increases to about 42.53% of empowerment within 2019 – 2023 (Akwa Ibom State Impact, 2022; AKSG

Explore, 2022, Researcher Computation, 2023).

On the other hands, despite the implementation of social protection programmes through AKEES in the state, the illiteracy rate is still high, Unemployment rate of 67.69%, making Akwa Ibom to be ranked 1st in unemployment amongst south-south states, followed by Rivers State 2nd with 63.50% while Delta became 3rd with 60.40%. (NBS, 2021, cited in BudgIT, 2021). In poverty rating, Akwa Ibom recorded 26.82%, and ranked 2nd highest in poverty rate in south-south after Cross River which was ranked 1st with 36.90% as reported by (BudgIT, 2021).

Also, healthcare is a major indicator of human capacity development in a state, there is a popular adage that 'health is wealth and that a healthy state is a wealthy state', this implies that citizens needs to be in good health in the state in order to become productive and contributes to the economic growth and development of the state. According to World Health Organization ratio of health workers per patients' requirements stipulates 1 medical doctor to 600 patients while in Nigeria 1 medical doctor to about 5000 persons; also WHO stipulated 1 nurse to 1500 persons whereas in Nigeria 1 nurse cares for over 5000 persons. To this purpose, the AKS government have invested huge amount of money so as to improve health care service delivery in the state. Data shows about 3,963 health workers are employed in 820 health facilities are available in the state as November, 2022 (Explore Akwa Ibom; 2022; Akwa Ibom Impact, 2022).

Data also revealed that 22.7% of citizens resident in the state still get their water from unimproved sources of drinking water as at 2020. 46.4% of the State's population still use unimproved water sources as at 2021, making Akwa Ibom State to become second highest in the South-South after Bayelsa State where 47.2% of residents still use unimproved water (Budgit Report, 2021). Data shows that 66.01% population had no access to water in

2015 but reduce to 65% in 2021 (Atser and Udoh, 2015; Budget Report, 2021, cited in Ekpo, 2022). Funding has been a major setback to the health care service as data revealed that the state have never met 15% WHO budget baseline implementation as the state recorded low percentage of about 5.0% within 1999 – 2003, lowest percentage of about 2.13% within 2015 – 2019 and the highest of about 5.13% within 2019 – 2023. The study calls for adequate funding through budgeting to meet the WHO 15% baseline.

Conclusion and Recommendations

According to UNDP (2016) *Human Capital* is the knowledge, skills, and health accumulated by people over their lifetimes that enable them to realize their potential as productive members of society. Human Capital or capacity development means investing more in people-oriented public goods and services which is critical for the future of Akwa Ibom State. AKEES is a viable instrument for investment in people through training and skill acquisition as well as empowerment that can help AKS to deliver on essence and the real outcomes of social protection programmes which is job creation and reduction of poverty through entrepreneurship and SMEs by ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to earn a fair income, live a healthy life, and contributes to society. Therefore, investing in human capital is essential to poverty alleviation and achieving sustainable economic growth and prosperity of the state.

Akwa Ibom State despite her infrastructures development is still challenged with problems of high poverty and unemployment rate. Hence, the state needs well-functioning, fully operational and funded social inclusion and protection policies that would address poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination, stigmatization, and gender-based violence that affect women and men in Akwa Ibom State and that the programmes are delivered to the targets

groups in order improved social cohesion and social protection mechanisms to increase coverage and quality of public services delivered to the people especially those poor and vulnerable persons in the State. Finally, corruption, misappropriation and insecurity on the part of the implementers of the social intervention programmes has been identified as a drawback to the implementation of social policies in the state including AKEES programmes.

The study recommends the followings:

1. There is need for a consciously and well-designed social protection policy that encourage skills training and empowerment for youths and women in order to improved human capacity for entrepreneurial development, Small and Micro Enterprises for self-employment and job creation to curb poverty, unemployment and inequality in the distribution of wealth in the state, as thus:
 - i. Training – the youths and women who constitute the highest proportion of unemployed should be trained in skills acquisition such as fashion design, craft works, agro-business and ICT to raise more human capital for the state industries. AKEES training centres should be established across the 31 LGAs in the state for easy access to training facilities.
 - ii. Empowerment – the trained workforce through AKEES should be given gainful employment in government and industries. For others, who may want to be self-employed, support should be given to them by Government, NGOs and rich individuals in terms of loans, grants and provision of the equipment needed for small business startup.
 - iii. Establishment of poverty scheme (social safety register) that enable proper identification of the poor and vulnerable persons for palliatives and conditional cash transfer such as physically challenged benefit, pension

- scheme, health insurance, education grant, credit facilities such as loan, grants and subsidy with low interest for entrepreneurs, vocational and skills acquisition training for small and medium businesses for job creation to address economic problems of poverty, hunger and unemployment in the state.
2. There is a need for policy reforms by diversifying the economic from oil dependent to investment in other major economic sectors such as agriculture, health, education, infrastructures and industrialization backed up by political goodwill and commitment on the part of the leaders to implement these policies to the later. Also the enforcement mechanism should strictly monitor and evaluate these social policies and programmes to ensure they meet the set goals. An active, vibrant civil society are needed to proactively enlightened citizens on participation and ownership of the social policies like AKEES, N-CARE, Conditional cash transfer and other empowerment schemes in the state.
 3. There should be introduction of entrepreneurship education into school curriculum and it should be made compulsory for primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. Also, there is need for more budgeting for social protection programmes to meet up 19% to 27% baseline of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as a case of Britain and USA and other advanced nations in order to aid human capacity development and empowerment programmes, savings and investment in human capital economy of the state. The free and compulsory education policy for primary and secondary schools should be extended to tertiary institutions in the state. More to training and empowerment of students to become entrepreneurs will help to curb youth restiveness, limit prostitution, insurgency and other criminal activities in

the state. Also, empowerment programmes should be directed towards entrepreneurship development with practical knowledge and skills needed for small and medium businesses to thrive in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

4. There is needs to establish anti-corruption agencies such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC) and other law enforcement agencies and equipped them by law to institute cases against corrupt SSP officials and the power to execute sanctions/ punishment on culprits in form of fines and imprisonments so to act as deterrence to others Also, adequate infrastructures such as provision building roads, schools, hospital, electricity, potable water, and banks to enable learners/trainees who acquire skills for entrepreneurship to access soft loans and grants for their businesses.

References

- Ake, C. (2010). *Democracy and development in Africa*. Spectrum Books Limited, Ibadan.
- AKSG (2022). Udom Emmanuel ensuring food availability and security. *Explore Akwa Ibom*, 2(1): 5. Ministry of Information & Strategy publication, Uyo.
- AKSG (2022). Unlocking limitless opportunities in the land of promise. *Akwa Ibom Impact*, 3(2): 17. Information & Strategy publication, Uyo.
- AKSG (2022). Result – Oriented Leadership. *Wetin Udom Don Do?* 1(2): 1 – 15. Ministry of Information & Strategy publication, Uyo.

BudgIT (2021). The State of states report. <file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/State-of-States-report-2021-web.pdf>.

Ekpo, M. E. and Umoh, U. E. (2022). Corporate governance process and management of public corporations in Akwa Ibom State: A Study of Akwa Ibom Water Company Limited. *AKSU Journal of Administration and Corporate Governance (AKSUJACOG)*, 2(4), 82 - 93, November, 2022.

Ekpo, M. E. (2023). Political leadership and socio-economic development in Nigeria: A study of Akwa Ibom State. A Thesis in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Uyo, Uyo Pp. 1 – 244.

Eminue, O. E. (2009). *Public policy analysis and decision making*. Concept Publications Limited, Lagos Pp. 256 – 267; 566.

Global Data Lab (2022). Area profile report of Akwa Ibom (Nigeria). *Area Database* 4(2). <https://globaldatalab.org/profiles/region/NGAr101/>. (Retrieved on 18th April, 2023).

Ita, E. B. (2020). Human development in Nigeria. *International Journal of African and Asian Studies. An International Peer-reviewed Journal*, 61 (38), Institute of Social Sciences Istanbul Aydin University, Besyol, Kucukcekmece/Istanbul, Turkey. www.iiste.org (Retrieved on 24th July, 2023).

Nkpoyen, F., Archibong, E.P., Undelikwo, V., Obeten, U.B., and Ofem, N.O. (2021). Social

welfare program and poverty eradication in sub-saharan region of Eket Senatorial district, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Amazonia Investiga*, 10 (42), 163-175. <file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/DialnetSocialWelfareProgramAndPovertyEradicationInSubsaha-8038436.pdf> (Retrieved on 24th July, 2023)

Okereke, O.O. and Ekpe, A, E. (2002). *Development and Underdevelopment: Politics of the North-South Divide*. John Jacob's Classic Publishers Ltd, Enugu. pp. 1 – 28

Sulaiman, M. (2012). Social protection and human capital accumulation in developing countries.

A PhD thesis submitted to the Department of International Development of the London School of Economics and Political Science, London, March 2012. Pp. 1 - 21

Tan, E (2014). Human capital theory: A holistic criticism. *American educational research review*, 84(3), 411- 445

Udokang, J. C. (2004). *Introduction to history of political thought: From Plato to Karl Marx*. PatomGraphic, Ikot Ekpene. Pp. 92 – 124.

Umoh, E. D. (2012). *Theory and practice of public administration: The Nigerian example*. Dorand publishers, Uyo. Pp.26 - 199

UNDP (2016). Human development report: Human development for everyone. http://www.hdr.undp.org/sites/aai/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes?NgA.pdf (Retrieved on 24th July, 2023)

United Nations (2015). Sustainable development goals: United Nations framework convention on climate change. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

United Nations (2023). Developmental impacts of expanding social protection: Universal social protection key to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/RessourcePDF.action?id=53943>

World Bank (2012). World development indicators. World Bank, Washington, DC.

World Bank (2019). World Development Report: The changing nature of work. World Bank publication.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital/brief/the-human-capital-project-frequently-asked-questions> (Retrieved on 18th April, 2023).