

## GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN ANAMBRA STATE, 2006-2022

Samuel Nwachukwu Udo

Email- [samuelsonkhali@gmail.com](mailto:samuelsonkhali@gmail.com)

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Austine Uchechukwu Igwe, PhD

Email- [au.igwe@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:au.igwe@unizik.edu.ng);

Department of History and International Studies,  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

### Abstract

Prior to 2006, the economic growth of Anambra State was significantly adversely affected by high rate of crimes that pervaded those times. This insecurity situation rubbed off negatively on potential investors, infrastructural development, capacity building and adequate productivity in different economic sectors of the state. However, from 2006 to 2022 during Mr. Peter Obi and Chief Willie Obiano's administrations, there became a significant boost in the economic growth of the state as the government of the day devised several strategies and mechanisms to combat crimes and criminality in the state. Hence, this study therefore investigated the different policies implemented by the administrations of Mr. Peter Obi and Chief Willie Obiano for effective economic growth. The paper also examined the impact of these policies and how they contributed to the economic growth of the state, while identifying the short comings of these policies. Diverse sources of data were adopted in the course of this essay; while the paper argued that effective/proactive implementations of these policies led to conducive environment that ensured economic growth within the period. It made recommendations, which it believes that if followed by successive governments in the years to come would ensure the sustainability of economic growth of the state.

**Keywords: Economic growth, Security, Government, Policies, Anambra State**

### Introduction

Government policies influence greatly on the level of economic productivity of a state. A state may witness an upward trend in economic growth indices when the actions and inactions of the state government are favorable and conducive to the people and the state at large. Therefore, for a state to achieve sustainable economic growth it must give due attention to the type of policies adopted and implemented. However, the year 2006 was adopted as the take-off year because that was the year Mr. Peter Obi won court case that ushered in his administration, which has been adjudged to have taken proactive steps and policies towards economic growth in Anambra State. The terminal date 2021 was chosen because that was the year insecurity escalated in Anambra State. Government policies to economic growth in Anambra State since the turn of the Fourth Republic in 1999 are worrisome. The state experienced escalation of crime and criminality as the government of the day appeared to have lost grips on the control of statecraft. Nonetheless, the government went ahead to employ policies that may have contributed to the deterioration of security situation at the long term, which is the invitation/formation of a peculiar vigilante group known as the "Bakassi Boys" to fight crime. In turn, these policies destabilized and discouraged economic activities and prosperity witnessed in the state. At the inception of Mr. Peter Obi as the state governor in 2006, he implemented policies

that saw to the rise of economic growth of the state. Notable among these policies was the formation of Anambra State Integrated and Development Strategy (ANIDS), which was geared toward strengthening the law enforcement agencies, investment in infrastructure, community engagement, judicial reforms, and foreign investment program. His successor Chief Willie Obiano also made remarkable strides in combating crimes and encouraging economic growth. He understood that maintaining security was not just about reacting to crimes but also about creating an environment where crime could not easily thrive. To achieve this, his administration focused on building on the foundation laid by his predecessor while introducing new strategies that leveraged technology and enhanced collaboration between law enforcement and communities. Many of these policies have been lauded for their positive results, which equally led to recorded economic growth, while some others have been criticized for minimal results and impacts. Therefore, this study critically analyzed the impact of these various government policies to the economic growth of Anambra State, highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of these policies.

### **Government Policies to Security and Economic Growth Under Mr. Peter Obi**

The policies implemented by Mr. Peter Obi were centered on Anambra Integrated Development Strategy (ANIDS). ANIDS embodies the State Government's strategic vision to solve development problems in an organized and comprehensive manner by fast tracking development in all sectors and by so doing will improve the economic growth of the state. ANIDS as a public policy enables Government to identify budgetary gaps some of which the state government may need to fill with development partners<sup>1</sup>. These policies are summarized under the umbrella of Peter Obi's crime fighting policies and Peter Obi's foreign investment policies.

#### **Peter Obi's Crime Fighting Policies:**

Peter Obi's tenure as the governor of Anambra State is often remembered for his innovative approaches to crime fighting. Among his most notable achievements was the significant reduction in crime across the state. Anambra, once plagued by insecurity and violent crimes, experienced a remarkable transformation under Obi's leadership. His crime-fighting initiative was characterized by a comprehensive strategy that involved both preventive measures and direct intervention to address the root causes of crime. Before Peter Obi assumed office in 2006, Anambra State was notorious for its high crime rates. Kidnappings, armed robberies, and political violence were rampant, creating an environment of fear and instability. The state's commercial cities, such as Onitsha and Nnewi, were particularly hard-hit, with businesses suffering due to the pervasive insecurity.<sup>2</sup> The situation was exacerbated by the lack of trust in law enforcement agencies, which were often perceived as ineffective and corrupt.

This atmosphere of insecurity had significant socio-economic consequences. Businesses relocated, investors were deterred, and many residents lived in fear. The state's reputation as a commercial hub was under threat, and there was an urgent need for a comprehensive approach to address these challenges. Peter Obi's approach to combating crime in Anambra State was multifaceted, addressing both immediate security concerns and the underlying causes of criminal activity. His strategy was built on four key pillars: strengthening law enforcement, investing in infrastructure, community engagement, and reforming the judicial system.

With emphasis on Strengthening Law Enforcement, one of the first steps taken by Obi was to enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies in the state. Recognizing that an underfunded and poorly equipped police force could not effectively combat crime, his administration invested heavily in providing modern equipment, vehicles, and

communication tools to the police. This included the purchase of patrol vehicles, motorbikes, and the establishment of a functional communication network that allowed for rapid response to criminal activities.

Moreover, Obi's administration forged a strong partnership with the federal government to ensure that the state received adequate police presence and support. He also initiated the recruitment of vigilante groups to complement the efforts of the police, especially in rural areas where official law enforcement was often scarce.<sup>3</sup> These vigilante groups were trained and equipped to handle security challenges in their communities, acting as the first line of defense against criminal elements.

Mr. Obi's administration also laid emphasis on Investment in Infrastructure, because he understood that poor infrastructure, especially in urban areas, contributed to the high crime rates. Dilapidated roads and poor lighting in cities provided cover for criminals, making it difficult for law enforcement to operate effectively. To address this, Obi's administration embarked on an ambitious infrastructure development program, which included the construction and rehabilitation of roads, installation of streetlights, and the upgrading of public spaces.<sup>4</sup> These infrastructure improvements not only made it more difficult for criminals to operate but also restored public confidence. The transformation of Anambra's urban centers into safer, more secure environments encouraged businesses to reopen and thrive, contributing to the overall economic revival of the state.

Another area Obi's administration paid attention to was in the area of Community Engagement. A cornerstone of Obi's crime-fighting initiative was his emphasis on community involvement in maintaining security. He believed that the success of any security strategy depended on the active participation of the community. To this end, his administration launched several community policing initiatives, encouraging local leaders and residents to collaborate with law enforcement agencies.<sup>5</sup> Community policing programs were designed to empower residents to take ownership of their security. Neighborhood watch groups were established, and local leaders were involved in the development and implementation of security plans tailored to the specific needs of their communities. These initiatives helped to build trust between law enforcement and the public, which had been severely eroded over the years.

The administration also embarked on Judicial Reforms. In addition to improving law enforcement and infrastructure, Obi's administration also focused on reforming the judicial system to ensure that criminals were prosecuted effectively and promptly. The state government worked to reduce the backlog of cases in the courts, improve the efficiency of the legal process, and ensure that justice was served in a timely manner.<sup>6</sup> This was crucial in deterring crime, as it sent a clear message that criminal activities would not go unpunished. Obi's administration also established a special anti-kidnapping squad within the state's police force. This squad was tasked with addressing the rampant cases of kidnapping, which had become a major security concern in the state. The anti-kidnapping squad was equipped with the necessary tools and training to handle these cases, leading to a significant reduction in the incidence of kidnappings in the state.<sup>7</sup>

### **Peter Obi's Foreign Investment Policies:**

Peter Obi, the former governor of Anambra State, is lauded for his pragmatic and reformist approach to governance. His administration was marked by a focus on transparency, accountability and strategic economic growth. Central to this was his foreign investment initiative, which aimed to attract international capital to stimulate the state's economy. Obi's vision was to transform Anambra into a hub of industrial and agricultural productivity, thereby improving the living standards of its residents and

setting a precedent for other Nigerian states.

Obi embarked on numerous international trips, where he engaged with potential investors, showcasing Anambra's strategic advantages. He emphasized the state's rich human capital, fertile agricultural land, and strategic location with access to major markets in the southeastern region of Nigeria. These efforts were complemented by the creation of an investment-friendly legal framework, which included tax incentives and guarantees for the repatriation of profits.<sup>8</sup> These foreign investment policies were centered on agriculture, industrialization, health care and education.

Agriculture was a cornerstone of Obi's foreign investment initiative. Anambra State, with its fertile land, had long been recognized for its agricultural potential, but this potential had remained largely untapped. Obi's administration sought to revitalize this sector by attracting foreign agribusinesses. One of the notable successes of this initiative was the partnership with the Irish firm, "SeedCo", which established a large-scale seed production facility in the state. This project not only introduced high-yield seed varieties to local farmers but also provided training and extension services, significantly boosting agricultural productivity.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, Obi's government collaborated with the World Bank and other international organizations to implement the FADAMA III project, which focused on enhancing food security and rural development. This project brought in significant foreign funding and expertise, resulting in the establishment of several agricultural clusters across the state. These clusters became centers for the production of crops such as rice, cassava, and vegetables, which were cultivated using modern farming techniques.<sup>10</sup>

In the industrial sector, Peter Obi's administration made considerable strides in attracting foreign investment. His government facilitated the establishment of several industrial parks, which attracted companies involved in manufacturing and processing. One prominent example was the entry of Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing, the major indigenous automobile manufacturer in Nigeria in recent times, which expanded its operations in Anambra state under Obi's administration. This development was supported by foreign partnerships, which provided technical expertise and capital.<sup>11</sup>

Obi also prioritized infrastructure development as a means of supporting industrial growth. His administration embarked on extensive road construction projects, improving access to rural areas and reducing transportation costs for businesses. Additionally, Obi through the help of the Federal Government of Nigeria under President Goodluck Jonathan in 2012 initiated the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Onitsha Inland Port after 42 years of inactivity, which aimed to facilitate trade by providing a direct shipping route for goods produced in the state. The port project attracted interest from foreign logistics companies, which invested in the development of complementary facilities such as warehouses and cargo terminals.<sup>12</sup>

Obi's foreign investment policies also extended to the healthcare and education sectors. Recognizing the critical role of human capital development in economic growth, Obi sought foreign partnerships to improve these essential services. His administration collaborated with international organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to enhance healthcare delivery in the state. These partnerships resulted in the establishment of several primary healthcare centers and the implementation of immunization programs that significantly reduced child mortality rates.<sup>13</sup>

In education, Obi's government focused on improving the quality of education and infrastructure in public schools. The administration secured funding from international donors to renovate schools, provide teaching materials, and train teachers. This investment in education paid off, as Anambra State consistently ranked among the top-

performing states in national examinations during Obi's tenure.<sup>14</sup>

### **Impact of Peter Obi's Government Policies**

By the end of his tenure, the state had undergone a remarkable transformation from one of the most insecure regions in Nigeria to one of the safest. The improved security situation had a ripple effect on various aspects of life in Anambra. Economically, the reduction in crime led to a resurgence of commercial activities. Businesses that had previously shut down or relocated returned to the state, and new investments flowed in, contributing to economic growth and job creation.<sup>15</sup> The enhanced security also had a positive impact on the real estate market, as property values in the state's major cities began to rise.

Peter Obi's foreign investment policies garnered significant attention from both local and international media. Newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *ThisDay* frequently reported on the progress of Obi's economic reforms, highlighting the inflow of foreign capital into the state. In a 2012 article, *The Guardian* described Obi's approach as "a paradigm shift in governance," noting that his emphasis on attracting foreign investment had placed Anambra on a path to sustainable development.<sup>16</sup> *Business Day*, a leading Nigerian financial newspaper, also provided extensive coverage of Obi's initiatives. In an Editorial, the newspaper praised Obi's strategic focus on agriculture and infrastructure, arguing that these sectors were critical to the state's long-term economic success. The Editorial further noted that Obi's efforts had significantly improved the business environment in Anambra, making it more attractive to both local and foreign investors.<sup>17</sup>

Socially, the improved security situation allowed for a greater sense of community and cohesion among residents. People felt safer moving around their neighborhoods, and there was a noticeable decline in the fear and anxiety that had once gripped the state. The success of the crime-fighting initiative also helped to rebuild trust between the public and law enforcement agencies, fostering a cooperative spirit that was essential for maintaining long-term security.

In conclusion, Peter Obi's policies in Anambra State were a defining aspect of his administration, contributing significantly to the state's transformation from a crime-ridden area to a relatively safe and stable one. Through a combination of strengthening law enforcement, investing in infrastructure, engaging communities, and reforming the judicial system, Obi was able to create a more secure environment that fostered economic growth and social stability.

### **Government Policies on Security and Economic growth under Chief Willie Obiano**

At the inception of Chief Willie Obiano as the governor of Anambra State, he said his Vision was to make Anambra State the First Choice Investment Destination and a hub for industrialization and commercial activities while his Mission was to make Anambra State a socially stable, business-friendly environment that would attract both indigenes and foreigners to seek wealth-creating opportunities. For him to guarantee the realization of his Vision and Mission statements, Governor Obiano crafted policies known as the five Pillars of Development which revolves around Security, Agriculture, Industrialization, Trade/Commerce and Oil & Gas.

In the security aspect, he initiated different policies which includes; community policing, intelligent driven policing, operation kpochapu, social intervention program among others. With reference to Community Policing, building on the community policing foundations laid by his predecessor, Obiano's administration deepened the involvement of local communities in maintaining security. He recognized that the police could not be everywhere at once and that local residents were often the first to notice suspicious activities. To this end, his government strengthened the capacity of community vigilante groups, providing them with training and resources to work effectively alongside formal

security agencies.<sup>18</sup>

Obiano also encouraged the establishment of Neighborhood Watch programs and facilitated regular town hall meetings where residents could voice their security concerns and collaborate on solutions with law enforcement officials. This approach not only enhanced the flow of information between the community and the police but also fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility for security among the residents.<sup>19</sup> Intelligence-Driven Policing was a key element of Obiano's crime-fighting strategy was the adoption of intelligence-driven policing. This approach involved the use of data and intelligence to prevent crimes before they occurred and to quickly apprehend criminals after a crime had been committed.

The state's security agencies were trained to gather, analyze, and act on intelligence from various sources, including informants, surveillance systems, and community reports.<sup>20</sup> The establishment of the Anambra State Intelligence and Surveillance Unit (ASISU) was a significant step in this direction. ASISU was responsible for collecting and analyzing intelligence related to criminal activities and providing actionable information to security agencies. This unit played a crucial role in identifying and dismantling criminal networks, particularly those involved in kidnapping and armed robbery.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, Obiano's administration implemented a whistleblower policy that encouraged citizens to report criminal activities anonymously. This policy provided financial incentives for information that led to the arrest and prosecution of criminals, further strengthening the intelligence-gathering capabilities of the state's security apparatus.<sup>22</sup> Obiano's first step was to organize the first International Security Conference, which was facilitated by an Israeli security expert. The immediate outcome of that idea is the famous Anambra Security Architecture. Which its first phase of the security blueprint was the launch of *Operation Kpochapu* (meaning "Operation Wipe Out Crime"). Launched in 2014, this initiative was a comprehensive security operation that involved the deployment of a multi-agency task force comprising the police, military, and paramilitary forces. The operation was designed to tackle all forms of criminal activities, particularly kidnapping and armed robbery, which were prevalent in the state.<sup>23</sup>

Under Operation Kpochapu, the state government provided substantial funding for security agencies, equipping them with modern vehicles, communication gadgets, and arms. The initiative also included the establishment of a centralized command and control center in Awka, the state capital, from where security operations could be coordinated across the state. This center was equipped with surveillance technology, including closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras installed at strategic locations in urban areas to monitor criminal activities in real-time.<sup>24</sup>

The success of Operation Kpochapu was evident in the significant reduction in crime rates, particularly in high-risk areas. The initiative also helped restore public confidence in the government's ability to protect lives and property, which was crucial for sustaining economic growth and attracting investments to the state. Similarly, Governor Obiano also embarked on Social Intervention Programs. Understanding that crime often stems from socio-economic factors, Governor Obiano's administration also implemented several social intervention programs aimed at addressing the root causes of crime. These programs focused on job creation, youth empowerment, and poverty alleviation, with the goal of reducing the economic desperation that often drives people to criminal activities.<sup>25</sup>

One of the notable initiatives was the Youth Empowerment Scheme, which provided vocational training and start-up capital for young people across the state. By equipping youths with skills and resources to become self-reliant, the government aimed to reduce the pool of potential recruits for criminal gangs. The administration also invested in education and healthcare, recognizing that a well-educated and healthy population is less

likely to engage in crime.<sup>26</sup> To ensure continuous economic growth of the state, Obiano's administration laid emphasis on **Agriculture**, in all its ramifications. Obiano, on assumption of office understood that agricultural intervention was necessary to boost the economy. He inaugurated an agricultural blueprint team to design a roadmap for developing agriculture in the state. The team, headed by a renowned agronomist, Professor C.P.E. Omaliko produced the blue print, which mapped the state to determine which crops performed well in certain places and recommend the way forward.<sup>27</sup> Obiano sent farm managers and farmers to South-East Asia to learn about rice planting, milling and processing. After the study period, the farmers returned to Anambra with more knowledge on irrigation techniques for rice. The trainings and certifications were done yearly to improve the agricultural knowledge base of indigenous farmers. The governor also established an agricultural training centre at the College of Agriculture, Mgbakwu. He supported the renovation of the Ministry of Agriculture's Agro Control Centre with internet facilities and other equipment. The Farmer Information Management System application was developed for collating data and mapping the farms and identities of all farmers into one database, directly connected to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture.<sup>28</sup>

**Industrialization-** In the area of industrialization, Obiano's administration created modern industrial parks and small-to-medium enterprise clusters, improved investments and better access to financing and strategic capacity building. He constructed the shoe making industry at Nkwelle Ezunaka.<sup>29</sup> This industry exported made-in-Anambra shoes and other foot wears. The success of the Shoe Making industry led to the setting up of a Clothing and Textile industry in the same location. Obiano also invested in electricity to support businesses. The administration installed 33kv line from Awada through Idemili to Nnewi to improve power supply in 43 communities. This was necessary because of the heavy industrial activities in those areas. Another 33kv line was also installed from Ogorji in Orumba North to Peters University in Aguata. As a further reinforcement, 400 transformers were distributed to several communities in Anambra State to strengthen electricity supply in rural and urban areas. Governor Obiano championed '**Made in Anambra**' goods and services. He ensured that the Government of Anambra State was one of the biggest patronizers of Innoson Vehicles, Coscharis Farms and several others.<sup>30</sup> This served as a tonic to many prospective investors and entrepreneurs who thronged Anambra to take advantage of the emerging investment safe haven.

**Trade and Commerce-** Trade and commerce sector was an important component of Obiano's economic blueprint. His objective in trade and commerce was to ensure that Anambra retains its historic place, as the leading hub for trade and commerce in West Africa and beyond. To achieve this, he created an institution known as the Anambra State Markets Agency (ASMA), which saw to the rehabilitation, construction and regulation of trade activities in major markets across the state.<sup>31</sup> Obiano completed and commissioned Onitsha Shopping Mall and created a conducive environment for other privately owned malls. He also initiated a N610m choose-your-project scheme for the 61 markets in the state; disbursed the sum of N500m to small businesses in the state through the Anambra Small Business Agency (ASBA); attracted Roban Stores (a fast spreading middle class mall) to

set up shop in Awka, built a beautiful network of roads in Oba International Market; designed a policy framework for the entrenchment of e-commerce; organized the first joint trade hosted by Onitsha, Awka and Nnewi Chambers of Commerce; constructed sanitary facilities to improve hygiene in the markets and conducted capacity building programmes in financial literacy for traders in Onitsha and Nnewi, among many other landmark achievements.<sup>32</sup>

**Oil and Gas-** Obiano commenced his project in the oil and gas sector by setting up a committee to help the state develop a world-class Oil and Gas blueprint, to promote and sustain cordial relationship between Anambra State Government and line Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies, to attract and keep record of all investors in the State Oil and Gas among others. However, under his administration Anambra State received approval of the Presidency to be recognized as an oil producing State. The state began to benefit from the 13 percent derivation fund as the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission.<sup>33</sup>

### **Impact of Obiano's Government Policies**

The impact of Willie Obiano's crime-fighting initiatives on Anambra State was significant. The state witnessed a marked reduction in violent crimes, particularly in urban areas that had previously been hotspots for criminal activities. The success of Operation Kpochapu and the intelligence-driven policing strategy earned Anambra State a reputation as one of the safest states in Nigeria, which in turn attracted both local and foreign investments. The emphasis on community policing and social intervention programs also contributed to a more cohesive society, where residents felt empowered to contribute to their own security.

His administration launched an all-out war against kidnapers, armed robbers, drug-dealers and child-traffickers. Obiano was able to smash crime syndicates and pulled down the warehouses used for keeping kidnap victims. For security agents to fight crime effectively, the governor donated smart vehicles to the police, a gunboat to the Navy and launched police helicopters to watch over the state skies. For the greater part of Obiano's tenure, Anambra was believed to have been effectively covered on the land, waters and sky.<sup>34</sup> The improved security environment had a positive effect on the state's economy, as businesses thrived and property values increased.

Obiano's administration gave rise to employment in the state and did not fault in payment of staff salaries, compared to other states that owed catalogues of salaries running to about four to eight months. His administration also increased the Internal Generated Revenue (IGR) of the state from N500 million to about N1.2 billion on monthly basis without heavy tax burden.<sup>35</sup> The governor also opened Anambra up to the World by making the state attractive to wise investors. He was able to attract investments and fast-tracking the process of investing in the state through the establishment of Anambra State Investment Promotion and Protection Agency (ANSIPPA). To date, ANSIPPA has attracted investments valued at over \$3.2 billion to Anambra State, which cut across agriculture, trade and commerce, manufacturing, oil and gas, hospitality, housing, electricity generation, waste management, education and health. Knowing the importance of diversification with the fall in price of oil, this led to reduction in federal allocation to

states.<sup>36</sup>

More also, in the agricultural sector, Obiano made Anambra a major exporter of rice, vegetables, maize, cassava, oil palm and fish. Rice production in the state rose from 70,000 metric tonnes when Obiano took office in 2014 to 525,000 metric tonnes in October 2021.<sup>37</sup> He commissioned JOSAN rice mill and Lynden Integrated Poultry Farms, a commercial farm that produces one million chickens yearly. By 2021, the farm began to export frozen chicken and poultry meat to other states in the region and beyond.<sup>38</sup> To boost mechanisation, Obiano procured new tractors and harvesters for farm clusters across the state, creating partnerships with E-force Agro Development Limited, specialised tractor operators and engineers, for the management of hundreds of tractors at Awkuzu tractor base.<sup>39</sup>

### Conclusion

Trends have shown evidently that policies enacted by government are capable of either encouraging or drying out investment, increasing or decreasing employment rate, reducing or increasing export receipts and government revenue and by implication be of advantage or disadvantage to economic growth. As seen in the paper, Anambra State was reputed as a state characterized by favorable government policies under Mr Peter Obi and Chief Willie Obiano's administrations. There became significant improvement in security and economic growth of the state as the two administrations made remarkable achievements in security of lives and properties which however provided the foundation for economic growth attained during their time. Anambra state recorded massive improvement in foreign investment, infrastructural development, management of funds, healthcare services, education, employment, when compared to the administrations before 2006.

Regardless of the short comes of their government policies; their administrations were essential and instrumental in transforming the state into one of the safest regions in Nigeria and also according to the National Bureau of Statistics, a retrospective look at Anambra's GDP and IGR during Obiano's tenure revealed significant growth in billions of naira. While challenges remain, particularly in terms of the sustainability of these efforts, the overall impact of Peter Obi and Willie Obiano's initiatives and policies are undeniable. Their approach serves as a model for future administrations in the state other states in Nigeria and beyond to emulate.

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