



Public Financial Management and Rural Development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria: A Re-assessment Perspective from TSA to AkwaRemit (2018–2026)

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Abstract

This study examines Akwa Ibom State's transition from its earlier Treasury Single Account (TSA) regime to the more strictly enforced AkwaRemit platform, introduced following a documented revenue remittance shortfall. Prior research had evaluated the state's initial TSA adoption in 2015 and its effects on rural development outcomes at the local government level, but no study had yet examined the 2025–2026 AkwaRemit transition. Using a descriptive, comparative research design, this study draws on secondary data from the Akwa Ibom State 2024 Auditor-General's Report, the 2024 Accrual Basis IPSAS Financial Statements, and verified news reporting on the AkwaRemit rollout. Findings show that more than 20 percent of the state's 2024 Internally Generated Revenue was not remitted into the Consolidated Revenue Fund prior to the reform, and that AkwaRemit's implementation was followed by reported revenue growth from ₦7.5 billion to ₦12 billion within three months. However, the reform's rigid centralization of fund disbursement was also associated with reported service delivery disruption among some ministries, departments, and agencies. Interpreted through Public Accountability Theory and Udoh's Pawpaw/Papaya and Pineapple theories of resource distribution, the findings suggest that AkwaRemit has, to date, strengthened revenue consolidation more clearly than it has demonstrated equitable

redistribution toward rural development. The study recommends differentiated implementation for time-sensitive agencies, joint public reporting on revenue and service delivery outcomes, and longitudinal follow-up research as AkwaRemit matures.

Keywords: Public Financial Management, Treasury Single Account, AkwaRemit, Rural Development, Fiscal Reform, Akwa Ibom State

Introduction

Public financial management (PFM) reform has remained a recurring policy priority across Nigeria's subnational governments, particularly in efforts to curb revenue leakages and strengthen fiscal accountability. One of the most consequential of these reforms is the Treasury Single Account (TSA), a unified banking structure designed to consolidate government revenue and expenditure into a single account monitored by the state treasury (Udoh, 2018). In Akwa Ibom State, the TSA was first adopted by the administration of Governor Udom Emmanuel beginning in 2015, with state funds consolidated into a single account domiciled at Zenith Bank. An early evaluation of that rollout found that TSA adoption had encouraged financial transparency within the state's civil service (Udoh, 2018).

Despite this early adoption, subsequent assessments revealed persistent compliance gaps. According to the Commissioner for Finance, Emem Bob, the 2024 Public Financial Management Assessment Report and findings of the State Fiscal Responsibility Board established that more than 20 percent of Akwa Ibom State's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) for 2024 was not remitted into the State Consolidated Revenue Fund (Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2025). Bob described this shortfall as a violation of international financial management standards and a setback to the state's fiscal credibility, attributing it to revenue collected by several ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) that failed to reach the state's central account (Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2025).

In response, the Akwa Ibom State Government, under Governor Umo Eno, introduced a rebranded and more strictly enforced TSA platform known as AkwaRemit, with full statewide implementation declared effective January 1, 2026 (TVC News, 2026). Under the new arrangement, all Internally Generated Revenue accruing to the state must be paid directly into the designated Treasury Single Account, while government expenditures are processed exclusively through the AkwaRemit platform, with MDAs required to carry out regular reconciliation of transactions (TVC News, 2026; The Trumpet Newspaper Nigeria, 2026). Governor Eno reported that this reform produced measurable early gains, with IGR rising from ₦7.5 billion to ₦12 billion within three months of implementation (Businessday NG, 2026). At the same time, the Akwa Ibom State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) raised concerns that the rigid centralization of funds under the new system

was slowing administrative processes in government-owned institutions, including media organizations, and called for exemptions for time-sensitive agencies (Leadership.ng, 2026). This sequence of developments (an early TSA adoption evaluated by Udoh (2018), a documented compliance shortfall in 2024, and a stricter AkwaRemit-based reform launched in 2026) leaves a gap in the scholarly literature. No published study has yet examined the AkwaRemit-era TSA regime in Akwa Ibom State or assessed how it compares, in outcomes for revenue generation and MDA service delivery, to the TSA regime evaluated in earlier research. This study addresses that gap.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

- i. Establish the pre-AkwaRemit baseline of Akwa Ibom State's public financial management performance using the 2024 Auditor-General's Report and the 2024 Accrual Basis IPSAS Financial Statements.
- ii. Examine the reported outcomes of the AkwaRemit-based TSA reform following its full implementation in January 2026.
- iii. Assess the trade-offs between revenue consolidation gains and reported service delivery disruptions among MDAs.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide the study:

- i. What was the state of public financial management compliance in Akwa Ibom State prior to the AkwaRemit reform?
- ii. What changes in revenue generation are attributable to the AkwaRemit-based TSA regime?
- iii. What operational challenges, if any, has the AkwaRemit reform introduced for MDAs?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Public financial management (PFM) refers to the set of laws, institutions, systems, and processes that govern how public resources are planned, mobilized, allocated, spent, and accounted for by government (Ibanga & Uwah, 2021). In Nigeria, PFM reform gained momentum from 1999 onward, as the federal government sought to address transparency, accountability, corruption, and poor service delivery in the management of public funds (Ibanga & Uwah, 2021). Among the instruments associated with this reform agenda is the



Treasury Single Account (TSA), a unified government banking structure through which all government receipts and payments are consolidated into a single account, replacing the fragmented multi-account system that had previously characterized public sector banking in Nigeria (Udoh, 2018).

Empirical Review

Udoh (2018) examined the adoption of the TSA in Akwa Ibom State's civil service following the policy's adoption by the administration of Governor Udom Emmanuel from 2015, with state funds consolidated into a single account domiciled at Zenith Bank Plc. Using historical and descriptive research designs, the study found that TSA adoption had encouraged financial transparency within the state civil service, though it also examined concerns that the policy could affect bank staff employment and competition among commercial banks in the state.

At the national level, Ibanga and Uwah (2021) investigated the relationship between PFM reforms and economic development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, using a survey research design with data drawn from the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation, the Bureau of Public Procurement, the National Assembly Committee on Finance, and the Ministry of Finance. Their study tested the effects of three PFM reform instruments (the Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System (IPPIS), the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), and the TSA) on youth employment, quality of service delivery, and infrastructural development, respectively. All three hypotheses were rejected at the 0.05 significance level, indicating statistically significant relationships between each reform instrument and its corresponding development outcome; notably, the TSA showed the strongest relationship with infrastructural development, with a correlation coefficient of 0.89 ($r^2 = 0.79$).

Closer to the present study's specific geographic and thematic focus, Offor and Uwah (2024) evaluated the impact of government budgeted expenditure, specifically recurrent and capital estimates, on rural development in selected local government areas of Akwa Ibom State, using panel data drawn from the 2016–2022 fiscal year budget estimates and fixed- and random-effects panel estimation techniques. The study found that recurrent and capital expenditure had positive but statistically non-significant effects on economic, social, and administrative sector development, and recommended that local governments in the state increase capital budget estimates and internal revenue efforts to strengthen rural development outcomes.

At the broader national level, Rafindadi and Kondo (2018) assessed the relationship between the Nigerian public finance system and rural quality of life using a comparative methodology combining multiple regression analysis and structural equation modeling, with data gathered from nine local government areas in Benue State. Their findings indicated that



public finance in rural areas had not been effective or efficient, a shortfall attributed largely to the joint account system operating between state and local governments, and the study called for a restructured public finance system directed more efficiently toward local government development.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on two complementary theoretical perspectives. The first is Public Accountability Theory, which holds that public officeholders and institutions entrusted with public resources are answerable to the citizenry for how those resources are managed, and that mechanisms of transparency and oversight, such as the TSA, exist to enforce this answerability (Ibanga & Uwah, 2021). This lens is appropriate for examining whether the AkwaRemit-based reform, introduced explicitly to address a documented remittance shortfall, has strengthened the accountability relationship between Akwa Ibom State's MDAs and the citizens whose resources they manage.

The second, supplementing the first, draws on Udoh's (2025) Pawpaw/Papaya and Pineapple Theories of government resource distribution. The Pawpaw/Papaya theory represents a single, uniform sharing stream, modeled on the way a pawpaw fruit ripens evenly across its entire body, and is associated with equality, fairness, and justice in the distribution of government resources across tiers of government (Udoh, 2025). By contrast, the Pineapple theory represents a two-variance sharing structure, encompassing both vertical and horizontal distribution, modeled on the way a pineapple does not ripen evenly across the whole fruit, and is associated with equity and strategic discretion in resource sharing, often reflecting a degree of shrewdness exercised by higher levels of government toward lower levels (Udoh, 2025). Udoh (2025) situates both theories within the broader context of fiscal federalism, noting that the idea of fiscal federalism has received support from John Rawls's theory of justice, whose basic assumption concerns the socially just distribution of goods in a society.

Read together with Public Accountability Theory, this second framework adds a distributional dimension that the accountability lens alone does not capture. Public Accountability Theory helps explain why a centralized mechanism like AkwaRemit was introduced and what it is meant to enforce which involves traceability and answerability for public funds. The Pawpaw/Papaya and Pineapple theories, by contrast, offer a lens for evaluating what happens after funds are consolidated: whether the resulting distribution of resources toward local government areas and rural development follows a uniform, equality-based pattern (Pawpaw/Papaya) or a more selective, discretion-based pattern (Pineapple). This distinction is directly relevant to the present study's concern with whether AkwaRemit's revenue gains have translated, or are likely to translate, into equitable rural development

outcomes across Akwa Ibom State's local government areas, rather than being concentrated or applied unevenly once consolidated at the state level.

In all, the reviewed literature establishes two things clearly: first, that TSA-type reforms in Nigeria, including in Akwa Ibom State specifically, have generally been associated with improved transparency and, at the national level, statistically significant relationships with infrastructural development outcomes (Ibanga & Uwah, 2021; Udoh, 2018); and second, that budgeted expenditure in Akwa Ibom State's local government areas has, as of the 2016–2022 period studied by Offor and Uwah (2024), yielded only non-significant effects on rural development. However, none of the reviewed studies extends into the 2025–2026 period, during which Akwa Ibom State transitioned from its earlier TSA framework to the more strictly enforced AkwaRemit platform following a documented compliance shortfall in the 2024 Public Financial Management Assessment Report. This leaves an empirical gap: no study has yet assessed whether the AkwaRemit-era reform has altered the relationship between public financial management and development outcomes established in the earlier literature. The present study addresses this gap.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive, comparative research design, structured around a before-and-after assessment of Akwa Ibom State's public financial management performance, specifically the period preceding the AkwaRemit reform (using 2024 fiscal year data) compared against the period following its full statewide implementation, effective January 1, 2026 (TVC News, 2026). This design was chosen because the study's objectives require establishing a documented baseline and assessing reported changes following a specific, dated policy intervention, rather than testing causal hypotheses through primary data collection.

Data Sources

The study relies entirely on secondary data drawn from official government financial records and verifiable news reporting, as follows:

Baseline (pre-reform) data:

- The Akwa Ibom State Government's 2024 Auditor-General's Report, which presents the audited accounts of the state for the year ended December 31, 2024, prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 125(2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) and the Akwa Ibom State Audit Law, 2021 (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2025a).



- The Akwa Ibom State 2024 Accrual Basis IPSAS Financial Statements, presented by the state's Commissioner of Finance, detailing the state's financial performance and its compliance status with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) for the 2024 fiscal year (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2025b).
- Officially reported findings from the 2024 Public Financial Management Assessment Report and the State Fiscal Responsibility Board, as disclosed by the Commissioner for Finance, Emem Bob, indicating that more than 20 percent of the state's 2024 Internally Generated Revenue was not remitted into the State Consolidated Revenue Fund (Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2025).

Post-reform data:

- Official statements and reporting on the AkwaRemit platform's full implementation, effective January 1, 2026 (The Trumpet Newspaper Nigeria, 2026; TVC News, 2026).
- Reported Internally Generated Revenue figures following implementation, showing growth from ₦7.5 billion to ₦12 billion within three months, as stated by Governor Umo Eno (Businessday NG, 2026).
- Reported operational concerns raised by the Akwa Ibom State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists regarding service delivery disruption in government-owned institutions under the new regime (Leadership.ng, 2026).

Method of Analysis

Data will be analyzed using trend and comparative document analysis. Quantitative figures (principally Internally Generated Revenue levels and the proportion of unremitted revenue) will be compared across the pre-reform (2024) and post-reform (2026) periods to assess directional change. Qualitative reporting on MDA operational disruption will be analyzed thematically to identify the nature and scope of implementation challenges accompanying the reform. This mixed approach is appropriate given that the study's underlying data are drawn from official financial statements and verified news reporting rather than from a structured survey or questionnaire instrument.

Scope and Limitations

The study is limited to Akwa Ibom State and covers the period from the 2024 fiscal year (pre-AkwaRemit baseline) through the first documented months of the AkwaRemit implementation in 2026. It does not extend to other Nigerian states, nor does it draw on primary data such as surveys or interviews with MDA personnel. The study's post-reform findings are further limited to the outcomes publicly reported as of the time of writing; a

fuller assessment of the AkwaRemit regime's longer-term effects on rural development outcomes specifically would require data beyond what is currently available in the public domain.

Results and Findings

Pre-AkwaRemit Baseline (2024)

The Akwa Ibom State Government's own 2024 financial records indicate that the state maintained general compliance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) during the 2024 fiscal year, with the Auditor-General's Report and the Commissioner of Finance's Accrual Basis IPSAS Financial Statements both noting consistent compliance except for outstanding valuation and recognition of certain assets (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2025a, 2025b).

Despite this general compliance posture, a separate assessment, the 2024 Public Financial Management Assessment Report, corroborated by the State Fiscal Responsibility Board, found that more than 20 percent of the state's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) for 2024 was not swept into the State Consolidated Revenue Fund (Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2025). According to the Commissioner for Finance, Emem Bob, this shortfall stemmed from revenue collected by several ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) that failed to reach the state's central account, a situation he described as a violation of international financial management standards (Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2025). This finding indicates a gap between the state's formal accounting compliance, as reflected in its audited financial statements, and its actual revenue remittance discipline at the MDA level.

Post-AkwaRemit Reform (2026)

Following the documented 2024 shortfall, the state government introduced AkwaRemit, a rebranded and more strictly enforced TSA platform, with full statewide implementation declared effective January 1, 2026 (TVC News, 2026). Under the new arrangement, all IGR accruing to the state is required to be paid directly into the designated Treasury Single Account, while government expenditures must be processed exclusively through the AkwaRemit platform, with MDAs required to carry out regular reconciliation of transactions (TVC News, 2026; The Trumpet Newspaper Nigeria, 2026).

Governor Umo Eno reported that the reform produced measurable early revenue gains: IGR reportedly grew from ₦7.5 billion in the first month of implementation to ₦10.2 billion in the second month, reaching ₦12 billion by the third month (Businessday NG, 2026). The governor attributed this growth to the reform's success in blocking revenue leakages that had previously constrained collection (Businessday NG, 2026).

However, the reform's rigid centralization of funds was also reported to have introduced operational friction. The Akwa Ibom State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists raised concerns that several government-owned institutions, including government media organizations, were experiencing delays in accessing operational funds for routine activities under the new system, and called for exemptions or more flexible implementation for time-sensitive institutions such as hospitals, media organizations, and emergency-response agencies (Leadership.ng, 2026).

From the above, the pre- and post-reform data suggest a trade-off pattern: the AkwaRemit regime appears, based on officially reported figures, to have substantially improved revenue consolidation relative to the 20-percent-plus shortfall documented in 2024, but this gain was accompanied by reported disruption to service delivery in at least some MDAs — a dimension not captured in the state's own revenue-growth reporting. No publicly available data at the time of this study quantifies the effect of the AkwaRemit reform specifically on rural development outcomes, which remains the identified gap this study set out to highlight rather than fully resolve given the limits of currently available secondary data.

Discussion

The findings of this study extend, but also complicate, the picture established in the reviewed literature. Udoh's (2018) evaluation of the earlier TSA regime in Akwa Ibom State found that adoption had encouraged financial transparency within the state civil service. The present findings suggest that this transparency gain was not fully sustained in practice: despite the earlier TSA framework being in place, the 2024 Public Financial Management Assessment Report found that more than 20 percent of the state's IGR was not remitted into the Consolidated Revenue Fund (Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2025). This indicates that formal adoption of a TSA framework, as documented by Udoh (2018), did not by itself guarantee sustained remittance discipline nearly a decade later; a distinction the earlier literature, evaluating the reform at its point of adoption, could not have anticipated.

At the national level, Ibanga and Uwah (2021) found a statistically significant relationship between TSA operation and infrastructural development ($r = 0.89$, $r^2 = 0.79$). The present study's findings on IGR growth following AkwaRemit's implementation, from ₦7.5 billion to ₦12 billion within three months (Businessday NG, 2026), are broadly consistent with the direction of that earlier finding, in that stricter TSA enforcement appears associated with improved revenue outcomes. However, the present study cannot confirm whether this revenue growth has yet translated into the kind of infrastructural or rural development outcomes that Ibanga and Uwah (2021) measured at the national level, since no comparable outcome data for Akwa Ibom State's rural development under AkwaRemit was available at the time of this study.

This caution is reinforced by Offor and Uwah's (2024) finding that, even prior to the AkwaRemit reform, recurrent and capital expenditure in selected Akwa Ibom local government areas had only non-significant effects on economic, social, and administrative sector development between 2016 and 2022. Read alongside the present findings, this suggests that revenue consolidation at the state level (the immediate effect AkwaRemit appears to be producing) is not automatically equivalent to improved development outcomes at the local government level, where Offor and Uwah (2024) located their analysis. The relationship between revenue collection efficiency and actual rural development delivery therefore remains an open question that this study's available data cannot resolve.

Within the Public Accountability Theory framework adopted for this study, the AkwaRemit reform can be read as a renewed institutional mechanism for enforcing the answerability of MDAs to the state government, and by extension to citizens, for the resources they collect and spend (Ibanga & Uwah, 2021). The documented IGR growth following implementation (Businessday NG, 2026) is consistent with strengthened accountability in the narrow sense of revenue traceability. However, the reported service delivery disruptions raised by the Nigeria Union of Journalists (Leadership.ng, 2026) suggest that accountability mechanisms, when implemented rigidly, can generate friction with a second, related public administration value: responsiveness — the capacity of government institutions to deliver services in a timely manner. This tension between centralized financial control and operational responsiveness is not addressed in the accountability-focused literature reviewed for this study, and represents a nuance the theoretical framework alone does not fully capture.

Viewed through Udoh's (2025) Pawpaw/Papaya and Pineapple theories, the findings suggest that AkwaRemit's current stage of implementation has so far operated more in line with the Pineapple pattern than the Pawpaw/Papaya pattern. AkwaRemit's primary achievement to date, as reflected in the available data, has been to consolidate revenue at the state level, which is a vertical movement of resources into a single central account (Businessday NG, 2026) without yet demonstrating a corresponding, evenly distributed flow of resources back out to local government areas and rural development projects. This resembles the Pineapple theory's structure of uneven, discretion-based sharing, in which resources may be gathered efficiently at a higher level of government but are not automatically redistributed with the same evenness the Pawpaw/Papaya theory would require (Udoh, 2025). This is not necessarily evidence of shrewdness or inequity but it does mean that the reform, on the evidence available, has so far demonstrated the *collection* half of equitable resource management more clearly than the *distribution* half.

This distinction matters for how the study's central finding should be read. The reported operational disruption faced by time-sensitive MDAs, such as government media organizations (Leadership.ng, 2026), can be understood not only as an accountability-

responsiveness tension, but also as an early sign of the Pineapple pattern in practice: a centralized system exercising discretion over disbursement timing in ways that do not treat all MDAs uniformly, regardless of their operational needs. Whether this discretion, over time, produces the kind of equitable rural development redistribution the Pawpaw/Papaya theory would call for, or instead settles into a more uneven Pineapple-style pattern is precisely the question this study's available data cannot yet answer, and is the central uncertainty this study's recommendations for further research are intended to address.

Implications for Rural Development and MDA Operations

For rural development specifically, the implication of these findings is cautious rather than conclusive. Improved revenue consolidation under AkwaRemit could, in principle, expand the pool of funds available for capital expenditure of the kind Offor and Uwah (2024) found had only non-significant effects on rural development outcomes in the pre-reform period, but whether increased revenue availability alone is sufficient to change that outcome cannot be determined from the data available to this study.

For MDA operations, the findings point to a more immediate and better-documented implication: that rigid, centralized fund disbursement mechanisms carry real operational costs for time-sensitive institutions, as reflected in the concerns raised specifically about media organizations under the Akwa Ibom State government (Leadership.ng, 2026). This suggests that the design of centralized PFM systems may need to account for institutional variation in operational tempo, rather than applying uniform reconciliation and disbursement rules across all MDAs regardless of function.

Conclusion

This study set out to address a specific, identified gap: while earlier research had evaluated Akwa Ibom State's initial Treasury Single Account regime (Udoh, 2018) and its subsequent effects on rural development outcomes at the local government level (Offor & Uwah, 2024), no study had yet examined the state's 2025–2026 transition to the more strictly enforced AkwaRemit platform, introduced in response to a documented revenue remittance shortfall.

The findings indicate that this shortfall was substantial: more than 20 percent of the state's 2024 Internally Generated Revenue was not remitted into the Consolidated Revenue Fund, despite the state's audited financial statements reflecting general compliance with international accounting standards (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2025a, 2025b; Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2025). Following AkwaRemit's full implementation in January 2026, officially reported revenue figures showed marked growth, from ₦7.5 billion to ₦12 billion within three months (Businessday NG, 2026). At the same time, the reform's rigid centralization of fund disbursement was reported to have disrupted operations in at least

some government-owned institutions, prompting calls for more flexible implementation for time-sensitive agencies (Leadership.ng, 2026).

In sum, these findings suggest that the AkwaRemit reform has on the evidence currently available, strengthened revenue consolidation without a correspondingly clear or yet-documented improvement in either rural development outcomes or MDA operational efficiency. The relationship between improved revenue collection and actual development delivery therefore remains only partially answered by the data available at the time of writing, underscoring the continued need for the kind of outcome-focused follow-up research this study recommends below.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and their limitations, this study recommends:

- i. Given the reported operational disruption experienced by government media and other time-sensitive institutions under AkwaRemit (Leadership.ng, 2026), the state government should consider calibrated disbursement timelines or limited operational float for MDAs whose functions require rapid access to funds, without compromising the overall goal of revenue consolidation.
- ii. Given that the state's own reporting to date has emphasized IGR growth (Businessday NG, 2026) without corresponding public data on service delivery impact, the Ministry of Finance and the State Fiscal Responsibility Board should publish periodic assessments that track both dimensions jointly, enabling more balanced evaluation of the reform's effects.
- iii. Because this study could not access data linking AkwaRemit-era revenue growth to rural development outcomes specifically, future researchers should examine whether the revenue gains reported since January 2026 have translated into measurable improvements in rural infrastructure, service delivery, or living standards.
- iv. Given that AkwaRemit's full implementation began only in January 2026, this study's findings reflect an early and necessarily limited window of observation. A longitudinal follow-up, conducted after AkwaRemit has been in operation for a longer period, would be better positioned to assess its sustained effects on both public financial management performance and rural development in Akwa Ibom State.

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