

## **AMERICA FIRST FOREIGN POLICY PRINCIPLE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON HEALTH SECURITY IN ABAKALIKI TOWN, EBONYI STATE.**

**OMINYI, VINCENT. C**

Department of Political Science,  
School of Arts & Social Sciences,  
Ebonyi State College of Education Ikwo  
Email: [vominyi@gmail.com](mailto:vominyi@gmail.com)  
Phone No: 07039523295

### **Abstract**

Despite benefits of foreign aids to receiving country and their potent usage by donor as instrumentalities of soft power, President Trump decided against continued Official Development Assistant, by gutting United States Agency for International Development. Consequently, this study interrogates America first foreign policy principle and its implications on health security in Abakaliki town. A survey method involving four hundred sample population, with Five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used. Collected data were analysed using simple percentage, frequency and mean, whereas Chi-square was used to test the hypothesis. Isolationist theory provided an explanatory framework for the study. Findings indicated that Trump's stop work order against USAID, affected health security in Abakaliki town, through un-sustained fight against malaria hitherto done through US Presidential Malaria Initiative for States. It therefore recommends not only comprehensive approach to fighting diseases, but less dependent on foreign aids.

**Keywords:** America First, Health Security, Abakaliki town.

### **Introduction**

What began as electioneering campaign rhetoric became a reality on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025, when Donald Trump began his second term as the President of the United States of America and revived his debutant term's "America First" policy doctrine, which focused on trade protectionism, tax reforms, immigration policy, energy dominance and fiscal restraint, all of which he believes, would Make America Great Again (MAGA).

Consequently, he has since signed more than sixty-five executive orders with about sixteen memoranda that wrecked ball on usual practices in trade, immigration, workforce policies and most importantly on foreign aids (Nigerian Economic Summit Group, 2025). The latter which is laid out in Article 55 of the UN Charter for 'the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations' finds expression in Official Development Assistance (ODA). Advocates of ODA are of the view that it not only

saves lives, but it also serves national interests, hence, high-income countries are being enjoined to spend 0.7 percent of their gross national income on low ones (Nilima,2025).

It was against this backdrop that United States was in the forefront of aids to developing or needy countries before now, thus, in his 1949 inaugural address, then US President, Harry Truman made bold calls, aimed at sending technology and capital to help nations afflicted by poverty, diseases and misery. By 1950s, it already bore fruits as the US had made foreign aid a universal obligation, culminating in the creation of United States Agency for International Development in 1961, by then-US President John F Kennedy to oversee aid matters. As of the year 2024, Nigeria ranked seventh in global standing of top ten highest beneficiaries of US aids, with a whopping sum of \$763m dollars (Dorothy and Sabrina,2024). Other countries have also toed similar part in competition for charity. Nilima (2025) points out that the contagion effects are virtually in all European countries, as they have one kind of aid program or the other to showcase.

Dislocation however came with president Trump back on saddle, as United States Agency for International Development (USAID which has the mandate to oversee the country's aids related programmes worldwide, and which indeed had handled sixty percent(60%) of Nigeria's aid programmes was closed down, placing most of its domestic employees on leave and recalling most of its over sea's employees through Executive Order 14169 titled "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid" back home (Chijioke, 2025). Thus, most foreign aid projects administered by USAID as well as other government agencies including the Department of State, were also suspended for ninety (90) days, whereas calling them wasteful and fraudulent. In his words, Trump described USAID as 'run by a bunch of radical lunatics', while Musk whom he appointed to oversee his newly created Department of Government Efficiency(DOGE)dubbed it a criminal organization (Charles,2025). Consequently, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio went ahead and issued a Stop Work Order (SWO) on all USAID funded projects across the globe (Mubarak et al, 2025).

The closure of this agency that hitherto administered \$40 billion dollar in overseas assistance, including vital health and food programmes in hundred (100) countries, Nigeria inclusive (Charles,2025) ignited a crucial conversation on its implications on a subject matter that doesn't involve a threat to territorial integrity but on individuals, otherwise called human security. This is coming on the heels of advocacy for a paradigm shift from state-centric security approach to individualist one. Hence, United Nations Development Programme

Commission on Human Security (UNDP,1994) stresses that continued definition of security from the prism of safeguards against internal or external threats only, has become old-fashioned and reductionist in the face of persistent threats from hunger, diseases, sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life, capable of causing deaths even more than war itself as evident in the victims of gutted USAID humanitarian operations, namely: victims of tuberculosis, malaria and People living with HIV who hitherto got assistance through President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) but who now seem to have been put in harm's way as a result of USAID shutdown by Trump's administration.

Due to hue and cry which the above generated, Trump's administration decided against the initial blanket closure, instead opted for case-by-case review, as well as, issuance of waivers for life-saving humanitarian assistance including: core life-saving medicine, medical services, food, shelter, and subsistence assistance for ninety days (Nura,2023).

However, the combine effects of the freeze order, the difficult-to-interpret waiver and what is actually on ground, given that USAID payment system has remained shut down after the waiver and even supreme court's ruling against the said actions of Trump's administration, has left a very sour taste on human security in Nigeria, Ebonyi state and Abakaliki LGA in particular.

For instance, a cursory look at US President's Malaria Initiative for States(PMI-S), a five-year flagship malaria project initiated by President George W. Bush and hitherto being sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by a consortium led by Management Sciences for Health(MSH) together with the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),in Nigeria, was at the forefront of National Malaria Elimination Programs (NMEP) of the country, which its vision is to achieve a malaria free Nigeria. It is in line with this, that there is 2021–2025 National Malaria Strategic Plan (NMSP), which is an action plan of achieving specific goal of reducing malaria morbidity to less than 10 percent parasite prevalence and mortality attributable to malaria to less than 50 deaths per 1,000 by 2025, through quality services for managing malaria and its complications ([www.pmi.gov](http://www.pmi.gov)).

It became operational in eleven states of the federation considered as having highest malaria burden namely: Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Ebonyi, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Sokoto, and Zamfara from January 2020-January 2025(Jules and Nwokenna, 2023). The agency's five-year programme, when weighed on scale of success, could be said to have accomplished its task by helping to decrease child death rates and malaria parasite prevalence

<https://ebscoeijer.org/>

through its Task Order 3 and Task Order 4 (Jules and Nwokenna,2023). Ebonyi State in particular, being under the former, holds the distinction of lowest drop in malaria positivity, from 82% in January 2020 when the programme was started, to 54% as at April 2023(<http://msh.org/projects/pmi-s/>).

These gains however appear to have fallen apart in the state, more so at Abakaliki Town the focal point of this discourse. This is because addressing tropical, infectious, epidemics and public health emergencies requires sustainable measures after a programme like that of USAID sponsored PMI-S had run its circle. More difficult it is, when sister programmes hitherto running their course too, were abruptly grounded, thereby placing not only additional strains on the ability of government to sustain already completed programme, but to also contain the abruptly abandoned ones. Ajah Oliver, Executive Director of Cooperation Social Responsibility disclosed that USAID closure grounded education interventions, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programmes in Ebonyi state (Beloved, 2025).

Although Nigerian government led by Chief Bola Tinubu reacted with a view to cushioning-off the effects of the aids' cut, by getting additional \$200 million in federal spending through legislative approval (Nduka,2025), such move may not cover the ground left by USAID. Afterall, there exist too much differences between the said amount contained in the supplementary budget and \$763m dollars Nigeria government is said to have got from USAID as at the year 2024.

This paper is concerned that stoppage of USAID health related Programmes in Ebonyi State for ninety days, by Trump's administration, may have a snowballing effect that could exacerbate human security problem in the area. Particularly, by hampering a sustainable fight against malaria after elapsing of PMI-S in Abakaliki town, since government has got divided attentions. This is more concerning given that the waiver exempting life-saving humanitarian assistance, appears unimplementable, as workers in USAID had been placed on leave before same, with the agency's official website also down, thereby opening many war fronts. Consequently, there is every likelihood that the problem may compound. This paper therefore sets out to probe into the subject matter through the following:

### **Research Question**

Has the Stop Work Order against USAID affected the ability to sustain Presidential Malaria Initiative for States' (PMI-S) interventions in Abakaliki town?

## **Hypothesis**

H0: There is no significant effect of Stop Work Order against USAID on sustenance of PMI-S interventions in Abakaliki town

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theory that was used to anchor this work is a theory of Isolationism. To Miller (1981) It is an analytical framework opposed to alliances or agreements with any foreign nation that does not involve American vital interests. According to him, it is rooted in 1796 first president of America, George Washington's farewell address wherein he warned against 'permanent alliances,' or taking side in Europe's seeming intractable problems. Instead he admonished his countrymen to take advantage of gains that may accrue from such neutrality. Since then, the ideology has recorded apologists in: Fred Rippy, Angie Debo, Alfred M. Bingham, editor of Common Sense; Bertram D. Wolfe a co-author to a book called "Keep America Out of War" (Manfred,2018; Carlos, 2024),

America once again are increasingly sceptical that their country can afford to spend trillions on foreign interventions while basic needs at home remain elusive (Carlos,2024). They therefore prefer America that would prioritize solving its own problems over trying to solve that of others. This stance resonated well with them, resulting in the victory of Donald Trump who dusted up the ideology, in the name of America First. He has since made good his rhetoric by withdrawing from foreign aid obligations especially in closing down USAID.

## **Methodology**

This work adopted a survey design. The choice is informed by the nature of the research that probed into the effect of Trump's foreign policy initiative, particularly, suspension of foreign aids and its implications on sustaining fight against malaria in Abakaliki town.

It was conducted within the town of Abakaliki LGA, capital city of Ebonyi State. The local government is bounded to the North, by Ebonyi L.G.A; to the East, by Edda and Okpuitumo communities and Ebonyi River; to the South, by Ezza North L.G.A. Abakaliki LGA, is located between Latitudes 60 10''N and 60 20'' N and Longitudes 80 00''E and 80 30'' E in the derived savannah zone of Nigeria; Ebonyi state is located in the South-eastern part of Nigeria; within the transitional belt of rain forest and guinea savanna. It is bounded to the North by Enugu and Benue States; to the East by Cross River State; to the South by Abia State ((Ugo, 2003). Abakaliki has a land mass of 51 km<sup>2</sup>, with a rainfall pattern that is moderate and average atmospheric temperature of 32-35oC (Epidi et al,2020).

In terms of population of the study, Abakaliki Local Government's town has an estimated 723,000 population (United Nations -World Population Prospects ,2025). The population of the study is therefore a cross sectional one, composed of households mainly, public servants (including health workers). business owners and some farmers, who are 18 years or above; who also had resided in Abakaliki town for at least a year.

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamani Formulae for sample determination. According to Yamani (1964)

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N}(e)^2$$

Where n = sample size

N = total population

E = margin of error

1 = constant

Therefore 
$$n = \frac{723,000}{1+723,000 (0.05)^2}$$

After calculation, sample size = 400. It is therefore these number of questionnaires that were distributed. The sample size of 400 is apt given the submission of Singh and Masuki (2014) it is adequate for a population above 100,000. Stratified sampling techniques was also used to ensure that different categories of population involved in the research were included.

The data used for this study were collected from two main sources namely: primary and secondary sources. The primary data were sourced through first-hand information using six questionnaire items designed by the researcher in Likert five-point scale format. While secondary data were from government health records, to corroborate or refute the former.

The data were processed through classification, tabulation, interpretation and. conclusion drawing. The table was structured taking into cognizance item relevant to issue being highlighted. While Descriptive statistical tool such as mean, frequency and percentage were used to analyse the data. Inferential statistical tool, chi-square was used to test the hypothesis. The statistical formulae for calculating this chi-square is as stated below;

$$X^2 = \sum \left( \frac{O-E}{E} \right)^2$$

Where,  $X^2$  = chi-square sign, O = observed variable. E = expected variable .

$\sum$  = summation sign

To test the hypothesis, the decision rule is that if the calculated Chi-square value is more than the value of Chi-square in the table at 5% or (0.05) level of significance, the null hypothesis will be rejected., if otherwise, the null hypothesis will be accepted.

Similarly, the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) score of the various responses made was calculated at 3.00 using five-point likert scale, hence any item that is equal to or above 3.00 was regarded as agreed, while below equals to disagree. This was obtained by summing up the values assigned to the responses made as follows: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2 Strongly Disagree = 1. The mean therefore =  $5+4+3+2+1=15/5=3.00$ .

## Results

**Table 1. Number and categories of Respondents in Abakaliki Town**

Category	No of Respondents	F	M
Public servants	100	60	40
Business Owners	100	58	42
Artisans	100	64	36
Farmers	100	50	50
Total	400	232	168

Source: Field Survey,2025

The study after administration of the questionnaire instrument to four hundred (400) respondents, got the same number in return. Thus, 400 was adopted as a sample size.

## Research Question

Has the Stop Work Order against USAID affected the ability to sustain Presidential Malaria Initiative for States (PMI-S) interventions in Abakaliki town?

**Table 2: Mean rating on effects of Stop Work Order against USAID, on the ability to sustain Presidential Malaria Initiative for States (PMI-S) interventions in Abakaliki town**

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	N	FX	X	REMARKS
1	Closure of USAID offices for ninety days, impacted on sustainable mosquitoes Larval Source Management (LSM) in Abakaliki town.	20 (35)	10 (40)	40 (24)	130 (140)	200 (161)	400	720	1.8	Disagreed
2	Laying-off of USAID workers affected continued distribution and use of Insecticide Treated Net in Abakaliki town	19 (35)	19 (40)	16 (24)	130 (140)	216 (161)	400	695	1.7	Disagree
3	Blockage of access to USAID fund affected ability to sustain Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention in Abakaliki town	21 (35)	27 (40)	20 (24)	212 (140)	120 (161)	400	817	2.0	Disagreed
4	Termination of USAID contracts affected continued prevention of Malaria in Pregnancy (MIP) in Abakaliki town.	23 (35)	25 (40)	15 (24)	149 (140)	188 (161)	400	718	1.8	Disagreed
5	Suspension of USAID funding affected diagnosis and treatment of malaria in Abakaliki town	25 (35)	16 (40)	5 (24)	170 (140)	184 (161)	400	728	1.8	Disagreed
6	Blockage of access to USAID fund affected continued use of Indoor Residual Spray (IRS) in Abakaliki town	100 (35)	140 (40)	50 (24)	50 (140)	60 (161)	400	1370	3.4	Agreed
Total		208	237	146	841	968	2400			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

**Note:** Expected frequencies are in bracket.



**Calculation of Expected frequency (E)**= Row total multiplied with Column total and divided by grand total:

$$E = \frac{RT \times CT}{GT}$$

Table two (2) above showed that item number one to five, indicated that America first foreign policy principle which placed Stop work order on USAID, is of no effect to sustaining fight against malaria in Abakaliki town. as had be done through US Presidential Malaria Initiative for State (PMI-S). Thus, Larvae Source Management, distribution of Insecticide Treated Net, Chemoprevention, Malaria in Pregnancy, diagnosis and treatment of malaria, still go to plan. On the other hand, response on item number six (6), showed that Indoor Residual Spray, was not sustained.

### **Testing of hypothesis:**

H0: There is no significant effect of Stop Work Order against USAID on sustenance of PMI-S interventions in Abakaliki town.

### **Table 3: Chi-Square calculation on the hypothesis**

Chi-square distribution tabulated ( $\chi^2$  t) based on degree of freedom(df) and 5% significance

S/N	O	E	(O-E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
1	20	35	-15	225	6.4
2	10	40	-30	900	22.5
3	40	24	16	256	10.7
4	130	140	-10	100	0.7
5	200	161	39	1521	9.4
6	19	35	-16	256	7.3
7	19	40	-21	441	11.0
8	16	24	-8	64	2.7
9	130	140	-10	100	0.7
10	216	161	55	3025	18.8
11	21	35	-14	196	5.6
12	27	40	-13	169	4.2
13	20	24	-4	16	0.7
14	212	140	72	5184	37.0
15	120	161	-41	1681	10.4
16	23	35	-12	144	4.1
17	25	40	-15	225	5.6
18	15	24	-9	81	3.4
19	149	140	9	81	0.6
20	188	161	27	729	4.5
21	25	35	-10	100	2.9
22	16	40	-24	576	14.4
23	5	24	-19	361	15.0
24	170	140	30	900	6.4
25	184	161	23	529	3.3
26	100	35	65	4225	120.7
27	140	40	100	10000	250
28	50	24	26	676	28.2
29	50	140	-90	8100	57.9
30	60	161	-101	10201	63.4
					728.5

level, where  $df = (r-1)(C-1)$ ,  $r$  = number of row,  $C$  – number of column  $= (6-1)(5-1) = (5)(4) = 20$ .

Therefore, the  $\chi^2$  t value at 0.05 and 20  $df = 31.4$ .

**Decision:** Since the chi-square calculated  $\chi^2$  c of 728.5 is greater than the chi-square tabulated  $\chi^2$  t of 31.4, we rejected the null hypothesis and accept the alternate, thus, conclude that Stop Work Order against USAID affected ability to sustain PMI-S interventions in Abakaliki town.

**Discussion:**

**Stop Work Order against USAID and ability to sustain technical areas of Presidential Malaria Initiative for States (PMI-S) in Abakaliki Town.**

Owing to the realization that human security particularly health, could pose danger just like conventional one and sometimes even greater if not well handled, current conversations on security have expanded to include the former as against the latter's reductionist approach, which focused only on maintenance of law and order within a given territory, with its attendant brute of force, while ignoring individuals. Presidential Malaria Initiative for States (PMI-S) which was an attempt to lean towards health security, was launched by then president of United States of America, George W. Bush in 2005 to support a rapid scale-up of malaria prevention and treatment intervention in fifteen countries, including Nigeria. USAID (2015) reports that \$1.2 billion dollar was earmarked by the administration for the initiative.

Through Task Order 2, PMI-S with the instrumentality of USAID. provided support to National Malaria Elimination Program (NMEP) in its coordination of all malaria activities in Nigeria. With PMI-S Task Order 3 and 4, fight against malaria was stepped down to Southern and Northern Nigeria respectively. In the former, it provided support to the four focal states of Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Ebonyi and Oyo. This task order commenced in January 2020 and by January 2025, it would have ended (USAID, 2006)

While the initiative lasted in Ebonyi State, the following malaria control areas were the preoccupation of PMI-S whereas tackling prevalence of malaria as a way of securitization of health sector in Abakaliki town: Mosquito Larval Source Management; Distribution and use of Insecticide Treated Net; Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention; Malaria in Pregnancy (MIP); Diagnosis and treatment of malaria and Indoor Residual Spray (IRS) (USAID,2006).

They were expected to be sustained by the government of Ebonyi state after the programme wound up. However, when President Trump of United States of America resumed office for the second time, in his America first policy stance, he issued Stop Work Order against USAID, an agency that hitherto handled various aid programmes of the country including the already completed PMI-S, thereby putting hitherto dependent states and sub-national ones alike, which Ebonyi is one, into seeming confusion.

Fortunately, as this study would reveal, USAID closure did not divert the attentions of Ebonyi State government to the extent of abandoning all her malaria preventive and control programmes. This is against the backdrop of sustaining environmental cleanliness aimed at tackling breeding habit of mosquitoes especially that of Anopheline mosquitoes. According to

Garcia and Fuseini (2022), Anopheline Mosquitoes oviposit in wide range of bodies such as: swamps, discarded tin cans, wells, permanent and temporary water collection bins. Ebonyi state government to this extent, evacuates refuse dumps at various dumping sites within the capital, clears drainage system without losing sight on overall and sometimes monthly sanitation exercise. They are all variants of vector control measures called Larval Source Management (LSM). The techniques target the immature mosquitoes' larvae and pupae, by killing them at source before they metamorphosise into biting and transmittable malaria adults. This is consistent with habitat manipulation

Similarly, Insecticide Treated Mosquito Nets (ITNS) continued to receive high ownership and use among the populace after the PMI-S era and USAID staffers' lay-off. This is probably because Roll Back Malaria (RBM) recommended that ITN all things being equal, should only be replaced after three years of use (PMI,2020). This could be the reason they are still found in stock. Thus, as Mosquitoes bite between dusk and dawn, ITNS are normally hung over the sleeping area. This practice not only prevents mosquitoes from gaining access and biting individuals sleeping under them, but also kills them upon landing because of the presence of insecticide.

There is also intermittent administration of full treatment of anti-malaria medicine, especially during the rainy season, to prevent and control malaria illness in various hospitals and clinics in Abakliki town. This approach called Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention (SMC), maintains therapeutic drug concentrations in the blood throughout susceptible period of malaria risk to children, with recommended drug as Sulfadoxine- pyrimethamine plus amodiaquine (SPAQ) at four weeks interval (Ogbulafor, Uhomoibhi and Dahiru, 2023).

Malaria infection in Pregnancy has also been noted as a major threat to lives of mothers, fetuses and infants. Through Maternal and Child Health Centres, intermittent preventive treatment (IPTp) reminiscent of PMI-S era, is still being given to mothers and their unborn babies in Ebonyi State. Once appropriate diagnosis and treatment were made, everything goes to plan, even as USAID myriads contracts have been terminated by Trump's administration. At every Ante Natal Care visit, it did not affect the supply chain of drug. Opeyemi and Olufunke (2024) notes that Sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP) is the medication recommended for this purpose, following WHO 2012 guideline.

Again, findings revealed that malaria diagnoses are performed using Rapid Diagnostic Test or by examining a blood smear under a microscope. When confirmed positive, hospitals and

health centres alike, within the study area, retain the standard protocol of administering treatment only, on the basis of positivity, with Artemisinin-based Combination Therapies (ACTs). This is World Health Organisation's guideline(WHO,2012) which was adopted by PMI-S, whereas it lasted and has since remained in vogue even after a cut in USAID funding. It is pertinent to note that Nigeria government led by President Ahmed Tinubu sought and got approval of additional \$200 million in federal spending through legislative approval (Nduka,2025), thus, helping sub-national governments under its orbit like Ebonyi state, to weather the storm that would have risen from withdrawal of USAID funding.

Amidst all these records in sustaining gains made while US presidential Malaria Initiative for States lasted, based on the findings of this paper, Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) would later cave in unlike other malaria prevention and control packages, to unsustainability. Blockage of access to USAID fund, only compounded division of government's attention from possible re-visiting and course correction of same, thereby exacerbating human security problems anchored on fight against prevalence of malaria in Abakaliki town.

The latest finding is a confirmation of earlier revelation by USAID (2022) that Indoor Residual Spraying has not been widely implemented for the last decade in Nigeria. Similarly, Hannatu etaal (2019) report that where attempt was made to use it, rejection has been its lots. Again, those who subscribed to it, used their personal money and not a function of government's intervention. The process involves spraying of residual insecticide on the interiors of homes to repel and kill mosquitoes, so as to prevent same from biting and transmitting malaria. IRS were in four classes, namely: Pyrethroids, Carbamates, organochlorines and organophosphate (Julie-Anne, etaal, 2020).

Inability of IRS therefore to have a smooth sail, presented a contagious effect scenario, wherein gains made using other malaria preventive and control measures, seem to have been eroded. This justifies health security narrative that disease conditions know no boundary, respect nobody and could pose threats to lives, using any means (Aldis, 2009).

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The paper came to a conclusion that America First foreign Policy principle of Trump's administration, affected health security in Abakaliki Town. This came on the heels of inability of all the packages in US Presidential Malaria Initiatives (PMI-S), particularly, Indoor Residual Spraying, to continue to sail through within the study area, as a result of divided attention on

the part of Ebonyi State government, owing to USAID closure for ninety days. Thus, creating exploitable holes for transmission of malaria parasites where otherwise it wouldn't have been.

Arising from the above, the paper admits that in as much as tackling the problematique required comprehensive approach, in terms of ensuring that all the packages in the fight against prevalence of malaria were seamlessly implemented, the elephant in the room that cut the state government off guard, is over dependent on foreign aids. Consequently, this paper recommends that Nigeria government nay Ebonyi State government, should strive to be self-reliant.

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