

Local Government and the Challenges of Rural Development in Nigeria

Aderemi AYODELE

Department of Politics & International Relations, Faculty of Management & Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria
aderemi.ayodele24@gmail.com; +234 803 645 2555

Olu OJEDOKUN

Faculty of Law, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria
ojedokun.olu@lcu.edu.ng; +234 9031314749

Abstract

This paper examined Local Government and the Challenges of Rural Development in Nigeria from 1999 till date. Lack of sufficient funding to implement various developmental programmes, particularly in rural areas, is the main issue facing most local governments. Secondary sources were used in the study's data collection. This paper argued that local governments faced a number of difficulties, including inadequate funding, corruption, poor project implementation, a lack of qualified labour, a high rate of illiteracy, a failure to adequately consult or involve local residents in policy decisions, and a state government takeover of local government funding. Therefore, the paper suggested an upward review of the statutory allocations to local councils, direct funding distribution to local governments, improved worker welfare packages, and transparent administration that promotes local involvement.

Keyword: Corruption, Funding, Local government, Rural development, Project implementation,

Word count: 127

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation with a government framework of government where there's protected division of powers among the levels of government that's the central, state and nearby governments. Neighborhood government is the third level of government within the nation. It is frequently alluded to as the government at the grass roots level. Improvement would not be important in the event that it does not influence the country tenants, it is as a

result of this that nearby government was made to guarantee successful and effective benefit conveyance to the people at the grassroots level. The creation of the nearby government in numerous countries stems from the ought to encourage improvement at the grassroots. The significance of neighborhood government among others may be a work of its capacity to create sense of belongingness, security and fulfillment among its people. In Nigeria socio-political setting, with assortment of culture, diversity of dialects and separated needs and implies the significance of neighborhood government in guaranteeing solidarity and protecting impossible to miss diversities cannot be thought little of. In spite of the pertinence of nearby government, there are a few issues that have confronted it within the execution of its capacities particularly in regions of benefit conveyance at the grassroots. Since a huge rate of the population are for the most part found at the grassroot level, the advancement of provincial ranges cannot be over-emphasized. Hence, advancement of rustic ranges impacts emphatically on per capita pay and nourishment generation. Advancement of the grass root has been the concern of every responsible and responsive government. Yusuf (1999) advance expressed that rural advancement is the result of a arrangement of quantitative and subjective changes happening among a given country populace and whose focalizing impacts show, in time, a rise within the standard of living and ideal changes within the way of life of the individuals concerned. In terms of level of financial improvement, quality of life, get to to openings, offices and civilities, standard of living and common practicality, the crevice between the urban and country regions in Nigeria is exceptionally wide. The rustic ranges are terribly dismissed as distant as improvement ventures and framework are concerned. The challenges and prospects of country advancement in Nigerian have been of extraordinary concern to the distinctive levels of government due to the rate of rural-urban relocation.

Onibokukun (1987) sees provincial improvement to be confronted with the generation arranged provincial economy relies intensely on non-productive individuals who are all ill-equipped with obsolete devices, specialized data, logical and social preparing and whose conventional parts and get to to assets posture issues for their successful joining into present day financial matters systems. The utilization situated urban economy is overflowed with individuals numerous of who are either unemployed or unemployable, or imperceptibly utilized or underemployed within the urban centres where they select to live. As a result of this mass-mass migration, the rural areas have gotten to be subjectively eliminated and are dynamically less alluring for social and financial speculations whereas the urban ranges are becoming physically congested, socially undesirable and for the most part uneconomic to maintain (Onibokukun, 1987) In spite of the gigantic assets committed to provincial improvement in Nigeria, provincial improvement still remains a illusion

since the neighborhood government specialists which are saddled with the duties have not been able to perform up to expectation. The expectation was that the third level of government would act as a catalyst to rapid and maintained improvement at the grassroots level. However, the trust for quick and supported development has been an illusion as progressive committees have horribly failed to meet expectations in almost all the ranges of their command. Separated from the substantial fumble and misapplication of reserves right now seen in most nearby governments within the nation, the assets accessible which something else ought to be utilized for improvement programs at the grass –roots are being utilized to benefit bloated chosen authorities and unproductive bureaucracies (Obasanjo, 2003).

Historical Background of Local Government System in Nigeria

The study of the development of local government as a tier of government in Nigeria will not be meaningful, if it is not preceded by an examination of the philosophical consideration underlying the local government system (Alex,1987).The structure, composition and functions of local government are influenced by the political beliefs of those who have the authority and responsibility for determining the main features of the local government system. This relationship between values or political beliefs and structure for the distribution of powers in society has been argued by Stanley Hoffmann (1959:113) as he wrote: any preference for a certain scheme of area division of powers presupposes a decision on the ends for which power is to be exercised –a decision on the values power should serve and on the ways in which these values will be served. Regardless of nomenclature, local government is a creation of British colonial rule in Nigeria. It has overtime experienced change in name, structure and composition; Between 1930s and 1940s, for instance, local government was known as chief-in-council and chief-and-council, where traditional rulers were given pride of place in the scheme of things. In the 1950s, election was introduced according to the British model in the western and eastern parts of the country with some measure of autonomy in personnel, financial and general administration (Nwabueze, 1982). It was on this premise that the rising tide of progress, growth and development experienced in the local governments in these areas was based. During this period, heterogeneity was the hallmark of local government as there was no uniformity in the system and the level of development was also remarkably different. The introduction of 1976 reforms by military administration of General Obasanjo brought about uniformity in the administrative structure of the system. The reforms introduced a multi-purpose single tier local government system (Ajayi, 2000).The reforms also introduced population criterion under which a local government could be created.

Consequently, a population of 150,000 to 800,000 was considered feasible for a local government. This was done to avoid the creation of a non-viable local council and for easy accessibility. There was provision for elective positions having the chairman as executive head of local government with supervisory councilors constituting the cabinet. This was complemented by the bureaucrats and professionals, such as Doctors, Engineers etc who were charged with the responsibility of implementing policies (1976 Guidelines). In 1991, a major landmark reform was introduced as the system had legislative arm. In addition, the Babangida administration increased the number of local government from 301 in 1976 to 453 in 1989 and 589 in 1991, the Abacha regime also increased the number to 774 local councils that we have today and the administrative structure also underwent some changes (Ajayi, 2000). In summary, it can be said that no public institution in Nigeria has been so subjected to frequent reforms than local government.

Statement of Problem

The main issue that most local governments are dealing with is a lack of sufficient funding to carry out various projects for development. Recall that there has been a significant rise in the overall amount of funding available to Nigerian local governments since the early 1990s. The state governors' appropriation of local government spaces, their usage for electioneering campaigns, and their sharing by political godfathers and state assembly members are the main causes of the shortage of sufficient funding. The Central Bank of Nigeria revealed this information in its economic report for the third quarter of 2011, stating that the 774 local government councils received \$493.77 billion in total from the federation and VAT pool Accounts during the months of July, August, and September. Accounts totaled \$493.77 billion during the months of July, August, and September. The Monday, December 26, 2011 media article detailed how state governors had taken control of local government budgets and occasionally outright redirected funds to nonexistent projects. Additionally, state governors have taken money from the federation account for local governments by using the joint account. According to Akhabue (2011), the most recent illegal trend involved state governors transferring funds from the federation account to local governments, giving each council less than \$20 million to cover overhead and salary expenses. These corrupting practises have contributed significantly to the issue of insufficient funding, which has rendered the provision of efficient services in rural regions unfeasible.

Objective of the Study

This paper therefore tends to address this problem of inadequate finance which has posed

serious challenge to the development at the rural areas. Thus, the allocation to local government do not get to the hands of local government practitioners for proper service delivery.

Conceptual Framework

In this paper, an attempt was made to define three basic concepts like local government, development and rural development. Local Government the concept of local government involves a philosophical commitment to democratic participation in the governing process at the grassroots level. This implies legal and administrative decentralization of authority, power and personnel by a higher level of government to a community with a will of its own, performing specific functions as within the wider national framework. A local government is a government at the grassroots level of administration meant for meeting peculiar grassroots need of the people (Agagu, 1997). It is defined as "government by the popularly elected bodies charged with administrative and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place (Appadorai, 1975). Local government can also be defined as that tier of government closest to the people, "which is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain" (Lawal, 2000:60). Akpan (1982) defined local government as "the breaking down of a country into smaller units or localities for the purpose of administration in which the inhabitants of the different units or localities concerned play a direct and full role through their elected representatives who exercise power and undertake functions under the general authority of the national or state government". Barber (1969) defined Local government as authority to determine and execute matters within a restricted area. It becomes clear from the above that the purpose of establishing a local government is to ensure appropriate services and development activities responsible to local wishes and initiatives. Local government operates at the lowest level of society. Bandhu (1967) defined local government as: representative of local inhabitants, more or less autonomous in character instituted under state legislation, in a village, a district, a city or in urban areas to administer services as distinguished from state and central services The jurisdiction of a local government is limited to a specific area, a village or a city, and its functions relate to the provision of civic amenities to the population living within that area. Clarke (1948) maintains that a "local government appears to be that part of the government of a nation or state which deals mainly with such matters as concern the inhabitants of particular district or place". According to Rao (1965), Local government is "that part of the government which deals mainly with local affairs, administered by authorities subordinate to the state government, but elected independently of the state authority by the qualified residents. Robson (1949), in a lengthy definition, says that

“Local government may be said to involve the conception of territorial, non-sovereign community possessing the legal right and the necessary organization to regulate its own affairs. This in turn pre-supposes the existence of a local authority with power to act independently of external control as well as the participation of the local community in the administration of its own affairs. Gokhale (1972) definition of local government is very simple. He says that “Local self-government is the government of a specified locality by the local people through the representatives elected by them. Venkatarangaiya and Pattabhiram (1969) defined local government as the administration of a locality, a village, a town, a city or any other area smaller than the state by a body representing local inhabitants, possessing a fairly large amount of authority, raising at least a part of its revenue through local taxation and spending its income on services which are regarded as local and, therefore, as distinct from state and central services. A local government is expected to play the role of promoting the democratic ideals of a society and coordinating development programme at the local level. It is also expected to serve as the basis of socio-economic development in the locality. An analysis of the above definitions reveals certain essential characteristics of local governments.

These are:

Local Area: A local government has to operate in a geographical area.

Statutory Status: The local government enjoys statutory status, i.e it is created by a specific law or statute.

Autonomous Status: Autonomy of the local governments Is the natural consequence of their statutory status. Since the local governments are created by an act of the legislature, that Act lays down their powers, functions, and relationship with central or state government.

Local Participation:

Participation of the local people in decision making and administration of the local authority is important that is what gives it the character of self-government. Local Accountability: Since local government provides services of local nature called civil amenities like sanitation, education, transport etc. to the people of the area, it is appropriate that it is accountable to the local people.

Local Finances: Local governments have two main sources of finances:

(1) grants-in-aid given by the central or state government and

(2) taxes and levies imposed by the local governments themselves.

Social Services for the Local People: The primary goal of the local government is to deliver certain municipal facilities right to residents' doorsteps. The neighborhood's ability to live healthily is ensured by the provision of these services.

Evolution: We must comprehend the idea of development in order to have a better understanding of rural development. According to Hornby (2000), development is the process of making or developing something new, as well as the slow growth of something to make it stronger, more advanced, etc. According to this concept, growth entails advancement through steady modifications.

Umehali (2006) sees the changes to be multi-dimensional involving changes in structures, attitude and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. He asserts that development involves economic growth component, equality or social justice component, and socio-economic transformational component which are all on a self-sustaining basis. Viewing the concept differently, Simon (2004) sees development as an improvement in quality of life (not just material standard of living) in both quantitative terms.

Rural Development

In Nigeria, the term "rural development" is not well defined since different academics have varied perspectives on it. Certain academics, such as Haddad (1990) and Hinzen (2000), examine rural development through the lens of educational training. According to Obinne (1991), rural development entails giving people more and better opportunity to receive an education, reach their full potential, and participate in choices and actions that have an impact on their daily life. Others, such as Olayide, Ogunfowora, Essang, and Idachaba (1981), see rural development as a way to give rural residents access to infrastructure, better agricultural production, extension services, and jobs. The views on rural development held by Olatunbosun (1976), Williams (1978), Lele (1979), Idachaba (1980), and Ogunfeditimi (2000) varied.

The standard of life and living circumstances of the rural population.

According to Olatunbosun (1976), the foundation of rural development is the necessity to supply technological needs for accelerating economic growth in the development while also balancing the pattern and direction of government for the benefit of both the urban and rural sectors. The views on rural development held by Olatunbosun (1976), Williams

(1978), Lele (1979), Idachaba (1980), and Ogunfiditimi (2000) varied. They all agree, meanwhile, that the living conditions and level of living of the rural population need to be improved. Olatunbosun (1976) stated that rural development is based on the need to balance the pattern and direction of government for the benefit of both the urban and rural sectors and provide technical requirements for speeding up economic growth in the development. According to Adelemo (1987), adopting new housing unit types or resettling displaced populations are examples of what is meant by the idea of rural development. He goes on to say that economic considerations like financing, irrigation, better agricultural practises, and land carrying capacity for every section of farmland should be included in rural development in addition to land-use development. According to Ogbazi (1992), the goal of the National Policy on Rural Development is to create an acceptable degree of development in rural areas, which is the ideal scenario.

These objectives can be paraphrased to include:

1. Promotion of the social, cultural, educational and economic wellbeing of the rural population, promotion of sustained and orderly development of the vast resources in the rural area for the benefit of the rural people.
2. Increase in and diversification of job opportunities and improvement of income in the rural areas.
3. Mobilization of the rural population for self-help and self-sustaining programme of development, and
4. Up-lifting of the technological based industries in the rural area.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach adopted for this paper is democratic-participatory school of thought due to the fact that it is essential to a democratic regime or for practical administrative purposes like responsiveness, accountability and control. The concept of democracy is central to the democratic-participatory school of thought. This school of thought believes that democracy is a way of life that demands that one another's point of view and one another's interest be mutually appreciated'. (Panter-Brick: 1970). It is a concept that is based on fair play, tolerance and respect for the right of others, a concept that accepts those to be intrinsically undeniable values (Ola: 1984). It is expected that real democratic governance would be good governance. Good governance amongst other things involves the enthronement of due process, constitutionalism, rule of law, transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs, the absence of good governance and its by-products, automatically leads to two negative outcomes like massive corruption and political

instability. None of these outcomes is conducive to development (Muo: 2007). The general consensus among Nigerians is that corruption appears to have been institutionalized in the local government. Selection instead of election a serious trait of anti-democratic governance among other things might have accounted for the scenario. The democratic-participatory school of thought exists solely for the purpose of bringing about democracy and Mill (1975) justified local government on three main grounds. The first was that there are certain concerns or interests which only a section of the community has in common, and it is convenient as well as advisable that only those who share this community of interests should administer them. As Mill (1975) put it: The very object of having a local representation is in order that those who have any interest in common, which they do not share with the general body of their countrymen, may manage that joint interest by themselves. The second reason was that local government is one of the free institutions“ which provides political education. According to Mill: I have dwelt in strong language –hardly any language is strong enough to express the strength of my conviction –on the importance of that portion of the operation of free institutions, which may be called the public education of the citizens. Now, of this operation, the local administrative institutions are the chief instrument. The third reason was that of accountability, as Mill expressed it: not only are separate executive officers required for purely local duties but the popular control over those officers can only be advantageously exerted through a separate organ. Their original appointment, the function of watching and checking them, the duty of providing, or the discretion of withholding, the supplies necessary for their operation, should rest with the people of the locality.

The arguments of Mill have been refined by elaboration. Millmodern adherent, Keith (1954) argued the pedagogic value of local government, asserting that participation in local administration teaches the participant the art of weighing and choosing between competing claims and justifying the choice as a just one, that is, being accountable. He further stressed that the capacity to make rational choices and the art of winning consent“ are as much necessary in local government as in central government, and, that capacity is acquired and enhanced by participation in local government. Another adherent is Wilson (1984) who argued that the higher ultimate purposes that local government serves are political. One of these is political education which participation in local government affords. That political education is „in the first place, an education in the possible and the expedient; in the second place, it is an education in the use of power and authority and in the risks of power, in the third place, it is education in practical ingenuity and versatility. Mackenzie (1961) regarded local government as a training

ground for national politicians. In addition, local government has the advantage that local knowledge, interested and intimate, firsthand knowledge which makes administration concrete and relevant to a locality can be more easily and perhaps cheaply made available to the local and central authorities. There is no doubt that the essence of local government fits into this framework in view of the federal system of government adopted and the quest for development at the grassroots level. Local government cannot meet the needs of the people without adequate participation of the local dwellers. In summary, local government, it is claimed, enables services of local importance only to be locally administered, provides education in citizenship, provides training in political leadership, makes available to the central government information about localities which is essential for adequately meeting their needs efficiently, and minimizes concentration of political power by diffusing it.

Attempts at Rural Development

The various policies of the Nigerian government on rural development are to improve the living condition in the rural areas with a view to curbing the streamlining rural-urban migration. These policies show the zeal of different governments and non-government organizations (NGOS) which has led to the proliferation of development agencies. Despite the countless numbers of rural development policies introduced at different times by successive governments coupled with the huge financial and material resources employed, little or nothing is felt at the rural level as each policy has often died with the government that initiated it before it starts to yield dividends for the rural dwellers. Onuorah (2006) support this claim when he states that not minding the lofty objectives (policies and government initiatives). Such efforts endured beyond the government that initiated the schemes. In Lagos State, specific attempts have been made by the government towards the development of rural areas through the initiation of various programmes. One of this is poverty alleviation through rural agriculture which was organized by Lagos state government in 2002. It has been discovered that rural-urban drift which make majority of the youths roam the cities in search of jobs that are not available could be tamed if agriculture is made attractive and the rural areas equipped with basic infrastructures like electricity and good roads among others. Local farmers are not able to go into mechanized farming as a result of paucity of funds occasioned by lack of access to rural credit and loans. They struggle to survive on the little they could do manually, most times to feed their families and very little to sell. Investigations indicated that even those who produce enough to sell run into losses due to lack of storage facilities and bad roads to move the produces to the market. In a bid to ensure that farmers have access to funds made available by the Federal Government and the International

Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative organised a three-day sensitization and awareness workshop on Rural Finance Institution Building programme (RUFIN) in Ikorodu, Epe and Badagry local governments. RUFIN programme is being implemented through a loan agreement of \$27.2million from International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and a grant of \$0.5million from Ford Foundation. It is an initiative embraced by the state government with the aim to reduce poverty level among the rural dwellers in the area of agriculture and other agro-allied economic activities. In other words, RUFIN developmental objectives was to help small holder farmers and rural micro enterprises to have quality access to financial services in a sustainable manner. Other objectives of RUFFIN include creation of variable and sustainable rural financial institutions for integration into the mainstream financial system of the country, guarantee and refinance of credit facility to rural microfinance institutions to be provided by the microfinance banks through the commercial banks.(State of Lagos Megacity Report, 2004)The programme was embarked upon to ensure that farmers, artisans and the physically-challenged in Ikorodu, Epe and Badagry local governments improve on their agricultural productivity and the economic activities of the youths in their various communities in order to reduce the unemployment situation in the state. At the end of the programme, the state government paid a sum of twelve million naira (#12million) to the participants and provided equipment, offices and competent manpower for the implementation of RUFIN programme in Ikorodu, Epe and Badagry local governments. A cursory look at the introduction, establishment, implementation and the objectives of majority of the above programmes will reveal that they are mainly targeted at rural development in an attempt to better the lives of rural dwellers, stimulate and enhance economic growth, as well as get the rural sector to contribute meaningfully to the national economic and social development. As a result of the neglect of agriculture and the rural areas, Nigeria now imports farm products to feed its people with untold hardship on the rural people Umehali and Akuibilo (2006) note that oil exploration and agricultural activities are carried out in rural areas, and both yield the highest revenue for the nation. Interestingly, as revealed by Umehali (2004), literature shows that greater percentage of the total population live in rural areas and most of them are engaged in agriculture. If we must make the rural areas attractive to live, then meaningful effort geared towards sustainable rural development must be aggressively and vigorously pursued as this will alter the certainty of poor quality of life in the rural areas which Adalemo (1987) sees as the main phobia that has often pushed migrants to the perceived opportunities in the urban centres.

The Roles of Local Government in Rural Development

In Nigeria, past centralized development efforts embarked upon had resulted into failure to benefit the rural people yet, these people cannot be neglected for its enormity. For instance, in Nigeria, the population of people residing in rural areas in few selected states is : Rivers 86.16%, Anambra 80:85%, Bauchi 76:8%, Oyo 37:84% , Ondo 25.8%, Kano 89:6%, Sokoto 38:7% Kwara 52.0%, Plateau 69:0%, Ogun 68:3% and Gongola 71:5% (Olojede,1991). It has therefore been realized that rural development must constitute a major part of a development strategy if a large segment of those in greatest need are to benefit since most programmes embarked upon by the central and state governments. have failed in these areas; then local government becomes the next agent to fall on for development. The roles of local government in rural development are:

Education: Local governments through their local education districts have been responsible for the construction, maintenance and staffing of primary schools in their respective areas. Also, it is responsible for the payment of salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff in primary schools.

Transportation: The provision of transportation has gone a long way to enhance the status of Nigerian local governments. These local governments have set up diverse mass urban transit schemes to help to transport their staff and also act as a source of revenue generation for local governments.

Public Toilet: Local governments are not left out in the maintenance of good hygienic culture. They embark on the construction of public toilets for their people.

Water Supply: Local governments embark on digging bore holes in the rural areas, this has greatly improved the hygiene nature of the people in these rural communities.

Medical and Health: These include the provision, maintenance and administration of dispensaries, maternity, and health centres. The increase in the revenue allocation to local governments has been helping in the maintenance of these medical and health services.

Law Enforcement: Customary courts of Grades A, B and C and setup indifferent local government areas. These courts deal with Civil cases such as divorce, defaulters and issuing of certificate of marriage Nehru (1996) emphasized the role of local government as the basis of any true system of democracy. According to him, the role of local government includes the following; Grass-root democracy: Local government provides scope for

democracy at the grass –root level. If direct democracy can still be practicable, it is only at this level, otherwise democracy at the state or national level has become only indirect type.

Serves as a training School: Local government is an excellent ground for creating and training future leaders. The participation of people at the local level in the management of their own affairs, gives them necessary experience to handle bigger affairs later at the state or national level.

Encourages participation of the people in public affairs: Local government affords opportunity to the people to participate in public affairs. It has become impracticable for common people to participate in public affairs at the state or national level.

Reduces the burden of the central government: Local government in a way acts supplementary to the central government. No doubt historically the local government is prior to the state or national government, but with the passage of time many important functions got transferred to the central government.

Serves as a channel of communication: The local government serves as two-way channel of communication between itself and the central government .Desires and aspirations of the local community are articulated and carried upward to the state government, and plans and programmes of the state and the central governments flow in the reverse direction.

Vital for national progress: Local government promotes diversity of experience and creative activity through democratic action. Thus, it contributes to national progress through resilience, strength and richness of democracy.

Challenges of Rural Development

The issue of funding is a big challenge, Some of the rural development programmes are so bogus without a clearly defined sources of funding. The cases of the Housing for ALL, Universal Basic Education (UBE) and so on are clear examples. They are often initiated before sourcing for funds from philanthropists and international donors which may never come. Another challenge is the armed conflicts ranging from ethnic, religious and communal issues which do not provide enabling environment for the implementation of sustainable development programmes in such areas. For instance, a situation where foreigners and government workers in some coastal rural areas are target of kidnappers demanding ransom is obviously not conducive for development work. Also,

corruption poses a very big threat to rural development. There is a lack of integrity, accountability and transparency on the part of people who are supposed to implement development projects in the rural areas. Nwakoby (2007) laments that public funds (made for rural projects) are stretched away in bank vaults in Europe and America, while an overwhelming proportion of the population live in abject poverty. Another challenge is the lack of political will and commitment, policy instability and insufficient involvement of the intended beneficiaries of the programmes hence according to Chiloikwu (2006), most of them died with the government that initiated them. For example, development programmes like Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Free and Compulsory Primary Education, Low cost Housing Schemes which impact positively on the rural dwellers could not be sustained. Onibokun (1987) sees rural development to be faced with the paradox that the production oriented rural economy relies heavily on non-productive people who are well-equipped with outdated tools, technical information, scientific and cultural training and whose traditional roles and access to resources pose problems for their effective incorporation into modern economic systems, whereas the consumption oriented urban economy is flooded with people many of who are either unemployed or unemployable or marginally employed or underemployed in the urban centres where they choose to live. As a result of this mass exodus, the rural areas have been qualitatively depopulated and are progressively less attractive for social and economic investments while the urban areas are becoming physically congested, socially unhealthy and generally uneconomic to maintain. In addition, rural development is faced with challenges which have made the effect of government's efforts at different levels, NGOs, private initiatives and international involvement not felt by the intended beneficiaries. Umebali and Akubuilu (2006) list such challenges like: Vicious cycle of poverty, poor infrastructure, high population density, high level of illiteracy, low social interaction, and local politics and rural-urban migration. Rural dwellers have been considered as the thermometer through which one determines the impact of rural development. A lot of rigours, bottlenecks and unnecessary bureaucracy are often attached to rural development process. This is evident in the history of most of the rural development programmes which are often saddled with disappointments. Another challenge is the issue of proliferation of development programmes. Some are so superficially implemented that the average targeted population (rural dwellers) doubt the sincerity of the initiators. Such proliferation can easily be noticed from the many numbers of such that died with successive government that initiated them. The problem of implementation is another glaring challenge. Obot (1989) justified this claim when he writes that the development policies geared towards the improvement of the rural dwellers remained almost a house -hold word without

corresponding success especially at the implementation states. To this end, some of them are haphazardly implemented as a result of poor supervision. Perhaps this is why water taps abound in so many rural communities but without water since their installation. Local governments, being small may not be able to attract competent and efficient people to perform the services they render to the public. Since the area of their jurisdiction is small and their capacity to pay is limited by their limited resources, they may find it difficult to hire specialists. Since governments are concerned with their respective local communities, they may degenerate into myopic, narrow-minded, selfish and ignorant institutions. They cannot provide services of a uniform standard. Local governments are bound to differ in resources, efficiency, etc. They are to work and survive in the face of centralizing tendencies. Modern technological revolution has led to speedy communications, industrialization, urbanization etc. "Local initiative and the independence of action have been undermined by the ease and quickness with which the state government and the town government may talk over the telephone and settle the matter," (Maheshwari, 1999).

Local governments may especially be prone to corruption and malfeasance, much more so than the central government.

Way Forward

One of the major challenges of local government is lack of adequate finance to implement its programmes at the grassroots level, therefore, for local government to bring development to the rural areas, there is the need for local councils to have strong economic base. In this connection it is suggested that statutory allocations to local councils be reviewed upward from 52.68%, 26.72% and 20.6% to 52.1%, 25.9% and 22.0% at the federal, state and local governments respectively. In addition to this, councils' shares of the federation account to be released to them directly to avoid lateness in the payment of salaries and arbitrary deductions by state government. Local government should have representation in the Revenue Allocation and Fiscal Commission which determines and shares the federated revenue to the beneficiaries. It is not enough to have an upward review of councils' allocations, but also advisable for local councils to look inwards for improved Internally Generated Revenue (IGR). This will make them financially self-reliant. Besides, some local councils should look for ways of attracting industries to their areas as this will propel economic development and increase their revenue base. In order to reduce the incidence of corruption in local government, there must be better welfare packages for local government staff. Adequate motivation and welfare package will prepare the workers for the task of service delivery.

Also, the electorates should be educated and enlightened of the danger inherent in money politics, they should endeavor to vote for people of proven integrity rather than compromising their future and that of the generation yet unborn on the altar of election. Furthermore, the inadequacy of skilled workers to implement various developmental programmes can be solved by investing in human beings, Obada (2002) believed that the most permanent and deepest way to ensure ideal development in the rural areas is to invest in human beings which policies like National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Universal Basic Education (UBE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) etc are meant to do. Also, a viable system of development at local government level must provide political leadership and guidance to plan and execute various programmes and policies. But this must be done without curbing local initiative and participation. Indeed, Bureaucrats and Technocrats are needed to assist and advise the local people. If these officials are to appear as masters of the people, it will be difficult to change their mentality and attitude. The only way to integrate themselves with the local people is to appear as genuine servants of the people and to place themselves under the political authority of the locally recognized leaders. Also, the concern for corruption in Nigeria society must be removed in the conduct of local government. Above all, provision of education, health and other social services must be the priority of the local government authorities to create new man with attitude prepared to challenge oppression and exploitation. The problem of lack of due consultation and non-involvement of local dwellers by the local government before embarking on developmental programmes can be eliminated if the local government can run an open administration that will encourage the local communities to express their opinions on issues that affect them, thereby allowing local government to implement programmes that are demanded by the people. Thus, this will prevent misplacement of priorities and wastage of resources.

Conclusion

In conclusion, if Odigbo and Adediran (2004) defined sustainable development as being long-term, lasting, and human-centered rather than being a temporary solution, then the primary responsibility of local government is to establish a robust and healthy rural community by providing a structural framework that fosters rural development. A foundation like this will promote cooperative philosophy, support private efforts, and reorient our value systems. Everyone should have sufficient education that will alter the moral standards of the community. Strict adherence to these recommendations, in my opinion, can elevate local councils from their defunct status as manipulative instruments to the desired position as grassroots development and change agents.

References

- Allen, I. (1979). Socialist transformation in rural Mozambique. *Rural Africana*. 4(5), 10-17
- John, M. C. (1980). Integrated rural development: Clearing out Under brush. *Sociologia Ruralis*, XX(3), 117-135.
- John, R. H. (1978). Towards a theory of rural development. *African Development*. 3(2), 47-50
- Okwudiba, N. (1993). *Dead end to Nigerian Development: An investigation on the Social, Economic and Political crisis in Nigeria*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Peter, A. N. (1987). *Popular struggles for Democracy in Africa*. New Jersey: Zed Books Limited.
- Huntington, S. & Joan, M. N. (1976). *No Easy Choice*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Sartaj, A. (1978). *Rural Development: Learning from China*. London: Macmillan Press Limited
- Seoul, (2002). *Second Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies, COEX Convection Center Seoul*
- Abia, V. (1991). *Local Government Administration: The Nigerian Perspective*. Lagos: BMD Graphics
- Yusuf, M.M. (1999). *The Role of Local Government Employees in National Development*. Paper presented at a seminar organized by the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees. Katsina State chapter
- Ajayi, K. (2000). *Theory and Practice of Local Government*. Ado Ekiti: University of Ado Ekiti Press Limited.
- Agagu, A.A. (1997). *Local Government in Kolawole, D (ed) Readings in Political Science*. Ibadan: Dekaal Publishing Company.
- Appadorai, A. (1975). *The Substance of Politics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Laski, H.J. (1982). *A Grammar of Politics*. London: Allen Press Limited.
- Lawal, S. (2000). *Local Government Administration in Nigeria: A Practical Approach in*

- Ajayi, K (ed). Theory and Practice of Local Government. Ado Ekiti: University of Ado Ekiti Press Limited.
- Nwabueze, B.O. (1982). A Constitutional History of Nigeria. London: Longman Press Limited.
- The 1976 Local Government Reforms Guidelines, Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information.
- Steven, A.N.(1981).Integrated Rural Development and the Marginalization of the Peasantry in Nigeria, *Africa development*. 6(4), 45-50.
- John, M.C. (1980).Integrated Rural Development: Learning out Underbrush. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 20(3), 75-80.
- Odueme, S. (2011). Alleviating poverty through rural agriculture, *Daily Independence*,
- Mill, J.S. (1975). Consideration on Representative Government, in his *Three Essays (With an Introduction by Richard Wollheim)*, London: Oxford University Press, P.358.
- Keith, P. (1954).Local Self Government as a Basis for Democracy: A Rejoinder, in *Public Administration*, London: Winter Press 438-440.
- Wilson, C. F. (1948).The Foundation of Local Government in his *Essays on Local Government*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Press. 1-24.
- Mackenzie, W. J. M (1961).Theories of Local Government, London: London School of Economics.
- Lagos State Government (2002). Report of the Second Lagos State Summit, Ministry of Economic and Budget, Lagos State, Nigeria.
- Bolaji, U. (2002). New forms of settlements in Africa. *State of Lagos Magacity and Other Nigerian Cities (2004)*. First edition
- Report: Lagos State Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, in collaboration with the Lagos state Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development.
- Ehingbeti (2002). Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget. Lagos State Government, Ikeja.