

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF  
SUSTAINABLE SOCIO ECONOMIC AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA. A  
STUDY OF AKWAIBOM STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The paper examined the role of local government and the challenges of sustainable socio-economic development in AkwaIbom State. Local government, being the third tiers of governments in Nigeria, is seen as a mechanism for overcoming rural socio-economic development challenges due to its closeness to the rural populace. The 1999 constitution as amended in fourth schedule clearly defined the roles of local government in the federation towards rural development. However, the capacity to fulfill these responsibilities has been hindered by several factors ranging from political infringement to economic marginalization by the higher tiers of government making local governments in Nigeria to exist at the mercy of the state government in the way that ridicule their existence. This and other challenges explain the weakness and ineffectiveness of local government system in Nigeria. The study relied on qualitative and descriptive approach for data collection. Data were drawn using secondary sources. The major findings of the study revealed among others that the problem of local government to serve as change agent for rural development in Nigeria is as a result of corruption, lack of qualified trained staff, lack of autonomy, inadequate funds among others. Based on the above findings, the paper recommended among others that for local governments in Nigeria to serve as viable agent of socio economic development at the grass root level, they should not over depend on the statutory revenue allocation from both Federal and State governments. By so doing serious commitment should be made by the local government administrators towards internally generated revenue. Elective council leaders should have the political will to transform their domain coupled with a well-trained and qualified staff should be recruited to administer the affairs of the local government council for effective utilization of resources generated for the wellbeing of the local populace in AkwaIbom State in particular and Nigeria in general. Secondly, the use of direct labour (council engineers) in carrying out projects in place of contractors should be encouraged. This will bring about accountability and transparency in project implementation and execution.

**Key Words:** Local Government, Rural Development, and Socio-Economic Development.

## INTRODUCTION

The arguments for the existence of local governments hinge on two basic principles: the need to create a sense of belonging, safety and satisfaction among the populace on one hand; and the need for proper mobilization and integration of the various component unit of the state for administrative convenience of the central government on the other hand. All forms of government, regimes or political systems have so far pursued the attainment of these goals. This informed the development of local government system, whose concept and effective practice holds promise of ensuring national administrative development and political efficacy. Therefore, whatever the system of government, the practice of local government system has been essentially regarded as the path to, and guarantor of, national integration, administration and development.

Studies on Local Government have spanned through the years and various scholars have expressed their opinions on the concepts, issues arising, circumstances, dynamics and associated problems of Local government system as relating to their viability as agent of socio-economic development in the rural area.

There is general assumption among scholars and practitioners, that local government are not only established as representative organ but also as a channel through which goods and services are delivered to the local people within the framework of laws establishing them. In fact, democracy itself originated and developed along the line of local government initiatives. This is why the executive, legislative and judicial arms of these governments are elected or appointed as the case may be.

The definition of local government by the Nigerian Federal Government leaves one with no iota of doubt that it is largely both theoretically sound and service oriented to the people. It talks of representative councils with substantial control over local affairs, for the provision of services and implementation of projects in their areas, to complement the activities of both the State and Federal governments. The definition also amply recognizes the need for local government autonomy as the substantial control of local governments is aimed at staff, institutional and financial matters, among others (FGN, 1976). This informed Ademolekun (1988) observations that the characteristics of Local Government system in Nigeria revolves around legality, which is to say that, it is statutorily established, its functions and its degree of autonomy clearly specified.

Local Governments administration in Nigeria are empowered by the constitution to elect leaders who should carry out their functions and consequently meet the yearning aspiration of the rural populace. The ideas behind this arrangement is to promote the involvement of grass-root (rural) people in the decision making process of the state, and also to identify local need, make policies to address them, and also monitor the process of its implementation in the local Government. The above points are not in any way isolated since they all focus on the purpose of ensuring socio-economic development of the rural populace (Ibanga, and (2012).

The 1976 Local Government reform initiated by the Murtala/Obasanjoregime evolves as a result of the commitment of the government to the objective of improving life in the rural areas

and getting more people involved in the decision making process. Information also gleaned from the reforms revealed that prior to the restructuring of the Local Government system, the Local Government institutions in the country were unstable and weakened excessively by outside control, financial deficiency, shortage of qualified manpower and lack of uniform structure. Given these problems, the Reforms noted that the main aims of the restructuring were:

- (1) To increase autonomy of Local Governments and give them more responsibility;
- (2) To ensure greater popular participation, which was to serve both input and output functions within the system; and
- (3) To give the local Governments necessary financial backing (Gboyega, 1991).

With these provisions, Local Government typifies a means of speeding up development in the rural areas.

As important as this tier of government has been, there seems to be some impediments that have been infringing on its performance and functions in recent times. These impediments ranges from undue interference of the higher levels of government( i.e. federal and state governments)in the business of the local government, to bribery and corruption, and gross inadequacy of well-trained and qualified personnel to mention a few.

Given the above background information, this paper seeks to contribute in discussing the actual status of Nigerian Local Government systems as regards to community or rural development which is the *raison d'être* of its existence. The descriptive analysis will show whether creation of local government is really for the sake of ensuring grassroots development or mere political compensation for the government loyalists. In the light of this, we chose to study the topic. Specifically, the paper carefully, critically and objectively examines operational definitions, local government, socio economic development and opinion of the people expressed through the print media about the impact of Nigeria's local government council towards rural development in Nigeria. And of course, germane recommendations which emanate from the study are provided for the improvement of local government in the development of the rural communities.

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The Federal, State and Local Government are recognized as the principal agents of rural development in Nigeria. But of the three tiers of government, the Local Government has the highest prospect of ensuring that the benefits of development spread to every nooks and crannies of the country through executing people-oriented programmes and projects in health, Agriculture, Education, Roads, electrification and other social infrastructure. This is due to its proximity to the people and its capacity for enhancing local participation in the development planning process. This is inline with Samuel Hume's argument that "no institutions are more capable of ascertaining local needs, considering local demand, determining priorities, mustering local resources and arousing local interest and support as local government councils".

The expectations from Local Governments as highlighted above are laudable. The extent to which the local governments are able to meet these expectations is quite significant. Local governments which were created to provide developments at the grassroots level, finds it so difficult to achieve such objective as a result of corruption, inadequate revenue, low executive capacity, poor and inadequate working materials, in competencies, mediocrity, lack of financial autonomy, ineptitude of existing staff and excessive control by the state government which results in delay (red-tapism). The failure of Local Government administration/administrators to ensure sustainable development compounds the problem of underdevelopment in the society. The inability of local governments to develop the rural areas has contributed immensely to the continued influx of people to the local government capitals which becomes so congested with negative multiplier effects on economy, health, social and other areas of human endeavor.

Though the 1999 constitution as amended guaranteed democratic elections to be conducted in the local governments, various state governments disregarded this provision, and mostly replaced with caretaker committees appointed by the governors. This appointees while in office mainly represent themselves and the governor that usually appointed them. They see local government council as avenue for rewarding their political allies, there would be no doubt that issue pertaining to development is not envisaged by them.

In order to properly understand the role of local government in economic development in Nigeria and the challenges faced in the cause of providing development oriented programmes at the grass root level, the paper raises the following questions:

- i. Has the local government effectively discharged its constitutional assigned functions?
- ii. Are funds at the disposal of the local government enough for the execution of its enormous programmes and projects?
- iii. What are the factors militating against these laudable expectations with particular reference to local governments in Akwa Ibom State?

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

### Local Government

There is no generally accepted definition of what constitute Local Government. A sizeable number of definitions of local government have been put forward by many scholars in this field to meet their respective scholarly objective. For the purpose of this paper, we shall only consider the following definition:

The United Nation division of public Administration defines Local Government as a political subdivision of a nation (or in a federal system) which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the power to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected (Awofeso, 2004). The 1976 guidelines on Local Government reforms defined Local

Government as ‘Government at the local level exercised through representative councils , established by laws to exercise specific function within a defined areas’.

In connection to the above definitions, Hill (1974) defined local government as:

- i. ‘A system of territorial units with defined boundaries, a legal identity, an institutional structure, and power and duties laid down in general and special statutes and a degree of financial autonomy’.
- ii. Government popularly elected bodies charged with administrative and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or phase.

American Dictionary of Government (ed) (1970), defined local government as a form of government in cities, boroughs, towns, townships, villages and counties as distinguished from state and the federal government.

Another expository definition is the one put forward by Ekpe (2012:16) who defines local government as a governing institution, which has authority over a sub national territorially defined area. In the same vein, Umoren (1993:3) equates Local government with the government of an area smaller than a country, state or province (which) includes countries, cities, towns and village.

Ogunna (1988) sees local government as the government in which popular participation both in the choice of decision maker and in the decision making process is conducted by local bodies which while recognizing the supremacy of their levels of government, is able and willing to accept responsibility for its decisions.

In conclusion, Local Government is defined as the institution of democracy closest to local communities with its vital role play not only in political education, but also in engendering and enhancing democratic practices among citizens. They also see it as a significant social capital to be gained through engaging their citizens in the governance of their own communities.

### **Socio Economic Developments**

Socio-economic development is a process of qualitative and quantitative improvement in the social and economic reality of the society. It is the relationship between economic activity and social life. The NEPAD Declaration view socio-economic development as the continuous improvement in the well-being and the standard of living of the people. The concept aims at ensuring that people meet the basic needs that are essential to live a life of dignity.

In line with this, Rodney (2009) sees it as a many sided process, which comprises increase in skill, and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. More recently socio-economic development has been identified with distributional justice as a way of reducing the poverty level among the masses or, satisfying their basic needs.

According to Seer (2003), the questions to ask about a state’s level of socio-economic development are three; (1) what has been happening to poverty? (2) What has been happening to

unemployment? (3) What has been happening to inequality? If all these three indices have reduced significantly, socio-economic development could be said to be attained in such a state. The objective of socio-economic development is to raise the level of livelihood of the masses and to provide all human beings with the opportunity to develop their potential. Thus, the definition clarifies that socio-economic development implies not only expansion in quantitative economic indices, but also structural changes in the society and its economy expansion process. Structural change includes institutional, social and economic aspects.

Socio-economic development action therefore is any action by the state whose purpose is to raise the rate of material well-being above that which would take place without any conscious effort. It has the dual purpose of economic growth and social structural change; it is comprehensive, covering every sector, region and aspect of life. Thus, the availability of infrastructure, industrialization, modernization and new technology and employments determined the levels of socio-economic development of a society.

The definition of socio-economic development given above, hinged on the material well-being of the people. Taking this as clue, when the term 'socio-economic development' is used in the study, it implies an improvement in the material well-being of the people in the rural area. Material well-being of a rural area or region or can be identified with the increase in the real production, availability of infrastructural facilities, amenities and services, better employment opportunities, practice and adoption of new and modern technology and an increase in the rate of investment and consumption. Any changes for betterment in these parameters indicate socio-economic development. Socio-economic development depends upon various factors or components such as:

Per capita Income

Level of Agriculture Development

Level of Industrial Development

Level of Urbanization

Level of employment

Occupational Structure

Level of Educational Development

Health Status/ life expectancy

Transport and Communication

### **Rural Development**

In the face of the wide acceptance of the concept of rural development, no single definition is yet available that is acceptable to all. The term rural development as used in this study refers to the act or process of developing and empowering the well-being of the vast majority of the rural dwellers through the provision of basic social and economic infrastructures. Rural development aims at the creation of sustainable improvements in the quality of life for all people at the rural area as the principal goal of development policy. Hence, it is a development from below.

Krutilla, (1985) grassroots development is an advancement at the rural levels that makes life more meaningful in its entirety whether political, economic, socio-cultural and

infrastructural. Orewa (1992) defined rural development as one which is directly concerned with increasing the natural standard of living of the poor at the grassroots level which could be quantitatively measured in terms of increased food, real income, educational services, health care, sanitation, water supply and the like.

Sustainable rural development is often referred to as the marriage of economy and ecology, that is; to attain economic development without compromising the ecological balance. Pearce (cited in Karpagam 2014:181) defines rural development as a vector of desirable social objectives such that an increase in real income per capita, and improvement in health and nutrition, educational achievement, access to resources, a fairer distribution of income and increase in basic freedom at the rural level.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Communal effort has not been a recent phenomenon. It dates back to the time of primitive communalism when people searched for their living communally. In the early state of man, he always sought ways of conquering nature. Okoli (2005) argues that the concept of community development is not new, that rather it is an old ideology. The reality in Bentham's assertion that community development revolves around man in the society can be sustained by the fact that members of communities throughout history constructed and maintained their roads, bridges, square, sunk their well for good drinking water supply, and constructed their markets, village churches and village halls by community efforts.

Okeke, (2008) asserts that community development is not new in Nigeria, that what is actually new nowadays in community development are techniques and methods through which new pattern of leadership emerges from the rank and file. Adewumi (1980) in his own contribution argues that though local government is a veritable vehicle for community development, most local government have not made appreciable impact in this direction. He attributes the problem to the myriad of functions allocated to local government without commensurate financial backing.

Gboyega (1991) in an early assessment observed that one could not talk of national development without sustainable rural development. He asserted that; the problem of rural development in Africa is connected to poor funding on the side of the local government. According to Gunman, (1984), the smallness of cultivable land owned by farmers is a vital limiting factor to increased productivity in rural agriculture. This remains so as long as size of acreage solely determines the level of rural output (Okeke, 2008). Another index of the backwardness of the rural society can be measured by access to other production factors. Ogonnia (2004) observed that the level of production techniques has remained low over the years while principal tools are still simple and rudimentary. These to him, points to the poor financial and technological situations in which rural producer operates and make other decisions.

Ogunna (1988:44) attributed the low performance of local government to the following factors; inadequate revenue, low executive capacity, poor and inadequate working materials, incompetence and ineptitude of existing staff and excessive control by the state government

which result in delays and red-tapism. The solution, he suggested, lies in the review of the local government system particularly in areas of financial relationship with the state government and personnel. This control of local government was made clear in the implementation, guideline on the application of the civil service Reforms in the local government service.

Umabali,(2000)expressing his own idea, states that the spread of counties has provided the awareness among rural dwellers, and has provided consciousness for the existence of the concept of process of community development and of project which have been set in motion since the United Nation Organization develop the concepts since thirty years ago. Community development draw greater inspiration from the desire for a change and in the ability of man to learn and change through the voluntary method, (that is, free from coercion) and through the participation of individuals and groups in the development process for the achievement of some definite goals.

According to Sehinde, (2008:9) community development is:A process of education by which people of all ages and interest in the community, learn to share their thoughts,their ideas, the participation, their joys and their sorrowsand in a large measures to mold and shape the communaldestiny for themselves. It is a process of self-discovery and also a means through which the people of a community learn to identify and solve their community problems.

A firm grasp at their beliefs and value system will throw light on what the community accepts as good and bad, as right or wrong. In turn, changes achieved by community effort can influence the beliefs and value system of a community. It is necessary to stimulate the self-help spirit of the people by mobilizing them for communal efforts, which should be sustained with the assistance of the government. Blue Print for rural development, argues that for effective implementation of strategies for community development the town and community unions, age grades, etc. should be linked with government. This idea he said is to involve the community people fully through their union, age grades and other similar organization that are designed to improve their economic, social, political and cultural development. He stated that this would enable them to make positive contributions to both rural and national development. The community union and age grade in every community have usually served as point of articulation and fully aware of the needs of the people. However, if they are fully integrated into the planning stage of development project, a lot will be achieved.

Writing on rural development in Nigeria, Arua, and Duru, (2009) accused successive Nigerian government of concentrating development at the centerrather than developing the rural areas. He contends that this is the general pattern all over the third world countries.They remarked that many strategies such as “authoritarian hand out” from the administration which prescribed the facilities suitable for the rural areas and the so-called development from below have been tried in the past, in the attempt to solve rural poverty in Nigeria. These strategies have however not proved successful; he looks at rural development problem such as lack of co-

ordinated community development programmes, manpower, problems of infrastructure, problem of relevant rural education. He suggested solutions to these problems, which include clear understanding of the concept of community development, an integrated development programmes, provision of infrastructure, relevance at rural education to the peculiar need and aspiration of the rural areas.

In their “Local government and rural development in Nigeria”, Ejumudo, (2005) describes government approach to rural development as a mere sham. According to him, government has succeeded in imposing development programme on the rural masses, such programme he argues, only benefited a few rich and powerful urban elite. He calls for a model of rural development, which involves the genuine participation of the rural people. Such, he continues, will be relatively independent of centralized urban-oriented bureaucratic machines.

Daly (2013) argued that government imposition of rural development programme on the communities have been a cog in the wheel of rural development. As he put it, government have often set community development; priorities without the participation of the target or relevant communities. He suggests that since government are the engines of growth; government should play down its excessive control in betting out development goals and priorities for local communities.

Nnoli, (1980) sees self-help, as a strategy for rural development as a form of exploitation because, according to him, for the rural people it is viewed as the task resort to their survival due to government neglect. According to him, the community development process arises from the crying need of the rural population for social welfare services, unwillingness of the rural class to provide these amenities, the exploitation of the ruling class and the competition among communities for those social artifacts which are deemed to reflect social progress.

Okoli, (2005) contended that the British colonialists in Nigeria hatched community development ideology in order to under develop the people through his negative manipulation strategy. He regrets that his strategy has continued to be employed by indigenous rulers in the post-colonial state. He further contends that this strategy predicated upon the colonial policy of economic exploitation of the local area. That it is an instrument used to sustain the self-interest of the ruling classes while the rural communities suffer under poor, hash and stagnant conditions.

Arua, and Duru, (2009) highlighted the various development programmes designed by successive governments in Nigeria, which aimed at developing the rural communities. He gives an example of River Basin and Rural Development Authorities established in 1975 to promote rural development. He laments that in practice the scheme bloated bureaucracies feeding on mega million naira contracts for irrigation and other agricultural projects while the rural areas for which they were meant seemed to have recorded deeper in debilitating poverty.

Finally, from the extensive review of literature, it is obvious that scholars like Ibanga , (2012), Orewa (1983) and Okeke (2002) regretted that rural development activities and

programmes of the past decades of national independence have not transformed the country's rural areas into the modern, they contended that prosperous population envisaged are the beginning of national sovereignty. And concluded that in terms of the number of programmes identification pursued, rural development in Nigeria has made little transforming impact. They cited basic social services, public utilities and essential infrastructure as still being woefully inadequate in almost all corners of the country.

## **ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION TOWARDS SOCIO-ECONOMIC RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

### **Economic Development Role**

The local government councils were empowered to provide services for improvement of roads and street for better communication purposes, agriculture and method of husbandry. The functions of local government council also include provision of services for improvement of livestock and control of the outbreak of diseases among animals. Maintenance of forest plantations and sale of their products were provided for. One other important function among those relating to natural resources concerned the prevention and control of erosion.

The roles of local government are in some ways similar to those of the central government. The central government exist to provide for the development services to the people and provide security for the citizenry and ensures participation of the citizens in government. To some extent, local government performs such roles even though with some varying degree of intensity. For easier understanding, such roles could be classified into two viz: political and economic roles.

Local governments are veritable and appropriate institution for promoting democracy at the grass root level. They are well placed to mobilize the people politically through political education, political enlightenment and political actions. Local government has become very useful tool for the conduct of election at all levels of government. With such, the process of political recruitment is institutionalized and the institution can then help to train people for higher responsibilities. The country's political role is that of maintenance of laws and order. Local governments have the instrumentality of the police at their disposal and therefore work with its leadership at the local level to enforce law and order and maintain security. Moreover, certain committees such as the security committees and police-community relations committee, facilitate such exercise.

Moreover, to enhance responsive governance, local governments serve as two-way channel of communication between the government and the governed. Just as it transmits the decision of governments to the local people, it also conveys or channel their demands and feedbacks on policies to government (state or central).

In contributions to infrastructural development, Local Governments also grade rural feeder roads and building market at the rural area. Most feeders' roads are eyesore becoming deathtrap and a Dan for faceless local armed robbers and banditry. Economic development and activities cannot thrive in this areas because rural farmers are put in jeopardy and unable to move their goods to the market. With this economic activities are jettisoned at rural areas.

### **Electric Power Transmission (Rural Electrification)**

Given the various uses and level of electricity supply as an ingredient of overall development, access to certain communication, facilities like television, radio etc. which provide information is a direct function of viability of electricity. Since electricity is important for social and human development, most Local Government administration initiated and completed electrification projects at different part of the rural area. The main reason for such project is to boost the economic viability of the people living in the rural area and to electrify all nooks and cranny of the rural community. Through electricity project at the rural area, local government administration in Nigeria has been able to contribute immensely to sustainable development at the rural area by creating conducive environment for business to thrive at a rapid pace in the grass root level.

### **Rural water supply**

Water is very essential for life especially to quench thirst and keep human cells alive, it assume a serious priority of local government. To demonstrate this, most local government in Nigeria have provided mini water schemes at different village's and clans for the benefit of her citizenry. This is achieved through collective effort with the state government, NGO's or with the support of philanthropies at the grass root level.

### **Provision of primary health care center**

In order to ensure that the life and the health status of her citizens is secured, local government have been able to provide basic medical facilities at the grass root level. This is inline with the primary role and responsibilities of local government as enshrine in 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria as amended. Issues such as minor diseases are well taking care of at these primary clinics with the help of medical practitioners deploy and pay by the local government council.

Though it has been observed that Local Government Chairmen frowned at the number of senior medical practitioners posted in their councils, medical Doctors, Pharmacies and Nurses etc. due to heavy wage bills of category of health officials because of the financial positions of these council. This simple act therefore inhibit effective health care service delivery to the rural populace.

Let alone the Mon bond status of many health centers in AkwaIbom State due to modus operandi of some medical officials. They only visited their offices to sign timebook and leave. In most cases these so called in charge stayed at their comfort home and licensed their lieutenants to act in proxy. This lackadaisical approach to work become so worrisome in local government health centers due to inefficient monitoring mechanisms put on ground to checkmate the activities of most medical personnel posted to the rural areas. This alone defeated the essence of establishing the primary health center at the grass root level.

Other role of local government towards sustainable rural development include

- i. Increasing the people's understanding and support of social and economic development activities through policies and programmes.
- ii. Making programme to foster social and economic betterment of the local population more realistic and lasting
- iii. Formulation of economic planning and development schemes for the Local government Area
- iv. Construction and maintenance of roads, streets lightings, drains parks, gardens, open spaces, or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the house of Assembly of a state
- v. Development of agricultural sector through provision of fertilizers, holes and other farming facilities including loan to local farmers in order to boost their source of revenue
- vi. Provision of primary and vocational education to adult at the grass root level.

## **PROBLEMS FACED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN AKWA INOM STATE TOWARDS ACHIEVING EFFECTIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Inadequate Finance**

One of the perennial problems which has not only defied all past attempts at permanent solution, but also has a tendency for evoking high emotions on the part of all concerned (each time it is brought forth for discussion or analysis) is the issue of equitable revenue allocation in Nigeria. It is an issue which has been politicized by successive administrations in Nigeria both Military and civilian regimes. Indeed, in virtually all country in which the constitution shares power between the central and regional or state governments and, for each level to be "within a sphere co-ordinate and independent" (Wheare 1964:93) enough resources need be allocated to each tier to justify their existence.

According to Orewa (1968:225) the *raison d'être* of local authority is to collect its revenue efficiently and to use such revenue to provide many social service as possible for its tax payers while at the same time maintaining a reasonable amount reserve to cushion over any period of financial stringency. Following from the foregoing, a key function of a local government in Nigeria with regards to revenue generation can be identified based on the provision at chapter

(vi)(c) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which deals with public revenue and the fourth schedule there provides functions of a local government council section 162 (of chapter (vi) sub section 3,5,6,7 and 8) provide that “Any amount standing to the credit of the federation account and shall be distributed among the federal and state government council in such state on such terms and in manner as may be presided by the National Assembly.

According to Okoli (1998:125), despite the elaborate provision made in both decree No. 36 of 1998 and 1999 constitution for the financial autonomy of the local government doubt still remains as to the financial relationships among the three tiers of government for one thing the direct funding of the local government which has been jettisoned by the ambiguities in the provision of 1999 constitution as far as finance of the local government are concerned.

Ekpe (2012) argued that the bottom line in judging the effectiveness of local government is the amount of funds at their disposal. He notes that “the success of a local authority is often measured in terms of its ability to provide services to the public. These services cost money”, which the local government do not have sufficiency. Ogbonnia (2004:34) say’s that other sources of local government revenue depend on the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the council. He further explains that, there are several ways the council can generate funds but the major problems lies in the ability of the chairman to look inwards to create means of generating funds for the council.

The inadequacies of operational and capital funds constitute a set-back on local government implementation of regular services and investment programmes. Consequently, most local government can only pay workers’ salaries and take care of recruitment expenditure. In the case of Nigeria, the financial crisis in the local government has been worsened by the failure of the Federal Government to recognize the new local government created by some states. The state governors new use part of statutory allocations meant for the newly created ones, which in Enugu referred to as development centers (Umebali,2000).

### **Paucity of Skilled Manpower (human capital for administration)**

This refers to human resources; manpower is often described as the most important resources of an organization because other resources are harnessed to meet the need of men. Paucity of skilled manpower has been a major constraints to the effectiveness and efficiency of local government in Nigeria vis-à-vis Warri North local government.

Oyelakin, (1995), noted that at the inception of democratic local government system in the former Eastern region of Nigeria in 1950, early recruits into the local government service were mainly “Sons of the soil”. Orewa and Adewumi (1983) rightly stated that recruitment based on patronage, have created problems of redundancy in local governments where stern measures like termination of appointment and suspension of staff are rarely contemplated.

There is no doubt that the effectiveness of any organization to a large extent depends on the caliber of its staff. The local government does not have enough graduates employed in its

services. The people who work in the local government are employed based on favoritism and not on merit. Most staffs of the council don't know what is expected of them as local government staffs. Most of them often did not go beyond primary school level, and therefore cannot perform well. They don't even know the function of the department they found themselves let alone the work they are expected to perform, and this contributes in affecting the rural development. Staff training and development is another important aspect that has been neglected in local councils.

According to Pearson (2013), effective training programmes can result in increased productivity, reduced labour turnover, and greater employee satisfaction. The people who work in the community development department because of lack of skills for the nature of their job use wrong approach or measure in appealing to the communities to contribute and take part in community development.

According to Harris, (2000), the inability to provide management training in areas of operations other than finance and general administration such as engineers, architects, accountant, doctors, nurses, agriculture extension workers etc continues to militate against effective performance in most local governments in Nigeria. In an effort to address this quandary of manpower in terms of (skilled manpower like Engineers and Doctors and Administrators) in local government system in Nigeria, the federal military government in 1979 introduced three university-based Department of Public Administration and local government: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Ezeani (2004:183-184).

## **Corruption**

Corruption has endemically eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian nations; it is a major obstacle to development planning (formulation and implementation of policies). Arua and Duru (2008) observed that; corruption has been institutionalized in Nigeria, impacting negatively on implementation of policies. Corrupt practices and its attendant consequences are particularly weighing against the establishment of social infrastructural amenities and national political building-blocks that could ignite, generate, propel as well as sustain broad development in Nigeria (Daly, 2013):

Corruption is a cankerworm which has eating deep into the fabric of Nigeria Local Government councils. Even with the little funds available, local government officials instead of using them for the development of the local areas devised means of siphoning such fund among council members for personal use, etc. It is perhaps this ugly development in the second republic that made Gana (1982:9) to described local government as "conduit pipes for transferring resources to the emergent local elites that have supplanted the oligarchies". There have been many glaring cases of embezzlement and misappropriation of the councils funds by the officials of the councils. In Nigeria today, it is very painful that inspite of the huge monthly allocations going to the councils from the federation account, these councils have failed to provide any meaningful services and infrastructures to their people. This non-performance of the council has prompted some citizens to advocate for the dissolution of local government administration in the country.

Most time we even had situations where local government's properties such as furniture and electrical generators are carted away by local government chairmen and senior officials at the expiration of their term of office. The implication of all these is that local government is denied the necessary funds and materials for development and regular payment of its staff salaries. We believe that if this culture is not totally erase, the problem of financial insufficiency will continue, even if the federally allocated revenue to local government is increase to 40 to 50% as currently canvassed.

### **Problems of political interference:**

There is much political interference or infiltration of politics in the affairs of the councils. Most often, public policies of the councils are politicized to serve selfish interest at the expense of general interest of the people. Appointments in the councils are sometimes based on political patronage and party affiliation by the state actors thereby creating room for mediocre and nonentity.

### **Lack of political Will**

Nigeria has been unfortunate to have been ruled by comprador bourgeoisie, who have little or no regards for the problems of the people they govern for development administration to succeed in any society, the leadership must be committed to the successful implementation of pro-people policies (Okereke, ed. 1999). As Arua and Duru (2008) observed that: leadership is very crucial to organizational success or failure, with a committed leadership, plan and programme objectives are likely to be achieved. A determined political leadership is necessary for the success of the policy process.

### **Lack of Autonomy**

The problems associated with local government autonomy in Nigeria have been discussed by many scholars. It is however important to emphasize here that local government autonomy was seriously hampered both administratively and financially before the 1976 Local government reform. Despite the post 1976 attempted efforts at making local government autonomous both under the Mutala/Obasanjo and Babangida regimes, the existence of various administrative controls over the local government councils by higher authorities serves as hindrance to the total realization of local government autonomy. Besides, the continued dependent of the local governments on federal and state statutory allocation has further eroded its autonomy. The implication of this is often manifested in faulty development, neutergrass root democracy and lack of local initiatives.

### **Financial Problem**

Local government financial problem are of various dimensions, each with its peculiar causes and implication. Historically, most local government council in Nigeria for decades had lay claims

to financial insufficiency as a major cause of their ineffectiveness even when their statutory allocation from the Federation account had increased from 10% to 15% and later 20%. This problem arise as a result of continued dependence of the local government on the federal and state financial allocation in the face of total disregard for local initiatives in areas of internally generated revenue and gradual encroachment of the state governments in areas previously regarded as revenue base of local government authorities. “Whereas prior to 1976 local government reform, the majority of local government revenue had been internally generated”, but now local governments in the federation generate less than 10% of their total revenues internally (Oyelakin, 1995).

### **Inadequate Trained Staff**

The inefficiency and ineffectiveness of local government councils in recent time have, apart from lack of funds and autonomy also been attributed to “chronic national shortage of trained manpower to execute their primary roles and responsibilities(Olu Awofose,2004). The poor condition of service of staff,irregular payment of salaries, and other non- motivated practices meted on local government staff have made it ‘practically impossible to recruit and trained qualified local government personnel. Today, most local government according to Bello-Imam, are lacking in executive capacity in professional staff in the fields of medical services,engineering and accountancy etc.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Theoretical framework adopted in this work is efficiency service delivery school. Foremost among the advocates of this theory is the French Scholar, Languod (1953). The main crux of this theory is that the main purpose of establishing local government in a federal state is to provide services to the people at the rural area in order to improve their social welfare as well as decongesting government at the center.The advocates of efficiency services believes that the idea of democracy advocated by Mills do not apply to different political system in the same manner especially in the face of modern realities.Nigeria’s local government council is a system which carries out efficiency service delivery these functions. They provide basic infrastructure like good road network, pipe borne water, health facilities, ultra-modern markets etc.

Applying this theory to the local government system, Local Governments administration in Nigeria are empowered by the constitution to elect leaders who should carry out their functions and consequently meet the yearning as aspiration of the rural populace. The idea behind this arrangement is to promotes the involvement of grass-root (rural) people in the decision making process of the state, and also to identify local need, make policies to address them, and also monitor the process of its implementation in the local Government.

Eugine, (2013)provided a very strong case for local governments on the grounds that it was the most efficient agent for providing those services that are essentially local. He suggested that the efficient performance of these services is so compelling that if local government does not

exist, something else will have to be created in its place, meaning that the institution is indispensable. Even a decentralized form of national government cannot play this role because of the level of coordination local government can forge cannot be undertaken by such an alternative. The main functional responsibility of Local governments therefore is to efficiency carryout local duties allocated to it, at the highest efficiency rate.

However, despites the huge expectation from local governments as the third tiers of government, one cannot boldly say that local governments in Nigeria have leave to an expectation as requires by the law in terms of service delivery. The failure of Local Government administration/administrators to ensure sustainable development compounds the problem of underdevelopment in the society. Local governments which were created to provide developments at the grassroots level, finds it so difficult to achieve such objective as a result of corruption, inadequate revenue, low executive capacity, poor and inadequate working materials, in competencies, mediocrity, lack of financial autonomy, ineptitude of existing staff and excessive control by the state government which results in delay .

## CONCLUSION

This paper focused on local government as an agent of social change and rural transformation in Nigeria. In the course of this work, the paper explores available literature which relate to local government and rural development effort. The study examined attempts made by Local government in the management of available resources to provide services and programmes in agriculture, health, rural electrification, and education to the local communities of the area. However, findings from the study revealed that one of the problematic areas in most local Government have been how to secure adequate funds for developmental purposes in order to be positive viable rural agent transformation mechanism in the provision of social amenities.

Funds allocated to local Government have been grossly inadequate and this problem is compounded by the various deductions by the state Government for one programme or the other. For instance, State Governments have seriously undermined the financial autonomy of Local Governments through the status of Joint Account Committee under the supervision of Ministry of Local Government Administration. The consequences of the above action is that most local Government in Nigeria has not been able to meet up with the overwhelming challenges of rural development and therefore fail in one of its duties as a change agent.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Although local Government was created in a vacuum, however in order to act as potent change agent which would bring about sustainable human development. It is pertinent that section 162(2) of the 1999 constitution be amended to ensure her fiscal autonomy.

i There should be an improvement on the revenue base of local government especially from the federation Account. As it stands, the 20% allocation proceeds from the Federation

Account of which all Local Government are beneficiary is grossly inadequate and a such should be improved upon so that the idea of local government as change agents would be meaningful.

ii Local Government councils should devise a means of compiling a comprehensive list and census of tax payers, ensure periodic updating of their records on tenement valuation, revaluation as well as account in order to strengthen their internally generated revenue efforts. The strategies adopted over the years have not been strategic enough to help improve the financial background of the council

iii Only qualified personnel especially, qualified accountants, estate values and managers, quantity surveyors etc. should be employ by councils to manage their internal revenue machinery. This is to ensure proper record and account keeping, and also help the local government as a change agent which is meant to help improve the socio-economic fortune of the people.

iv Modern equipments like account machine, computers and other accessories and gadgets should be made available especially to the revenue and administrative offices to help them in proper office management and good accounting system.

v Local government Council should mobilize and empowered the rural women and youth in self-generating and small scaled development projects. Through this they can afford to feed themselves and their families and contributes immensely to council GNP.

vi Local Government Council should collaborates with Non-Governmental organizations within their areas of concerns, since most of the NGSs partners with the United Nations and other International organizations I the march towards the attainments of the SDGs objectives

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