



Local Government and Good Governance in Nigeria’s Emerging Democracy, 1999-2011: An Analysis of the Constraining Factors

Ademola Adebisi^{[a],*}

^[a] Ph.D., Adjunct Lecturer of Political Science, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State, Nigeria.

* Corresponding author.

Received 7 October 2012; accepted 14 December 2012

Abstract

When local governments were democratically instituted in Nigeria in 1999, Nigerians widely assumed that democratic rule would usher in good governance at all levels. This study however discovered that the expectations of the people have not been largely met. This failure the study further discovered is attributable to a number of constraining factors. The paper analyzed these constraining factors and prescribed measures that can engender good governance at the local level in the country.

Key words: Local Government; Good governance; Democracy and Constraining factors

Ademola Adebisi (2012). Local Government and Good Governance in Nigeria’s Emerging Democracy, 1999-2011: An Analysis of the Constraining Factors. *Canadian Social Science*, 8(6), 114-122. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/j.css.1923669720120806.2666> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.css.1923669720120806.2666>.

INTRODUCTION

The idea and practice of localizing government is a universal and age-old phenomenon. In Nigeria, before the emergence of the contemporary state system, governance in all originality was locally or community based. With the emergence of the state system, local government still finds a place in the scheme of things. The philosophy

of localizing governance in the modern day setting as most scholars have concurred is anchored on the need to bring government closer to the people (Mills, Janda, Barry, & Goldman, 2000; Ajayi, 2004; Kolawole, 2003; Ola, 2004). Thus even as its functions and relevance sometimes overlap with those of other levels government, it is still seen as a contrivance that will not only engender development and make governance more efficient and effective, but equally compatible with a majoritarian view of democracy (Janda, Barry, & Goldman, 2000, p. 122). After close to two decades of military repressive rule (1983-1999) Nigeria was again returned to democratic rule in 1999. When the new democratic dispensation was about to take-off, expectations of the citizens were high in respect of the responsiveness of the democratic government at all levels that were to succeed the military rulers. Indeed, it was a general presupposition that the incoming democratically elected government would envelope and deliver to the people good governance. While it is acknowledged that democracy is not a destination, it was still assumed that, democratic rule would usher in good governance at all levels. However, the report card has not portended flying colours for all the tiers of government in the country namely: Federal, State, and local government.

In discussing the matter of good governance, veiled reference is usually made to the evaluation of the performance of the local government. Whereas, the national picture of governance ought to be a cumulative performance of all the tiers of the government in the country. It is in recognition of this fact that this paper has chosen to examine good governance at local level with emphasis on the constraining factors that have impeded or imposed the present level of development and quality of governance at the local level under the nascent democratic dispensation which was instituted in 1999.

1. CONCEPTUALIZING GOOD GOVERNANCE

In order to bring the term “good governance” into proper perspective, it is apposite to first examine the meaning of governance. Governance has been defined as the exercise of political, economic and social authority to regulate human interactions for the well being of society. In this sense, governance can be seen as an attempt by the state machinery (government or constituted authority) to translate into concrete realities, the objectives for which a political society is established which in the main consists of maintenance of law and order and the promotion of the welfare of the members of the political society in all ramifications. Human history has however revealed that the performances of the people charged with the responsibility of governance have, in term of satisfying the yearnings of the members of their states and fulfilling the traditional and primary aim of governance – maintenance of law and order – have varied. While some succeeded in fulfilling the traditional aims of governance, others have indeed engaged in the perversion of the core aims of governance. It is this perversion that brought about the concept of “bad governance”, which has in turn generated the desire to remove bad governance and thus the emergence of the term “good governance”. More specifically, in state where governance has metamorphosed from its purposeful ends to perverted ends, governance is characterized by socio-economic regressions; violation of the rule of law; and mismanagement of state resources or corruption; general ineffectiveness and inefficiency; neglect of the welfare of the populace and breakdown of law and order. Those were and still indeed the trends of governance on the continent of Africa. As all these have hindered the development of such countries the so-called promoters of development in the developing countries led by the princely World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the industrialized countries, “re-articulated”, “re-echoed” and redefined the primary aim of governance and made it not only the central aim or new aspiration for the developing countries, but also a desiderata for granting them development aid. In the conception of these financial Institutions therefore, “good governance” amounts to transparency, accountability, enforcement of the rule of law; effective and efficient delivery of public services, widening of democratic space or political participation. However, let it be said that the rule of classifying government as “good” and “bad” did not start with the World Bank and the IMF. Over two thousand years ago, Aristotle engaged in the classification of government on the basis of “good” or “bad”. For example, he pinpointed that if one man rule is “good”, it is called monarchy and if it is bad it is called “tyranny”. Where the few rule in good manner this form of government he called Aristocracy; and when the rule of few is bad he called the form of

government, oligarchy. Good rule of many he called polity while its perversion is dubbed mob rule (democracy). In another conception good governance has been defined as a state of satisfactory fulfillment of expectations and the achievement of societal well being by the mandated authority (African Leadership Forum, Dialogue 2000, p. 4). The attainment of good governance in essence requires accountability, transparency, the rule of law and respect for human rights; responsiveness, a strong civil society, free press, social sanctions and reward system, popular participation, efficient systems and structures (ibid). In this context however, it is realized that local government does not have the capacity and the capability to prosecute all these indices of good governance all alone. However, they do not only have the instrumentalities to perform their constitutionally assigned duties, they are also expected to be responsive to the immediate needs of the local people, get the people involved in their affairs; and carry out their responsibilities with all sense of transparency and accountability. In this context of assessing or evaluating the performance of local government, therefore, “good governance shall be narrowed down to the capability and capacity of local government to discharge their constitutionally assigned functions effectively and efficiently; the level of transparency and accountability in the conduct of local government business; the extent of responsiveness of the mandated local authorities to local needs and issues and the degree of popular participation in local matters”.

2. FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

In analyzing this topic, our framework shall be eclectic for scholars have generated different but complementary thoughts to explain the rationale or justification for the existence of local government. Four of such thoughts are discernible and shall be eclectically employed to analyze this study. First is the position that local government exists to bring about democracy and create opportunities for political participation and socializing the local citizenry (Agagu, 2004, p. 176). Flowing from this local government constitutes a vehicle by which political training can be given and leadership qualities can be fostered in young politicians at the local level. This point had been earlier stressed by John Stuart Mill (Cited in Ajayi, 2003, p. 6) when he submitted that local government is one of the free institutions which provide political education. In short, it is seen as a plank by which grassroots politics can be promoted. While local government truly engender participation in politics, this is not enough to explain its existence. This becomes apparent in the next equally germane line of thought which borders on accountability and control.

According to this perspective, since the local populace has the opportunity to elect their local representatives they can hold them accountable or control them in the

performance of their responsibilities. In a nutshell, the school sees local government as arena for local citizenry to serve as effective watchdog and whistle blower over those that control their political destiny at the local level. Considered alone and even taken together with the earlier strand of thought, this rationale for the existence of local government is not also complete.

Throwing more light on the rationale for the existence of local government is the efficient service framework. The stance of this conception is simply that local government occupies the best position for the efficient performance of certain functions (Ajayi *op.cit.* 5) put better still, the school holds that because of its closeness to the people and the smallness or manageable size of local government, it is better positioned to provide basic amenities or services much more efficiently or effectively. Local government is seen as small cut for the provision of services and that local government must be judged by the success they achieve in providing services measurable even by national standards (Ola, 2007, p. 177).

Fourth is the development perspective of the rationale for the existence of local government. According to this perspective, local government is a contrivance that can bring about political integration in developing societies that are ethnically plural and diffuse (ibid). In this sense, local government is seen as instrument through which national sentiments and national consciousness require to serve as impulse for national development and growth can be imparted on the populace. It is able to stimulate initiations, courage, drive and experimentation, identify available local skills, interests, and abilities and see or get them developed in the general interest (ibid).

From the foregoing, it is very palpable that none of these views is singularly sufficient to explain the rationale for the existence of local government. Second, it is the combination of all the views that give a world view of the indices of good governance. Also, none of these positions taken alone is adequate to evaluate the local governments in Nigeria as to whether or not they have matched the yardsticks for good governance. In order to give a comprehensive assessment, therefore, the combination of these views constitutes the framework of our analysis.

3. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA

In order to give our analysis a proper footing it is apposite to discuss the structure and functions of local government in Nigeria. It is this we now briefly turn to.

Under the 1999 constitution, Nigeria has a single-tier system of local government. One other significant provision on local government in the constitution is the clear creation of room for separation of powers. More specifically, there now exists distinct executive arm which is presidential in nature and the legislative arm. Apart

from discussing these two key arms of government, we shall also discuss the other important organs, officers and committees of the council.

3.1 The Executive Arm of Local Government

The executive arm of local government consists of the chairman of local government, vice chairman, supervisors and the secretary.

The Chairman is the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the local government. His designation as the Accounting Officer however excludes signing of cheques and vouchers, though he has to authorize all payment. He performs numerous functions. Some of this functions include: observing and complying fully with the checks and balances spelt out in the existing guidelines and financial Regulations governing receipts; he ensures accountability as he can be held accountable while in office and even after the expiration of his tenure and he is to face periodic checks in order to ensure full adherence to all relevant laws on finance. He is to render monthly statements of income and expenditures and annual reports to the local government council for consideration and debate; he is also to render quarterly returns of the actual income and expenditure of the local government to the state government for further necessary action. Beyond these, the chairman also directs the affairs of the local government; he allocates responsibilities to the vice-chairman, supervisors and the secretary to the local government; he conducts the meeting of the executive committee of the local government – vice-chairman, supervisors and the secretary – at least once a week. Furthermore, he maintains liaison with the legislative arm of the local government; he countersigns the Annual Performance Evaluation Report of the Heads of the local government departments. He has to address the local government council at least once a year. During this address, he has to give an account of his achievements and the problems or challenges he has encountered in the year. He is to also present his annual budget to the local government council at the beginning of the year for consideration and approval.

In exercising his powers and discharging his administrative and financial functions, he has to consult with the vice-chairman, supervisors and secretary.

3.1.1 The Executive Committee of the Local Government

The Executive Committee of the local government consists of the chairman, a vice-chairman elected with him, the supervisory councilors appointed by the chairman and a secretary also appointed by the chairman upon assumption of office. The chairman presides over the meetings of the committee. The committee meets at least once a week. It considers memoranda from the departments and any Head of Departments may be summoned by the committee to make clarification on any matter relating to its memorandum or any issue under the consideration of the committee.

3.1.2 Vice-Chairman

The vice-chairman in the administration of the local government is assigned the responsibility of administering a department of the local government. He acts for the chairman in his absence.

3.1.3 The Secretary to the Local Government

The secretary is an appointee of the chairman. In his capacity as the secretary to the local government, he performs the following functions: Secretary of the meetings of the Executive Committee of the local government and keeping the records of the meetings; co-ordination of the activities of the departments of the local government; liaising on behalf of the chairman, with the local government council through the Leader of the Council; liaising with the appropriate officers of the state government on state local relations and carrying out other duties that may be designed to him from time to time.

3.1.4 Supervisors

These are political appointees of the local government. Upon appointment, they are assigned a department each for supervision. More specifically, their functions include: serving as political heads of their respective departments; serving as members of the Executive Committee of the local government; giving directives to the professional heads of their respective departments on general policy issues; assisting the chairman to supervise the execution of local government projects within their respective departments and carrying out such other duties or functions as the chairman may assign from time to time.

In running the affairs of the local government, the Executive arm is assisted by other key support staff. These are heads of the departments in the local government. They are all equal in status. Chief among them are the Head of the Personnel Management (Director of Administration), and the Local Government Treasurer (Director of Finance).

3.2 The Legislative Arm of Local Government

The Legislative arm of the local government consists of the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Councilors. All the councilors are elected and the leader and the deputy leaders are chosen among the councilors.

The local government council is saddled with the following functions:

- Debating, approving or amending the annual budget of the local government council subject to the chairman's veto which may be set aside by two-third majority of the members of the local government council;
- Vetting and monitoring the implementation of projects and programmes in the annual budget of the local government;
- Examining and debating the monthly statements of income and expenditure rendered to it by the chairman of the local government;
- Advising, consulting and liaising with the chairman of the local government, and

- Performing such other functions as may be assigned to it, from time to time, by Edict or law of the state in which it is situated.

The law passed by local governments is called bye-laws. After the passage of a bye-law by the council, the chairman must assent to it for it to have force of law.

3.3 Other Structures of the Local Government

Every local government is structured into departments. The departments, some of which we had earlier mentioned are:

- a. One department of Personnel Management
- b. One department of Finance, Supplies, Planning, Research and Statistics
- c. Not more than four operation departments reflecting the functions and area of great emphasis of the local governments. The essential ones are:
 - i. Education
 - ii. Agriculture and Natural Resources
 - iii. Works, Housing, Land and survey, and
 - iv. Medical and Primary Health

With the approval of the appropriate authority a local government may have a full department of Budget and Planning or Research and Statistics.

The local government Education authority is placed under the department of education to avoid duplication. No local government can have more than six departments. Every department is further divided into divisions according to professional areas. The divisions are further split into branches and branches into sections.

In all these arrangements the span of control is put at six (6). Each department, branch and sections is headed, as in the approved scheme of service for local government employees.

Furthermore, an Internal Audit unit is established in every local government for auditing of the accounts of the local government. The unit is headed by a qualified accountant, and he is responsible to the accounting officer of the local government.

Beyond this, every state has State Auditor-General for local government who has responsibility for the auditing of the accounts of all local governments in the state.

3.4 Functions of Local Government in Nigeria

The functions of local government in the country are contained in the 1999 constitution. According to the fourth schedule of the constitution, the following are the functions of local government:

- a. The consideration and the making of recommendations to a State commission on economic planning or any similar body on
 - i. The economic development of the state, particularly in so far as the areas of authority of the council and of the state are affected, and
 - ii. Proposals made by the said commission of body;

- b. Collection of rates, radio and television licenses;
- c. Establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds and homes for the destitute or infirm;
- d. Licensing of bicycles, trucks (other than mechanically propelled trucks), canoes, wheel barrows and carts;
- e. Establishment, maintenance and regulation of slaughter houses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor packs and public conveniences;
- f. Construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains and other public highways, parks gardens, open spaces, or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the House of Assembly of a state;
- g. Naming of roads and streets and numbering of houses;
- h. Provision and maintenance of public conveniences; sewage and refuse disposal;
- i. Registration of all births, deaths and marriages;
- j. Assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a state; and
- k. Control and regulation of:
 - i. Out-door advertising and hoarding,
 - ii. Movement and keeping of pests of all description,
 - iii. Shops and kiosks,
 - iv. Restaurants, bakeries and other places for sale of food to the public;
 - v. Laundries and
 - vi. Licensing regulation and control of the sale of liquor.

The functions of a local government council shall include participation of such council in government of a state in respect of the following matters.

- a. The provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education;
 - b. The development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals;
 - c. The provision and maintenance of health services;
- And such other functions as may be conferred on a local government council by The House of Assembly of the State.

4. CITIZENS' EXPECTATIONS FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DEMOCRATIC NIGERIA

When democratic government was instituted in 1999, just as the citizens expected both the Federal and State government to deliver good governance, they equally expected the local governments to achieve a significant measure of political, social and economic deliverables within the framework of their constitutionally assigned functions.

The people's expectations were reinforced by four major factors. One, the 1999 constitution as shown above contrived within it, the functions of local government most of which have bearing on the welfare of the people. Thus it is a widely held view that local government had been given clear development agenda.

Two, with the provision for the conduct of periodic election to elect local leaders, the citizens were assured of regular participation in their affairs or the determination of their political fate. Three, with the provision of a uniform single-tier system of local government and presidential executive structure, the citizens could not but believe that they would have a purposeful, efficient and effective local administration. Four, it is also believed that with the constitutional guarantee of funds to local government, they should be able to meet the expectations of the people. For example, according to section 162 (6) of 1999 constitution the state and local governments should maintain a special account to be called "State Joint Local Government Account" into which shall be paid all allocations to the local government councils of the state from the Federation Account and from the Government of the state. Section 162 (7) of the 1999 constitution provides that each state shall pay to local government council in its area such proportion of its total revenue on such terms and in such manner as may be provided by the National Assembly. The constitution further provides that the state government should share the amount standing to the credit of local governments in a state on such terms and in such manner as may be stipulated by the state House of Assembly. With all these and other reinforcement, the citizenry were correct to think that local governments throughout the country should be able to deliver on the indices of good governance.

5. A SURVEY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NIGERIA

In the last one decade, though the performance of the local governments in the country have varied from state to state, yet the general opinion is that in reality, local governments in the country have not delivered good governance. In general they have been found to have performed below expectation in the following areas or on the following grounds:

- * Neglect or failure to embark on sufficient capital projects which can positively impact on the lives of the citizens e.g. inadequate provision of potable water, street light, modern markets, toilets etc..
- * Embarkment on white elephant or otiose projects.
- * Failure to enthrone enduring empowerment programmes for local citizens.
- * Violation of the twin principles of accountability and transparency which has manifested in many corrupt practices such as embezzlement of funds, over invoicing

or inflation of contracts, etc..

- * Projects abandonment.
- * Poor infrastructural facilities maintenance culture.
- * Arbitrariness in the application of rules and regulations or violation of the rule of law.
- * Inadequate communication between the political leaders at the helm of affairs at the local level and the

citizenry (Jat & Sha, 2005; Field survey, 2011).

In a survey among two hundred (200) samples in each of the six geopolitical zones into which the country is divided, it is also evidently clear that generally speaking Nigerians are of the opinion that local governments in the country have not performed to the expectations of the citizenry. The details are as shown in the table below:

Table 1
Nigerians' Opinion About the Performance of Local Governments in Nigeria

Zones	Samples	No of Respondents	Yes	%	No	%
North-West	200	180	160	88.0	20	11.1
North-East	200	170	155	91.2	15	8.8
North-Central	200	160	150	93.8	10	6.2
South-West	200	180	105	58.3	75	41.7
South-East	200	196	130	66.3	55	33.7
South-South	200	189	170	89.9	19	11

Source: Field Survey, 2012

6. THE CONSTRAINING FACTORS: AN ANALYSIS

The local governments in the country have been found to perform below expectations because of the following factors:

One of the problems and challenges facing local government administration in Nigeria today is unceasing growth in the rate of corruption. Indeed, corruption and abuse of office by local government administrators have assumed gargantuan proportion. It is perpetrated by both local government bureaucrats and political office-holders. These categories of local government administrators are neck deep in inflation of contracts, outright embezzlement of council funds, taking kickback on contracts; and non-execution of contracts among other corrupt practices.

Second and related to this is the growing perception among local citizens that local governments are indeed citadels of sharing national cake. For example, it is now public knowledge that local government chairmen are not supposed to account for security vote. Thus there is the eagerness among the poor rural folk to share from this so-called free money. Whereas, if properly applied and judiciously spent, the vote is supposed to be used by the local government chairmen to pursue their protective functions.

Third, in another related development, there is the growing practice among the state governments to divert local government funds through state-local government joint account. This is possible because local government allocations from the federation account are disbursed through the state governments. Most state governments have taken this advantage to divert part of the allocation to other otiose projects thereby robbing the local governments of the capacity to perform their functions and live up to the expectations of the people.

Fourth, there is also the growing problem of overstaffing and redundancy in the local government bureaucracies all over the country. Local politicians now

see local government as a place where they can easily put their children, wards, cronies and party members even when their services are not required. Thus today many local governments carry a lot of redundant workers who receive huge salaries and wages. This development has indeed financially weakened the local governments in the pursuit of their tenets. This problem is further compounded by some state governments which have created unnecessary political offices and authorized payment of salaries to the wives of local government councilors.

For example, the Osun State Government between 2003 and 2010 approved the appointment of Executive Assistant for each of the thirty local governments in the state whose office from all appearance is unnecessary and also constitutes waste of councils' funds.

Similarly, the Ekiti State Government during 2007-2010 approved the appointment of Development Officer for every local government ward in the state thereby increasing the financial burden of the local governments. In some States up till now, thousands of political appointees in the names of Special Assistant, Special Advisers, etc. abound at the local government level.

Fifth, amidst all these trends, the local populace has also lost sight of their place as watchdog over local government administration. Thus local government officials just carry on according to their whims and caprices. People do not criticize them for their shortcomings. This is as a result of poverty and illiteracy.

Sixth and related to this is the issue of non-involvement of the people in the choice of their chairmen and councilors. There also exists the problem of party dictatorship at the local level. The common trend in most rural local governments in the country is that people that are not well educated or bare illiterates, inexperienced or hitherto unemployed and apparently incompetent are those at the helm of affairs. The resultant effect is unarguably, dismal performance or poor service delivery.

Beyond this, there is also the growing tendency by local government elected officials to abandon their wards

after their election. Thus, people hardly see them to intimate them with their problems. This is particularly the case with urban local governments.

Another trend in local government administration in Nigeria is lack of developmental and strategic planning (Kolawole, 2003, p. 105). Since most of the officials at the helms of affairs of local governments are incompetent, hardly can they perceive any need for developmental and strategic planning. Thus projects are haphazardly conceived and executed.

Furthermore, where local government chairmen attempt to be progressive and transparent, and these are incongruent with the values of the state government, there is the tendency for the state government to suppress such local government chairmen or if they are proving too uncompromising, the state government can get rid of such local government chairmen. This was the fate of the chairman of Ado Ekiti local government, Ekiti State, between 2004-2007.

Aside this, election into local government where it is conducted at all has also become a matter of life and death. This is because everybody wants to have a share of the national cake. It is also characterized by rigging, thugery and other forms of anti-democratic behaviours. Thus most of those in offices hardly represent the will of the people. This is of course contrary to the tent of local government as symbol of democracy at the local level.

Upon this, there is also the growing tendency among urban elites who do not reside in their localities to run back to their localities of birth to contest election into their local governments. They are indigenes of the local governments who live in cities and who just because they want power for further personal accumulation and self-aggrandizement, run to their local governments of origin or birth to capture political power. Because they are already rich or sponsored by their urban friends, they use money to win election. The resultant effects of this trend are these: While in power, people cannot relate with them properly. Two, they hardly have patience to understand or appreciate the feelings and dispositions of the local people. The overall effect of this is the alienation of the people from the running of the affairs of the local government.

Another constraining factor is over population of some local governments. Over the years, the population of some local governments has grown beyond the management capacity of their leaders. In such local governments, the needs of the people are hardly met. Some local governments that ought to have been split into many local governments could not be split because of constitutional hurdle which has made creation of more local governments in the country almost impossible.

Specifically, the reluctance of the Federal authority to grant the constitutionally required imprimatur to creation of more local governments by states desirous of more local governments has remained a serious albatross for creation of more local governments in the country.

Also, the use of caretaker committee usually constituted by some state governments instead of elected local government officials has also hindered the performance of local governments in the country. With caretaker committee in place, it becomes easy for state governments to manipulate local authorities to the advantage of the state government and even for the personal gains of state political leaders. More specifically, with caretaker committee in place, transparency and accountability are further held in abeyance.

Finally, there is also the tendency by the local populace not to pay their taxes, rate and levies. It is assumed among other reasons by some people that, local governments are rich and have little or no need for internally generated revenue. For fear of losing the political control of the local government, every political party in power often shy away from enforcing tax and levy rules rigorously. Thus the low financial standing of many local governments in the country which has in turn adversely affected their service delivery capability.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As indicated earlier, the attainment of good governance in Nigeria under the current democratic dispensation is a joint endeavour of the governmental tripod; Federal, State and Local governments. For local government to be able to effectively assume its catalytic position in national development cum the strive for good governance, the following recommendations may be helpful.

First, there is the need to as a matter of urgency entrench new ethical orientation in the local citizenry as to the essence of local government. This should be aimed at letting the citizens know that local governments are not contrived to engage in "cash sharing", but to discharge their constitutional functions to the citizenry in effective and efficient manner.

Second, instead of direct sharing or transfer of cash, local government should embark on programmes that can empower local citizenry.

Third, the controlling state governments should show good example in transparency and accountability to local political leaders. This will minimize corruption at local level.

Fourth, the civil society should play the role of whistleblower in the monitoring of the activities of the local political office-holders. The attention of the anti corruption agencies such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) etc. should be drawn to any financial misdemeanor by the office-holders for prosecution. This will serve as deterrent to others who may engage in corrupt practices.

Fifth, as part of re-orientating local political leaders, it may be necessary to expose the operators of local government in Nigeria to those of other countries so that

they can learn from them. Occasional visits by political leaders to countries such as the Germany, Canada, U.K etc. to learn the *modus operandi* of their local governments may enable the local government leaders to see beyond their noses and ginger them to run efficient and effective government at the local level.

Sixth, as a way of promoting transparency and accountability, state government should desist from the unethical practice of diverting local government funds by some states to the state governments' coffers. This is to ensure financial security for the local governments for better performance. The provision that state IGR be shared among the local governments within a state should also be complied with by state governments. Local governments should be seen as partners in progress rather than as a "child" that has been stunted into permanent incapacity and incompetence.

Seventh, state governments should also desist from hijacking the functions of local government. It is by allowing local political leaders to discharge these functions while in office that they can master the ropes of governance. Thus local government will assume its role as a training ground for local and budding politicians. Instead of hijacking their functions, they should rather be given developmental template (or developmental targets) by the state government. By setting developmental agenda for them, they will take governance more seriously. It is not totally correct that local politicians are more corrupt than the state political leaders. It has even been discovered that where some state governments divert local government funds the intention is even to corruptly drain local government financial resources and not as a means of checking corruption of the local politicians. Once the anti-corruption laws are enforced, local politicians can in fact be punished if they are found engaging in corrupt practices.

Eighth, the creation of more local governments should be the sole responsibility of the state government. To this end the aspect of the constitutional provision which makes creation of local government a joint endeavour between the federal government and the state government with the federal authority holding the ace should be reviewed or expunged from the constitution. This will enable the state government to create more local governments when necessary. This will further enhance efficient and effective delivery of services. A situation where a population that is supposed to be served by more than one local government is held down under one local government because of constitutional hurdle is not pragmatic and responsive to the demands of the people. As every society is dynamic, the structure, the composition and operations of local government should also be dynamic.

Ninth, state and local government machineries should ensure that needs rather than patronage inform most appointments. While party loyalists may be offered appointments, recruitment must be based on availability

of vacancies and needs.

Tenth, there is need to entrench the principle of recall into local government administration. Its use should cover both the legislative and executive arm of government. This will minimize the danger of party dictatorship.

Eleventh, the National Orientation Agency, the state and local governments through their information departments and units should intensify the enlightenment programmes on the need for the citizenry to pay taxes. This will swell the purses of local government to pursue efficient and effective service delivery or good governance.

From the foregoing, it is safe to conclude that local government has come a long way in the country. However, it is observable that most of the local governments in the country are hardly effective and efficient. Indeed there is still loud yearning for good governance at the local government level. Whichever the case, it appears that good governance at local level can only be guaranteed via attitudinal change on the part of local politicians and even the local people and not necessarily through unceasing or endless structural changes we call reforms.

REFERENCES

- Agbakoba, O., & Ogbonna, H. (n.d.). *Local Government Administration and Development in Nigeria*. A Capacity Building Manual for the Human Rights Law Services. African Leadership Forum Dialogue 2000.
- Ajayi, K. (2003). Theories of Local Government. In K. Ajayi (Ed.), *Theory and Practice of Local Government*. Ibadan, Johnmof Printers Ltd..
- Dalhatu, S. (2007). Local Government as Third Tier of Government in Nigeria's Emergent Democratic Dispensation. *International Journal of Law and Contemporary Studies*, 2(1&2).
- Denhardt, R. B., & Denhardt, J. V. (2009). *Public Administration: An Action Orientation*. Washington, Thomson Wadsworth.
- Field Survey. (2011).
- Field Survey. (2012).
- Janda, K., Berry, J. M., & Goldman, J. (2000). *The Challenges of Democracy*. New York, Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Jat, R. B., & Sha, D. P. (2005). *The Performance of Local Government Council in the North Cental Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria*. Ibadan, Stirling: Hordan Publishers Ltd..
- Kolawole, D. K. (2003). *Local Government and Problems of Service Delivery*. In K. Ajayi (Ed.), *Theory and Practice of Local Government*. Ibadan, Johnmof Printers Ltd..
- Khemani, S. (2004). *Local Government Accountability for Service Delivery in Nigeria*. Washington, Development Research Group, the World Bank.
- Local Government Administration and Bye-Laws in Nigeria. (n.d.). Abuja, Office of the Vice President.
- Oke, L. (2001). Local Government System in Nigeria. In F. Omotoso (Ed.), *Contemporary Issues in Public*

- Administration*. Lagos, Bolabay Publications.
- Ola, R. F. (2004). Local Government Theory & Practice: An Examination of Modernization Efforts in Three Decades of Nigerian Local Government (1975-2003). In A. A. Agagu & R. F. Ola (Eds.), *Development Agenda of the Nigerian State*. Ibadan, Fiag (Nigeria) Publishers.
- Olaoye, E. O. (1998). Local Government Creation Under the Abacha Regime. In D. Kolawole & N. Mimiko (Eds.), *Political Democratization and Deregulation Nigeria Under the Abacha Administration, 1993-1998*. Ado-Ekiti, Department of Political Science.
- Olowu, D. et al. (1991). *Local Institutions and National Development in Nigeria*. Ile-Ife, Research Group in Local Institutions and O. A. U. Press.
- Olaoye, E. O. (1998). Local Government Creation Under the Abacha Regime. In D. Kolawole & N. Mimiko (Eds.), *The Nigerian 1999 Constitutions*. Lagos, Federal Government Press.