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ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CONFRONTING DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AT GRASS ROOTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Local Government in Nigeria basically was established to fast track the level of grass roots development, be it human or economic development. This paper is critically designed to examine the role of local government in confronting development challenges at the grass root development in Nigeria and to also proffer solutions in solving those confronting problems bedeviling the survival and development of local government in Nigeria. Secondary data which encompasses scholarly articles, published researches, documented guidelines on local government administration, text books on the subject matter, constitution of federal republic of Nigeria, etc were employed in getting relevant information, while content analysis was used to make analysis in finding out the significant challenges confronting the local government in Nigeria as well as forwarding ways out. The paper revealed that the vacuum of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria about the autonomy of local government as third tier of government, internally weak revenue base, inadequate statutory allocation, corruption, poor and weak political leadership, lack of political legitimacy, unqualified personnel with improper condition of service, among others were the significant challenges confronting grass roots development in Nigeria. The paper finally recommended that there should be constitutional amendment to ensure autonomy of local government, responsive governance, stemming of corruption and embezzlement, accountability and transparency in local government, participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in economic planning and development at grass roots level, adequate financial allocation, capacity building on human resources, employment of qualified staff, improved condition of service, political and financial autonomy, among others.

Keywords: Local government, Autonomy, Grassroots development, Development challenges

1.1 Introduction

Local Government is central to all political landscapes to the extent that it is found everywhere though taking different structure and powers. These differences can be attributed to the political system put in place, history and other peculiarities in different societies. It is therefore safe to say that a form of Local Government exists everywhere and no political system can operate successfully without a system of Local Government. Creation and sustenance of Local Government can be justified on many grounds, key among these include: means of ensuring popular participation of citizens especially at the grass roots; means of entrenching democracy and democratic values and policies of the grass roots; means of enhancing easy access to government especially for the people at the grassroots; means of bridging the communication gap between the center and localities; means of providing quality basic services to the people at the grass roots.

Local government basically plays crucial role in rural as well as urban development all over the world. The importance of local government in both rural and urban development process made Abubakar Rimi to remark as far back as 1979 thus, “Local Government is the most important government of our land. The man in my village does not care about who the president is. He does not even care about who the governor of his State is. He cares only about those who are counselors and chairman of his local government” (as cited in Ozohu & Poul, 2015). Local government is therefore considered as the most powerful instrument of rural and urban development.

To buttress this further scholars and practitioners have expressed largely common views on the desirability of local government, like Adeyemi, (2013) sees local government as a third tier of government in Nigeria as well as the closet tier of government to the people. The guidelines for 1976 Local Government Reform in Nigeria elaborately describes it as government at the local level exercised through representative councils which was established by law to exercise specific powers over local areas. The primary goal of local government is to bring government nearer to the people for the purpose of maximum participation of rural inhabitants, utilization of local resources (men and materials) for rapid and even development of local communities.

Local Government being decentralized entities takes the form of devolution. What obtains in Nigeria since 1979 is to move the Local Government system towards devolution which means greater operational autonomy and independence. This however has met the subtle resistance of especially those politicians that are benefiting the controls they exert on the Local Government. Another reason may be that the constitution especially the 1999 is not very forth coming about the status of the local government. Although it recognized them as the third tier, they were not insulated from the firm grip of the State Government. Yet another reason might be the failure of the system to develop itself in term of quality staffing, transparency and ability to generate adequate internal revenue to reduce dependence on the statutory grant.

Local government is a product of decentralized administration as well as a grassroots government recognized by law. Consequently, the UNO (1961) viewed it as a political sub-division of a nation (or in a federal system, a state) which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the power to impose taxes or to exert labor for prescribed purposes. The

governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise selected (as cited in Amujiri & Nwamaka, 2017).

Where Local Government in Nigeria allowed to evolve as third tier of government they have served better as indispensable administrative unit for quite a number of reasons. First, it is more democratic and increases scope or citizenship participation in the government of their locality; provides valuable political education; trains people for higher public offices; ensures that local knowledge is brought to bear on decision by local government; help to identify local initiative easily; is more sensitive to local opinion; ensures that powers is more widely dispersed which is a safeguard against tyranny and handles more appropriately local variations and needs (Diejomaoh & Eboh, 2010). Despite the fact that local government in Nigeria was established to complement and uphold the indicators or dimensions of national development, be it economic, political, social and or cultural, etc, but still the local government in Nigeria has been characterized by many challenges which hinder the process and means of achieving grass root development, and it also appeared that the rationale for establishing local governments in Nigeria had been almost defeated. As such, the paper intends to examine the role of local government in confronting development challenges at grass root in Nigeria.

2.0 Local Government in Nigeria

2.1 Evolution of Local Government

Local Government in Nigeria has come a long way; it existed even before the advent of colonialism as they were centralized systems, well-coordinated and with defined functions operated in all centralized states in Pre-colonial Nigeria. Indeed it is the effectiveness of what the colonialists met coupled with other considerations that made them to adopt the indirect rule system in many parts of Nigeria.

The primary purpose of local government is to bring government to the local communities so that the local people can participate fully in the process of government in order to provide essential local services and which will accelerate the pace of social, economic and political development. The importance of local government in development of rural areas made various communities in Nigeria to be governed through the instrumentality of their traditional political institution. Various communities in Nigeria governed themselves through local government system since before the advent of Europeans and even the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates that led to the emergence of Nigeria as a state.

Historically, local government in Nigeria has evolved extremely diverse and to a large extent, developmentally dysfunctional structural forms (William & Groff, 1986). The system of local government in Nigeria, before, during and even after the advent of the British rule has been a subject of trial and reforms. Several patterns have been experimented and abandoned in frustration. Local government system has in fact, gone very numerous and constant reforms aimed at evolving a viable system that could serve the purpose for which local government is created. The local government system in Nigeria has evolved through the central government's earlier phase of decentralization of function (especially during the period of British colonial rule) to the federal government's current phase of decentralization through increased devolution of powers and

functions to authorities which, to a great extent, have now been institutionalized as the third tier of government in the country. In this context, the structure, powers and functions of local government in Nigeria have undergone several changes in accordance with the regime in power, the core task of the regime in power and the failure of that resultant structure to be in congruent with the core task of the regime in power by various administrations from pre-colonial to the present post colonial era. That is, the development objective and priorities of various regimes in power, the existing structures they set up to achieve such goals as well as their perceptions of the role which local authorities should play (Onah & Amujiri, 2011)

Local government in Nigeria, Ogunna (1977) correctly noted, has undergone numerous reforms aimed at evolving a viable system that could serve the purpose for which the local government is created. Before the advent of the British colonial administration various communities in Nigeria were governed through the instrumentality of their traditional political institutions. In the North, the Hausa/Fulani Emirates operated highly centralized hierarchically organized political system. They were authoritarian large-scale states and were ruled by powerful Emirs. There were clear specifications of function of the political structure. The local government administration under the Hausa/Fulani traditional political system was under the district heads (Hakimis) and village heads. They were charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order, collecting taxes within their respective areas and settling minor disputes. In the discharge of those functions, the district and village heads were responsible and accountable to the Emir.

The Yoruba's of Western Nigeria had centralized chiefdoms in which the Obas ruled their various chiefdoms. The Obas played roles as constitutional monarchs in the sense that they ruled their respective kingdoms with a council of chiefs which exercised dominant powers. Each Yoruba kingdom consisted of the Obas town or capital city and the subordinate towns. The capital city was directly administered by Obas while the others governed the subordinate towns through chiefs known as Baales or Olojas. The Baales or Olojas and their subordinate chiefs conducted the affairs of the subordinate town which constituted the local government functions of the political system. The Baale settled minor cases and disputes, maintained law and order, allocated vacant land and paid annual tributes to the Obas.

In Eastern Nigeria, the Igbos had fragmented and diffused autonomous communities. In this system, many groups and institutions like age grades, women association, Ozor title societies, the council of Elders, the people assembly (Oha) shared political authority with the chief of the community. And during the earlier period of British colonial rule in Nigeria, local government was an extension of the central colonial administration through the mechanism of "indirect rule" which involved the administration of the local area through the existing traditional authorities known as Native Authority. The Native Administration system continued to thrive in the country particularly Northern part until the emergence of modern local system from 1952-1965, and the era of Caretaker Committees and Sole Administrator Systems. However, since 1970, the number of local government rose from 299 in 1970 to 301 in 1979, to 781 in 1981, when the state government were given authority to create local government. After the overthrow of the civilian government in 1984, the numbers were again reduced to 301 and later they increased to 449 in 1987; 589 in 1991 and 774 in 1996 (Otobo, as cited in Amujiri & Nwamaka, 2017).

2.2 Local Governments in the Nigerian Constitution

The first time provisions were made for Local Government in Nigeria was in 1979 when provision as a tier of government, bordering on recognition, functions and scope of power were clearly provided.

Section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria provides that:

“The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the government of every state shall, subject to section 8 of this constitution, ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils”

Although the 1999 constitution made specific provisions for the Local Government as a third tier of government, in term of establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions, but still did reduce the powers of Local Governments as making them merely appendages of the State Government.

Section 7(6) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria also states that:

“The National Assembly shall make provisions for statutory allocation of Public Revenue to Local Government Councils in the Federation, and the House of Assembly of a State shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local Government Councils within the state.

Still the constitution of federal republic of Nigeria did not give local government a financial autonomy to appropriate its appropriation bills like other tiers of government; it only serves as administrative machinery meant to implement the state government needed policies. And in term of economic planning, local government in Nigeria has been only given the participatory role, where the power of establishing and creating the board of economic planning is saddled on the House of Assembly of the State, to buttress this important point on the issue of economic planning and development, thus:

Section 7(3) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria provides that:

It shall be the duty of a local government council within the state to participate in economic planning and development of the area referred to subsection (2) of this section and to this end an economic planning board shall be established by a law enacted by the House of assembly of the state.

Moreover, the 1999 constitution assumes that the law relating to local government creation would be made by the State Houses of Assembly. Thus the legal framework does not see local governments as a third tier of government, but merely recognizes local government as an appendage of state government where the latter enjoys absolute discretion over the former. But in

case of federal and state government, the constitutional status of the two entities appears clear and unmistakable. Thus Chapter V, Part I (Sections 47–89) of the 1999 constitution makes extensive provision for the legislative arm of government at the federal level. Similarly, Part II (sections 90–129) of the same chapter makes provisions for legislative arms of government at the state level. Provisions are also made in respect of the executive powers and functions of the federal and state governments. These provisions automatically accord the Federal and State governments the constitutional autonomy and legal framework required for their operations. No such provision exists for local governments, and it is for this reason that their constitutional guarantee of third-tier status should be treated with circumspection (Ozohu & Poul, 2015).

2.3 Functions of Local Government in Nigeria

The Local Government system, composed of democratically elected Local Government Councils, is guaranteed under the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, section 7. Based on this section 7, the 1999 Nigerian Constitution provides for the functions of a Local Government Council under its Fourth Schedule. This schedule tends to derive mainly from the Basic and Constitutional Transition Provisions (Decree 15 of 1987). Thus, functions of Local Governments are categorized into; *The Exclusive list*; and *The Concurrent list*. The exclusive list of functions is those functions that are solely performed by Local Governments, while the concurrent list of functions are those that the Local Government performs in collaboration with State and Federal Governments. The State and/or Federal Government can also perform these functions on behalf of Local Governments until Local Governments are in a position to perform such functions. Shamsuddini and Siddiq (2012) stated that the Fourth Schedule 1 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution identified the main functions of a Local Government Council as: The Consideration and the making of recommendations to a State commission on economic planning or any similar body on; 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 Proposals made by the said commission or body; Collection of rates, radio and television license; Establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds and homes for the destitute or infirm; Licensing of bicycles, trucks (other than mechanically propelled trucks), canoes, wheel barrows and carts; Establishment, maintenance of and regulation of slaughter houses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor parks and public conveniences; 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; Naming of roads and streets and numbering of houses Provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal; Registration of all births, deaths and marriages; 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; Control and regulation of Out-door advertising, hoarding, movement and keeping of pets of all description, Shops or kiosks, restaurants, bakeries and other places for sale Laundries, Licensing, as well as regulation and control of the sale of liquor. they further said that based on the section 2 of the Fourth Schedule, the functions of a Local Government Council shall also include participation of such council in the Government of a State in respects of the Provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education; the development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals; 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.

Local Government administration also carries out informative functions such as enlightenment, development projects, administration, democratic and leadership initiative and maintenance of peace, law and order in the locality (Awotokun, 2005). In addition to the above, the local government administration also provides these functions: such as inspection of meat and abattoirs; provision of scholarship and bursaries award, provision of public libraries and reading rooms; agricultural and animal health extension services, veterinary clinics, fire service, Lighting and drainage (Shamsuddin & Saddiq, 2012).

2.4 Factors That Undermine Local Government capacity in Confronting Development Challenges at the Grassroots level in Nigeria

A critical examination of local government performance in Nigeria discovered that local governments have failed in providing the ingredients for grass root development due to a number of factors. Some of these factors were identified in a study conducted by Bello-Imam and Roberts (2001). These factors include:

1. **The constitution** especially of 1999 which subsumed local government under the states denying them the required autonomy to operate independently. Most of the provisions on local government in the 1999 constitution contradict the basis and operation of local government in a federal decentralized system. By the constitution local government cannot plan without consent of the state government, their budgets have to be approved by the state House of Assembly and even their laws have to be enacted by the state assembly.

The issue of staffing, even though not expressly stated in the constitution is the responsibility of the state government because all officers from grade level 07 are directly staff of local government service commission or ministry for local government as the case may be.

Indeed most local governments especially in rural areas are financially not viable as a result of either weak revenue base or weakness in the administration and management of the revenue so generated.

In addition, the constitution recognized the existence of the state/local government joint account where share of the local government of the statutory grant is first lodged in this account and access to these funds are essentially through the state government. Indeed many state governments see these funds as theirs and used it to suit more of their interest than those of the local governments. The constitution and the role some state governors play in local government affairs grossly undermine the political will to fashion out policies and programs that provide radical departure from the exiting order.

2. **Weak Internal Revenue Base**, the erosion of local functions particularly in the revenue yielding areas by state governments and their agencies, politico-administrative problems such as inadequacy of skilled and technical manpower, lackadaisical attitude of existing local government staff, official corruption, variable structures/sizes of local government among others, and lack of integration of the relevant communities in the execution of local government developmental services. Also some scholars and professionals in public administration and local government studies identified the following challenges affecting

development at grass root level in Nigeria as; lack of funds/financial constraints, corruption, undue political interference/ lack of autonomy, lack of qualified professional staff/ unskilled workers, leadership problem, poor work attitude, among others (Saulawa et al 2007, Khaleel, 2012 and Ogoga, 2018 and Adeyemi, 2013). Some of these challenges will be discussed below. Financial constraints: For local government to provide developmental services at the grassroots level funds must be available to carry out its assigned responsibilities. In Nigeria, aside from other common problems, non-provision of enough funds to local government has hindered meeting development objectives by the local council (Ogoga, 2018).

3. **Statutory allocations and grants from the federation account to councils is inadequate**, the constitution require state governments to contribute 10% of their internally generated revenue to the local government, but hardly does any other state oblige this due to low statutory grant and internally generated revenue some local government could not pay staff salaries not to talk of provisions of developmental services at grassroots level (Ibok, 2014).
4. **Corruption:** Corruption has been identified as one of the problems undermining effective local government administration in Nigeria (Ogoga 2018; Ibrahim, 2014). Corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria local councils and it is the greatest bane of local government administration in Nigeria. Bolatito & Ibrahim (2014) pointed out that: At the grassroots level, corruption has been an order of the day and it is almost formalized, entertained, and celebrated within the system. In the local government setting corruption euphemistically referred to as national cake sharing is a major hindrance to development at grass root level.

The inability of local governments to provide services to the people at the grassroots has been linked to high levels of corruption among local governments' officials. There have been glaring cases of embezzlement and misappropriation of the councils' funds by the official of the council (Ibok, 2014). Generally, a wide-scale embezzlement by officials of the grassroots has made the needed development of the grassroots a tall dream and has rendered them financially incapable to discharge their constitutionally assigned responsibilities (Borris, 2015). This unethical conduct has rendered local council financially impotent, hence incapable of providing basic needs to its citizens. The important of the foregoing is that apart from financial constraints, corruption constitutes a major obstacle on the development at grass root level.

5. **Poor and weak political leadership:** The leadership in the local government is constrained by either lack of capacity or inclination for accepting responsibility for development: where anything goes wrong in transforming the people and the society, somebody must be responsible. This may be due to lack of experience, exposure, the pressure from the locals for personal favours and patronage or interference from the state government which sometime result in changing plans and programmes of local governments arbitrarily (Dalhatu, 2002). The weak capacity of the local government leadership is attributable to some many factors which include the circumstance that lead to their emergence as local government leaders. Political interference is another reason for the failure of local government in providing development services; it is the role of the state governors in the affairs of local government (Adeyemi, 2013). According to Eboh & Diejomaoh (2010) there is high degree of external influence and

interference in local government affairs by the higher levels of government, particularly the state governments. The governors are found of taking over their financial allocation, taxes, counterpart funding and refuse to conduct Local Government elections, but instead ruling local governments with appointed administrators, most of whom are party loyalist and their friends and relations turning the entire process of local governments into irrelevant schemes of things (Ukonga 2012). There have been instances where State Governors unconstitutionally dissolve the entire elected council without recourse and due process (Eboh & Diejomaoh, 2010). As soon as a new Governor comes into office, one of the first actions is to dissolve the existing local councils, whether elected or care taker. The outright denial of democratically elected local councils through caretaker committees demonstrates the increasing authoritarian holds of the councils by state governors. As such most state governors never bothered of conducting local government elections (Boris, 2015).

The high level of interference by state governors on local government affairs was also expressed by Khaleel (2012) when he observed thus: “There is no state of the federation of Nigeria where one form of illegality or the other is not committed with funds of local government, through over deduction , spurious state/local government joint project, sponsoring of elections, taking over the statutory functions of local government and handing them over to cronies and consultants, non-payments of pensioners and non-utilization of training fund despite the mandatory deduction of stipulated percentages for these purposes This is central to the whole problem because it is by planting stooges called caretaker committee, who neither have the mandate of the people nor the moral strength to resist the excruciating control of the state government that perpetuates the rot. This undue interference has incapacitated local government from effective functioning on one hand, and alienated grassroots people from enjoying social developmental services expected of local governments in Nigeria. Consequently, local governments now functions as appendages of state governments. The second dimension is the political interference. The constitution did not provide adequately for the political autonomy of the local governments in Nigeria. For instance, it did not provide specifically for the constitution of the local government council to be solely through democratic elections, for the specific tenure of the local government political office holders, for the local governments to derive their full existence directly from the constitution of the federal constitution and for the specific powers and functions of the local government. The resultant effects of these lapses or inadequacies are that the state governments have the discretion to determine the nature, content and direction of local government elections and political activities. In the exercise of this discretion, the state government decide when elections would be held, who wins in elections, when to dissolve elected council, and the alternative framework to administer the affairs of the local governments (Khaleel, 2012).

6. **Lack of Political Legitimacy:** Development can only ensure if those in power are truly acceptable choices of the people. Development cannot be pursued when the chairman and councilors of the local government emerged through fraudulent elections and means (Dalhatu, 2002). Most of chairman nowadays are emerging either through rigged elections or superimposed by the Governor of the state using the State Independent Electoral Commissions. Hardly do candidates of the ruling party in the state loose local government election.

8. **The level of education,** training, experience and exposure, the quality of staff in the service of the local government and the attitude and conduct of the state governments towards the local government. The quality of staff in the local government significantly undermines grassroots development. Most of the staff lack exposure and being merely posted by the Local Government service commission or ministry for local government to serve, their loyalty is more to the commission/ministry than to the local government where they are serving, the best the Local Government chairman can do to an erring officer is to report him/her to the commission/ministry.

2.5 Recommendations on How Local Government Can Contribute Toward Addressing These Challenges

The need to ensure balanced development, maximizes citizens' participation, and stimulates responsiveness of government in term of development, which necessitates the creation of the local government. Local government as the government to the people at the grassroots is expected to play significant roles in providing the social services that will lead development in the local areas. However this paper would give some measures that would address development challenges at grass root levels in Nigeria.

- i. **Constitutional amendment to ensure autonomy of Local Government as enjoyed by the other tiers of government.** Amendment is needed to increase the fiscal and spending autonomy of local governments and minimize the interference and control of state governments on local governments fund and expenditure. The undue interference of the state governors should be eliminated to allow the council heads to govern and manage their natural resources to achieve grassroots development. This could be done by constitutionally empowering the federal government especially through the National Assembly to monitor the conduct of states on the way they handle local governments within their jurisdiction. Even though the local government is commonly referred to as the third-tier of government, it is debatable whether it truly qualifies as third-tier of government. This is because the local governments do not have the full compliments of a full three-arm government, like federal and state governments. There is therefore need for constitutional amendment to provide unique guarantees for the autonomy and powers of the local government. Autonomy would pave way for rapid development at the grassroots.
- ii. **To ensure responsive governance,** local government executive must be elected by the people and not superimposed by the ruling party or state governor. Elections at specific intervals should be conducted into the local government council and with outright prohibition of any other alternative arrangement to administer the local governments. The constitution should clearly specify sanctions on states that failed to constitute local governments properly: for example where elections conducted by the State Independent

Commissions are adjudged not to be free, fair and credible. The elections that brought the leaders into political power must be free, fair and credible election.

- iii. **To stem corruption and embezzlement,** all financial transaction of the council must be audited and publicized.
- iv. **To ensure accountability and transparency in local government administration,** the civil society organizations should also monitor the performance of local government officials and report any found wanting to anti-corruption agent. The anti-corrupt agencies like the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFFCC) should intensify their efforts by tackling the problem of pervasive corruption in the local government system. Government could further assist in this direction by introducing more effective anti-corruption clauses and fraud detecting mechanisms as well as ensuring the conduct of free and fair elections through which people could only get into power on the basis of their perceived merit and honesty.
- v. **Adequate Financial Allocation to the Local Governments:** Lower levels of government must be assisted, and empowered to generate more internally generated revenue that have to support its expenditure requirements. This will require some of the revenue sources which both the state and federal government are enjoying. The federal government should have minimal share of the value added tax for example while the bulk should go to the local governments. The fiscal relationship between the center and lower levels of government has clearly worked out on the basis of equality, fairness and justice. Local governments should have direct access to the statutory allocations from the Federation account and their share of the internally generated revenue and their share from the federation account has to be increased from the current 20%. State government should be compelled to relinquish their 10% internally generated revenue to the local council to avoid their overdependence on statutory allocation. Thus, the provision for the State Local Government Joint Account should be expunged from the constitution. On the other hands, the internal revenue generation sources of the local government should be enhanced where the revenue of local governments is enhanced, they must be compelled to invest in profitable ventures under their supervisions.
- vi. **Capacity Building of Human Resources:** There should be capacity building for local councils to take advantage of modern tools of local governance that have being developed for the development at grassroots level. This must combine the politicians and bureaucrats' personnel of the councils. In this regard, the operation of the local government service commissions in the states should be overhauled to give the local governments more leverage in the type of training they required. In other words local governments should have a say in the type of training their staff required.
- vii. **Accepting responsibility for development:** The leaders at grassroots level particularly chairmen and council members must be ready to accept challenges confronting local

government of their domain for them to meet development at grassroots level. It is only their actions would take local government out of woods.

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Local Government Development or Localism Agenda all over the word, Nigeria inclusive, conceptualized as a process of employing governance approaches and they are the means of improving service delivery through the application of public engagement or participation, social accountability and transparency, which are considered as different critical mechanism for individuals or group of individuals (i.e general public) to freely express opinions, perceptions and views in exerting influences regarding political, economic and other social decisions towards attaining the local government development and at the same time achieving efficient and effective service delivery for the local inhabitants at the grass roots level.

The Local Government service delivery in Nigeria could be only accomplished, when the following palliative drastic measures are seriously put in place; thus

- (a) That Local Government in Nigeria should individually and collectively incorporate civil society organizations (CSOs) on issues related to public accountability, transparency and participation.
- (b) there should be an increase in the effectiveness of the delivery of public goods and services in response to citizens' needs and preferences
- (c) there should also be an improve in the quality of governance and democracy at grass roots by strengthening the integrity of Local Government institutions and actors, reducing corruption and promoting citizen engagement in public affairs
- (d) there should be an increase in citizen empowerment through the expression of voice, realignment of local government-society relations and reducing the widening of inequality exhibited in the local government area.
- (e) there should be proper following of due process in planning and implementation strategies of local government projects, where the regular influence of State Executive Governors or ruling class should be reduced to the barest minimum if not completely eliminated
- (f) there should be a critical redress of some local government development projects that appear more of white elephant projects which do rarely address the felt-needs of the local people
- (g) there should be an upgrade of both conditions of service and research facilities in the structure and composition of local government, this would entice many qualified personnel across the country to willingly join the local government system where their potentials and abilities will immensely utilized in the development of local government system.
- (h) there should be an adoption of participatory planning mechanism in taking the course of actions for the developmental projects in the local government system.

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