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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT, THE PEOPLE  
AND THE CHALLENGES OF  
DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

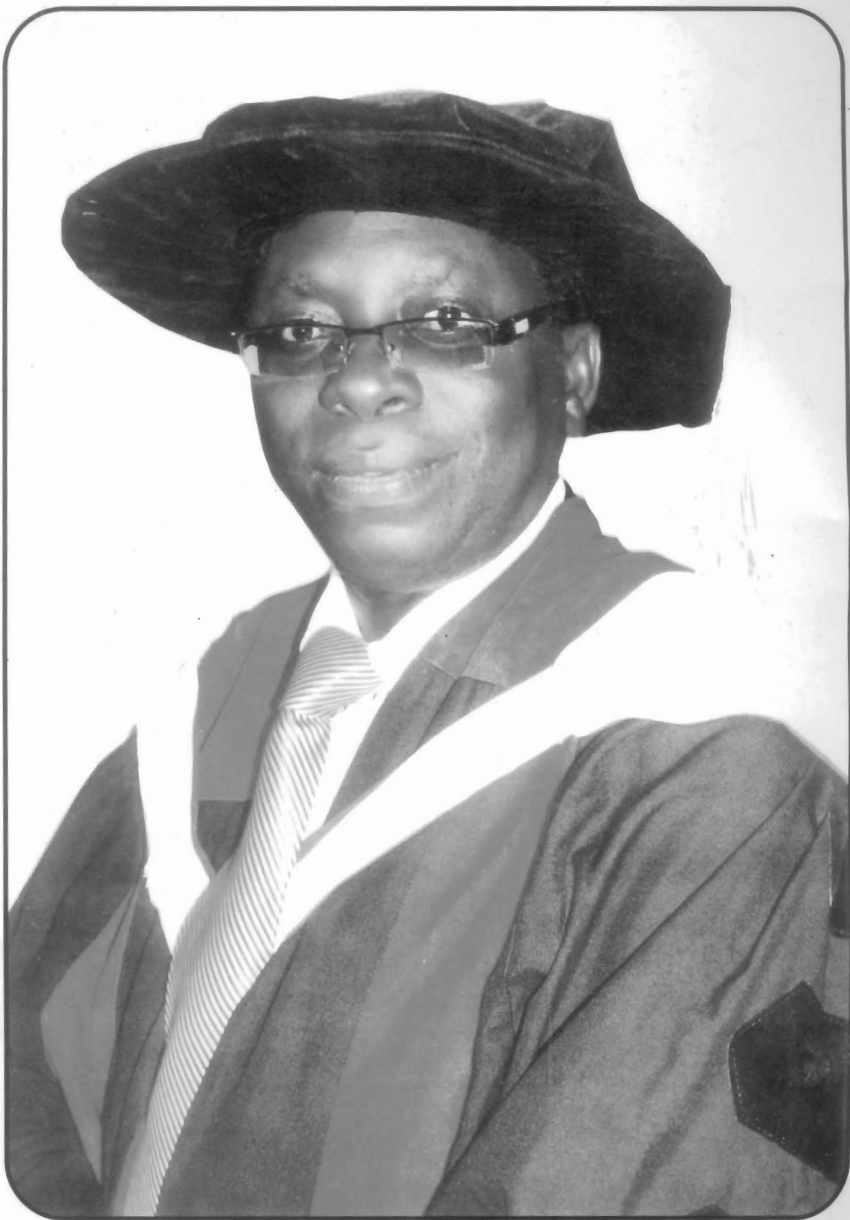
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**OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY PRESS, ILE-IFE, NIGERIA.**



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# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT, THE PEOPLE AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

**An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at Oduduwa Hall,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria  
On Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2017**

**By**

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**Inaugural Lecture Series 298**

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Hall,  
113

ISSN 0189-7848

OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDIES  
A. OLALEKAN ARANSI

*Printed by*

Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited,  
Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Inaugural Lecture Series 298



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT, THE PEOPLE AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

## PREAMBLE

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir,

Distinguished Audience.

I am grateful to Almighty God; the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Universe, and to the authorities of this great University, for the privilege to stand before this sophisticated and distinguished audience this evening to present the 298<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. It is a mark of honor to have been asked to present this Inaugural Lecture on behalf of the Department of Local Government Studies, Faculty of Administration. This Inaugural Lecture is the fifth of its kind to be delivered from the Department. Previous Inaugural Lectures delivered from the Department include those presented by Professor Oladimeji Aborisade with the title, "That all Politics is Local", in 1993, being the very first. This was followed by Professor Bamidele Olowu's "Bureaucracy and the People: The Nigerian Experience", in 1996 and Professor Adekunle Meshack Awotokun's "Localism, Communitarianism and the Logic of Grassroots Democracy in Nigeria's Political Landscape" in 2015. The Fourth in these series was presented by Professor Adeyeye Michael Ola on the topic, "Governing the Localities: Lessons (Un) Learnt", in March 2016. An important thing to note about the lectures is that each of the topics has succeeded in addressing cogent issues of the period with very deep theoretical insights and eloquence.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, my sojourn at Obafemi Awolowo University started about forty years ago, when I entered this University and assumed duty as a Stenographer in the Faculty of Education under the leadership of the then Dean of the Faculty, Professor Adeniji Adaralegbe (now late). I worked in various capacities in the University Administration and rose through the

ranks for a period of eighteen years before I was appointed to the academic position of Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Local Government Studies in 1994, facilitated by my mentor, Professor Oladimeji Aborisade, (now retired and based in the United States of America). I am very grateful to the University Authorities and the Faculty of Administration for finding me worthy of holding various positions of responsibilities in the University including: Acting Head of Department of Local Government Studies, Editor-in-Chief of the Quarterly Journal of Administration, current Head, Department of Local Government Studies and Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Administration among others.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I have been privileged to study in two foremost first generation universities in Nigeria, namely: University of Ife, Ile-Ife, (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife; and University of Ibadan, Ibadan from where I obtained two degrees each. I obtained a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Honours degree in Education/English and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree from the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife. I also obtained a Master of Science (M.Sc.) and Doctor of Philosophy degree (Ph.D.) from the University of Ibadan, Ibadan. In both Universities, I have benefited from the scholarship and wealth of knowledge of many ranking, erudite and distinguished professors who cut my teeth in my current discipline of Political Science/Public Administration with specific focus on Local Government Administration. In particular, I would like to mention the names of erudite professors and senior colleagues in my Department and sister Departments including: Professor Oladimeji Aborisade, (my mentor, now retired); Professor Bamidele Olowu (now retired), Professor S. B. Ayo (now late); Professor E.J. Erero (now late); Professor A.M. Awotokun; and Professor M.O. Okotoni, among others. At the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, names of Emeritus Professor John A.A. Ayoade, (my Ph.D. supervisor); Professor Alex Gboyega; Professor J. Bayo Adekanye; Professor J.B. Okunade; Professor A.A.B. Agbaje, (my M.Sc. supervisor), Professor Tunde Adeniran, Professor O.B.C. Nwolise, and

Professor R.T. Suberu, among others, cannot be forgotten. It is to the glory of God Almighty and the knowledge I acquired from the aforementioned and various other Professors as well as my loving and caring family and friends that I was promoted to the rank of Professor with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2010. I thank the authorities of this University for this honor.

This Inaugural Lecture, consequently, affords me the opportunity to express my deep appreciation and profound gratitude to my mentor, my supervisors, past and present, senior colleagues and other groups of academics, both in Nigeria and in the diaspora, over the years. It has been beneficial, highly rewarding and immensely advantageous coming in contact with them all.

The topic of this Inaugural Lecture is: "Local Government, The People and the Challenges of Development in Nigeria". I have decided to settle for this topic after considering many others, in view of its all-encompassing coverage of my research endeavor in the past twenty-three years, its appropriateness and contemporary relevance to the present-day Nigeria.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The concept "Local Government" means different things to different people. This is the reason why it is necessary at the outset to state in unambiguous terms what the concept means particularly to us in this lecture. To Robson (1949), Local Government is seen as "a territorial non-sovereign community possessing the legal rights and necessary organization to regulate its own affairs." Wraith (1972) posits that Local Governments differ from one country to another and even differ within the same country. He argues that the different forms of the Local Government are determined by a variety of factors, which are very complex in nature. According to him, the factors which bring about these differences and help to determine different patterns and purposes for Local Government are very complex, and include the historical, the geographical, the sociological, the political and the economic". Ola (1984) argues that the theory of Local

Government should be “one that can evolve a well-considered list of criteria of what Local Government ought to be functionally concerned with, and what theoretically it ought to be engaged in”. Ola’s viewpoint as enunciated above is supported by Oyewo (1993) who describes Local Government in terms of “the development it generates, the social amenities it provides, and the extent that it has catered satisfactorily for the general well-being of the communities it has been established to serve”. According to Abubakar (1993):

some forms of Local Government exist in each country the World-over. Even though they may differ in such distinguishing features as: constitutional status, historical experiences, structure and organization, as well as in the scope of their statutory, delegated or devolved responsibilities and functions among others. Local Governments are consensually regarded as governmental/administrative units closest to the people, or in more general parlance, the grassroots. Invariably, therefore, they act as veritable agents of local service delivery, mobilisers of community based human and material resources, and organizers of local initiative in responding to a wide variety of local needs and aspirations. Importantly also, Local Governments provide the basic structure and conditions for grassroots participation in the democratic process.

It is appropriate to state that Local Government, as conceptualized by different scholars, particularly from the functional viewpoints, is rather narrow and incomplete. The above contention lends credence to the opinion of Hickey (1996), who argues that the functions of Local Government must be legally recognized and that those who manage the services must be democratically elected. He also believes that, for the Local Government to

function effectively, it must enjoy relative autonomy. According to him, Local Government means:

The management of services, regulatory functions by locally elected councils and officials responsible to them, under statutory and inspectorial supervision of central legislature and executive, but with enough financial and other independence to admit a fair degree of local initiative and policy-making.

The above definition, taken side-by-side with the one provided by the United Nations Office for Public Administration, offers what we might call an “optimal” or an all-encompassing definition of Local Government. The United Nations defined Local Government as:

... a political sub-division of a nation (or in a federal system/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 locally selected.

While the United Nations definition of Local Government seems to agree with those of Robson (1949) and Hickey (1996), the United Nations attaches some importance to the right of the Local Government to generate and utilize human and non-human resources. The idea that the governing body of the Local Government could be selected as noted by the United Nations runs contrary to the idea of participatory democracy in the Local Government as advocated by many scholars and Local Government practitioners, (Aransi, 2004, 2010). No wonder why Harris (1988) conceptualizes Local Government as: “Government by local bodies, freely elected which while subject to the supremacy of the national (or state) government are endowed in some respect with power, discretion and responsibility which they can exercise without control over their decisions by the higher

authority.” Local Government has come to dominate discussions about countries of the world, developed and underdeveloped alike. It constitutes some kind of fundamental instrument for ensuring ‘good governance’, ‘progress’, ‘growth’ and ‘development’ in any political arrangement, (Aransi, 2014). It impacts more on the grassroots people than any other tier of government, be it Regional/State or Federal, (Aransi, 2012).

Local Government has tremendous roles to play in ensuring good governance and sustainable development in any country. For example, Local Government facilitates even development of social services such as primary and adult education, infrastructure, medical care, good feeder roads, potable water, electricity, building of health/maternity centers, clinics and dispensaries, provision of markets, motor parks, refuse and night-soil disposal, public conveniences, piped sewerage schemes for urban areas, water supplies, agricultural extension services, animal health and forestry (largely for urban areas) among others. Local Government facilitates good governance at the local level where the impact of the people is deeply felt because of its proximity to the grassroots people, (Aransi, 2010, 2014). ‘Good governance’ encompasses issues such as efficient public service, an independent judicial system, a legal framework to enforce contracts, an accountable administration, pluralism, a free press, respect for law and fundamental human rights, among others. ‘Good governance’ is pursued by countries of the world as a way of ensuring sustainable development and the welfare of the people. Therefore it should neither be an exclusive preserve of any given nation, nor should it be an exclusive preserve of any tier of government. Countries of the world normally strive for good governance, progress, growth and development at all cost in view of the tremendous advantages derivable from them particularly because of their impact on the lives of the generality of the people, (Aransi, 2014). The most basic needs that constitute the requisite for improved living standard of the people such as meaningful employment, poverty alleviation, accommodation, health service, education, clothing, agriculture, etc., are provided by the Local Government, (Aransi, 2012, 2014).

## **The Theory of Local Government**

Basically, there are two classes of theories of Local Government that can be identified. The first class of theories, according to Gboyega (1987) attempts to justify the existence or need for Local Government on the basis of its being essential to a democratic regime or for practical administrative purposes like responsiveness, accountability and control. The other class of theories is contrapuntal to the first class of theories. It argues that an effective Local Government system contradicts the purposes of a democratic regime; indeed, the two, Local Government and democracy stand in antithetical relationship to one another such that the weaknesses of one is the strength of the other. Mill (1975) justified the first class of theories on three main grounds. The first was that there are certain concerns or interests which only a section of the community has in common and it is convenient as well as advisable that only those who share this community of interest should administer them. The second reason was that Local Government is one of the "free institutions" which provides political education. The third reason was that of accountability. As Gboyega (1987), following Mill (1975), expressed it,

not only are separate executive officers required for purely local duties but the popular control over those officers can only be advantageously exerted through a separate organ. The very object of having local representation is in order that those who have an interest in common which they do not share with the general body of their countrymen may manage that joint interest by themselves.

Oyediran (1988) is therefore of the opinion that "an essential ingredient of a satisfactory democracy is that a considerable proportion of the people should have experience of active participation in the work of small self-governing groups, whether in connection with Local Government, trade unions, cooperatives or other forces of activity". A recent view on this puts it this way, "the more freedom people have to influence events around them,

the more responsibility they feel; waiting for orders from the center tends to make people passive, apathetic, and alienated and they individually and collectively stop caring about the public good, public initiative and innovation die,” (Markovic, 1983). This view is widely held in contemporary Nigeria. Even at the official level, Local Government has often been seen as an institution where democracy could be best tested, (Awotokun, 2000).

The Efficiency-Services School of Thought beliefs that Local Government exists to provide services, and it must be judged by its success in providing services up to the standard measured by a national inspectorate. It is further argued that Local Government, because of its closeness to an area, can provide certain services far more efficiently and effectively than the National government can. The Developmental School of Thought emphasizes how Local Government in the developing world can be an effective agent for a better life, and improved means of living, socially and economically, and a means to a better share of national wealth, (Akindele *et. al* 1997). This school of Thought sees Local Government as a system that can bring about political integration in developing societies that are ethnically plural and diffuse. Where local sentiments and local attachment are very strong, Local Government can use these positively to advance national growth, (Ola 2004).

In a developing country such as Nigeria, Local Government has an important role to play in national development. This was the conclusion of two conferences held in 1961 – one sponsored by the British Government and the other by the United Nations. The contributions of Local Government to national development, it was agreed, are at least in the following five different ways:

- (a) decongesting government of the center and thereby freeing national leaders from onerous details and unnecessary involvement in local issues;
- (b) increasing the people’s understanding and support of social and economic development activities;



- (c) making programmes to foster social and economic betterment of the local level more realistic and lasting;
- (d) training people in the art of self-government; and
- (e) strengthening national unity, (Oyediran, 1988).

The Federal Military Government of Nigeria virtually accepted all these as the *raison d'être* of Local Government when, in the *Guidelines for Local Government Reform*, it claimed in 1976 that the principal aims of this tier of government are:

- (a) to make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by devolving or delegating them to local representative bodies;
- (b) to facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the local levels of our society and to encourage initiative and leadership potential;
- (c) to mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local development;
- (d) to provide a two-way channel of communication between local communities and government (both state and federal), (FGN, 1976).

Consequently, the 1976 *Guidelines for Local Government Reform* defines Local Government as:

Government at local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the State and

Federal Governments in their areas, and to ensure, through devolution of functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized, (FGN, 1976).

In general, the functions which Local Government bodies should perform should be those:

- (a) which require detailed local knowledge for efficient performance;
- (b) in which success depends on community responsiveness and participation;
- (c) which are of a personal nature requiring provision close to where the individuals affected live, and in which significant use of discretion or understanding of individuals is needed; provided the services can be effectively rendered on the scale of a Local Government area or at most a joint board of neighboring Local Government bodies. (FGN, 1976).

With the issuance of the 1976 Local Government Reform and the subsequent 1979, 1989 and 1999 Constitutions, as well as the introduction of the presidential system of Local Government in 1992, Aransi (1995) contends that the first class of theories becomes most relevant. In other words, to consolidate democracy in Nigeria, there must be the development of the democratic culture from below, through the strengthening of the Local Government system.

### **“People” as a Concept**

The concept “people” can be said to refer to “all the individuals or persons who belong to a nation, race, tribe or community; those persons who live in a particular place or have a particular nationality; the citizens of a country, especially those who have the

right to vote,” (Oxford, 1989). “People are assumed to possess certain essential attributes – sense of worth/self-consciousness, a sense of community and ability to act as rational human beings – to act in their perceived self-interest”, (Olowu, 1996). In relation to the democratic process, the “people”, or more precisely the electorate, are the locus of electoral power. For example, Abraham Lincoln considers democracy as “the government of the people, by the people and for the people”. Even in non-democratic governance, the heads of government derive their legitimacy from the people’s acquiescence. In the specific case of Local Government, the “people”, which appears in the British Government and United Nations conferences documents and the Nigerian *Guidelines for Local Government Reform* referred to above, the concept assumes an even more crucial significance, especially due to their proximity to the leadership of this tier of government.

### **Conceptualizing “Development”**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the third key concept in the topic of this Inaugural Lecture is “Development”. It is appropriate to elucidate on this concept just as I have done for the concepts “Local Government” and the “People”. “Development” is one of the most topical issues of the present century all over the world. Development is indeed a common objective of all countries.

Todaro (1977), quoted by Ebo and Oleru (1993) states as follows in this connection:

Development should be perceived as a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social systems. In addition to improvements in incomes and output, it typically involves radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as popular attitudes and even in customs and beliefs. Development in its essence, must represent the entire gamut of changes by which

an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as "unsatisfactory" towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually "better" (Ebo and Oleru (1993).

Ebo and Oleru (1993) further argue that:

It is often thought that economic growth is equal to economic development and even equal to development in general. However, this is certainly not the whole truth because development must encompass more than the material and financial side of people's lives. The most economic measure of development was the gross national product (GNP) per capita. An alternative common economic index of development was the use of rates of growth of per capita GNP to take account of the ability of a nation to expand its output at a rate faster than the growth rate of its population. The third economic measure was agriculture's share of the national output and employment. (Ebo and Oleru, 1993).

This narrow economic definition of development was found grossly deficient especially in the 1950s and 1960s when many of the Less Developed Countries did achieve the overall United Nations growth targets and yet the levels of living of the masses remained low and unchanged. Thus there was a clamor for the dethronement of GNP as the yardstick for measuring development. Emphasis was now placed on direct attacks on three key economic variables: (i) widespread absolute poverty, (ii) increasing inequitable distribution of income, and (iii) rising unemployment and underemployment, (Ebo and Oleru, 1993).

Seers (1963) posed the basic question about the meaning of development succinctly when he asserted that:

The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, there has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result "development" even if per capita income doubled. (Seers, 1963).

Today, three basic components or core values which were highlighted by Goulet (1971) have been generally accepted to serve as a conceptual basis and practical guideline for understanding the "inner" meaning of development. These are: life sustenance; self-esteem and freedom. According to Ebo and Oloro (1993),

Life sustenance is the ability to provide basic necessities such as food, shelter, health, protection etc. An economy or a government is successful to the extent it is able to provide as many people as possible with the means of achieving these goals. To this extent, it is clear that economic development is a necessary condition for the improvement in the "quality of life" which is "development". Self-esteem means confidence, a sense of worth and self-respect. As many third world countries suffer from inferiority complex they seek development in order to gain the esteem which is denied to societies living in a state of disgraceful 'under-development'. Freedom is used here in a more fundamental sense of freedom or emancipation

from alienating conditions of life and freedom from the social servitudes of men to nature, ignorance and other men, misery, institutions and dogmatic beliefs.

Another important concept of development in contemporary times is the concept “Sustainable Development”. The concept is also worth clarifying. According to the World Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), Sustainable Development can be defined as: “long-term continuous development of the society aimed at satisfaction of humanity’s need at present and in the future via rational usage and replenishment of natural resources preserving the ear for future generations”. The Brundtland Commission’s Report, quoted in Oladeji (2014) considers Sustainable Development as “the kind of development, which satisfies the current needs without endangering the future generations to satisfy their own”.

Akinroye (2016) posits that:

Sustainable Development has got some goals or targets that are universal; set up by the United Nations (UN) member states at the UN Summit in September 2015 and became applicable in January 2016. The UN member states are expected to use these goals or targets in framing their agenda and policies from 2016 to 2030. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were accepted as successors to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). SDGs are meant to continue where the MDGs stopped and are expected to serve as mechanism to change the World positively in the next 15 years (2016 - 2030), Akinroye (2016).

The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets. The goals are as contained in the following table:

**Table 1: Goals of Sustainable Development**

*Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere*

*Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture*

*Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*

*Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all*

*Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*

*Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*

*Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all*

*Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*

*Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*

*Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries*

*Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*

*Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*

*Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

*Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*

*Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*

*Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*

*Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*

**Source: United Nations Organization, 2014**

Akinroye (2016) posits that in developing countries, including Nigeria, MDGs were achieved with mixed results from 2000 to 2015. The MDGs were criticized for being too narrow and left out many issues, like Non communicable diseases such as Cardiovascular Disease, Cancer, Diabetes Mellitus, and Mental Health, which account for more than 80% of illness and death in Developing countries. He further states that the MDGs were considered targets for poor countries to achieve, with finance from wealthy states. The goals did not cover Human Right issues nor address Economic Development. Specifically, he states:

The eight (8) goals and 21 targets of the MDGs were limited to the basics of **poverty, hunger, health and education**. For the 15 years that the MDGs were implemented, it became known that extreme poverty and hunger can be reduced within definite period. In addition, with adequate planning and goal setting, diligent tracking could provide opportunities to achieve better outcomes. Nigeria recorded some progress in the implementation of MDGs in the areas of **universal primary education; gender; parity in education; reduction in the spread of HIV/AIDS; maternal and child mortality; and prevalence of hunger**, (Akinroye, 2016).

It is appropriate to state that most of the goals and targets of the MDGs are clearly applicable to the Local Government because of the proximity of that level of government to the grassroots people. For example, issues relating to poverty, hunger, health, education (particularly primary and adult education), gender, parity in education, reduction in the spread of HIV/AIDS, maternal and child mortality, as well as agriculture, are definitely some of the critical goals and targets of the Local Government. No wonder then, why Akinroye (2016) is of the opinion that:

to implement the SDG agenda there will definitely be challenges at the global, regional and national levels which therefore call for



concerted collaboration between **Government (National, State and Local levels); Private Sector; Non-Governmental Organizations; Civil Society Organization; and Development partners.**

As obtained with the SDG agenda, there are definitely many challenges confronting Local Governments in Nigeria in their quest to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Table 2 below compares the MDGs and the Proposed SDGs in terms of the goals and targets of the two development goals.

**Table 2: Comparing MDGs and proposed SDGs**

<b>MDGs</b>	<b>Proposed SDGs</b>
1. <i>Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</i>	<b>Goal 1:</b> <i>End poverty in all its forms everywhere</i> <b>Goal 2:</b> <i>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture</i>
2. <i>Achieve universal primary education</i>	<b>Goal 3:</b> <i>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</i> <b>Goal 4:</b> <i>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all</i>
3. <i>Promote gender equality and empower women</i>	<b>Goal 5:</b> <i>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</i> <b>Goal 6:</b> <i>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</i>
4. <i>Reduce child mortality</i>	<b>Goal 7:</b> <i>Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all</i> <b>Goal 8:</b> <i>Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</i>
5. <i>Improve maternal health</i>	<b>Goal 9:</b> <i>Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</i>
6. <i>Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</i>	<b>Goal 10:</b> <i>Reduce inequality within and among</i>
7. <i>Ensure</i>	

<p><i>environmental sustainability</i></p> <p>8. <i>Develop a global partnership for development</i></p>	<p><i>countries</i></p> <p><b>Goal 11:</b> <i>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</i></p> <p><b>Goal 12:</b> <i>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</i></p> <p><b>Goal 13:</b> <i>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</i></p> <p><b>Goal 14:</b> <i>Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</i></p> <p><b>Goal 15:</b> <i>Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</i></p> <p><b>Goal 16:</b> <i>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</i></p> <p><b>Goal 17:</b> <i>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</i></p>
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**Source: Sustainable Development Report, 2015**

Consequently, it can be summed up that today, as postulated by Gboyega, (2003) the idea of development

embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvements in the material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future. It also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to provide personal physical security and of livelihoods and expansion of life-chances. In short, human development.

Local Government as the level of government closest to the grassroots therefore constitutes an effective tier of government for the attainment of the targets and goals of Sustainable Development.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA: HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS**

Local Government in Nigeria has undergone a series of reforms and reorganization. It has moved from the local administration of 'Native Authorities' to 'Local Authorities' to 'Local Government'. It has also moved from region-specific types to the present national unified Local Government system since 1976. It has in fact since 1979 become a "recognized" tier of government, (Aransi, 2010). The changes which Local Government has witnessed are undoubtedly aimed at strengthening that "tier" of government "so that it can contribute maximally to the democratic evolution of Nigeria." (Nwosu, 1991). Gboyega (1987) notes as follows:

Local Government is both an institutional arrangement for the achievement of political and administrative decentralization as well as a field of study. As a level of government functionary, it has generated tremendous and renewed interest, particularly among the elites. The reorganization and reforms also served as motivator for studies in local government in Nigeria. There is now a "tradition of scholarship" in local government studies in Nigeria".

According to Ayoade (1995):

The origin of modern Local Government in Nigeria is deeply embedded in the colonial period. The British colonialists established the indirect rule system, which was a form of local administration. The administration made use of traditional rulers who were in direct contact with the people... In other words, traditional

rulers played crucial role by ensuring that policies formulated by the colonialists were left in the hands of the community chiefs who were then very loyal to the traditional rulers.

Some parts of Nigeria experienced an advanced stage of human civilization and a highly centralized government. For instance, Kingdoms and Empires such as the Old Oyo Kingdom, Benin Kingdom, Kanem Bornu and Fulani Empires fall into this category. These areas had a form of government through which the local administration of their subjects was carried out. The advent of colonialism brought about the introduction of indirect rule. The traditional rulers were used by Lord Lugard to administer the country in his indirect rule. Between 1914, when the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria were amalgamated by Lord Frederick Lugard, and the year 1999, "several constitutional changes emerged, thus introducing new dimensions into the administrative management in Nigeria and emphasizing the concept of decentralisation", (Aborisade, 1989).

According to Gboyega (1987),

the MacPherson Constitution of 1951 is significant because of the reasons that it carried out Local Government reforms which were intended to modernize and democratize the Local Government structure of Southern Nigeria. This Constitution decided that Local Government, was to be a regional responsibility; i.e. governments in Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna, for the Eastern, Western and Northern Nigeria respectively. The passage of the Local Government Laws in the Eastern and Western Regions in the early 1950s reduced the powers of the traditional rulers because of the introduction of elected local councils. The Regional Governments that were established in Enugu and Ibadan were hostile to the Native Administration System. These Regional

Governments, and in particular their leaders, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo were greatly influenced by Western political theory, most especially the participatory ideology.

This was, indeed, the first opportunity for Nigerians to introduce the participatory system in local councils by ensuring that people had a say in the running of their own affairs. It is to be noted that the military coup which took place in Nigeria in 1966, although widely regarded as an aberration with its characteristic of centralization, was actually interested in the participatory system at the Local Government level. The military placed emphasis on making Local Governments development-oriented in order to improve the lots of the people at the grassroots level, (Ayoade, 1995). This is rather ironical as the civilian regime which should promote participation at the local level is, quite unfortunately, against the determination to entrench mass participation of the rural people in local level governance.

By the year 1976, the Muritala/Obasanjo military regime carried out the most fundamental reforms to the Nigerian Local Government system. According to Ayoade, (1995), the regime issued the Guidelines for Local Government reform with the intention to make Local Government the third tier of the Nigerian federal system. The reform introduced autonomy of decision-making to the Local Government and also specifically made available to the third tier of government, statutory allocation. There was indeed the introduction of more responsiveness of the people in governance at the local level.

The 1976 Guidelines provided for the responsibilities to be devolved to Local Government.

**Part A: the exclusive responsibility of Local Governments save in exceptional circumstances.** These include: Provision of

Market and Motor Parks; Sanitary inspection, refuse and Night soil disposal; Slaughter house and slaughter slabs; Public Conveniences; Burial Grounds; Registration of births, deaths and marriages; Provision of Community and Local Recreation Centers; Licensing and regulation of bakery house, liquor sales, bicycles, hand carts etc.; Control of advertisements in or near public places; Naming of roads and numbering of plots and buildings; Collection of Vehicle parking charges; and Collection of property and other rates, community tax and other designated revenue sources.

**Part B: the Responsibilities which Local Governments may run concurrently with State Governments.** These include: Basic Health Services (Health Centre), Dispensaries, Health Clinic, Ambulance and Preventive Health Services; Abattoirs and Meat Inspection; Nursery, Primary and Adult Education; Provision of Scholarships, Reading Rooms and Libraries; Agricultural Extension services and Veterinary Clinics; Rural and semi urban water supply; Fire services; Provision of Roads and Streets Lighting and Drainage; Control of water and atmospheric pollution; Provision of homes for destitutes, the infirm and orphans; Provision of Public utilities; Public Housing programs, Operation of Commercial undertakings, Control of traffic and parking; Regulation and control of buildings, town and country planning; and Piped sewerage system, (*FRN, Guidelines, for Local Government Reform 1976*).

The *Guidelines for Local Government Reform of 1976* introduced a uniform, single-tier system of Local Government for the first time in Nigeria. This year, the Federal Military Government created "three hundred and one Local Government areas whose population ranged between 150,000 and 800,000. Each of them received grants from the Federal Government with a further grant from the State Governments", (FRN (1976). However, Ayoade (1995) notes as follows:

As a matter of fact, the Federal Government paid its grants through the States. The States acted as funnels so that the funds only trickled down to the Local Governments. In fact, some State Governments were known to have diverted Local Government grants to other needs between 1979 and 1983. But be that as it may, it laid a solid foundation for the funding of Local Governments."

The diversion of Local Government funds by the State Governments still persists till today. Although statutory allocations are made for Local Governments in the federal account, these allocations are paid to the Local Governments through the State/Local Government Joint Account (JAC). The *1976 Guidelines for Local Government Reforms* did not work because, according to Aborisade (1979),

all the operators (Governors, State Ministries for Local Governments and Officials of Local Government Councils) did not allow the system to succeed. This is evidenced in two clear ways: the diversion of local government funds into another area and failure of state governments to conduct elections into the local government councils.

It is to be observed that the diversion of Local Government funds into another area by the State Chief Executives and failure of state

governments to conduct elections into the Local Government Councils still persist till today in Nigeria.

The 1979 Constitution provides for the constitutional recognition of the Local Government as a third tier of government in Nigeria. For instance:

Section 7 (1) of the Constitution stated as follows:

The system of Local Government by democratically elected Local Government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the Government of every State shall ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils.

The 1979 Constitution provides for the people to have constitutional recognition to participate in local level governance through “democratically elected councils because every person who is entitled to vote or be voted for at an election to a House of Assembly has the right to vote and be voted for at an election to a Local Government council. Since that time citizen passivity in the affairs of the locality has become unfashionable. As a matter of fact, local political awareness heightened and became a veritable guarantee of transparency and accountability of local political institutions”, (Ayoade, 1995).

It is very unfortunate that most of the State Governments in Nigeria have resorted to adoption of appointed local councils rather than elected government. The inability of State Governments to encourage elections at the Local Government level has eroded local political awareness and accountability, transparency and honesty to the citizens have remained a mirage, (Aransi, 2010).

However, in spite of the 1976 Local Government Reform and the subsequent 1979, Constitution, it can be stated that Local



Government has now been reduced to an agent of the state government or what can be referred to as field administration of an increasingly centralized state, (Aransi, 2010). For example, Olowu (1996) opines that:

Today, Local Governments operate more like field administration of an increasingly centralized federal government rather than self-government structures in the various communities in which they are located. Their political leadership and the larger proportion of their revenue sources come from the federal government. These institutions are not directly accountable to the people but to those who appointed them.

It can be categorically stated that today, Local Government is no more recognized by the State Government as a partner in the planning and development of the State, (Aransi, 2000). What obtains today is nothing but a "Master/Servant" or the 'Horse and the Rider' relationship between the State and the Local Governments", (Ayode, 1995).

The Guidelines for Implementing the Local Government (Basic Constitutional Provisions) (Amendment) Decree 1991 was aimed at extending the presidential system of government, already in practice at the central and state levels, to the Local Government. With this development, Local Government was constituted in such a way that it had two arms, namely: The Legislative Arm and the Executive Arm. The separation of powers as being experienced at the federal and State levels was therefore endowed the Local Government, (FRN, 1991). Oyelakin (1995) states as follows:

The Reforms were designed to hasten, the development of the democratic culture in Nigeria and create a conducive atmosphere for meaningful political participation at all levels of government. It was also aimed at strengthening the Local Government system and enhance its

status and autonomy by giving it a parity of treatment with higher tiers of government. It was also to strengthen the system of checks and balances (including the establishment of the office of the Auditor-General of Local Governments, the process of audit alarm, the codification of offences and sanctions and the principle of recall).

I submit that, the proximity of the Local Government to the grassroots people makes it the most convenient tier of government where the development of democratic culture should be allowed to thrive. It is to be noted that, despite that Local Government creates a conducive atmosphere for ensuring meaningful political participation at the grassroots level, the noticeable lack of autonomy of that tier of government has undermined its being given a parity of treatment with higher tiers of government particularly in Nigeria.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS A DECENTRALIZED UNIT OF GOVERNMENT**

Local Government is a decentralized unit of government. According to Abubakar (1993), it is "by conception and design a unit or level ... of some larger, or groups of larger governmental authority or body".

Local Government operates within the framework of the devolutionary decentralization milieu. For instance, though the spirit of the 1976 Local Government Reforms in Nigeria was that of devolving powers to local authorities, the practice produced a deconcentrative arrangement. As observed by Abubakar (1993),

In the first place, Local Governments did not have final say on their budgets, most of the key officials were appointees of the state government and were accountable to it, and for most of the periods of their existence did not

have councils that were democratically put in place. Decentralization can therefore be said to encourage citizen or community participation, which is essential if the efforts are to be relevant and sustained, it also facilitates administrative control.

It could be observed that except in 2004, when almost all States in Nigeria conducted Local Government elections, several States in Nigeria have resorted to haphazard Local Government elections between 2007 and 2014. Till today many States in Nigeria do not have councils that are democratically put in place. This does not augur well for the meaningful participation of the people in local level governance. There is, therefore, nothing like accountability and responsiveness of local level officials to the generality of the people of the various Local Governments. This is antithetical to democracy and good governance at the local level. Furthermore, Local Government in Nigeria is confronted with a lot of other challenges despite the spate of reforms which Nigeria has witnessed since independence. I will endeavor to discuss some of these challenges under my contributions to knowledge.

### **MY MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIP**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the main thrust of my publications in Political Science/Public Administration with a bent in Local Government Studies in which I have made contributions to knowledge have been in the areas of Comparative Public Administration, Human Resources Management and Local Government Administration and Management. My contributions in these areas have investigated several issues highlighting how management theories could be explored to enhance better performance at the Local Government level with a view to ensuring development in Nigeria. I have focused attention on the study of the structure and functions of Local Government and other different social institutions in Nigeria and established their relationship with the Local Government in

socio-cultural perspective. I have made it clear that the best level to guarantee the existence of the social institutions is the Local Government, (Aransi, 2004). I have also been able to establish that there is the need for further reform of the Nigerian Local Government as I have undertaken an assessment of the workability, relevance and adequacy of the previous Local Government reforms in the country, (Aransi, 2000). My contribution on the re-visitation of the dynamics of population on public administration in Nigeria has established the significance of population to national development. The contribution has been able to establish that economic progress and sustainable development will remain a mirage unless appropriate steps are taken by Public Administrators to integrate population factors in the development process in Nigeria, (Aransi, 2005). My contribution on Local Government and Productivity provides a case for a more efficient and effective management of Local Government with a view to bringing about maximum productivity. The study raises such management issues as motivation, development, training/education, human resource capacity as critical variables in the improved productivity of Local Government system in Nigeria, (Aransi, 2006). All these contributions, among others, are aimed at ensuring the attainment of the goals and targets of development and indeed, sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Elected and Appointed Local Councils: A Comparison**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, my Ph.D. Thesis titled, "A Comparative Analysis of the Performance of Elected and Appointed Local Councils in Nigeria", has observed that there is a difference between Local Government and central administration at the local level. While Elected Local Governments are people-driven, the Appointed Local Councils are paternalistic. The Administrator comes in as a technocrat and is hardly responsive to the people. His constituency is the civil service from where the Administrator is often drawn. Usually, the Administrator has freedom of action because of his close rapport with members of the civil service. Checks and balances are therefore weaker. On the contrary, the

study observes that checks and balances are stronger in elected type of Local Government where the Executive is not a civil servant. In a way, there is separation of power. While the Appointed Local Councils are not democratic and participatory, the Elected Local Councils are democratic and participatory. The study revealed that although they are not democratically accountable, Appointed Local Councils are more development-oriented and result-oriented than Elected Local Councils. This is because of the distinctive characteristics of Appointed Local Councils where there are possibilities of easier release of funds from the federal and state levels, narrower and non-local constituency, lower personnel costs and strict adherence to rules and regulations. The study therefore concludes that although it is more responsive and people-driven, the Elected Local Council is less efficient and effective than the Appointed Local Council in terms of the quantum of services delivered, (Aransi, 2004). It is stating the obvious therefore, that Appointed Local Councils, either as Sole Administrator or Caretaker Committees, can be said to be government, but cannot be said to be local or representative government. They are neither participative nor autonomous government and do not possess separate legal identity. The *Guidelines for Local Government Reform (1976)* allows up to 25% of the members of each Local Government Council to be nominated. Similarly, during the civilian rule of the second republic, under the Presidency of Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), all the Management Committees in all the Local Governments throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria were nominated by the respective State Governors. This affirms the contention of Gboyega (1985) that under the military administration led by Late General Sanni Abacha, Local Government Chief Executives were nominated initially as Sole Administrators. Later, after the nomination of more representatives to assist the Sole Administrators, there came the administration of Local Councils by Caretaker Committee members. This position also tallies with the observation of Emezi (1983) who observes that the appointment of Chief Executives of Local Government began during the civil war (1967-1970). The same system was employed

for Local Government administration in 1983, 1986, 1990, and 1998, (Aransi, 2012).

The above attributes may be adduced for the reasons why many State Governors usually put appointed executives in place at the Local Government level especially after the dissolution of elected local councils. This practice is common in Nigeria because of the frequent changes in administration and instability of government. As a matter of fact, many State Governments in Nigeria still put appointed executives in place at the Local Government level in Nigeria today. No wonder why Olowu (1995) contends that "today, Local Governments are effectively subordinated to State government rather than the public. They operate more as extensions of the state bureaucracy rather than as local, self-governing institutions."

It is extremely expedient to consider the role of elected members of Local Government for a thorough consideration of the role of officials, especially in relation to the Financial Memorandum. The Financial Memoranda is a document that contains the regulations guiding financial transactions in Local Government. The document also stipulates the roles and responsibilities of officials of Local Government in Nigeria. The elected members of the Local Government can be listed as the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Councilors, (Aransi, 2001). Election itself has been considered as an important element of modern representative government. This observation confirms the position of Nnoli (1990), who sees election as being closely tied to the growth and development of democratic political order that it is generally held to be the single most important indicator of the presence or absence of democratic government.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, arising from this study, I submit that the office of the Chairman of the Local Government Council should, under normal circumstances, be contested for and won in an election. There are several advantages that could be derived from putting in place, elected executives at the Local Government level.

For instance, there is opportunity of having a clear-cut mandate in terms of agreement between the elected people and those who elected them. There are also the opportunities for mass participation of the local people in the management of their own affairs at the Local Government level. Furthermore, there are the opportunity of stronger checks and balances, clear-cut separation of power between the Executive and the Legislature, and accountability of the elected executives to the public, among other advantages, (Aransi, 2012).

### **Decision-Making in Nigeria Local Government**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, our studies (Aransi, Olasupo and Badejo, 1997) have shown that “decision-making at the Local Government level particularly under the parliamentary and the presidential systems of government were the responsibilities of the actors in decision-making. In the parliamentary system, such that exists in Britain (a model that Nigeria adopted at independence and maintained until the advent of military rule in 1966), governmental decision-making was the responsibility of the local political executive,” (Aransi, Olasupo and Badejo, 1997). The political executive in turn was responsible for his actions before parliament, which exercised sovereignty on behalf of the people. This was the position witnessed at the federal and regional levels. The dominant actors in decision-making at the local level under parliamentary system included the temporary political executive and the local career officers. Other actors include the elite in the local community and the community people themselves. Conversely, under the presidential system, the temporary political executive, political appointees, local career officers, judiciary and the legislature constitute the dominant actors while the elite in the local community and the community people constitute minor actors. The role of the dominant actors and other actors in decision-making cannot be under-estimated. The actors in decision-making are more relevant when there is participatory/elected local councils than the appointed ones. This study concludes that there is nothing wrong with any system of government but the operators of the system.



## **Assessing Local Government Reforms in Nigeria**

In another study, Aransi, (2000) assessed the workability, relevance and adequacy of the previous Local Government Reforms in Nigeria. It was observed that Reforms have been a recurring event in Nigeria particularly since the colonial period. Reform presupposes the existence of certain structures which require and/or necessitate modification, innovation and change. In the Federal Republic of Nigeria, most of the reforms undertaken, particularly at the Local Government level, have been considered as administrative, (Aransi, 2000). This observation confirms the position of Ayo (1995) who posits that reforms at the local level are administrative in the sense that they are occasionally undertaken as part of the attempts to overhaul the Nigerian politico-administrative machinery as a whole. The intention of any reform is to bring about innovation and change to the existing system.

## **Local Government and Culture**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, in my study on Local Government and Culture in Nigeria, Aransi (2004) observed that the study of Local Government and Culture in Nigeria is full of several profound changes and challenges. Prior to the advent of colonialism, the African people have had their various cultural beliefs and practices. Aransi (2004) established that the Nigerian people are undoubtedly, richly endowed with diverse cultural values and tradition just as any other society or country worldwide. Notable among the traditional beliefs and practices among the people of Nigeria are the examples of the enviable cultures of respect for elders, accommodation of strangers, culture of morality, liberality to kith and kin, the belief in the Supreme Being, the cultural value of pre-marital virginity, predestination, belief in life after death, moral order of the society and regulated activities of man within the society, among others, (Aransi, 2004). Anywhere in the world, culture is regarded as bedrock of development. It is the sum-total of the materials and intellectual equipment whereby people satisfy their biological and social needs and adapt themselves to their environment. In other words, culture embraces every facet of



human endeavor, including development, the objective of which would be to improve the quality of life of the people. The culture of the Nigerian people, which in the past, had been praiseworthy and admirable has undergone an unprecedented acculturation and admixture. This is as a result of the contact with foreign culture: Oriental, Occidental and African. Arising from this acculturation is the prevailing modernization, sophistication and industrialization all of which have brought about complete reversal of our cherished traditional beliefs and practices culminating in complete relegation of the Nigerian cultural heritage. The words of the elders are the words of wisdom. Deriving from the wisdom of our forefathers, tallies with the advice from history, that is, man needs to learn from historical experiences and cultural heritage, not only to solve immediate problems but also to enable him to correctly chart his course towards ameliorating or completely obviating, a recurrence of such problems in the future. In other words, we should not forget our past, our root, and our culture, (Aransi, 2004). This position lends credence to the Collingwood (1974) who posits that by understanding it (the past) historically, we incorporate it into our present though, and enable ourselves by developing and criticizing it to use that heritage for our environment. Despite the influence of foreign cultures, some positive aspects of Nigerian culture deserves the pride of place and should not be relegated to the background, (Aransi, 2004).

### **State and Local Government in Nigeria: The Changing Scene**

In 2006, our contribution (Aborisade and Aransi (2006) studied the changing scene with regard to State and Local Government in Nigeria. The study delves into the politics of Nigeria amalgamation in 1914 and systematically traced its political development in the context of structure and operation of the provinces, divisions, districts and later regional administration which gave birth to States and Local Governments. The study observes that it is a complex development to describe because the initial three regions: North, East, and West operated their administration in the context of the local tradition and custom within their environment. When the time came to adopt a federal

system of government, it became somewhat difficult because of the initial allegiance to the regions instead of the federation which was perceived as tribal symbols such as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The early political development in Nigeria accommodated a strong regional power which gave a pseudo impression to the then leaders that a region is like a country. Thus the development of political parties was essentially based on the ethnic lineage, a condition that posed future contradictions, (Aborisade and Aransi, 2006). The study noted that the time is now ripe to decipher from the old notion of running a region like a country to an acceptable rational judgment of blending but there are many knots to untie. People still feel almost the same. A change from the past to the present is being challenged on a daily basis because the federal revenue is mostly "oil" which is concentrated in the south. Those days are gone when Nigeria depended on farming to survive. The contribution examines critically the areas of power structure at the state and local levels, the public officials, education, federal mandates, the courts and due process, security, policy areas, social, revenue issues, the military incursions and public enlightenment programs, (Aborisade, 2006, Aransi 2006).

### **Corruption in Nigeria Local Government**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, in my study on bureaucratic corruption in the public service: a case study of the Nigerian Local Government, Aransi (2008) observed that corruption as a social vice is all engulfing, as there has not been any area of the national life not touched, Local Government inclusive. Although, a third world country, Nigeria enjoys a robust endowment of human and material resources, which under normal circumstances should be judiciously employed for the development of the nation. Unfortunately, these resources have been negatively and corruptly used to the detriment of the nation. Consequently, growth and development are continuously becoming a mirage. Nigerian leaders, bureaucrats and government officials engage in corrupt practices such as bribery and spoil, embezzlement, misappropriation of public fund, inflation of contracts, squandermania etc. Most of the misappropriated funds are stashed away in

foreign bank accounts to the detriment of the nation, (Aransi, 2008).

In a related contribution, our study on Corruption in Nigeria (Oloyede, Kobiowu and Aransi, 2008) observed that in Nigeria, as elsewhere, corruption manifests itself in every aspect of the public service. In the government ministries, it is quite clear that where a minister or a director-general in charge of a ministry, has received some gratification in abuse of his office, he can hardly be expected to maintain discipline within that ministry. Similarly, a judge who is corrupt can hardly be expected to make a report of any corrupt magistrate, neither can he be expected to give a fair and unbiased judgment. It is not that official corruption descended on us after independence. Indeed, the phenomenon of official corruption developed with political administration, not only here, but virtually everywhere, in varying degrees. Sufficient legislation were made against corruption in our criminal code, however, most of the sections dealing with official corruption in the code have fallen into disuse, due to reason best known to the authorities. The truth is that we are now living more or less in a lawless society. One is apt to adduce reasons for the prevalent high level of official corruption in Nigeria. In the first instance where the leadership is corrupt, the followers should not be expected to do otherwise, since most of our leaders, be it in military or civilian, have either by their action or inaction encouraged corruption in Nigeria, as in many other parts of the world, (Oloyede, Kobiowu and Aransi 2008).

With the exception of the short-lived Muritala Mohammed military regime, the frantic efforts made by the Buhari/Idiagbon military administration, the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo and the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration, to address the issues of official corruption in Nigeria, other administrations at the center have greatly contributed to the problem, by openly indulging in various corrupt practices and until recently when the present government took it upon itself to fight this cankerworm. In a society where

accountability and probity are not treasured by both the public office holders and the polity at large, such a society is bound to be a very corrupt one. In Nigeria, we do not accord accountability and probity, a priority in our scheme of things. Nobody feels concerned about any public officer who lives above his or her means. In fact, most Nigerians consider top government appointments as the easiest avenue to make money, and people expected such appointee to be very rich and stupendously affluent by the end of his/her tenure. Our culture, which gives unnecessary recognition to the wealthy ones, irrespective of the sources of the wealth, does not help the situation. It is only in Nigeria that a known treasury looter is given chieftaincy title or prestigious award, in as much as he/she doles out some amount of money to the traditional ruler or the powerful leaders. We worship wealth, not minding the sources of such wealth, and in an attempt to acquire wealth, which ultimately leads to recognition in the society, public officers among others, indulge in various corrupt practices, (Oloyede, Kobiowu & Aransi, 2008).

In another related study on office ethics and conduct in Nigeria Local Government system, Aransi, (2012) observed that corruption and unethical conduct has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian nation. This vice has affected and infected all the tiers of government in Nigeria, Local Government inclusive. This militates against development in small measure,(Aransi 2012).

In another study on the impact of corruption on poverty alleviation in Nigeria, Aransi, (2009), assessed the impact of corruption on poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The study considered corruption as being the bane of growth, development and progress in Nigeria. It has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation and has impacted negatively as well as been one of the major consequences of the prevailing poverty among the Nigerian people. The contribution found out that people in positions of authority in Nigeria who have access to financial resources do amass wealth to the detriment of the generality of the populace. Rather than investing the accumulated wealth in Nigeria for the benefit of the poor masses,

most of these people corruptly enrich themselves and stash these monies in foreign bank accounts. There is no doubt that corruption and poverty do militate against development in all ramifications. Poverty is much more prevalent at the Local Government level in Nigeria than any other tier of government, (Aransi 2009).

### **Public Administration in Nigeria**

In another contribution (Aborisade and Aransi, 2009) present the scope, intentions, realities and purpose of public administration by examining into details, the nature and several functions of public administration with a focus on the major activities, roles, responsibilities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) issues and the endemic practices of corruption particularly in Nigeria. The contribution viewed public administration as a field that relates favorably to other disciplines and embraces all the tenets of a civil society as well as promotes an ideal image of a state. Although some of these attributes are missing in the Nigerian context because of the erroneous oversight in the choice of selection or election of quality of leaders culminating into the vagary behavior of the public administrators. The study found out that the experience so far can be attributed to the greed at the high peak in all the arms of government, federal, state and local; thus creating a care-free attitude to the public administrators. Indeed, it is the study of public administration to discover what government can do properly and successfully do and see how it can do these proper things with utmost level of efficiency. The study highlights several areas in which public administration can foster. even under the present undesirable corruption episode. It concludes that an appropriate approach must be employed by public administrators in the discharge of their official responsibilities in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, (Aborisade and Aransi, 2009).

### **Leadership and Conflict Resolution in Local Government**

In another study, (Aransi, 2009) examined leadership and conflict resolution. The study revealed that a leader is to liberate the followership to perform and achieve stated objectives. The good

leader integrates the goals, wants and drives of the people with those of the organization and so gets both realized concurrently. The contribution is of the view that leadership means 'hard work' and not 'less work'. That is to say, the leader must be the servant of all. His thinking, planning and action must take account of the needs of all. The leader must be more perceptive and less judgmental of the requirements and actions of others. It is by being all these that he can be able to resolve conflict amicably particularly at the Local Government level, (Aransi, 2009).

### **Revenue Sources to Local and State Governments in Nigeria**

Contributing to the issue of revenue sources to Local and State governments in Nigeria, Aransi (2006) observed that revenue constitutes the lifeblood of Local and State Governments in Nigeria. It has been established that without adequate revenue Local and State Governments will not only lose their credibility and reputation but the fundamental basis for continuous growth and development will undoubtedly suffer an unprecedented setback. It is desirable for any tier of government to maintain its identity and be less independent of the other tier(s) of government. The contribution essentially examines the sources of revenue available to Local and State Governments in Nigeria. It is pertinent to note that today, the state governments in Nigeria have taken away, all the revenue yielding resources available to the Local Governments and consequently given to them, expenditure incurring responsibilities. This has rendered our Local Governments in Nigeria ineffective, (Aransi, 2006). It has affected growth and development in Nigeria.

### **Security Problems in Nigeria: The Role of Local Government**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the need for security is as old as human history. In fact, among the hierarchy of human needs, security and safety takes a prominent position. In Nigeria, all tiers of government – federal, state and local, need to pay particular attention to the challenges of security of our rural and urban environment and how to ameliorate or completely obviate the problem. In my study on security problems particularly at the

Local Government level in Nigeria, Aransi, (2003) has observed that until of recent, the problems threatening security in our rural Local Governments have not been so well pronounced. Many reasons could be advanced for the low rate of criminal activities in rural local levels. The above position, confirms the contribution of Adediran (1989) who stated that these criminal activities range from cultural and religious, to social reasons. In the rural areas, cultural values, especially of honesty, good neighborliness, respect for elders and authorities etc. play a major role in minimizing the rate of crimes. Religious injunctions inhibit criminal tendencies while social interaction between communities and villages makes everybody his brother's keeper. In addition, the role of the traditional rulers in the maintenance of law and order and maintaining vigilance in their domains play a prominent role in solving security challenges. That is not to say that our rural communities are completely immune from criminal tendencies. This position is supported by Aliyu (1989) who cited the examples of criminal activities that could be located in rural Local Governments that include: assaults, larceny, cheating and sometimes adultery. There are also cases of culpable homicide resulting from land disputes, chieftaincy tussles, protracted family problems and ritual killings perpetrated by secrete cults. In semi-urban and urban Local Governments, arising from urbanization, industrialization, politicization and sophistication, uncountable number of criminal activities are noticeable, such as: bomb blasts, inter-city conflicts, religious intolerance, teenage robbery, persecution, power tussle, electoral fraud, assassination, abduction, and formation of ethnic based organizations (militant groups) amongst others. These constitute security challenges to the nation as a whole, (Aransi, 2003). Security problem do militate against development in no small measure.

### **Corporate Governance, Democracy and the Challenge of Efficient Personnel Management in Local Government**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, in my other study, Aransi (2009) observed that corporate governance, democracy and efficient personnel management and stability at the Local Government level



can be guaranteed if there are good morale and good inter-personal relations among workers, motivation of workers by the employers, managing the employment relationship in work environment, developing people for the future, looking after employees' welfare and counseling services, ensuring fair pay and employee benefits and guarantee the law and the rights of the individual employee. The contribution observed that there is the need to monitor the employees from the recruitment stage to the retirement period. The achievement of the developmental objectives for setting up the Local Government as a third tier of government in Nigeria can be achieved if there is an efficient personnel management, (Aransi 2009).

### **Status and Roles of Local Government as an aspect of Public Administration in Nigeria**

In my study on the Status and Roles of Local Government as an aspect of Public Administration in Nigeria, Aransi (2010) observed that Local Government has essential complementary and supplementary roles to play in relation to higher tiers of government and larger public administration system which embraces it. The contribution identified the roles and status of Local Government and provided a critique of some of the theoretical postulations of some scholars in the field of public administration on the status of the tier of government. The study posits that in order to ensure development in Nigeria, demand for Local Government by the people should be predicated on genuine requests from the people. This confirms the contention of Mabogunje (1995) who posits that Local Government should be "striven for and earned", rather than being given on a platter of gold, (Aransi, 2010).

### **Women and Political Participation**

Aransi (2013) has studied the role of women in Yoruba indigenous politics in Nigeria. The study x-rayed the contributions of women in the field of politics historically from the pre-colonial, through colonial and the contemporary period. The study highlighted the various factors responsible for the unimpressive performance of



women in politics. The contribution is of the opinion that the time to allow women to take leadership position in the political arena is now if their contribution and participation in politics are to be given the pride of place deserved. Women should be given the opportunity to prove their mettle. This study is of the view that they can amazingly perform wonderfully well in political leadership as they have proved so in Europe, Middle East and until of recent, in Liberia in West Africa. Africa, and indeed, Nigeria should borrow a leaf from the countries of the world where women have demonstrated a high degree of patriotism and political leadership, their biological composition notwithstanding. Women should therefore be allowed to take leadership position in the political arena, in order to ensure development in Nigeria, (Aransi 2013).

In a related study on women in Local Government development, Aransi and Aluko (2012) observed that women in Nigeria are seen as catalysts for development of their communities and the country at large. This so because for development to take place, the entire populace must participate to ensure improved quality of life and contribute to decision-making and policy formulation that affect them. Despite the contributions of women and involvement in their communities, their efforts are not well documented. To promote sustainable development, the people, including women in the locality, need to participate in the economic, political and social development of their Local Government. The UNDP report clearly tallies with the above study by stating that Nigerian women form a third of the labor force in Nigeria, while the 2006 national population census reveals that women constitute 48.78% (about half) of the total population. This implies that women are actively involved in the development and sustenance of Local Government, despite their traditional roles as home managers and mothers, (Aransi and Aluko, 2012).

### **The Dynamics of Population on Public Administration in Nigeria**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, in my study of the dynamics of population on public administration in Nigeria, Aransi, (2005)

observed that the significance of population to national development cannot be over-emphasized. This derives from the fact that population data provides the main ingredients for planning vis-à-vis development. Unfortunately, Nigeria is a country where there has been unreliability of demographic data despite the various census conducted since independence. This observation confirms the contention of Okoh, (2000) who observed that population is the basis for creating of political units for Public Administration, such as Wards, Local Government, State and Federal constituencies. Population as it relates to public administration is the determinant factor in the allocation and distribution of social services such as Primary Health Centers, Dispensaries, Educational Institutions, Markets, etc. Population is a basis for increase in revenue generation and increase in government responsibility in affected political units. For example, high population density will attract more revenue for the government in terms of taxes. Increase in population therefore, will lead to overstress of the available social services provided by the government. Despite the huge natural resource base with which Nigeria is endowed, the country has not made much progress over the past three decades in achieving her developmental objectives such as: sustained improvement in the standard of living of the people and poverty reduction. Aside from her inability to effectively harness her vast natural and human resources to enhance sustainable development, there are several other factors militating against sustainable development in Nigeria. These include natural, socio-cultural, political, economic and demographic factors. The magnitude of the employment problem is expected to rise over the years due to rapid increase in the size of working population, high labor force participation rate and slow rate of economic growth. Unemployment in the country is at an alarming proportion. Job security among those currently employed remains threatened by the day as a result of the current wave of retrenchment both in the public and private sectors in the wake of economic recession. Unemployment and under-employment are higher among females who often loose out to their male

counterparts in the competition in the labor market, (Aransi 2009). These are hindrances to development of Nigeria as a country.

## **CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL**

Over the years in Nigeria, efforts have been made to entrench democracy, good governance and ensure that Local Government impacts on the people with a view to contributing to development. As a matter of fact, there are so many challenges militating against development in Nigeria. Some of the challenges include: over-centralization and top-down approach to governance, widespread absolute poverty among groups and geo-political zones, corruption, a high population growth rate, unproductive or inefficient agricultural practices, low level of industrialization, a combination of poor or inappropriate policies and strategies by government, constraint of inadequacy of finance, lack of continuity of governance resulting in disjointed development policies and programs; inability to articulate long-term development visions and plans, increasing inequitable distribution of income; rising unemployment and under-employment, inability to conduct accurate censuses for planning purposes, among others, (Aransi, 2005).

The above observation confirms the position of Olowu (1996) who identified some other challenges militating against development particularly at the Local Government level as the increasing dependence of local government on federal statutory allocation. Local Government's major source of finance is either through federation account or statutory allocation; and internally generated revenue. The other major challenge is the failure to hold elections at the appropriate time. The implication of this is that Local Government officials become agents of the State Government. Another challenge is that some Local Governments are very large (ranging from 150,000 to over a million population) and as such are not perceived by very many local communities as local institutions with which they can identify. Furthermore, even though local councils have powers to appoint their officials, senior

and middle-level Local Government personnel are recruited and deployed by a Local Government Service Commission which is responsible to the state rather than to the Local Government.

In addition to the challenges identified above, inadequate executive capacity constitutes another major challenge. There is a dearth of efficient, reliable and responsible executive capacity in term of training. Training of personnel has not resulted in expected improvement in the quality of governance at the local level. Specifically, the Federal Government of Nigeria established training institutions where the Personnel in the Local Government service should receive their trainings and instructions. Unfortunately, most of the States do not patronize the training institutions, (Aransi, 2012, 2014).

The identified challenges confirm the contention of Aborisade (1985) who highlighted significant numbers of finance and financial management problems facing Local Government. These include, The budget structure; Inadequate financial communication; The method of exercising external financial control over Local Government; The operation of internal control over Local Government finances; Controlling the cash flow position; Inadequate sources of locally raised revenue; inadequate medium and long term financial planning; Inadequate staff recruitment and staff development programs for the treasury; and Lack of better co-operative endeavor in the field of financial management.

Aside from the above, some other challenges affecting development at the Local Government level are: Abuse of power, Primitive accumulation of capital; Bad Leadership, and Bad government, Poverty, Unemployment, Inequality, Political instability, Lack of patriotism, Lack of understanding of the fundamental human rights, Lack of administrative power to act independently, Favoritism and nepotism, influences of local gladiators, Dearth of partisanship, State influences, Shortage of fund, and lack of financial independence, among others, (Aransi, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014).

Furthermore, other challenges include denial of resources by respective central governments; effective subordination of Local Government to the State Government rather than the public; lack of financial autonomy of the Local Government, Local Government administrative guidelines by the State government are not always in tandem with the philosophy of Local Government creation, disconnect between the felt needs of the local communities and the projects provided by the Local Governments; duplication of Local Government revenue sources by the State Government, Low educational background and exposure of politicians, mistrust between the Executive and Legislative arms of government which is inimical to development, flawed process of recruitment of staff due to the overbearing influence of politicians; deliberate tampering with Local Government federal allocation by the State Government who always accuse Local Government of ineffectiveness, Non-payment of staff salaries as and when due; among others, (Aransi, 2009, 2010, 2014).

For Local Governments to be able to contribute meaningfully and play their roles effectively, impact positively on the people and contribute to development, there is the need to address the challenges and reduce them to the bearest minimum. If these are done, they will undoubtedly enhance the prospects of Local Government for helping to deepen and consolidate democracy and good governance and above all, contribute to development in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I would like to make the following recommendations:

- Government in this country must jettison the top-down approach to governance. Instead, government should adopt a bottom-up approach. If Nigeria as a country sincerely hopes to change its development paradigm and focus, that is cater for the basic needs of the majority of the people, then we have to build governance capacity from the grassroots upwards. We do not have to climb a tree from

the top or build a house from the roof-top. Development from below should be our topmost priority in Nigeria. Local Government must be our reference point and our central focus to achieve our developmental objective. Nigeria as a country should borrow a leaf from the advanced countries of the world operating federalism. As a matter of fact, despite the existence of other tiers of government in such countries, Local Governments are given special recognition and are allowed to discharge their social service responsibilities with minimal control from the higher tiers of government. Local Government enjoys some measure of autonomy in those countries. A situation whereby Nigeria takes one step forward and ten backward on Local Government matters will not allow for rapid growth and development of the country. Consequently, I am recommending that government should strengthen our Local Government as an institution in Nigeria by building governance capacity from the grassroots level in order for us to achieve developmental objective.

- There is the need to review the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria because there are so many grey areas to be cleared in it. As a matter of fact, the time to embark on the constitutional review is now if we really want the dividend of democracy to reach the grassroots people. This recommendation affirms the position of Gboyega (2003) who supports 'the need to set up more specific criteria that will prevent creation of new Local Governments; such criteria that are different from political ones in the Constitution such as economic and demographic criteria'. There are so many Local Government Development Area Councils currently being created by State Governments all over the country. The questions that arise now are: (a) how do we sustain the new Area Councils in the face of the dwindling financial resources available to such Local Government Councils? (b) What is the level of viability of

such Local Councils? These questions require answers from the affected state governments in Nigeria.

Furthermore, our development effort in Nigeria must be people-centered and people-driven. That is to say, government should ensure that people are put at the center of development by devolving more resources to the grassroots level. The current situation whereby the Federal Government alone takes more than 50% of the statutory allocation and leaves the States and Local Governments with the rest cannot augur well for meaningful and sustainable development in Nigeria. In view of this, I suggest that the Federal Government should increase the statutory allocation to the Local Government from the present 20% to 25%. The current allocation of 20% to 774 Local Governments and other Development Area Councils created is grossly inadequate. The Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission should be made to consider and approve this recommendation as a matter of urgency in order to encourage sustainable development and equitable distribution of financial resource in Nigeria. A situation whereby Local Government is tied to the apron string of the state on the issue of development cannot augur well for equitably distributed, meaningful, rapid, and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Moreover, there is the need to review the present State/Local Government Joint Account Committee (JAC) being operated in the States of the Federation. The present position whereby the statutory revenue allocation to Local Governments does not go directly to them will not augur well for grassroots balanced and sustainable development. There is the need to ensure that the State/Local Government Joint Account is managed in such a way that it will benefit the Local Governments exclusively. As presently being operated, JAC is tantamount to economic enslavement of Local Government by the State. This

recommendation supports the position of Gboyega (2003) who posits that there is the need to also ensure downward accountability by ensuring that local budgets are widely distributed statutorily to relevant local bodies such as traditional councils, Non-Governmental Organizations, civic associations and interested parties. Currently, Local Governments cannot boast of any developmental project being embarked on with the present precarious financial situation of things. Many Local Governments are currently in existence to pay staff salaries with little or nothing left in terms of financial resource to embark on any developmental project.

- With regards to budgetary autonomy, Local Governments should not be made to rely solely on the allocation from the federation account. Local Governments should be encouraged to embark on aggressive internal revenue generation as a way of enhancing their autonomy. As no organization can record meaningful development without a sound financial base, it is recommended that there should be an improvement in the present machinery for revenue generation through improved administrative processes, adopting the market concept to educate the citizens about government activities, accurate record keeping to form a reliable data base, staff training, promotion, purchase of more vehicles and improved attitude to work by all employees of the Local Government. Local Governments should build into their systems, an internal control mechanism by way of audit that would forestall and/or reduce incidence of mismanagement. Without financial autonomy, there is very little the Local Government can do in terms of development.
- On the question of effective citizen participation, Local Government councils in Nigeria should create a high level of awareness for the generality of the people in their locality to participate in the act of governance. The citizen



participation being recommended here entails the involvement of the people in making decisions about things that affect them. This is crucial as Local Government is recognized as that tier of government where the issue of training in corporate citizenship and democratic governance could be learnt.

- Furthermore, training and re-training of the members of staff of the Local Governments is a *sine-qua-non* for effective and efficient performance. As far back as the early 1980s, the Federal Government of Nigeria has set up specifically, training institutions where staff of Local Governments would be exposed to training so that their resultant behavior will contribute more to the achievement of the Local Government objective of social service delivery. In the present civilian dispensation, many States of the Federation have not been patronizing the training institutions established for the above purpose. In Nigeria, for example, three Universities have been designated as training institutions for middle and high level manpower at the Local Government level. These are: Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile - Ife; and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Several States of the Federation have benefited immensely from training their Local Government staff by these Institutions by sponsoring such staff members. This tradition should be encouraged if meaningful development is expected from the grassroots level. I will like to add that the desire of the National Universities Commission (NUC) to cancel the Diploma program being mounted at the University level should not be made to affect the three specially designated training institutions mentioned above as this will amount to policy summersault and policy inconsistency on the part of the government, resulting in one step forward, ten backward.
- Additionally, Local Governments are enjoined to utilize the 1% training fund meant for Local Government staff

judiciously. University training institutions should be patronized for training of Local Government staff members in all the states of the federation. A situation whereby ill-equipped and incompetent contractors are utilized for training and re-training of Local Government staff will have a long-run negative effect on the staff and the Local Government in the various States. This very unfortunate development should be redressed by States and Local Governments in Nigeria.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian nation. Some public officers are generally known to engage in large-scale mismanagement and embezzlement of public funds. This eventually results in poor performance in term of social services provision at the Local Government level. Individual interest has overwhelmed the public interest. Despite the efforts of government to discourage this hydra-headed cankerworm, the various anti-corruption Agencies have not succeeded in curbing this menace in this country. As it obtains in other tiers of government, so does corruption obtains in Local Government. Corruption and primitive accumulation of capital should be discouraged in its entirety at all levels of government - Federal, State and Local.

Political interference in Local Government affairs by the State and Federal Government has reached a worrisome proportion in Nigeria. It should be noted that several decisions affecting Local Governments are taken by some State governments and imposed on Local Governments in their states for implementation. Projects that do not constitute the immediate priority areas for Local governments are executed by some State governments on behalf of Local Governments and Local Governments are made to pay for such projects. The question that arises from this is: who takes the credit, the State or the Local Government? This is a big problem to be solved by the

State government. This undue interference has incapacitated Local Government from effective and efficient delivery of social services and has alienated the grassroots populace from enjoying the dividends of democracy the way they would have loved.

- Related to the above is the problem of political instability at the Local Government level and the resultant effect on the implementation of social service projects. Since there is no stable political system at the Local Government level, there is lack of continuity of the administration of social service programs and policies. Every government that comes to power begins a new project and abandons the earlier project(s) already commenced before assuming office. Each administration prefers to be identified with its own programs. This situation does not augur well for meaningful and sustainable development at the Local Government level. For sustainable development to be guaranteed particularly at the Local Government level and indeed in other tiers of government in Nigeria, there should be continuity of administration at all levels. This will undoubtedly allow for meaningful realization of political objectives on the long run and eventual realization of developmental objectives.

- It is stating the obvious that State Governments have succeeded in eroding the functions of Local Government councils in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, almost all the revenue yielding resources have been taken away from the Local Governments in almost all the states of the federation. State Governments therefore pass on to the respective Local Governments, expenditure incurring responsibilities. On so many occasions, Local Governments are made to pay for services provided by the State Government in their areas of jurisdiction, the services for which Local Governments never planned for as priority projects. Local Governments will therefore have nothing to

say since they have been strangled by the State Governments. This is a major problem militating against effective performance of Local Government's functions in Nigeria. For sustainable development to take place at the Local Government level, Local Government should be given that measure of autonomy that will allow them to set their priorities in term of the social services they intend to deliver to the grassroots people. The impact of such priority projects provided at the Local Government level will be better felt by the people than if provided by the higher tiers of government.

- It has been observed that bad leadership is another challenge confronting Local Government in Nigeria. It could be argued that the success of any institution hinges on the quality of its leadership. A Local Government cannot be an exemption. The primary role of a leader is to facilitate development through his activities and actions. It is important that good leadership should be encouraged to man our various Local Governments in Nigeria. For good leaders to emerge, government and the citizenry should encourage people who possess sterling qualities. In line with the above recommendation, Odoh and Usman (2012) have identified qualities of a good leader, such that should be expected at the Local Government level. Such qualities include: integrity, humility, intelligence/knowledge, human sympathy, decisiveness, motivation and desire for achievement, honesty, and discipline. Other attributes are that a leader must be sensitive. He must see that problems are solved. He must be a good listener and a good communicator. He must be a visionary leader and must be leading by example. Such a leader must be impartial in dealing with the people. He should be able to absorb challenge. He should be hardworking, courageous, kind, open, and be able to admit mistakes. He must also have the ability to delegate some functions and recognize the

contributions of others. We should encourage people with such qualities to lead our Local Governments in Nigeria.

- Poverty is another bane of the Nigerian society. In fact, a large proportion of the grassroots people are extremely poor. Individuals are regarded as poor when they are significantly deprived, relative to the circumstances of their fellow human beings. As a matter of fact, people are poverty-stricken when their incomes, even if adequate for survival, fall markedly below those of other members of the community, that they cannot have what the larger community members regard as the necessary minimum for decency. They are degraded because they live outside the grades or categories which the community regards as acceptable. Poverty is taken to be a standard of living that is regarded as far below the minimum standard. An individual whose income is less than \$1 per day is regarded as poor person. Many people fall to this category in our various Local Governments. Poverty manifests more when people are unemployed. The prevalence of this, at the Local Government level cannot be under-estimated. Poverty should be tackled head-long in our society. That tier of government closest to the grassroots people should be the target to obliterate this social ill from our society. People at the grassroots must be mobilized to engage in jobs and activities that will banish poverty from our grassroots people. A good example is farming. It is important that our youth are encouraged to participate in agricultural occupation at the local level. After all, agriculture used to be the mainstay of the Nigerian economy before the discovery of oil. I advocate that we should all be encouraged to go back to our grassroots to participate in agriculture. We should not forget the occupation of our forefathers.
- In Nigeria today, what is urgently needed is to grow and develop a culture that will inculcate the right sense of

values. This will in turn, produce an ethical and moral climate in which unethical conduct will find it difficult to survive. This cannot be achieved through statutory legislation. The culture has to grow and develop among the people. The surest and perhaps the only way to develop this culture and the moral climate that will accompany it is through education. The Nigerian people should be encouraged to send their children to school for proper education as a way of alleviating poverty in our society.

- The present unemployment situation in this country has reached a worrisome dimension. Concerted effort should be made urgently to address this problem by government at all levels. Local Government is a convenient tier of government to start this experiment. The opportunity for mass participation of the people at the local level will encourage happiness, and reduce undesirable behavior among the teeming population of the youth in this country. There is an adage that says: "*Owo to ba di'le ni esu mbe ni'se*", meaning, "an idle hand is the devil's workshop", (Aransi and Aransi 2012). Nigeria has never had it so bad in terms of militancy, insurgency, assassination, abduction/kidnapping, theft and other undesirable attitudes and behaviors. Effective participation of the youth in local level governance can ameliorate some of the above undesirable behaviors and attitudes. Every year, our tertiary institutions turn out graduates in thousands without any hope of getting the youths engaged in gainful employment. It is noteworthy to acknowledge the contribution of federal government in fighting and winning the war of Boko Haram insurgency. It is also important to acknowledge the role of Governors of some States in Nigeria in providing jobs for thousands of our youth in the various Local Governments in their respective states. This is a welcome development and a commendable effort that should not go un-recognized. More of this is needed if the affluent in our society would want to have security and

peace in their various domains. One Yoruba proverb says: "*Aja to yo ki i ba eyi ti ko yo sere*", meaning: "A well-fed dog does not play with a hungry one," (Aransi and Aransi 2012). Something should be done urgently to address this problem by government at all levels. If the rich want to sleep with their two eyes closed at night, they should cater for the unemployed, the down-trodden masses and the wretched of the earth that are prevalent in our Local Government areas in this country. Local Government is a convenient tier of government to start this experiment.

- Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, distinguished audience, I wish to submit that the failure to hold elections at the appropriate time at the Local Government level in Nigeria is not a good development for democracy and appropriate people's participation in governance. Local Government has, therefore, become an effective agent of the State Government. For the impact of the people to be felt at the Local Government level therefore, I would like to suggest that State Governments should ensure that Local Government elections are held periodically. It is ironical and unfortunate too to note that in Nigeria, military government that was considered an aberration took into cognizance, Local Government election as against our experience under the civilian dispensation. Only very few State governments in Nigeria have had Local Government elections in their various States. This trend should be reversed if truly, we are interested in encouraging mass participation in local level governance in Nigeria and enjoyment of dividend of democracy by the people.
- There is lack of patriotism on the part of several people at all levels of government in Nigeria today; Local Government inclusive. There is an unprecedented selfishness and egocentricity on the part of a large majority of the people of Nigeria. People amass wealth as if there is immortality of the soul. Very few Nigerians are so affluent

while the generality of the masses are wallowing in abject poverty. The rich are becoming richer while the poor are becoming poorer. There is no doubt that there is an inequitable distribution of wealth and resources in Nigeria today. What obtains today is "survival of the fittest". The "Rich" does not want the "Poor" to share from the "Rich's" "hard-earned" wealth. It is high time people of Nigeria jettisoned their selfish desires and imbibe the culture of patriotism about their fatherland. The general belief is that whatever belongs to government belongs to nobody. We need to change our attitude to the way we handle government business in Nigeria; Local Government inclusive. Social service delivery at the Local Government level should be those that impact on the people directly. I admonish the Nigerian people to discharge their duties and responsibilities wholeheartedly and without fear or favor; transact official government business as if it is their own; be patriotic in their dealings with their fellow human beings; and encourage others to imbibe the spirit of patriotism in all their day-to-day activities. Local Government is the level government where this ideal can easily and quickly manifest and taught because of its proximity to the grassroots people.

It is important to conclude this section of the lecture by quoting George Stigler who says:

*If we give each governmental activity to the smallest governmental unit which can efficiently perform it, there will be a vast resurgence and revitalization of local government in America. A vast reservoir of ability of imagination can be found in the increasing leisure time of the population, and both public functions and private citizens would benefit from the increased participation of citizens in political life. An eminent and powerful structure of local government is a basic ingredient of a society*



*which seeks to give the individual the fullest possible freedom and responsibility.*

The above quotation is as relevant today in Nigeria as it is in the United States of America. Local Government in Nigeria will be able to impact on the people and perform more efficiently and effectively as mass citizen participation in governance will be ensured if we decentralize government to the local level. Some Yoruba proverbs say: "*Igi kan ko le da'gbo se*", meaning "a tree does not make a forest". "*Agbajo owo la fi so 'ya, ajeje owo kan ko gbe'ru d'ori*" meaning: "we use closed fists for tapping on the chest; a single hand cannot lift up a full calabash to the head". I wish to encourage State governments in Nigeria to treat Local Governments as "partners in progress" in their efforts to develop the country. I am confident to say that the above will also enhance fullest freedom, justice, equity, fairness, responsibility, accountability, transparency, good governance and eventual development of the country, Nigeria.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, distinguished audience, since almost two and a half decades ago, I have been deeply involved in manpower development and capacity building in the training of middle and high level Personnel in Nigeria, particularly Personnel from the Local Government Service Commissions through teaching, participating in conferences/workshops and public lectures. I served as one of the researchers who covered Ogun, Oyo and Osun States of Nigeria in the United Nations Development (UNDP) and the Federal Government of Nigeria sponsored programs in the Federal Government Reform efforts at the Local Government level in Nigeria. I served commendably and handled my responsibilities with keen sense of commitment and maturity that brought a lot of pride not only to the Department but to the University in general. Many of the students under my teaching and supervision have risen to the position of Directors in the various Local Government Service Commissions, especially in the ten catchment states of the southwestern part of Nigeria being covered by my Department. I

have also been involved in several other trainings for Senior Local and State Government Administrators and Political Functionaries, many of which were organized by the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and International Organizations such as the UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, AU, WHO, World Bank among many others. I have served as external examiner to a number of universities (public and private) and I have been privileged to assess many colleagues for professorial chair in a number of universities.

Within the University system, I have occupied leadership positions in the University such as the Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Administration (November 2008 – 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2011); Acting Head, Department of Local Government Studies, Faculty of Administration, (1<sup>st</sup> July, 2010 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013). I am, by the grace of God, the current Head, Department of Local Government Studies of this University (1<sup>st</sup> August 2016 - date). I am the Editor-in-Chief of the Quarterly Journal of Administration (2013/2014 academic session – date); the Editor-in-Chief, Nigerian Journal of Local Government Studies - (2010 – date); Member, Faculty Board of Administration - (1994 – date); Member, Editorial Board of African Journal of Institutions and Development (2010 – date); Member of the Editorial Advisory Board of many Journals in numerous universities; Member, Faculty of Administration Quality Assurance Monitoring Committee ( March 2014 – date); Member, University Senate ( 2008-2010) & March 2016 – date); Member, (Representing Dean, Faculty of Administration at the Appointment & Promotions Committee), (November 2008 - February, 2013); Member, (Representing Dean, Faculty of Administration at the University Development Committee) (November 2008 - February, 2013); Member, Committee of Deans, (representing Dean, Faculty of Administration (2008-2013); Member, University Congregation (1986 – date); Chairman, University Task Force on Financial Independence of Internally Generated Revenue Outfits and University Shares (September 2016 – January 2017); Member, Central White Paper Task Force on all Task Forces set up by the

University (December 2016-February 2017). I am a Fellow of the Strategic Institute for Natural Resources and Human Development; Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Local Government and Public Administration of Nigeria; and Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration of Nigeria. I belong to several other Professional Associations in Nigeria.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, distinguished audience, before I end this lecture, I wish to say that all praises and adorations are due to the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful *Allah* who has given me the opportunity to stand before this wonderful audience to deliver the 298<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The achievement that I have recorded today has been facilitated by Obafemi Awolowo University that has offered me the platform and the encouragement to attain this height. I therefore, wish to express my sincere appreciation and profound gratitude to the authorities and officials of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife who have nurtured me to pursue the study of Political Science/Public Administration with a bent in Local Government Studies.

I am grateful to my late parents – Alhaji Aransi Akanbi Badmus and Alhaja Asanat Aduke Aransi for giving birth to me and for channeling my course towards educational pursuit at a time when many parents were discouraged from sending their children to school. I pray Almighty Allah to grant them *Aljanat Firdaus* on the Day of Judgment.

I thank every individual who has contributed directly or indirectly to my education and the success that has been recorded by me so far.

I specially thank my mentor, Professor Oladimeji Aborisade (now retired and based in the United States of America) for recruiting me into the Department of Local Government Studies; facilitating my admission into the doctoral program at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan and for collaborating with me in my research endeavor till now, culminating in today's achievement.

I would like to specially thank my Ph.D. thesis supervisor, Emeritus Professor J.A.A. Ayoade for his guidance and constructive criticisms which led to the successful completion of my doctoral program. I am very grateful to Professor Alex Gboyega of the Department of Political Science, University of

Ibadan for the role he played in securing me the Ph.D. admission and for his encouragement and consistent assurance during the program. I also appreciate Professor A.A.B. Agbaje, my M.Sc. thesis supervisor, Professor J. Bayo Adekanye, Professor O.B.C. Nwolise, Professor Tunde Adeniran, Professor R.T. Suberu, Professor Bayo Okunade and Professor V.A. Isumonah and others two numerous to mention. I have benefitted immensely from their scholarship and wealth of experience.

I wish to acknowledge with thanks the contribution of Late Professor S.B. Ayo for his effort in reading through the first draft of my Ph.D. research proposal. I pray that his gentle soul rest in perfect peace. I thank most sincerely, Professor C.A.B. Olowu, former Head, Department of Local Government Studies, for his moral support to undergo my doctoral program. I appreciate Professor M.L. Nassar, Professor A.M. Awotokun, Professor W.A. Fawole, Professor Taiwo Asaolu and Professor Olu Okotoni, for their leadership.

I appreciate all my colleagues whose names I cannot fully mention here (both academic and non-academic) and all my students at all levels in the Department of Local Government Studies and in the Faculty of Administration as well as other students on campus in general, for their efforts in ensuring the success of this lecture. I wish them all the best of luck in their future endeavor.

I express my gratitude to Professor Y.K. Yusuf, Department of English, Professor I.I. Omoleke, Department of Public Administration and Professor O.A. Bamisaiye, Department of Political Science, for reviewing the manuscript of the lecture. I also thank the Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited for being patient with my committee in editing the manuscript of the lecture.

I thank the Chief Imam, Prof. Abubakr Sanusi and the entire members of the Obafemi Awolowo University Muslim Community for their love and encouragement at all times. I express special appreciation and profound gratitude to the families

of Professor M.A.O. Rahaman, and Professor Y.K. Yusuf for their commitment, encouragement and love for me and my family. I thank Professor M.A. Durosinmi and Professor Fola Lasisi for their love.

I appreciate all members of UNIFEMGA from various chapters in Nigeria and in the diaspora for their companionship in fostering Islamic brotherhood. Special thanks to Alhaji Abdul-Waheed Odeyinka, the current President, Alhaji Ahmed Tunde Popoola and Professor Abdul-Wahab Egbewole, former Presidents, UNIFEMGA and Mallam Yusuf Olaolu Alli, SAN for his Philanthropy.

I wish to thank all members of the committees set up to ensure the success of this Inaugural Lecture. In particular, I appreciate the coordinating role played by Professor O.K. Owolarafe of the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Engineering, Dr. Hamed Adefeso of the Department of Local Government Studies and my doctoral candidate, Mr. Banji Adepoju, for all their efforts. Their good gesture will remain indelible in my memory for a long time to come. Your commitment and love are deeply appreciated.

I thank all my friends both in Nigeria and in the diaspora whose names I have not mentioned, for their consistent love and encouragement. They have continued to be a source of joy to me.

It is with pleasure that I thank all members of the various Unions on O.A.U. campus for attending this lecture. I appreciate you all.

I thank all staff and students of the following Universities who I have had direct and indirect academic collaboration and contacts with over the years: University of Ibadan, Ibadan; Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo; Wesley University of Science and Technology, Ondo; Osun State University, Osogbo; Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye; Kwara State University, Malete; Adeleke University, Ede; Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko; University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Oduduwa University,

Ipetumodu; Redeemers University, Ede, Fountain University, Osogbo, and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, among others.

I specially thank the leadership and all members of the numerous Professional Associations to which I belong. In particular, I appreciate the efforts of the Registrar and CEO of the Chartered Institute of Local Government and Public Administration, Dr. Uche Okereke JP and other members of the Institute. I appreciate Dr. Emmanuel Akin Anifowose, the Registrar and CEO of the Institute of Public Administration of Nigeria, Nigeria Political Science Association and other members of the Institute among others.

I wish to specially thank my in-laws – the families of Alhaji Shakirudeen Shodiya from Abeokuta, based in Lagos; Alhaji Yisau Alaje from Oyo, Oyo State, and Alhaji Taiwo Adefila from Ila-Orangun, Osun State, based in Lagos. I appreciate you all.

I am grateful to all my family members particularly my siblings. They have remained so wonderful. I thank my uncle, Alhaji Abdul-Rasheed Lawal, the Baale of Alabelapa, Ibadan, Oyo State, representing the Olubadan of Ibadanland. I thank all other Chiefs from Ibadanland for their attendance.

I am sincerely grateful to my loving and caring wife, Dr. Mrs. Oladunke Ayoola Khadijat Aransi for taking care of my children and our home during my absence from home. My children: Mrs. Ganiyat Shodiya (nee Aransi), Hamed, Dr. Rilwan and Mohammed have been a beacon of hope and encouragement. I appreciate you all.

*“Alhamdu liLlahi Robil Aalamin”* – All praises and adorations are due to Almighty Allah, the Cherisher and the Sustainer of the Worlds. “Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?” Quran 55(13). Almighty Allah has been so good to me. I cannot deny any of his favors.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, distinguished audience, I thank you all for listening.

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