

## Local Government Autonomy and Democratic Dividend in Nigeria: An Assessment

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### **Abstract**

*The fourth republic has been in existence for more than twenty years, thus it is alarming that Nigeria's fledgling democracy has failed to benefit the populace as planned. This deplorable development has prompted some worries and inquiries about why the nation continues to struggle to achieve democratic government and dividends like social welfare, justice, even-federal development, and equitable access to resources. This essay looked into Nigeria's local government autonomy and democratic dividends. The success of democracy and democratic governance in Nigeria, particularly at the local government level, has also been and continues to be hampered by a number of reasons. This involved reviewing pertinent literature, adopting the structural functionalist theory as the theoretical framework, and gathering data from secondary sources. The study shows that corruption, party politics, upper government meddling, a lack of local government autonomy, and other factors, among others, have significantly hampered Nigerian democracy, particularly at the local government level. Therefore, it suggests, among other things, that local governments be given constitutional autonomy in terms of their powers and duties, that the fight against corruption be extended to local government areas while local government officials are made accountable to the local population, and that leaders adopt higher standards of morality in their pursuit of public office.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, Local Government, Autonomy

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since they facilitate simple grassroots political participation and socialization, local governments are often seen as effective tools in the democratization of contemporary governments. According to academic research, its principles constitute the most successful method for spreading democracy and its benefits to the general populace at large. Fundamentally, the role of local government is to support local self-help and self-reliance, community cohesion, national engagement, and development through a network of grassroots participation and civil society organizations, all of which are indicative of the fundamental principles of democracy as a form of government. This corroborates with the submission of Nwanna (2015) for instance, that the essence of local government is the consolidation of democratic values at the grass root. In his argument, the Local government is an instrument through which democracy and democratic political culture is or are established, nurtured and sustained such as grassroots political participation and socialization (Nwana, 2015). It serves as the means by which a community's common issues and demands are efficiently and inexpensively addressed. This demonstrates that a local community's primary means of addressing its shared needs and issues is local governance. But, throughout time, there were some difficulties with how these local governments in Nigeria performed. They include issues with funding, autonomy, deteriorating infrastructure, political unrest, and constitutional issues, among others.

People are able to participate in state administration through direct or indirect means under a democratic form of government. According to Shively (2001;151): "A democracy is a regime in which all fully qualified citizens vote at regular intervals to choose, from among alternative candidates, the people who will be in charge of setting the state's policies." It is called a government of the people, by the people and for the people. In a large and heterogeneous state, efforts are made to bring government closer to the people so as to enhance to goal of grass-roots participation.

Local government and grassroots democracy in Nigeria have both been markedly let down by the country's democratic issues. After numerous attempts at democratization, the nation has yet to develop a viable, virile, and stable democracy, not even at the local level, that will win the support of the general public or even directly affect the lives of the average people. This is because the nation continues to struggle with the implementation of democratic governance and its benefits, including social welfare, justice, infrastructure development, human development, and equal access to resources, among others. Non-delivery, a lack of accountability, and corruption are the three main flaws in Nigerian local governance. The institution of local government's failure to increase its capabilities is another factor.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

In Nigeria and other federal systems that operate three levels of government, the Local Government is sometimes referred to as the last and third tiers of government. In order to exercise and carry out its constitutionally mandated responsibilities and duties, it is an independent level of government established by the constitution that collaborates with higher levels of government, particularly the state. Popular among the definition of Local Government is the submission of Anifowose and Enemuo (2008) that Local Government is the lower level of government in modern state that is legally distinct and has powers to raise revenue and undertake constitutionally assigned responsibilities under a leadership that is elected and answerable to the local population.

The accurate definition or meaning of concepts has varied across many scholars particularly in social sciences. Because of this context, it attracted the attention of numerous well-known and widely respected researchers who have studied and characterized it. Ola (1984) in his contribution defined local government as a political sub-division of a nation, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labor for prescribed purpose. According to Blair (1977), local government is rather a resident population occupying a defined area that has a locally authorized and governing body; a separate legal entity, the power to provide certain public or governmental services, and a substantial degree of autonomy adding legal or actual power to raise part of its revenue. The Guidelines for Local Government reform (1976), defined local government as government at the local level established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas (and) to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement project so as to complement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas, and to ensure that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized. In this case therefore, much emphasis is placed on peculiarity of the tier, and the capacity based on knowledge of the area to initiate and execute services that are much needed by the people in that locality.

The United Nation (UN) defines local government as a political subdivision of a nation in a federal system that exist within a state, which is constituted by law to have a substantial control of local affairs, including the power of impose taxes, or exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected. According to Agagu (1997), the concept of local government represents a grassroots level of administration meant for meeting peculiar needs of the people at the local level. It is the lowest unit of administration with laws and regulations the communities to which a group of people who live with common social and political ties, are subject.

## **DEMOCRACY**

The definition of democracy as a form of government is "a system of government in which the people govern themselves, acting as their own government and managing their own affairs for their own benefit." This is capture in the popular definition of Lincoln where he submitted that democracy was or is the government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is that form of government that operates base on the rights of the citizens to elect among competing ideologies, parties, politicians and people of their own choice to represent them in the processes of policy formulation and decision making. Or simply put it, that it is the governmental system that is based on the consent of the people.

Democracy is a prime example of a concept that is "essentially contested" (Gallie, 1956), as there is currently no agreement on how to define it or what it fully entails. However, there is broad agreement on some aspects of democracy, and there are numerous instances of democratic practices that have persisted for a very long time and have developed over a very large geographic area. Democracy is still widely accepted as a system of government that relies on some degree of public sovereignty and group decision-making. However, it is the worry about the additions to this fundamental definition that has led to a substantial and serious discussion about the various definitions of democracy. In order to accomplish this (Developing Democracy Concepts, Measures and Empirical Relationships - IDEA. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/speeches/Developing-Democracy-Concepts-Measures-and-Empirical-Relationships-PDF.pdf>) study, these definitions of democracy include procedural democracy, liberal democracy, and social democracy, which are now considered in turn.

The two dimensions of contestation and participation are included in procedural definitions of democracy, most prominently in Robert Dahl's seminal book *Polyarchy* from 1971. Contestation is a principle that assumes the legitimacy of some opposition, the right to challenge incumbents, protection of the twin freedoms of expression and association, the existence of free and fair elections, and a consolidated political party system. Contestation captures the uncertain peaceful competition necessary for democratic rule. Participation embodies the notion of popular sovereignty, which presupposes both the presence of universal suffrage and the protection of the right to vote. Liberal definitions of democracy continue to emphasize involvement and contestation while making more direct allusions to the preservation of specific human rights. Liberal definitions incorporate an institutional component that captures the idea of popular sovereignty and incorporates concepts such as responsibility, restraint on leaders, citizen representation, and involvement by all. However, it also provides a dimension of rights, including civil, political, property, and minority rights. These rights are supported by the rule of law. Liberal definitions of democracy's institutional and rights aspects are maintained by social definitions of democracy, but the kinds of rights that need to be upheld are expanded to include social and economic rights. (Developing Democracy Concepts, Measures and Empirical Relationships - IDEA. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/speeches/Developing-Democracy-Concepts-Measures-and-Empirical-Relationships-PDF.pdf>).

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY**

The debate on local government autonomy focuses on what powers and functions the central or regional or state government should grant to the local units within the political system (Clark, 1984). However, within the Nigerian context, the 1976 local government reform gave us not only the definition of local government, but also the basic rudiments of local government autonomy. The 1976 reform defines local government as: Government at the local level exercised through Representative Council 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... institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to implement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas, and to ensure, through devolution of these 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 (p,111).

The essential components of local government autonomy are highlighted in the definition above. The first need is that the local government entity has a separate legal personality from the state and federal governments. Second, the local government must possess specific authority and perform specific duties that set it apart from the national and state governments. Finally, the local government must function separately from the national and state governments. Hence, the local government is not a branch office or an affiliate of the national or state governments. Fourth, each local government should be empowered to create its own laws, rules, and regulations. Fifth, local government should have the authority to create and carry out its own policies as well as the freedom to hire, fire, and discipline its own employees. It is pertinent to note that there is never a time that local government in Nigeria has been granted the kind of autonomy expounded in our definition above. And like we earlier pointed out, in all political systems, the kind of autonomy the central or regional government entrust to the local units depend largely on the nature and character of state politics. For example, in the United States of America, the degree of autonomy granted local authorities is derived from ideals and values such as liberty, equality, democracy, individualism, unity and diversity. Such ideals are at the very core of their national identity and shape the nature and character of state politics. As

Rogoveanu (2013) rightly argues, it also shapes the vision which Americans have upon the world. These perennial principles, which are an important part of the American psyche, have greatly influenced the way public policies and laws are made in the United States of America. Furthermore, lettering on the same issue, Rogoveanu (2013) aptly points out: The concept of liberty has been at the forefront of American political culture, and the sheer dominance of liberty-related discourses is indicative of this theory. “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” as the core principles of declaration of Independence are restated in the preamble to the Constitution, as “the Blessing of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity” or sublimated in an artistic form in the Statue of Liberty (p.6). These principles shape federal-state-local relations in the United States. Thus, the kind of powers and functions the federal or state government devolves to the local unit is remarkably influenced by the concept of liberty. The principle of liberty has long guided the American experiment with government during and after the American Revolution.

It is also important to note that there is no political system that the local units operate completely independent of the central or regional or state government. In an intergovernmental context, there is variety of ways in which federal and state governments might contribute to the fiscal sustainability of the local government. For example, in older federations like the United States of America and Switzerland, the federal and state governments do interfere in the activities of the local councils through grant-in-aid and other intervention programmes, to ensure that they meet their obligations to the citizens as a tier of government (2012) and Rivlin (2012) for a discussion of federal and state governments’ positive contribution to local governments in the United States). In this regard, the interference is a positive one; therefore, it does not generate any negative controversies. The point being made here is that federal and state governments’ interferences in the activities of the local government can be positive or negative. It is negative when such interference impedes on the capacity of the local government to carry out its statutory functions and vice versa. It is the former that generates controversies, litigations and seminar research. Positive interferences’ lead to more effective governance at the local level and negative ones intensify crises of federalism at the sub national level. The negative genus of interference is predominant in the Nigerian federation. Scholars, including Ammani (2012) and Akindele and Olaopa (2002), commenting on this issue, have described how state governments seize federal allocations meant for local governments in their domain and misappropriate them; leaving the local governments debilitated.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY IN NIGERIA**

Before and after gaining independence, Nigeria experimented with a number of local government administration types. According to Ige (1996) Nigeria is the only federation in the whole world where the federal government decides how, where and when a local government council must run. In all other countries, it is the state or regional government that legislates on local government. As a matter of fact, we are not surprised because this is evident in the kind of federation the military instituted in Nigeria (for a detail discussion on this issue see Nnoli (2011) and Elaigwu, (1979). In the colonial era, local government enjoyed a wide range of both financial and administrative autonomy. The British Whitehall model served as the basis for the local government system. Each colonial region was given the authority to supervise local government operations that fell within its purview. This means that each region provides the legal framework for local administration: The Eastern region local government ordinance of 1950, the Western region local government law of 1952 and the 1954 native authority law in Northern Nigeria. According to Otiye (1999), during this period, the councils were given a wide range of functions including primary education, health, police, and judiciary among others. Furthermore, the councils also enjoyed a great measure of autonomy in financial,

personnel and general administration. As one analyst rightly argues, “it can therefore be said that the 1950s, was the era of pupillage for councils in modern local government throughout Nigeria”. In other words, the local governments were under the regional governments and there was relatively little or no interference in the activities of local governments by the federal government. In popular Nigerian parlance, the local governments run their own show: they were free to decide their own fate among other things, generate and spend their revenues, make laws, formulate and execute their own policies. The reason for this is not farfetched. The local governments were offshoots of the native authority system that were in existence before, or created by the British colonialists. They were formidable structures the British used to administer the country. They preceded the regional governments that were created in 1946. The dominant political culture was greatly influenced by the British ethos of governance. This explains in part why in spite of the resentment the educated Nigerians had for the native authority system and by extension the local government, it took them time to erode the powers and functions the local councils wielded in each of the regions. Thus, the nature and character of politics in the 1950s influenced the kind of local councils that were in operation at that time.

Local governments lost the financial and administrative autonomy they had in the colonial era between 1960 and 1965, more specifically during the post-colonial period. Along with this, municipal governments in the four regions—North, East, West, and Mid-West—were given fewer responsibilities. Although the first Republic was short-lived, it is easy to see that the regional governments' intrusion into local government problems was a result of the nature and character of the politics at the time. Each area sought to control its own affairs by taking over some of the local councils' duties. During this time, the federal government had essentially little impact on local government councils. The regional administrations in each locality had granted the local councils mercy. The Anglo-Saxon and French models were heavily adopted, but more crucially, each region experimented with several local government administrative system types. With the foundation of 12 states and subsequent restructuring of the Nigerian federation, this pattern persisted and worsened under the military. Most importantly, each region experimented with different models of local government administrative system: the Anglo-Saxon and French models were widely used. This trend continued and became worse under the military with the creation of 12 states, and other subsequent restructuring of the Nigerian federation.

A major reform of the local government system in Nigeria was carried out under the military in 1976. Nigeria adopted a unified local government administrative system. Local government officially became recognized as the third tier of government. The objectives of the reform were outlined as follows:

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

In some circles, the military's unification effort is credited with sparking Nigeria's contentious debate over local government autonomy. According to Otive (1999), the 1976 reform completely eroded local government autonomy and laid the basis of interference in the conduct of local affairs of local government by military and civilian government thereafter. Furthermore, he posits that “the military

laid the basis for the undemocratic nature of the local government and the erosion of local government autonomy". But this by itself is a wrong conclusion because the 1989 Babangida reforms had cancelled all the errors of the previous reforms, both civilian and military. At best it is a paradox. This abnormality was subtly addressed by the 1999 Constitution in a fraudulent manner. Though the Constitution allows the State House of Assembly to legislate over local governments within their domain; they are not allowed to create local governments. Section 7 of the 1999 Constitution empowers the state legislature to make laws for the administrative operation of local government areas and section 162 authorizes the existence of a state and local governments Joint Account. However, these two provisions have become the ammunition used by some state governors to incapacitate local governments within their states.

The core of local government autonomy is the fact that local governments have never operated independently of the state and federal administrations in Nigeria's postcolonial political history. This type of local government structure has been a mirage in the hunt for it. Three opposing viewpoints on this issue have evolved. The first viewpoint interprets local government autonomy to mean independence from the interference of state government in the activities of local government. The Second, perceives local government autonomy as the non- interference of the federal government in the activities of local governments, and the third group, maintains that local government autonomy means independence from both state and federal governments interference in the activities of local councils. This is the dilemma facing local government in Nigeria today. At the moment, members of the National Assembly seem to be inclined to the first perspective; freeing the local governments from the loathsome interferences of state governments, which explains why they want to amend section 7 and 162 of the 1999 Constitution. In the draft amendment, they recommended the establishment of a Special Federal Account upon which the 774 local governments would draw their federal allocation; thus, circumventing the abhorrent intercession of various state governments in local government finances. To be sure, this is what they describe as local government financial autonomy.

The struggle to control local government by state and federal governments is simply a matter of what each of them stands to benefit from such control, rather than how such control can deliver democratic dividends to the people at the local level. This argument falls within the trajectory of François Bayart's perception of African politics as contained in his book, *L'Etat en Arique: La Politique du Ventre*<sup>1</sup>. With this kind of political culture in place, nothing positive can be achieved in terms of instituting a veritable local government system in Nigeria.

## **RATIONALE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY**

There are a number of reasons advanced by those advocating for local government autonomy.

– Local government autonomy will develop the system, and help in educating the people in the rural areas to acquire knowledge of the political system.

- strengthen democratic decentralization of power and putting power in the hands of citizens at the grassroots level governance, in addition to delivering development.

- deliver development evenly to each and every Nigerian since each person resides in a local council located in either the rural, semi-rural or urban area - it enables capacity building of people in rural areas which will be in form of economic empowerment through job creation and payment of salary

and emoluments or freedom from external control of allocation which the excess can be channeled into the economic system of the communities concern.

- Make the working environment functional and less threatening to the survival of the system. Local government employees in most of the states of the federation are not getting their salaries when due, and retirement benefit is no forthcoming even years after retirement from the service. This will give the workers a sense of job security and motivation which will encourage them to put in their best.

– Provide a voice to minorities who will have representation at the local government level. Minorities no matter the size of their population will be part of the political equation and process of making the councilor or chairman of their local government - Put more powers in the hands of citizens and their institutions and thus help them demand for accountability, transparency and developments. By virtue of citizen's participation in making the government, they decision making process, policy initiation and monitoring. These and many more reasons are the driving force for stakeholders and activists who are working to ensure citizen's participation in governance at all levels believed in. Countries all over the world are shifting attention to the local government and decentralization of responsibilities.

#### **FACTORS AFFECTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY**

Local governments in Nigeria face a wide range of difficulties, from institutional fragility to politico-systemic deterioration. Nonetheless, the following are the most troubling issues that pose threats to the country's tier's autonomy. They consist of: - Constitutional issues – The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) made it difficult for local governments in the country to operate as an autonomous tier because of its provisions that relates to that level of government in the federal arrangement. Financially, the constitution provides for a joint state.

– local government account which all revenues accrued are pooled there, and this gives the state governors an opportunity to deny local governments what is due to them. Furthermore, the existence of the state independent electoral commission democratizes the system and pave way for plating stooges of the state governor. The challenge therefore is that the process of amending the constitution is difficult and prone to state governor's manipulation. - Appointment of Caretaker Committees.

– As a result of the constitutional lapses, caretaker committees are mostly appointed in most of the states instead of elected council members. This undemocratic practice disenfranchises the citizens at the grassroots, and made the leadership subservient to the state governors instead of the electorates. This creates political apathy in the minds of the citizenry, and denying them their civic rights. The governors are using this platform for their political gains, and making it difficult for local autonomy. - Poor Manpower Planning.

– The local governments in the country are faced with over – populated staff because they have little or no control over staffing as such increasing the wage bill and creating redundancy. The political elites in the state are using this to employ their followers and thugs whom ideally cannot be employed in the state service. The consequences of this are spending all resources on payment of salaries instead of services to communities in the area, and for the governors is an avenue to reduce the pressure on them.

- State – Local government joint projects – State Governors use their powers and compelled local governments to engage in joint projects which has little or no relevance to the people of the areas instead of allowing the tier to come up with projects that were initiated by the people who felt that it is an area that they needed the local governments to address. In most cases, these projects are either



abandon or left without commissioning resulting into a waste of resources or channeling a huge sum that may be used to execute a number of projects in the area. Although such joint-projects are being done with the consent of the councils, but in most cases, they lacked the powers to reject the idea because they were not elected in free and fair elections as they are only obeying the directives of their political godfathers at the expense of the majority populace. The ultimate result is that people at the grassroots are not carried along and they lost confidence in what the local governments can do.

- Corruption – The excessive control by the states results in widespread corruption coordinated at the state level through its overseeing organs such as the Ministry for Local Government and the Joint Account meetings. Money meant for the development of rural areas are being siphoned and shared or used for political activities of the ruling party controlling the state. And in some cases, the money is diverted to another council to upset deficit at the detriment of the real owners. But if the local governments can have their allocations directly, it will be easier to hold the council accountable for their actions.

- Poor delivery of service – Because of misplaced priority as a result of fear and obedience to the political elites at the state level, basic essential services such as Primary Health Care and Primary Education which constitutes some of the basic constitutional functions of the local governments are neglected. Instead, huge sums of money are diverted for running State Universities and Tertiary institutions creating a major setback in these essential areas. These and many more reasons informed the using of the state houses of assemblies by governors in the federation and coupled with the constitutional lapses to block all efforts that may lead to local government autonomy in the country. Conclusively therefore, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria created fundamental contradictions, conclusions and ambiguity that have been exploited to decimate the local government and subsequently made them appendages tied to the State Governments, so much so that in some states they are mere extensions of the State Ministry for Local Governments. The local government autonomy in the country is a euphemism particularly with the provisions of section 8 (subsection 5 & 6), section 5, and the return of state – local government joint account as adopted from the 1976 constitution. This has become one of the greatest tragedies that have befallen the Local Government system in the country.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Structural Functionalist theory is embraced to support our explanation of the role or function (or functions), the local government as an independent level of government has to perform for the survival of Nigeria's democratic federal setting as provided by the constitution, whose failure over the years has form part of the obstacles to democracy in Nigeria. Structural functionalism as presented by scholars popular among them, including Gabriel Almond and Talcott Persons is a theory that looks at the political system as a coherent whole with structures which performs certain functions interdependently and are only meaningful in terms of the working of the whole system. According to Almond, the political system must perform some set of tasks for the survival and the functional requirement of the system to be performed by different kinds of political structures (Almond, 1956). Central to the functionalist theory, is the assumption that all societies survive on the performance of some certain functions by designated structures and as such, the foci of attention in the approach is or are the structures and then the functions they performs. And in the discussion of local government as a level of government, the local government is seen as a structure in the society with definite functions (Maidoki and Philip, 2009).

Hence, using the functionalist theory, it will help us in describing and understanding the local government as a structure or instrument through which certain basic democratically designated

functions of the society as a whole is to be administered locally based on the intimate understanding of the requirements, conditions, and characteristics of the relevant regions (Makinde, J., et al. "Theory, Principle and Practice Of Local Governance In Nigeria." The Journal of Developing Areas, vol. 50, no. 1, Journal of Developing Areas, Jan. 2016, p. 305.).

## **CONCLUSION**

This essay contends that the character and nature of state politics in Nigeria heavily influence the level of autonomy that the federal and state governments grant the local government through the Constitution. This explains why local government affairs have become a source of contention between political elites at the state and federal levels. In Nigeria, corruption, nepotism, and ethnic politics influence politics at all levels of government (federal, state, and municipal). These enduring principles, which play a significant role in Nigerian culture, have had a significant impact on the nation's public policy and legal framework. Federal, state, and municipal relations are shaped by these principles in the nation. Hence, the level of autonomy that the federal and state governments have are influenced by these values. As a result, nothing constructive can be done to establish a true local government system in Nigeria given the current political climate. We make this claim because no political system completely exempts the local unit from state, regional, or national regulation. They do not, however, meddle negatively by seizing and misusing the financial resources of the local governments, as is happening at the moment in Nigeria. This sort of meddling is what gave rise to the troublesome problem of local government autonomy. Yet, since local governments in Nigeria cannot function in isolation, if the federal and state governments can positively influence the operations of local governments that is perfectly acceptable. They can accomplish this by assuming responsibility for tasks that are best executed by them and handing off other tasks to the local government with sufficient funding.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is advised that devolution, which has been considered the most successful decentralization technique for the development of local democracy, be completely implemented in Nigeria as opposed to the simple de-concentration of powers that is currently possible. This is due to the fact that it gives local government's greater financial independence, the flexibility to act without being governed by a central administrative authority, and the ability to hire, dismiss, tax, contract, spend, invest, plan, and establish priorities.

The economic base of the government at the local level should be developed through an upward review of the statutory allocations to local government while it is encouraged to develop or improve its Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) strength. This will help to address the challenge of local government non-viability and inadequate finance and to implement its programs. This will unavoidably encourage rural development, the eradication of poverty and inequality, the lowering of rural-urban migration rates, and the reduction of excessively high rates. While the civil society continuously calls for transparency and accountability from local government officials to achieve good governance for effective development at the grassroots level, it is necessary to hold local government officials accountable to the electorates rather than state governors in order to combat corruption. It is also important to note that the local government as a unit is better equipped with value system and democratic culture so as to make it a true democratic administrative system, real service providers, efficient decision makers, and dynamic grassroots transformers. It is also important to have improved mechanisms for active and maximal participation of local residents in

local government affairs through involvement in not only election, but the initiation and implementation of the local government projects.

It is advised that the Third Schedule, Part II, which creates the State Independent Electoral Commission, be deleted from the constitution and the responsibilities transferred to Independent National Electoral Commission in order to reduce the challenge of state governors' deliberate refusal to conduct local government elections and to minimize the rate of electoral malpractices when conducted. (INEC). This does not imply that INEC has become a credible agency, but it will lessen the governors' use of political operators from the local government.

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