



# Local Government and Administration of Rural Development in Nigeria, 2020-2023: A Constructive Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

The paper analysis the role of Local Government in the administration of rural development in Nigeria, 2020-2023. It states that the local government is the third tier of government in the Nigeria federation and was created to provide social and economic services to the rural communities. The paper argues that because of the proximity of local government to the rural areas, it has the capacity to further the socio-political and economic development of the rural communities. The study based its argument on the Institutional theory of rural development as the intellectual framework for analyzing the importance of political and administrative institutions in engendering rural development. It relied on secondary sources of data, using content analytical method of data analysis. The paper finds there are some factors inhibiting the Local government in the administration of rural development such as undue interference by the state and federal governments, policy inconsistency, corruption, misuse of Local government funds by the state government among others. It posits that in spite of the huge financial allocations to the 774 Local governments in Nigeria from the federation account, the Local governments have not performed creditable in the discharge of their statutory functions. The paper recommends among others: the effective mobilization of the rural dwellers for active participation in rural development programs, it argue for establishment of mechanism for the enforcement of recent Supreme Court judgment granting financial autonomy and statutory four years term to elected Local government Chairmen and Councilor.

**KEYWORDS:** *Rural Development, Financial Autonomy, Revenue Allocation, Political Mobilization, Local Government Reforms, Political and Administrative institutions*

## I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Local government as the third tier of government in Nigeria Federation was primarily established by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to actualize rural development. Its proximity to the rural areas strategically made it an important political and administrative institution to facilitate the development of rural areas. Ihemadu (2016) assert that the four basic purposes for the establishment of Local government in Nigeria includes (i) the enhancement of participatory democracy in the local areas, (ii) the promotion of local freedom of action or local autonomy, (ii) to use the institution of Local government for the enhancement of political integration and national unity, (iv) and the provision of services for which local government is the most efficient provider compared to other levels of government.

The significance of the Local government as the government at the door step of rural people, with the statutory responsibility of provision of social and economic amenities to the rural areas, and create enabling environment for better living conditions of the rural people made the institution a critical factor in the field of development administration. It is in this context that the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria established seven hundred and seventy four (774) Local Government Councils to ensure development



at the grassroots level (Kyenge, 2013). Constitutionally, the Local government has the statutory responsibility to provide essential social and economic services to the rural areas, to eradicate poverty and positively change the living condition of the rural populace. However, in spite of the constitutional stipulated functions of the Local government as the third tier level of governance in Nigeria, there exist some factors undermining its capacity to formulate and execute rural development programs.

Bello-Imam (1996), and Ogunna (2007) contends that these inhibiting factors include, but not limited to financial distress, inadequate executive capacity, lack of autonomy, undue interference and conflicting directives from State and Federal governments, irregular participatory democracy at the local level of governance, undemocratic appointment and dismissal of Local government executive by some State governments, poor leadership quality and incompetence on the part of the elected Councilors and Chairmen of Local governments, and lack of legal framework to prevent the State governments from truncating the position of elected Local government Chairmen and Councilors (Ojinnaka, 2018). These factors have seriously inhibited the capacity of the Local government in the provision of essential services to the rural dwellers, and facilitating rural development in Nigeria.

Against the backdrop of the foregoing analysis, this paper discusses the role of Local government in the administration of rural development and the factors that have hindered the local government in the discharging of its statutory responsibility in Nigeria.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

The provision of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) as amended clearly states that the institution of Local Government was created to provide the services which the Federal and State governments cannot easily provide owing to their distance from the local communities, hence the establishment of the Local government is aimed at bringing governance nearer to the grassroots, with the view to facilitate the socio-economic and political development of the rural areas (Ojinnaka, 2018). In particular, Section 7 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended provides for a democratically elected Local government. Notwithstanding the various institutional and

administrative reforms by the 1976 Local government reforms, and its consequent recognition as the third tier of government by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which enhanced its capacity as a veritable instrument for rural development, the Local governments in Nigeria has not perform creditably in the discharge of its statutory responsibilities.

Arguably, the Local governments have failed short of the expectations of Nigerians in the provision of essential social and economic services for improved living standard of the rural dwellers, who are alienated from the allocation of national values. In spite of the huge monthly statutory revenue allocation from the Federation Account, the Local governments in Nigeria have not been effective in the administration of rural development, as the socio-economic condition of the people at the rural areas has continued to deteriorate; there are almost near absence of social amenities; electricity, pipe-borne water, good and accessible roads, high rate of illiteracy, increasing poverty, economic disparity between rural and urban dwellers, and high death rate (Ojinnaka, 2018). Accordingly, the negative social and economic implications of this have been enormous. It has resulted in high rate of rural-urban migration, wherein young men and women are drifting from rural areas to urban centers in search of better living condition and reliable means of livelihood.

Consequently as it were, this paper is set to examine and analyze the role of the local government in the administration of rural development in Nigeria, and to consider the factors that have undermined or enhanced the institutional and administrative capacity of the Local governments in Nigeria in the discharge of its statutory responsibility to the rural areas.

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Awa (1981) as cited in Ebo (1989) define Local government as a man made device for the management of local affairs with local resources by the representatives of the local population. Awa posits that this is an ideal definition of Local government in most democracies, and it is the model which Nigerians are aspiring to achieve. In the same vein, Ebo (1989) contend that Local government is a functional tool designed to cater for the needs and interests set up for it by those who designed it. The nature of those needs and interests shape to a large extent the structure of the Local government and the



objectives it is set up to fulfill. The United Nations Office for Public Administration (1990), as cited in Eke and Maurice (2017) define Local government administration as the political subdivision of a nation which is constituted by law and has substantial control over local affairs including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The United Nations Office for Public Administration contends that Local government involves the philosophical commitment to the idea of democratic participation in the governing process at the grass root (UN Office for Public Administration, 1990).

Appadorai (1975) in his advance conceptualization of the Local government conceive the Local government as the government by popularly elected bodies charged with administration and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place. Appadorai posits that the institution of Local government is expected to promote democratic development and initiate policies and development programs that would better the lives of the people at the rural areas, by providing the institutional and administrative basis for socio-economic and political development of the locality. Similarly, Bello-Imam (1996) define Local government as a system of political decentralization in which the power base of decision making is, to a great extent, not national, but local. Bello-Imam states that within the Local government system, functions are locally and directly executed by elected officials who have direct control over local affairs. It constitutes the most critical level of government at which the momentum to sustain national development can be created.

Awa (2006) further states that the Local government system is government at the local level established by law to exercise specific powers of 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 through the active participation of the people, and their traditional institutions to meet local needs and ensure their conditions are maximized, thereby complement the activities of the State and Federal governments. Akpan (2006) as cited in Eke and Maurice (2017) sees local government as the breaking down of a country into smaller units or localities for the purpose of administration in which the inhabitants of the different units or localities concerned play a direct and full-part through their elected representatives who exercise power to undertake

functions under the general authority of the national government. The scholar posits that because of this, unit of local government in a giving system is assumed to possess a given territory and population, an institutional structure for legislative, executive and administrative purposes, a given separate legal identity with a given delegated autonomy.

Eke, and Maurice (2017) in an assessment of the impact of Local government on rural development in Nigeria argues that it is through the grassroots democracy that the local government teaches the local citizens the act of self-government. The local communities pay taxes and rates to the Local government to jointly provide them services, which would have been impossible for the local inhabitants to provide individually for themselves. Equally, Aghayere (2000) as cited in Eke Maurice (2017) note that the effectiveness of the Local government is measured by the quality and quantity of development projects and services it provides for the well-being of the local communities. Agagu (2004) and Arowolo (2005) argue that the institution of Local government as a wide-reaching institution exists in diverse forms and in diverse political systems. In spite of what form the local government takes in any political system, it has been essentially a path to and guarantor of administrative competence, effective service delivery, and participatory development. Both Agagu and Arowolo maintains that Local government as a form of political and governmental institution aids decentralization of political and administrative powers, national integration, competence in governance, and gives sense of belonging at the people dwelling at the rural areas. Accordingly, the Local government provides basic services that affect people in their area of jurisdiction. As a third tier of government nearest to the people in Nigeria, the institution of Local government by virtue of its statutory responsibility is thought to know better the needs of the local area and not only what the people can contribute, but also how to engage them in economic activities (Wikipedia.com [www.imostateblog.com/2012/08/17/details-from-the-inaugurat-event-of-the-community-government-council](http://www.imostateblog.com/2012/08/17/details-from-the-inaugurat-event-of-the-community-government-council)). In all, the institution of Local government must be structured in a way that the authority pattern must be essentially understood and acceptable to the local people concerned (Ebo, 1989). It is on this premise that the Local government is seen as an institutional designed to engender the participation of the local people to usher in rural development.



Overtime, the operation of the Local government in Nigeria has been influenced by consideration of efficiency in the discharge of its statutory functions and responsibilities. The emphasis on efficiency is to ensure effective management of Local affairs. Ojinnaka (2018), and Agagu (2004) maintains that since colonial rule, dating back to the pre-independent era, the institution of local government has been a key feature of the Nigerian government and politics. Agagu note that over the years, there have been variations in name, structure and composition of the Local government system in Nigeria, while it was operated differently in diverse parts of the country. In the same vein, Aborisade and Aransi as cited in Olojede and Afegbua (2011) posits that local governments whether it is in form of devolution of power from the centre or as a form of field administration, as the administration that is nearest to the grassroots of the polity are universally seen as veritable mechanism of socio-economic development of the rural areas.

Ojinnaka (2018) assert that the target of the Local government is the people at the rural areas; improving their environment, infrastructures and enhancing their welfare. The scholar notes that rural development, as a strategy for national development is designed to use the institution of the local government as a vehicle to improve the economic and social conditions of people living in the rural areas (Ojinnaka, 2018). He further states that the most fundamental rationale for creation of local government is to use it to take responsibility for the development of rural areas and, as such to contribute directly or and indirectly to the national development (Ojinnaka, 2018). Collaborating with Ojinnaka, Adejo (2003) as cited in Ihemadu (2016) note that the Local government appeals to both the people and government as a feedback mechanism that transmits the ideas and demands of the grassroots to a superior tiers of government.

Local Government as level of government closest to the people are suitable to create enabling environment for ordinary citizens at the grassroots to be involved in democratic political participation in matters that affect their communities directly, as it enhances closer interaction between citizens and their elected representatives (Wikipedia.com [www.imostateblog.com/2012/08/17/details-from-the-inaugurat-event-of-the-community-government-council](http://www.imostateblog.com/2012/08/17/details-from-the-inaugurat-event-of-the-community-government-council))

Tonwe (2003) in his theoretical Perspectives of Local government Administration in Nigeria: contends that the following are the reasons for the creation of local government in Nigeria: (i) that the Local government is an instrument of political education which is in line with Jeremy Bentham and Harold Laski democratic participatory school, (ii) as an agent for the provision of efficient services, the local communities are very conversant with their peculiar problems and felt needs. This is in line with the views expressed by Williams Mackenzie, which states that the Local government is best suited to understand and handle their own problems (iii) again, Tonwe argue that Local government exist to decongest the state and federal government of unnecessary local issues, which is in line with the developmental necessity of the rural areas.

Before the 1976 local government reforms the institution of Local government was officially and legally controlled by the state or regional government. However, the 1976 Guidelines for Local Government Reforms made the Local government a legal entity, and the 1999 Constitution formally recognized them as a third tier of government in Nigeria Federation (Adeyeye, 1989). This recognition stem from the fact that Local government is regarded as the most appropriate agency to bring about rural transformation and the most pre-disposed to rural development (Adeyeye, 1989). In the same vein, Kunle (2021) argues that the 1976 Local Government Reforms made the Local Government bedrock of socio-economic and political development of the rural areas, because the reforms clearly provide Local government the needed structural and organizational adequacy and capacity to generate and actualize socio-political and economic development of the local areas.

Ojinnaka (2018), Adeyeye (1989), and Kunle's (2021) arguments are premised on the fundamental assumptions of the 1976 Guidelines for Local Government Reforms that: First it is the nearest level of government to the rural citizenry where the majority of Nigerians reside. Second it is the level of government that clearly presents itself for the necessary psychological preparedness for massive rural development. Lastly, it has already made institutional arrangement for social and political mobilization of the people for rural development (Adeyeye, 1989). These factors combine to make balance rural development possible in Nigeria.



The Guidelines for Local government reforms of 1976, outlined the following as the supposed functions of the Local government: (i) which require detailed local knowledge for efficient performance (ii) in which success depends on community responsiveness and participation, and (iii) 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. To achieve the objectives of the Local government reforms, the Guidelines further states that to : (i) make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiative by developing or delegating them to local representative bodies (ii) to facilitate the exercise of democratic self government close to the local level of our society and to encourage initiative and leadership potential (iii) mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local development (iv) provide a two way channel of communication between the local communities and the government.

Kunle (2021) observe that the contradictions inherent in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria undermine Local government aspirations for efficacy in grass root governance. Also, Ofoeze (2003) in his widely read book "Local government system in Nigeria" states that in spite of the clearly evident of structural and organizational adequacy and capacity, the present day Nigeria Local government system has woefully failed to really generate and concretize socio-political and economic development of the local areas and their people. The scholar states that this is evident in the rural decay, mass unemployment and underemployment; illiteracy; lack of basic amenities such as health centers, pipe borne water, electricity, hunger and malnutrition; poor sanitary conditions; high rate of preventable diseases; low life expectancy of the rural population; high rate of infant and maternal mortality; lack of functional educational institutions; the decay and collapse of existing schools. Ofoeze contend that all this has led to high rate of rural-urban migration with all its negative implication for Nigeria national development.

Equally, the recent landmark judgment by the Supreme Court of Nigeria, granting financial autonomy to the 774 Local governments in Nigeria is well deserved. It would put to an end the criminal diversion of revenue accruing to the Local government from the Federation Account, by the

State government under the questionable State-Local Government Joint Account. Needless to say, the Supreme Court Judgment has brought to an end the firm grip on Local government administration by the State governments and State Houses of Assembly. Overtime, the questionable State-Local Government Joint Account has hindered the capacity of the Local Government to provide essential services to the people of the rural areas, and strangled the financial effectiveness and efficiency of the Local government in administration of rural development in Nigeria.

### **RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Rural development is defined by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (1971) as the outcome of a series of a quantitative and qualitative changes occurring among the given rural population and whose converging effects indicate in time a rise in the standard of living and favorable changes in the way of life of the people concerned. Claude Ake in his book "Democracy and development in Africa" posits that rural development involves the focusing of development effort on the transformation of the rural society. It means that all aspects of development are co-ordinate and flow together to form an unbroken whole (Ake,2001). Ake contends that in Nigeria, all sorts of activities went on in the name of development which was interpreted to mean improved agricultural extension services and the encouragement of community development efforts, the strategies he notes made no impact on the lives of the rural people. Ake further states that the people cannot be mobilized for development unless their needs and aspirations are taken care of and they must be sincerity and commitment of their leaders towards actual improved development ( Ake , 2001).

Equally, Ojinnaka (2018) posits that rural development is on purposefully designed development policy, strategy or approach to improve the economic and social life of the people living at the rural areas, and intended for their social, economic and political development. Rural development programs in Nigeria have been at the center of development administration since the immediate post independent era. Thus the emphasis on rural development date back to immediate post independent Nigeria when rural development was conceived as the bedrock of social, political and economic development of the newly emergent Nigeria nation (Ojinnaka, 2018).

The Nigeria National Development Plans since independence in 1960 made rural development



a policy priority. The Nigeria national development plans necessarily reorganize that about 70 per cent of the Nigerian population live in the rural areas and have benefited relatively little from the rapid economic growth of the past few years (The Nigeria National Development Plan, 1975, as cited in Idode, 1989) The policy plans, realized that the improvement in the welfare of the average Nigerian will therefore require a substantial in the rural income. Accordingly, in the allocation of the scarce resources in the course of plan implementation, priority was given too programs and projects directly benefiting the rural population, particularly, projects to increase income of small holder farmers and to improve the economic and social infrastructure in the rural areas (Idode,1989)

Egonwan, (2004) in his “Principle and practice of Local government in Nigeria” contend that comprehensive approach to rural development involves detailed planning based on a careful understanding of the needs and resources of the target population and the setting up of appropriate institutions for implementing rural development. Drawing from Nigeria perspective, rural community is considered to be a community sharing a common locality and value system. In this context, this paper conceptualizes rural development from three broad perspectives: economic, political and social development perspectives. The economic perspective is viewed from economic needs to tackle the problems of poverty, underdevelopment, unemployment, and inequality, to usher in economical integration and development of rural areas, to ensure that residents in rural areas experience an improved living condition and high quality of living, while the political perspective is viewed from the entrenched position of the local government to mobilize the locals to participate in the democratic process and promote political development of the rural areas. Drawing from the democratic participatory school of rural development Mackenzie (1964) argue that local government is necessary for political education and as a training ground for potential politician for the national parliament, and national political development. In a similar vein, Izueke (2010) maintain that democratic participatory implies nurturing the people of the grassroots level about the tenets of democracy, which is based on fair play and the right of the people.

Again, the social perspective of this paper draws from the statutory responsibility of the Local

government to engage in social mobilization of the people. In this case, social mobilization must be seen in terms of involving the people in taking active part in free discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare. Its goal is the creation of a new culture that will transcend the multitude of negative factors in the Nigerian nation state (Eke and Maurice, 2017). The Local government has the social responsibility to provide social amenities and social infrastructure to better the social lives of the rural people. This is based on the fact that the rural areas cannot be separated from the objectives of the Nigeria national development, as both the State and the Local government must play leading role in the formulation and implementation of rural development policies and programs (Adeyeye, 1989). Adeyeye (1989) assert that in Nigeria the overall social, political and economic development has made the life of the people of the rural areas a towering and all embracing phenomenon, as majority of the rural masses cannot be isolated from the core of the nation’s development.

The Secretary of State for colonies in a despatch to the Governor of African States in 1957, as cited in Krik-Greene (1965) posits that the success of any rural development program lies in the development of an efficient, democratic system of local government. The key concepts of Local, efficient and democratic mean that the system of government must be close to the common people and their problems, efficient because it must be capable of managing the local services in a way which will help raise the standard of Living of the people, and democratic because it must not only find a place for the growing class of educated men, but in the same time command the respect and support of the mass of the people (Kirik-Greene, 1965).

However, the increasing effort to stimulate integrated rural development in Nigeria is due to widespread poverty and food insecurity ravaging the country. In spite of the various institutional efforts to make agriculture the mainstay of the nation's rural economy (Adeyeye, 1989), this most serious social and economic problems facing the country has persisted. Due to the proximity of the Local government to the rural people, the programs of rural development have as a matter of rationality occupied the central place in the statutory responsibility of the Local governments in Nigeria. The emphasis on the policies and programs of rural development is to improve the lives of the rural



people through their participation, by providing basic economic and social infrastructure, creating employment opportunities, reducing poverty, the provision of clean water, education facilities, electricity, good road network and other social services. At the top of the rural development agenda is to achieve the social, political and economic development of the rural communities. Rural development is therefore, the process of improving the quality of lives, material condition and economic well-being of people living in rural areas that are often in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas (Moseley, 2003).

Rural development is also characterized by its emphasis on locally produced economic development strategies that is sustainable and capable of achieving lasting positive impacts on the material condition of the rural dwellers (Ojinnaka, 2018; Moseley, 2003). This characterization is based on the fact that the people of the rural areas are in better position to understand their culture, language, political, social, economic conditions prevalent in their locality, hence to meaningfully achieve the objectives of rural development, the rural people themselves have to participate in their sustainable rural development programs. In this case, the rural communities have to be actively promoting rural development and taking decisions on the best programs for their own development.

Cohen and Uphoff (1980) contend that a critical 'organization gap' identified during the late 1960s, reflecting on the disjunction between national organizations and rural communities led to a great focus on community participation in rural development agendas. In the main time, rural development in Nigeria is activated through the channel of political decentralization policies via the institution of Local government which functions on the logic of been the nearest government to the locals, and shift of the power of socio-politico-economic decision-making, and the election of representatives and leadership from the local people (Kauzya, 2007), which engenders the participation of the local populations in the decision making process for rural development.

Traditionally, rural development is the function and statutory responsibility of the Local government in Nigeria. The 1976 Local government Reforms, and 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria made rural development statutory responsibility of the Local government. This opened the door for diverse strategies of rural development across the country. However, the

mishandling of this statutory responsibility by the managers of the institution of Local government is responsible for the high level of poverty in the rural areas in Nigeria, corruption and infrastructural deficiency, and has hindered the efforts to ensure effective community participation in rural development efforts (Pocock; Steckler; and Hanzalova 2016). The rural areas in Nigeria are experiencing poverty due to lack of access to meaningful economic and social activities by the young generation, especially, their inability to access economic activities that will positively impact their lives, mismanagement of the resources for the development of the rural areas and lack of investments in key infrastructure: education, social amenities, all of which play an important role in developing rural areas (Rowley, 1996).

However, changes in the security architecture of the contemporary Nigeria, have changed the character of rural economy and increasingly foster food insecurity, decreased resource extraction and agriculture activities that has been dominant rural economic drivers (Ward and Brown, 2009), and have negatively impacted the living conditions of the rural dwellers. This has created the needs for rural communities to approach development from a wider perspective, and be more focused on a broad range of development goals rather than merely creating incentive for agricultural or resource-based businesses (Ward and Brown, 2009).

### **III. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK INSTITUTIONAL THEORY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

This paper is premised on the Institutional theory of rural development as the intellectual framework of analysis. The theory emphasizes the role of political and administrative institutions in enduring rural development. Ojinnaka Ify Evaristus is the intellectual precursor of the Institutional theory of rural development. He systematically articulated and developed the Institutional approach to rural development as a framework for understanding and analyzing the role of political and administrative institutions in rural development. His seminal idea was first put forward in his book; "The imperatives of development administration" published in 2018, which contains the most fundamental ideas about the institutional theory, and has become a very comprehensive framework for analyzing and understanding of the importance of political and administrative institutions in the development of the rural areas (Ojinnaka, 2018).



The theory center's on the argument that the development of the rural areas where the majority of the people in developing countries dwells should be a national priority. The theory argues that political and administrative institutions that are proximate to the rural areas are ideal for formulation and implementation of rural development policies and programs. It maintains that such institutional framework has the dynamic capacity to effectively engender rural transformation. The theory further states that rural transformation cannot be separated from national development, hence it argues for rural development programs that would promote resources allocation and income redistribution in favour of rural areas (Ojinnaka, 2018).

The theory posits that political and administrative institutions like the institution of the Local government should be used to formulate and implement development policies and programs that would be beneficial to the rural dwellers (Ojinnaka, 2018). The theory based its argument on the consideration that political and administrative institutions are the most suitable framework for the analysis and understanding of the role of the Local government in actualization of the rural development. It contends that it is the political and administrative institutions that enhances the enterprise of the people and give them the framework to operate and deal with poverty and other related social economic problems (Ojinnaka, 2018).. Accordingly, the proximity of the Local government or any other administrative institutions at the grassroots would engender mass participation and enable the rural dwellers to participate fully in the programs meant for their own development. The high point of the international approach to rural development is the notion that for genuine rural development to take place, institutional mobilization of the rural communities for participation is very necessary (Ojinnaka, 2018). The theory therefore argues the developing countries to employ institutional approach to enhance the development of the rural areas. Ojinnaka conclude that there is an extraordinary capacity in administrative and political institutions that made them to be predominantly oriented towards the provision of essential economic and social services to the rural people.

The instruction of Local government in Nigeria is a mechanical reflection of the institutional theorization of rural development. Against the background of the foregoing, the theory brought into views the statutory role and functions of the Local

government in Nigeria. As the intellectual framework of analysis of this study, the theory will enable us to understand the contributions of the institution of Local government to rural development in Nigeria.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY**

The paper relied on secondary sources of data obtained from text books, Conference papers, academic Journals and scholarly publications, data from Online sources; government official documents and the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Guideline to 1976, Nigeria Local government reforms, all of which provided us documentary evidence of the contributions of the Local government in the administration of rural development, as well as the factors that inhibit the Local government in the administration of rural development in Nigeria. The study used content analytical method of data analysis. Thus all the relevant materials from different sources were content analyzed.

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA, 2020-2023**

The proximity of the Local government to the rural areas and the relative ease with which they relate with local authorities made the Local government a veritable and effective instrument for social and economic services delivery, rural transformation and development. The major concern for the establishment of the Local government in Nigeria derives from the need to create a truly autonomous tier of government that would not only bring government closer to the people, accelerated rural development, but would also give the local people the opportunity to participate in government of their area (Odion-Akhaine,1999).This would involve an effective Local management strategy that require a concrete step towards changing the existing socio-economic and political system, to a system that will make room for active participation of the people (Odion-Akhaine, 1999).

In essence, the ever increasing relevance of the Local government and its impacts on rural development in Nigeria reinforced the needs to improve its capacity to ensure efficient and effective discharge of its statutory role. This informed the 1976, Local government reforms, and the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, that strengthened its capacity



to effectively and efficiently carry out its statutory responsibilities to ensure rural development. The Local government is expected to compliment the development efforts of the States and Federal government of Nigeria, and create positive impact on the material conditions of the people at the rural communities. Constitutionally, the Local government is the third tier of government in Nigeria. It is the political and administrative fuel of rural development, and assigned the responsibilities to perform for the benefits of the rural people, not as appendage of the Federal or State governments (Imhanlahimi and Ikeanyibe, 2009).

The Nigeria Local government system is designed to be auto-dynamic, proactive and consistent in the performance of essential functions that are the needs of the people, such as the provision of social and economic amenities, both earth and tarred roads, pipe borne water, electricity, rural health care delivery, recreational facilities, good learning environment and functional education system, market stalls and motor park (Ofoeze, 2003; Ihemadu, 2014; Ojinnaka, 2018). In earnest, the Local government in has been useful in opening up of the rural areas through the provision of rural roads to facilitate rural transformation.

As a purveyor of rural development, the Local governments has within the limit of its administrative and institutional capability impacted the rural areas in several ways, and has brought some degree of development and transformation to some rural communities. In the some way, the Local government has been a stepping stone for the consolidation of democracy and building of a democratic political culture (Ojinnaka, 2018). Through creation of political education and political awareness, political mobilization and political enlightenment, the Local governments in Nigeria have achieved measure of democratic consolidation by engendering active participation of the locals in the national and local democratic processes ( Ojinnaka,2018). It serves as an institutional platform for mobilization of the people and activation of their interests in the political process. Equally, the local government help to cultivate due process, orderliness and the rule of law, a situation that have positively impact on the socio-political and economic development of local communities in the country. In its effort to ensure social political and economic improvement in the lives of the rural dwellers in Nigeria, the Local government ultimately brings power to the people at the grass root where power belongs ( Ojinnaka,2018).

**Table i. REVENUE ALLOCATION FROM THE FEDERATION ACCOUNT TO 774 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NIGERIA, 2020 FINANCIAL YEAR.**

MONTH	AMOUNT IN BILLIONS OF NAIRA
JANUARY	132,944,286,039.58 Billion
FEBUARY	119,305,333,443.19 Billion
MARCH	135,950,369,256.16 Billion
APRAIL	125,347,747,210.30 Billion
MAY	114,094,633,373.67 Billion
JUNE	138,973,593,080.79 Billion
JULY	142,761,020,251.29 Billion
AUGUST	147,421,532,110.79 Billion
SEPTEMBER	138,443,902,381.04 Billion
OCTOBER	124,707,802,665.06 Billion
NOVEMBER	126,789,336,511.37a Billion
DECEMBER	131,792,357,934.41 Billion



JANUARY-DECEMBER ALLOCATION, 2020 FINANCIAL YEAR	REVENUE	TOTAL AMOUNT #1,439,697,294,257.65 Trillion Naira
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source: National Bureau of Statistics, (2020), as cited in Einno Projects Nigeria (2024) Report on Local Government Revenue Allocation in Nigeria.

**Table ii. REVENUE ALLOCATION FROM THE FEDERATION ACCOUNT**

**TO 774 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NIGERIA, 2021, FINANCIAL YEAR**

MONTH	AMOUNT IN BILLIONS OF NAIRA	
JANUARY	131,399,546,586.52 Billion	
FEBUARY	122,853,202,204.98 Billion	
MARCH	138,372,400,050.09 Billion	
APRAIL	143,297,613,823.78 Billion	
MAY	143,741,578,841.75 Billion	
JUNE	161,100,759,742.53 Billion	
JULY	166,561,943,930.47 Billion	
AUGUST	161,540,295,558.19 Billion	
SEPTEMBER	164,176,011,767.08 Billion	
OCTOBER	156,282,594,632.78 Billion	
NOVEMBER	63,937,470,236.31 Billion	
DECEMBER	163,879,389,697.58 Billion	
JANUARY-DECEMBER ALLOCATION, 2021 FINANCIAL YEAR	REVENUE	TOTAL AMOUNT 1,808,661,636,749.61 IN TRILLION OF NAIRA

source: National Bureau of Statistics, (2021), as Cited in Einno Project Nigeria, (2024) Report on Local Government Revenue Allocations in Nigeria

**Table iii. REVENUE ALLOCATION FROM THE FEDERATION ACCOUNT TO THE 774 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NIGERIA, 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR.**

MONTH	AMOUNT IN BILLIONS OF NAIRA
JANUARY	131,877,519,560.68 Billion
FEBUARY	140,611,475,978.67 Billion
MARCH	167,910,439,337.02 Billion
APRAIL	149,251,133,153.74 Billion
MAY	175,942,056,941.49 Billion
JUNE	182,330,450,392.99 Billion
JULY	210,617,208,410.21 Billion
AUGUST	164,246,625,813.10 Billion
SEPTEMBER	172,776,661,970.82 Billion
OCTOBER	177,086,890,392.01 Billion
NOVEMBER	202,485,822,780.01 Billion



DECEMBER	221,807,324,545.05 Billion
JANUARY-DECEMBER REVENUE ALLOCATION, 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL AMOUNT # 2,096,943,609,275.79 Trillion Naira

source: National Bureau of Statistics (2022 ), As Cited in Einno Project Nigeria, 2024 Report on Local Governments Revenue Allocations in Nigeria

**Table iv. REVENUE ALLOCATION FROM THE FEDERATION ACCOUNT TO THE 774 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NIGERIA, 2023 FINANCIAL YEAR**

MONTH	AMOUNT IN BILLIONS OF NAIRA
JANUARY	183,225,323,372.37 Billion
FEBUARY	173,935,885,298.74 Billion
MARCH	111,277,519,560.68 Billion
APRIL	14,785,910,008.42 Billion
MAY	221,785,830,448.47 Billion
JUNE	218,063,798,448.90 Billion
JULY	236,231,558,913.16 Billion
AUGUST	266,538,727,404.93 Billion
SEPTEMBER	210,900,176,467.13 Billion
OCTOBER	225,209,515,653.62 Billion
NOVEMBER	258,810,449,711.47 Billion
DECEMBER	288,928,090,774.11 Billion
JANUARY-DECEMBER ALLOCATION, ,2023 FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL AMOUNT #3,873,497,876,895.58 Trillion Naira

source: National Bureau of Statistics, As Cited in the Einno Projects 2024 Report on Local Government Revenue Allocations in Nigeria

In any case, from the provisions of 1976 Guidelines of Local government reforms and the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, there is clear evidence of structural and organizational adequacy for effective performance of the Local governments in Nigeria. In spite of this inherent capacity, the 774 Local governments in Nigeria have performed below the expectation of the Nigerian people. Table i-iv shows that between 2020-2023, the 774 Local governments in Nigeria received a total sum of (#9,218,800,417,178.63 Trillion Naira) Nine thousand, two hundred and eighteen Trillion, Eight hundred Billion, Four hundred and Seventeen million, One hundred and Seventy-Eight thousand, Sixty-three Naira, as statutory allocation from the Federation Account. Notwithstanding this staggering amount received by the 774 Local governments in Nigeria as allocation

from the Federation Account within this period under study, the Local governments has not justified the utilization of such huge financial resources allocation , to really generate and concretize socio-political and economic development of the local areas, and their people (Ofoeze, 2003), There is no evident of any concrete development Projects in each of the 774 Local government areas in the country, no factories, no creation of employment opportunities, no provision of infrastructural facilities and supply of essential services to rural dweller, no functional health care system, no functional educational institutions, no good roads, no clean water supply or outstanding recreational facilities provided by any of the 774 Local governments in the country.

Rather, there is high level of poverty



among rural dwellers, wide spread illiteracy; poor health facilities, epileptic electricity supply, poor public sanitary conditions and insecurity. Worst still, the neglect of the agricultural sector of the economy which is the mainstay of the rural Nigeria economy has resulted in food insecurity, as hunger is today ravaging the land. The rural dwellers in Nigeria have been alienated from the Local government. as the rapid dwindling of the material condition of rural dwellers points to the fact that the Local government in Nigeria has failed in the expectations to bring about rural development and improved condition of living of the people. Consequently as it were, the negative social implications of this has been enormous, as the high level of poverty among the rural dwellers has resulted in an unprecedented increase in rural-urban migration, wherein young men and women are drifting in their numbers to urban centre in search of better means of livelihood and better condition of living (Ihemadu ,2016).

In essence, the Local government reforms that was aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Local government in the administration of rural development, and provision of essential social and economic services, and improving the material conditions of the people at the rural areas has not achieved the desired result. The Local government has not been effective in carry out its statutory responsibility in the Nigeria. Hence, in spite of the huge monthly statutory revenue allocation to the Local governments in the Nigeria from the Federation Account, the socio-economic condition of the people at the Local government areas has continued to deteriorate, as there are almost near absence of social amenities; electricity, pipe-borne water, good and accessible roads, high rate of illiteracy, increasing poverty, economic disparity between rural and urban dwellers in the country, and high death rate due to preventable diseases (Ojinnaka,2018).

Against, the foregoing analysis, it is crystal clear that the Nigeria local government, as the third tier of government in Nigeria federation has been ineffective and inefficient in the administration of rural development, and have failed to bring about the desired improvement in the material condition of the rural dweller..

#### **FACTORS THAT INHIBITED THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THEADMINISTRATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA, 2020-2023.**

The operation of the Local government in Nigeria is constrained by some human, institutional, administrative, structural, legal and constitutional factors which have marred the efficiency and effectiveness of the Local government system in Nigeria. These challenges revolves around the problems of autonomy, financial issues, illegal imposition of caretaker/transition committee, corruption, leadership problem, indiscipline, unskilled workforce and lack of qualified personnel, and the diversion and mismanagement of Local government funds by the State governments, lack of maintenance culture and political instability among others. These factors have directly or indirectly undermined the capacity of the Local government to effectively and efficiently perform of its statutory duties (Ojinnaka,2018), and to really generate and concretize socio-political and economic development of the local areas and their people (Ofoeze, 2003).

Ikelegbe (2004) highlights four basic problems facing the local government in the administration of rural development in Nigeria to include:(i) Lack of development projects and improved service delivery system because of excessive politicking (ii) Financial recklessness and irresponsibility of officials of the Local government who indulges in frivolous and unnecessary expenditures including over invoicing and contracts inflection (iii) High scale looting by the local government chairmen and other officials who are involved in corrupt practices, financial miss-management, theft and outright fraud (iv) Poor performance of the Local governments in service delivery to the rural people due to wicked diversion of Local government allocation from the Federation Account by the state governments. These challenges brought into question the effectiveness of the Local government in the administration of rural development in Nigeria, and have inevitably engenders developmental crisis that have resulted in rural decay, rural poverty, mass unemployment, underemployment, crimes, insecurity of lives and property, inadequate means of transportation, inaccessible road networks in communities, illiteracy, lack of basic amenities such as health centers, pipe borne water, electricity, hunger and malnutrition; poor sanitary conditions; high rate of preventable diseases; low life expectancy of the rural population; high rate of infant and maternal mortality; lack of functional educational institutions; the decay and collapse of existing schools (Ofoeze, 2003, Ojinnaka,2018).



Also, the monumental problems of corruption, lack of accountability, lack of transparency, political patronage, indiscipline and lack of due process has undermined the developmental process of the rural areas in Nigeria, and has greatly inhibited the Local government in the discharge of its statutory responsibilities (Ojinnaka, 2018). The areas that corruption thrives in the Local government in Nigeria include: (a) Inflation of prices of bought items; (b) Over-estimation of cost of projects; (c) The ghost workers syndrome; (d) Award of contracts and subsequent abandonment; and (e) Outright payment of huge sums of money to political godfathers (Ihemadu, 2016; Ikelegbe, 2005; Ofoeze, 2003). Thus, corruption, lack of accountability and mismanagement of Local government funds have undermined the operations of the local government system in Nigeria. The huge monthly allocation from the Federation Account to the 774 Local governments' areas in Nigeria is not justified by any meaningful development projects. This has made Nigerians to demand from the Federal Ministry of Finance and Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation to regularly publish the monthly allocation collected by each Local government areas in Nigeria. Consequently, the apparent mismanagement, and diversion of public fund meant for the development of the Local areas to other uses has led to the inefficiency and ineffective performance of Local government in the administration of rural development (Ikelegbe, 2005; Imhanlahimi and Ikeanyibe, 2009), and have over the years rendered the Local government administration ineffective, inefficient and inactive and devoid of concrete developmental activities (Aghayere, 1997).

Overtime, the Federal and State governments have continued to interfere in the affairs of the Local government. Notwithstanding that the autonomy of Local government was established by 1976 Local government reforms and enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This undue interference by the state and federal governments in the affairs of the Local government has continued to undermine the capacity of the local government to improve the living condition of the rural people.

In the recent times, cases of unlawfully removal of elected Councilors and Chairmen of Local governments by the State Governors has been a serious challenge to participatory democracy at the rural areas. In 2011, the former Governor of Imo

State (Rochas Anayo Okorocho) unlawfully truncated the tenures of elected Councilors and Chairmen of 27 Local Government Councils of Imo State, and has them replaced with Sole Administrators/ Caretaker Committee. The interference by the State and Federal governments in the affairs of the Local government do not only undermine the objective of rural development, but also negate the status of Local government as the third tier of government in Nigeria. The over bearing influence of the State governments on the local governments in Nigeria, create the erroneous impression that the institution of the Local government in Nigeria is a mere administrative outpost of the State and Federal government and should takes directives from them, instead of carrying out its own policy and programs for rural development. This erroneous thinking is fuelled by the mandatory approval of bye laws made by the Local government Legislative Council, by State Legislature in total negation of the 1976 Local government reforms and the 1999 Constitution.

In the same vein, the controversial Local government- State government joint account in which Local government statutory allocation from the Federation Account come through the state government, has been a continuous challenge to the capacity of the Local government to effectively discharge its statutory functions to ensure rural development. It has hindered the ability of the Local government to provide social and economic amenities to the rural areas. The practice of joint Local government-State government account is not only undemocratic, anti-rural development, but makes it possible for corruption to thrive, as the State governments mismanage and divert the funds meant for Local government to other uses. Over the years, it has been an unfair practice for the statutory allocation from the Federation Account to be delayed, or even be denied the Local government as it passes through the Local Government-State joint account (Ihemadu, 2016). In a similar way, the state governments have failed to comply with the constitutional requirement of remitting 10% of the internally generated revenue to the Local government. A situation that have also undermined the ability of the local government administration to effectively and efficiently perform its statutory function.

Also, the Nigeria Local government is lacking in skilled manpower. Most of the Local government staff do not have the requisite knowledge, education, training, competence and do



not possess the leadership quality and managerial skills needed to reposition the Local government in the administration of rural development. In other word, the strategic position of Local government in Nigeria, as the government most proximate to the rural people is not matched with adequate, effective and efficient administrative staff and capable hands to translate the articulated, but basic purposes for establishing local governments into reality (Bello-lmam 1996, as cited in Ojinnaka ,2016). Also, due to lack of job satisfaction and poor incentives, people that has requisite skill and professionals are not motivated to join Local government system. On the whole, these problems have hindered the efficiency and effectiveness of the Local government in the administration of rural development in Nigeria (Ojinnaka, 2018).

Furthermore, policy inconsistency is one of the major hindrances to rural development in Nigeria. In the past years many rural development programs have been abandoned midway by Nigeria Leaders. It has been new government, new rural development policies without reference to the policies and programs initiated by the previous administrations. Rural development programs like River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDA), the Agricultural Development Project (ADP), the Communal/ School -to Land Programs (CSLP) and the highly supported Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI). These rural development programs that are very crucial in the history of rural development in Nigeria (Idode,1988), were abandoned by succeeding Nigeria government, particularly, since the inception of the current democratic dispensation.

Notwithstanding the huge amount of monthly revenue allocation from the Federation Account to the Local governments in Nigeria, it has not been effective in the administration of rural development.

## V. CONCLUSION

The key issues we have address in our study of the Local government and its administration of rural development in Nigeria includes how the Local governments have contributed to the social, economic and political development of the rural areas, as well as the factors inhibiting it from effective and efficient discharge of its statutory responsibility.

Traditionally, rural development is the prerogative of the institution of Local government. It is a consciously designed development agenda

aimed at finding ways to improve the lives of the people at the rural areas with their participation in the rural development policies and programs, so as to meet their developmental needs. The impact of Local government on the development of the rural areas in Nigeria is highly distinctive. There has been vast variety of strategies adopted by the Local governments in Nigeria in the discharge of its statutory responsibility of providing essential social and economic service to the rural areas. Rural development in Nigeria is basically rural centered approaches to the development of rural communities reflecting the needs to engage them to participate in their own development by transferring the power of socio-politico-economic decision-making to the people through their elected representatives.

As the nearest level of government nearest to the rural areas, the Local government is designed to be innovative, proactive, resourceful and rural development oriented. This is to enhance its capacity to effectively discharge its statutory responsibility of providing social services to rural people, improving the quality of life of the rural population and provide employment opportunities, provide clean water, good roads, education facilities, electricity and make possible two ways communication between the Local government and rural people. As part of the efforts to bring governance proximate to the rural people, the Local government provides the structural, institutional and administrative foundation of Nigeria democracy. It provides the institutional framework for political education, political and social mobilization, political recruitment and sustenance of political culture through its cohesive and integrative efforts at the rural areas.

In Nigeria today, there is a wide gap between the expectations of the people residing at the Local government areas and what the Local government has been able to offer to the people in terms of rural development. The efficiency of the local government rests on the ability of human resources element to perform their function efficiently and effectively (Eke and Maurice, 2017), but unfortunately human resources is in short supply at the local level. An analysis of the prevailing situation in Nigeria points to the multiplicity of problems in the country arising from poverty, insecurity, unemployment, corruption and mismanagement of Local government financial resources, rapidly increasing population, increasing rural-urban migration, food insecurity, declining per capita income, unprecedented increase in the cost of living. These and more problems are daunting and the resultant hardship on the local



populace is crippling (Eke and Maurice, 2017). It attests to the compelling moral, socio-cultural and economic reasons for a serious attention to be directed to the rural areas (Eke and Maurice, 2017).

Nevertheless, poverty alleviation and rural development is closely related in the Nigeria context. Rural development is not limited to issues of provision of social amenities and other modern infrastructural facilities. Very many Local governments in Nigeria have had active rural development programs, and many rural development policies have been actively promote by some Local governments. However, some institutional, political, administrative and human factors have hindered and undermined the capacity of Local government to bring about desired development of the rural areas.

Consequently, within the period under study, 2020-2023, the 774 Local governments in Nigeria have not been effective in providing essential social and economic services to improving the quality of lives of the people at rural areas. The result is that the residents of the rural areas are experiencing poverty, hunger, unemployment, high cost of living, lack of basic social and economic infrastructure, and other developmental problems peculiar to Nigeria rural areas. These and some other developmental problems have hindered the rural dweller's access to economic benefits, and often times undermines Local government articulated policies and programs to combat rural poverty and ensure social, economic development of the rural areas.

Today, the assessment of the performance of the Local governments in the administration of rural development in Nigeria is solely based on the ability of the Local government system to effectively and efficiently discharge its functions and services with the pro-active participation of the rural dwellers. While it has been observed that the rural communities are often excluded from the schemes of things at the Local government Council, not consulted and do not participate in what is supposed to be their own affairs. Apart, the Local governments in Nigeria receive huge statutory revenue allocation from the Federation Account, at present, there is no evident of any concrete development Projects in each of the 774 Local government areas in the country. More so, majority of rural dwellers in Nigeria are living abject poverty and the Local governments has demonstrated incapacity, and unable to provide for the needs of the rural communities, hence the Local government have ultimately filed to effectively and efficiently administer rural development in Nigeria.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

The Nigeria Local government system should drive to provide efficient services that are beneficial to the rural dwellers. In essence, the programs of rural development embarked upon by the Local development should be done in active collaboration of the Local communities to ensure that it have maximum impact on their material conditions and ensure greater transparency and accountability. It is therefore, the position of this paper that the success of rural development programs by the local government lays on the support and collaboration of the rural communities that such programs is meant to serve their interests. For this reason, the paper posits that the rural communities as the beneficiary of any rural development programs needs to be involved in the formulation and execution of rural development strategies. This would ensure the participation of all the stakeholders in the rural communities and engender coordinated approach in talking the problems of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and lack of access to basic economic activities.

Again, to ensure good governance, effective and efficient management of the Local government resources, the managers of Nigeria local government system should demonstrate sense of patriotism, accountability and responsible leadership to enable the Local government to be proactive in the provision of services to the people. This would engender productivity and facilitate maximum development of the rural areas. Equally, in line with the recent landmark judgment by the Nigeria Supreme Court granting financial autonomy to the 774 Local governments in Nigeria, the monthly revenue allocation from the Federation Account should be paid directly to the Local government. It will put to an end the criminal diversion of revenue accruing to the Local government by the State governments under the ungodly Local Government –State joint Account. This would enhance the capacity of the Local government to embark on meaningful rural development projects. Needless to say, the Supreme Court Judgment has brought to an end the firm grip on Local government administration by the State governments and State Houses of Assembly, which has overtime strangled the Local government system and hindered its capacity to provide essential social and economic services to the people and administer rural development. In the same vein, the Federal government should set up mechanism to monitor and ensure full implementation of the Supreme Court judgment of Local government financial



autonomy and statutory 4 years tenure for elected local government Chairmen and Councilors

Also, to strengthen the institution of Local government, the stakeholders should work for institutionalization of democratic culture to be rooted in the rule of law, constitutionalism, separation of power and Due process. Consolidating democracy and strengthening the application of acceptable democratic culture will not only enhance the prospect for national democratic development, but would have a positive developmental impact on the communities at the Local government areas. In addition, the Local government should invest in commercial ventures such as rural-urban mass transit program, commercial farms; build shops/stores in the rural markets, fast food, build recreations and entertainment centers and other viable commercial services that could enhance its capacity for revenue generation.

Again, there are needs for value and leadership reorientation to enhance the emergence of a committed, transparent and democratic minded and servant leadership that will be committed to ensuring rural political development and the creation of an enabling environment for private business to thrive.

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