

# Corruption in Local Governments in Nigeria and the Way Forward: A Case Study of Rivers State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:**-This study unearthed the nature and incidences of corruption in local governments in Nigeria, with particular reference to Rivers State. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study and data was collected from secondary sources. The data were analyzed via the content method of data analysis. The findings of the study showed that corruption is pervasive at the local government level in Nigeria and Rivers state in particular. The study observed that corruption is not just one of the intractable pathologies ravaging local government administration but the progenitor of every other socio-economic woe affecting the local government areas in Rivers state. The menace is perpetrated by mostly the top echelon or leadership of the council in connivance with their godfathers cum state government officials. Corruption at the council manifest in the form of inflation of prices of bought items, over estimation of cost of projects; ghost workers syndrome, payment of huge sum of money to godfathers, outright embezzlement and diversion of the council funds. This wide-scale corruption at the local level has made the needed development at the grassroots a mirage. The study recommended mounting of serious war against corruption at the Nigerian local government areas by the anti-graft agencies and civil society organizations as the panacea to reduce the menace of corruption that has eaten deep into fabric of the country's local government administration.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Nigeria, Local Government, Anti-graft, Law, Rivers State.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Local government areas constitute the geographical entity headed by a local government i.e. a government that exists in the local government area to develop the people and the geographical area. Nweneka (2018b), stated the local governments aim at providing efficient services and facilitating development at the grassroots. The essence of local government area and local government council is for accelerated development of the inhabitants and the environment (Okara 2012). Agba, Akwara and Idu (2013:458) observed that it is a general agreement of most scholars and professionals that local governments in Nigeria have not justified the reasons for their creation through the delivery of cutting edge services to the rural people. The key factor responsible for this is corruption in the local government areas which takes various shapes and forms. In view of the above, this paper therefore examined the nature and incidences of corruption in Nigerian local government areas, with Rivers State being a case study and further suggested ways to reduce the menace of corruption in the Local government areas in the nation.

## II. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

### *Conceptual Framework*

It is imperative to clarify major concepts in the paper in order to situate them within the context of our analysis. The key terms of the study demand conceptual clarification and meaningful and purposeful analyses.

### *Corruption*

The word corruption has its origin from the Latin words *corruptus* meaning "spoiled", and *currumpere* meaning "to ruin" "to break down to pieces" "to spoil" (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, UNODC, 2004:23). Thus, corruption can be generally understood as contamination, distortion or ruin of purity of things for personal interest.

According to Nweneka (2018a), Corruption is a behavior, which deviates from the normal duties of a public role because of private relationship. This includes such behaviour as bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of inscriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses.

The World Bank (1977) defines corruption as the abuse of public or private office for personal gain. Similarly, Transparency International (2006), defined corruption as misuse of entrusted power for private gains. According to the Independent Corrupt practices and Other Related Offences Commission Act (section 2), corruption includes vices like bribery, fraud and other related offences.

Kumar (2012) argued that corruption when viewed with Africa's history in mind, though rampant across Africa today is an alien culture. Accordingly, it was European colonialism that introduced systemic corruption on a grand scale across sub-Saharan Africa and this was occasioned on indirect rule, taxation, police and military formation, and conspicuous consumption. The repudiation of indigenous values, standards, checks and balances and the pretensions of superimposing western structures destabilized the well-run bureaucratic machinery previously in existence across pre-colonial Africa. The end result is what is rampant across Africa and Nigeria in particular today.

According to Yorgboro (2012:135) “all the eight types of corruption identified by Ackerman (1995) have been found manifest in Nigeria. They are:

- (1) Political corruption
- (2) Economic corruption
- (3) Financial corruption
- (4) Professional corruption
- (5) Working class corruption
- (6) Kleptocracies monopolies and
- (7) Mafia-dominated

On his part Igwe (2010:89), averred that, corruption may take varied forms or dimensions but; state otherwise called grand corruption or political corruption stands out as the progenitor of its all other forms such as petty or bureaucratic corruption, electoral corruption, bribery, fraud; embezzlement; extortion, nepotism and cronyism (neopatrimonialism).

Furthermore, extent literature on corruption in developing countries generally suggests five strands of hypothetical explanations to the causes of corruption namely; rent-seeking, cultural relativity, low salary, and institutional/political centralization. Invariably Schwenke (2002), while identifying the factors causal to corruption averred that corruption flourishes when the public is poorly informed, apathetic, cynical, tolerant, or so weak as to be unable to protest. He added that corruption finds root and easily becomes embedded where political leaders fail to display concern for the public interest or fail to set examples of integrity, where civil servants are often underpaid and held in low public esteem and where there is lack of meaningful sanctions, or high probability of not being punished for engaging in corruption even if severe sanctions exist. Corruption unleashes negative effects on the Nigerian society, its people and economy at large. Ruzindane (1997:182) in Yorgboro (2012:170) observed that;

*Corruption has lead to bad roads, decaying infrastructures, inadequate medical services, poor schools and falling education standards, and the disappearance of foreign aid and foreign loans and of entire projects without a trace (or other delayed completion, leading to high costs). Corruption has meant that fewer imported goods enter the country than were paid for, foreign exchange earned from exports is not repatriated, national assets are run down and ruined; production capacity in industry, agriculture and services has been reduced, and repairs of buildings, equipment, vehicles, and physical and social infrastructure have been paid for repeatedly but never performed. Corruption disturbs the economy through the waste and misallocation of resources.*

#### Local Governments

Nweneka (2018), opined that local government areas are basically the physical, geographical locations or areas ruled or controlled by a local system of government. Kyenge (2013), posits that the concept of local government focuses on the transfer of political powers to local areas by involving the

inhabitants in the provision of basic needs in their respective communities. Specifically local government is a unit of government below the central, regional or state levels established by law to exercise political authority through a representative council within a defined geographical area (Olisa et al 1990).

The United Nations Office for Public Administration defines local government as thus:

*A political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such entity is elected or otherwise locally selected (quoted in Odalonu, 2015:13).*

#### Theoretical Framework

The best theory that stands out as unique on the spectrum or analysis of this study is the Fred Riggs theory of prismatic society (1964). Adamolekun (1983:21) noted that the most notable contribution to comparative public administration is Fred Riggs work entitled “administration in developing countries: A theory of prismatic society.”

According to Riggs (1964), a prismatic society is the ideal type of a third world country evolving and/or developing from traditionality to modernity. The theory attempts to provide a systematic explanation for the differences that exist between the public administrative system of non-industrialized counties and those of the industrialized countries, in spite of the apparent similarities in structures and functions across societies with emphasis on how similar structures perform different functions (fused” institutions of traditional societies nor the (supposedly) fully differentiated institution of modern society, their (developing countries) institutions were legal rational inform (in manifest function), but traditional in fact (in latent function ). Thus, the prismatic society combines the characteristics of both fused and diffracted societies. Modern norms and structures co-exist side by side (Obiora, 2008).

As Abbah (2000:69) notes “in prismatic societies, there is often a high incidence of nepotism, favouritism, and poly-communalism (officials apply the rules to serve the sectional interest of their own communities). He stated that Riggs believes that a public official is a corporate individual owning allegiance not only to the rule but also to other exogenous forces including his (extended) family, community, region, friends etc which place mandatory demands on his person and official position.

Corroborating this view Mohammed (2008:182) while paraphrasing Riggs (1964) opined that “there is wide spread corruption or vocracy in development countries”. Public servants tend to serve their personal interest to a greater extent than fulfillment of organizational objectives. They tend to protect the interest of their families (nepotism) and clients for various reasons. In the same vein, McMullen (1996) equally

pointed out that in African societies, the greatest volume (if not value) of corrupt transactions probably takes place at the bottom of the administrative pyramid at the interface between minor officials and mass of the population.

Under the above circumstances, which Riggs called “the bazaar canteen model”, it is not a surprise that administrative system of developing (prismatic) societies are grossly inefficient and ineffective in comparison with those of developing (modern) societies where authority is essentially rational-legal and the rule determine the behaviour of public officials.

In nutshell, this theory is adopted in this study because it helps us to illuminate the nature and incidence of corruption in prismatic (developing) society like Nigeria especially at the local government level.

### III. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NIGERIA AND CORRUPTION

The Federal Government of Nigeria 1976 Guideline for Local Government Reform offers another comprehensive definition of local government as thus:

*Government at the local level established by law to exercise specific powers within defined area (and) to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas, and to ensure that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized.*

The main features of local governments include:

- (1) Operate within a defined geographical area (local government area)
- (2) Has certain population within the confines of a defined territory
- (3) Operate at the local or grassroots level
- (4) Has a range of constitutionally delineated functions to perform
- (5) Has a relative autonomy or independence
- (6) Can sue and be sure
- (7) Has its council composed of elected representatives
- (8) It is the lower level of government in a unitary political system and lowest level of government in a federal three-level of government as the case of Nigeria.

Modern local government administration in Nigeria began during the British colonial rule. But the system was not uniform. The restructuring and provision of some levels of roles, uniformity, democratic existence and funding of local government administration were introduced through the advent of the 1976 local government reform. These changes are modified and consolidated by the current 1999 constitution of Nigeria. Section 7(1) of the constitution guaranteed the existence of democratically elected local government councils under the legislation of state

government. Section (162) subsection (3-8) makes provision for statutory funding of local government from both the Federation and State Government Account. While the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution captures both the internal sources of revenue and functions of local government. It stated inter alia: the main functions of a local government council are as follows:

- (a) The consideration and making of recommendations to a state commission on economic planning or any similar body on:
  - (1) The economic development of the state, particularly in so far as the areas of authority of the council and of the state affected...
- (b) Collection of rates, radio and television licenses etc.

At present, there are 774 local government council areas in Nigeria. The local government system in Nigeria operates within the presidential model. The chairman of the local government area is directly elected by the electorates in the local government area and governs in collaboration with the legislative arm (Elected councilors) of the local government. The tenure of both the chairman and councilors of the local government area is currently three years especially in Rivers State. The both arms of government checks and balance the actions of each other to prevent abuse of power at the council. Also, several external control mechanisms have been put in place to promote efficient service delivery and to eliminate the tendency of corruption at the Nigeria councils. For instance, the councils are controlled and supervised by the central/state government, through the legislature (National Assembly and State House of Assembly), Ministry of Local Government, Local Government Service Commission, State Auditor General, judicial council and Public Complaints Commission (Ombudsman).

There is no political institution that has a clean bill of corruption just as no level of government (be it federal, state or local government) is insulated from the malaise of corruption in Nigeria.

Ajieh (2014), stated that one of the issues militating against local governments’ performance is corruption. Hard earned and limited resources accruing to and raised by local governments are always mismanaged. Priorities are misplaced; projects are done not according to, or as demanded by the people but regrettably in tune with the selfish end and aggrandizement of the political leadership in collaboration with the senior bureaucrats at the local government level.

Similarly, Bolatito and Ibrahim (2014), contend that corruption is one of the problems confronting effective local government administration in Nigeria. The inability of local governments to provide services to the people at the grassroots has been linked to high levels of corruption among local government officials (Agba, Akwara and Idu, 2013).

Oviasuyi et al (2010), categorically identified the areas where corruption thrives in local government to include:

- (a) Inflation of prices of bought items;
- (b) Over-estimation of cost of projects;
- (c) The ghost worker syndrome;
- (d) Award of contracts and subsequent abandonment and ;
- (e) Out right payment of huge sums of money to political godfathers etc.

To illustrate the level of corruption at local government level, former chairman of Ezeagu North local Government Area Council in Enugu State Mr. Edwin Offor Nwatarali, has been charged before Enugu High Court by Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) for allegedly diverting the sum of 1,109,250,00 belonging to the council to his personal use while in office (Achile, 2011:11).

#### IV. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN RIVERS STATE AND CORRUPTION (NATURE AND INCIDENCES)

According to Wikipedia (2018), Rivers State, is one of the 36 states of Nigeria. Its capital and largest city, Port Harcourt, is economically significant as the centre of Nigeria's oil industry. Rivers State is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, to the North by Imo, Abia and Anambra States, to the East by Akwa Ibom State, and to the West by Bayelsa and Delta states.

Rivers State is currently made up of 23 local government areas. These are Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Ikerre, Etche, Andoni, Bonny, Okrika, Oyigbo, Khana, Gokana, Tai, Eleme, Obio/Akpor, Emohua, Degema, Asari Toru, Akuku Toru, Abua/Odual, Omumma, Opobo/Nkoro, Ogu/ Bolo, Ahoada West, Ahoada East and Degema.

Pursuant to section 7 (1) of the 1999 Constitution, the Rivers State House of Assembly enacted the Rivers State Local Government Law No. 3 of 1999. The law makes provision for the establishment, structure, composition, finance, and functions of local government councils in Rivers State and matter incidental there to. Apart from the principal law, five amendments have been made. The amendments include the following:

- (i) Rivers State Local Government (Amendment) Law, No. 6 of 2001
- (ii) Rivers State Local Government (Amendment) Law, NO.3 of 2002
- (iii) Rivers State Local Government (Amendment) Law, No.4 of 2003
- (iv) Rivers State Local Government (Amendment) Law, No. 3 of 2004
- (v) Rivers state local government (amendment) law, No.3 of 2007 (cited in Nyewusira, 2011:53).

In this review, we shall limit ourselves to the provisions of the law that are relevant to this study. Section 1 of the law guarantees the existence of 23 local government councils’.

Section 4 (1) provide for the composition of the councils and its states that:

*For every Local Government Area, there shall be composed of an elected Chairman, Vice Chairman and councilors.*

Section 4 (2) specifies that:

*The number of elected councilors shall not be less than ten and not more than twenty.*

Section 5 provides that the members of council shall be elected in accordance with regulations made under the provisions of the Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission Law.

Disqualification for office is in section 7, while sections 8,9,10,11, 12 and 13 is concerned with validity of acts done by unqualified persons, terms of office of elected members, vacancy in the seat of a member of the legislative council, recall of a councilor, vacancy in the seat of a chairman or vice chairman.

The section in the term of office for elected members of the council read thus:

*Shall not be less than three years and not more than three years and three months. Section 2 of the Rivers State Local Government (Amendment) Law No. 6 of 2001 amended the term of office to read thus; “shall be three years; and was further amended in Rivers State Local Government (Amendment) Law, No.3 of 2002 to make provision for the appointment of caretaker committee for local government by the governor subject to the screening and confirmation of the House of Assembly.*

Ibeanu (2008), argues that the appointment of caretaker committee instead of elected officers as provided in section 7 (1) of the 1999 constitution is geared towards making the state government have firm control in the administration of local councils. In fact, it creates room for corruption at the Rivers State local government council. Appointments of the then successive caretaker committee members were made to the council on partisan patronage, thereby instituting corrupt and unqualified personnel to man the affairs of the state local government.

The menace of corruption has been canonically accommodated, entertained and celebrated within the system. Corruption has been described as the major cause of comatose of local government administration in Rivers State and Nigeria at large, and a major hindrance to good governance (Onwueanyi, 2008 in Adeyemi; 2012).

A major finding of an empirical study carried out by Ironkwe and Ndah (2016), on the “Impact of Internally Generated Revenue on Performance of Local Government in Rivers State, Nigeria” revealed that tax revenue displayed a positive but insignificant influence on road construction and maintenance. They contend that, porous tax collection system and inherent corruption at the local government level



accounted greatly for the insignificant effect of tax revenue on road construction and maintenance. Specifically, they pointed out that in Ogba, Egbema, Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State, (that was carefully and purposefully selected for the study), remittances of tax revenue are not adequately checked, apparently due to corruption inherent in the system.

Little wonder Coker, Eteng, Agishi and Adie (2016:83) opines that "there is high incidence of corruption, fraud and embezzlement among local government revenue officials". Some of these unscrupulous council's officers collect revenue for which they issue fake receipts to the payers, and the funds collected are not paid into the council treasuries. Others collect revenue without issuing receipts. It is by so doing that large sum of money are lost by local government to some corrupt and fraudulent rates and fee collectors, licensing officials, collectors of fees and fines, market masters, and valuation officers. These fraudulent and corrupt practices have tended to deprive the local government of their legitimate finances.

Another study by Agbani and Ugwoke (2015), equally revealed the incidence of corruption as evident in the State Joint Local Government Account. The sample size of the study consist of four hundred and eighty (480) employees (Treasurers and Heads of Personnel Management) of local government council drawn from 240 local government councils inside 24 outside 36 states of Nigeria. The study utilizes both primary and secondary data. The research finding shows that excessive and illegal deduction of fund from the local government statutory allocation from Federation Accounts by state governments in Nigeria through the Joint Account Allocation Committee (JAAC), improper management of finance and endemic corruption in the local government administration in Nigeria, have made rural sustainable development a mirage.

The study's available secondary data from Rivers State JAAC succinctly collaborate the above findings. A total of N31, 210, 844, 740, .51 was deducted from revenues occurring to the local government in Rivers state alone between 2007 and 2013. Unfortunately the deductions are largely arbitrary and the deducted funds are not sent on the development of the affected local government areas. Instead, they are diverted into the private pockets of the governors and other key state officials that have nexus with the running of local government. Percentage deductions range from less than 10% to more than 16% across local government. Port Harcourt Local Government suffered 16.2% deduction, Bonny Local Government suffered 10%. Others suffered differing percentage deductions such as; Etche, 15.3%; Khana 15.2%; Emohua 15.5%, Asari Toru 12. 5% etc. This shows the level of diversion of public funds at the council level in Rivers State.

In April 2006, the members of Opobo/Nkoro's legislative council voted unanimously to file allegations of gross misconduct against their chairman, Christopher Ogolo, with the state government. Those allegations ultimately led to

Ogolo's impeachment and removal from office by the Rivers State House of Assembly in August 2006. Ogolo was also shown to have awarded numerous construction contracts without following any pretence of proper procedure. Between 2005 and the first few months of 2006 he illegally awarded at least N12 million (\$92,000) worth of construction contracts to himself and gave another lucrative contract to his brother, all in clear violation of the law. Ogolo also claimed to have expended large sums of money for items or services that were never delivered. This included billing the treasury for twice as much diesel fuel as he actually purchased for the running of electrical generators in the local government, at an average cost of more than N4 million (\$30,000) per month. The leader of Opobo/Nkoro's legislative council told Human Rights Watch that the chairman had also spent some N50 million (\$384,000) to build a fish pond for the sake of encouraging small-scale aquaculture but that "no one has seen a fish inside this pond.

According to human rights watch (2007), Obio/Akpor Local government's budget allocated more than N125 million (some \$961,000) for the "upgrading/expansion and renovation" of health centers in 2005 and 2006, but the Coordinator, who had never seen a copy of the budget, told Human Rights Watch that no such work had been carried out or even planned.

Agbani and Ugwoke (2015), further notes that most local government council elections in Nigeria are huge scam. The state chief executives use the state independent electoral commissions to select the governors' political loyalists and give chairmanship and councillorship as political patronages. Funny enough the people are cowed down and generally know this arrangement since they know that if they force their way into such elective posts, the governors will automatically use the JAAC deductions to frustrate any deviant local government chairman. Nyewusira (2011), observed that the level of desperation displayed by politicians at the state level in their bid to size local government apparatus by foisting stooges as local government chairmen is reflected in the expressions of the leader of All Nigeria's People Party (ANPP) in Rivers State, Mr. Arthur Uchendu. He (Uchendu) said it was a "felony" for anybody seeking for political office to local government council to differ the state government on political or policy perspectives. He further avers that a declaration of such ambition automatically qualifies the declarant an enemy of the state government and his life could be endangered. Nyewusira (2011), added that all the series of interviews and interaction he had with the active politicians in the local government areas confirmed that every chairmanship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), had the final endorsement of the governor before the election. This is why, in the expressions of one of the electoral officer, the PDP, which is the ruling part in the state recorded a moon slide in the 2004 and 2018 election by winning all 23 chairmanship positions and 324 councillorship seat in the state.

Since the return of civil rule in 1999, the PDP has shown to be a potent force in entrenching what Kolawole refers to as corruption of democracy and democratization at the local government level. The conduct and outcome of the local government elections especially that of 2018 election showed clearly that PDP maximally mobilized state apparatus to win and control the administration of the 23 local government councils of Rivers State. Scholar such as Ibodje (2000), and Ozor (2003), have argued that local government promotes development process through prudent management of financial resources. But the predominant pattern of party politics as observed by Nyewusira and Nweke (2012:172), shows that the various factions which made up the ruling PDP competed with each other to use financial resources, mainly from federal allocations and internally generated revenue, accruing to the local government to distribute ‘spoils’ to their supporters.

The implication of the above is that local government system which is designed to be centrifugal point of socio-economic development and welfare propagation for the citizens in the localities has morphed into diversion of public resources for self-aggrandizement and substance of party structures in order to hold on to power.

In another related development, a former leader in one of the legislative councils Nyewusira (2011), interviewed admitted that with the way in which local government law is enacted, all that a chairman of local government council requires to ensure that his term of office runs unhindered is to channel at least 20% of local government funds to bribe principal officers and members of the Rivers State House of Assembly, even if no development project is carried out. As he stated:

*It is not payment of staff salaries or performance of other statutory functions of local government councils that determines security of office of a chairman; it is obviously his willingness to dispense monetary patronage to the House of Assembly. After all, the prerogative to remove a chairman or even dissolve the executive and legislative council of a local government belongs to the state legislature. Chairmen of councils who pay salaries to local government staff and embark on development projects are just too magnanimous and are not willing to take advantage of the local government law to hold on to power, irrespective of monumental financial corruption and administrative malfeasance they may perpetrate (Quoted in Nyewusira, 2011:129).*

The above scenario equally depicts the pattern and trend of financial corruption in the Rivers State Local Government Service Commission. The Commission is immersed in excessive politicking and bribery. It is on record that what goes on in Local Government Service Commission is the reign and height of cabalism. The politics of the Commission is far more than what transpires in the “Wadata Headquarters of the PDP”. Those appointed Heads of Personnel Management; Heads of local government administration and Treasurers make regular financial returns to the Commission

as a measure of gratitude and means of preserving their enviable positions.

The crux of the matter is that local government funds in Rivers State are abused and shared by the leadership of the council in connivance with their cohorts at the state level. This is why there is always paucity of funds despite the steady revenue inflows local government receive from the Federation Account. The staff of local governments are the most abused, their salaries are not paid as and when due. The recurrent expenditure set out to pay them mostly end up in the pockets of the local government chairmen and their godfathers. On the other hand, the available funds, which could have been spent for development, are fraudulently diverted to the private purse by the councilor, chairmen and administrative personnel. Often times revenue collectors divert sums of money meant for development into their private pockets. Ajieh (2014) observed that corruption has been rampant among senior and junior bureaucrats to whom the public funds meant for development purpose are entrusted.

Further studies shows that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2010 arrested 3 principal local government officials in Rivers State on charges bordering of corrupt practices. The arrested officials include, Jessy Ogulor, treasurer of Port Harcourt Local Government Area, Da-Wariboko, Head of Personnel, Ikwerre Local Government Area and Hyacinth Nwosirim, Cashier Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (Sahara Reporters, 2010). This is just an example of indicted local government officials in Rivers State. The consequence is an emasculating deprivation of basic amenities and a dangerous disconnection and disenchantment of the people with the third tier level of government; while the officials celebrate their ill-gotten wealth. The lack of integrity, transparency and accountability (in a word corruption) at the local government level is definitely taking a leaving toll on the well-being of ordinary Rivers people and Nigeria at large.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the presented evidences, it is very glaring that corruption is not just one of the intractable pathologies ravaging local government administration but the progenitor of every other socio-economic woes affecting the local government areas in Rivers State and Nigeria at large. The menace is perpetrated by mostly the top echelon or leadership of the council in connivance with their godfathers cum state government officials. Corruption at the local government level manifest in form of inflation of prices of bought items, over estimation of cost of projects; the ghost workers syndrome, outright embezzlement and diversion of local government funds. These wide-scale corrupt practices at the grassroots have made the needed development of the grassroots a mirage.

The following recommendations are therefore posited to be the way forward in tackling the menace of corruption at the local government areas in Nigeria and Rivers State in particular:

- (1) There is urgent need to put in place an effective and efficient institutional mechanism in all the 774 local government area councils especially the 23 in Rivers State to checkmate the menace of corruption at grassroots level which has hindered rural development.
- (2) There should be attitudinal change in the behavior of those who operate the institutions of government at both the state and local government levels. The functionaries of both tiers of government must be accountable and imbibe deep-rooted respect for due process and rule of law. The local government should not be used for political patronage.
- (3) Section 162 (6) of the 1999 Constitution which provides for the maintenance of State Joint Local Government Account should be expunged and the account scrapped. The State Joint Local Government Account has not only become an albatross on local government finance, it is also an avenue for financial corruption by state government officials.
- (4) Revenue generation officer should be meritorious recruited, trained and monitored in day to day performance of their duties. Anyone found wanting of financial corruption should be adequately punished to serve as deterrent to other.
- (5) Periodic re-training of local government staff and administrators and enlightenments by anti-graft agencies on the dangers and penalties of engaging in corrupt practices.
- (6) Introduction of e-governance system to limit unwarranted personal contacts, minimize individual bias, prejudice.
- (7) Introduction of a holistic and comprehensive e-financial system to curtail easy access of public funds by corrupt local government administrators and ensure proper accountability.
- (8) The Code of conduct bureau (CCB) must be proactive in their duty of checkmating local government personnel at the helms of affair periodically to verify their sources of wealth and personal properties.
- (9) Hold public hearings as part of the budget-making process to allow for greater public scrutiny of government spending priorities. Publish annual budgets and end-of-year expenditure reports and make these widely available to the public.
- (10) Introduce public bulletin boards outside of the local government secretariat and other prominent public places in the Local Government Area. Post the total amount of the allocations received by the local government each month.
- (11) Post information on publicly funded projects, to inform local communities on the nature of the projects, total project costs, sources of funds, the timetable for project completion, and the name and address of the contactors carrying out the work.

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