

CORRUPTION IN THE IMO STATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM; A CASE OF NJABA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, 2006-2010

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Abstract

It is remarkable to appreciate how much or little socio-economic conditions of people have been transformed in a corrupt but civil society like Nigeria. With huge resource expansion, unparalleled and unprecedented corrupt practices have been the bane of democratic governance which the people of Nigeria yearn for. Thus, corruption has made things very stressful and difficult and the reality of good governance a mirage. Dramatic abuse of office, injustice, embezzlement, nepotism, inequality and lack of basic needs of the people have been the order of the day as a result of corruption that has plagued the Nigerian governance structure and system. This work thus attempts to look at Corruption and Democratic Governance in Nigeria with Njaba Local Government Area of Imo state as our case study from years 2006-2010. It also examines the causes of corruption, the typology and further recommends ways of fighting the scourge to enhance democratic governance in the local government.

Keywords: Corruption, Local Government, Democratic Governance, Imo State, Legislative-Executive relations and accountability

Introduction

Legislative-Executive relations and accountability in the local government system has become a disturbing matter to both the government and the governed. Particularly of note is that most recently, scholars have turned their attention to the study of local government administration as it concern the appropriation of resource by the executive, because local government throughout the federation have assumed increased financial responsibility with enormous amount of money generated from both internal and external sources, in order to maintain probity, checks misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds in the system, a number of statutory

measures have been put in place to ensure that the accounting officers of the local government are kept in check. Among these provisions are the implementation guidelines on the application of civil service reforms in the local government, the appointment of the Auditor-General for the local governments in every state, the issuance of the Handbook on local government in 1992 etc (Ozor, 2000:81-85).

These measures notwithstanding, the issue of accountability in the local government system has not been assured, moreover, in spite of the constitutional provisions to ensure the observance of the financial guidelines and regulations in the management of public funds, the trend of accountability seems to persist such that with the enormous revenue allocated to, or generated by the Enugu North Local Government Council, no meaningful project could be seen as executed. As a result, that guarantees accountability in local government system. In principle, the legislature and the executive are considered as equal, therefore, non could actually control the other. However, each can exert certain level of oversight functions on the other. That is, each can check and monitor the excesses of one another in order to prevent tyranny. Meanwhile, democracy demand that elected officials should be accountable to the electorates. With their ever increasing financial responsibility, much is expected from the administration of local governments, particularly as it concerns the provision of infrastructural facilities as approved in the budget estimate. But while these developmental project are yet to be provided, the administrators of the local government exhibit monumental wealth, which calls to question the issue of accountability in the local government. This accountability posture supports the Transparency International rating of Nigeria as among the most corrupt countries of the world (Ezeani, 2003:xv). This tendency has undermined and retarded every developmental effort at the grass root level because the administration of local government appears to have shown tremendous evidence of accountability.

Plethora of studies abound as scholars liked Ikejiani-Clark (1995), Ozor (2000), Ezeani (1998), Olowu (1983), Obasi (1988) and Ezeani (2003) have studied public accountability, particularly as it concerns corruptions, yet, the incidence of accountability appears to continue. Moreover, non of these studies paid attention to the issue of legislative-executive relations vis-à-vis accountability in the local government system. Even those studies that focused on local government, particularly the work of Ozor (2000) and Akintola (2003) among others did not address the issue with the empirical evidences (s) that it deserves, and as a result, could not satisfactorily demonstrate the nexus between the legislative-executive relation and their responsibility towards accountability.

Nigeria is one of the world's most endowed nations with abundant human and natural resources. Ironically, Nigeria still remains one of the world's unindustrialized and poor nations. Nigeria is economically and political backward with trauma of bad governance or mismanagement due largely to corruption (Abass, 2008). With the democratic transition in 1999, the myth and reality of sustainable democratic governance became glaringly: manifesting a fundamental problem of ethics and morality. Even though, there were high hopes that the "new" democratic dispensation would usher in some economic and social well-being and values expected to be completely divorced from the previous military autocracy or authoritarianism. The euphoria of democracy suddenly evaporated and hopes dashed or depleted.

Corruption and democratic governance are global phenomena. In Nigeria, corruption has debased the entire way of life and invariably battered its image and credibility internationally. Corruption has become almost the norm in all governmental activities at all levels. The prevalence of corruption in Nigeria has transformed it to be amongst the world's most corrupt nations. In essence, corruption, within the rank and file of Nigerian leadership, has affected the provision of basic needs to the people and maintenance of decayed infrastructure. Also, the level of corruption in the system of governance in Nigeria, has made several world rankings of corrupt countries by International and Local bodies such as Transparency International(TI) in 1996,2005,2007, Standard and Poor's(S&P),Oxfam and even our own Campaign for Democracy(CD)amongst others to always see Nigeria among the topmost corrupt countries in the world. This is even as successive governments in the country are in the custom of putting in place some measures to fight the monster. Therefore, the corruption virus (in all its forms) has affected the quality of governance churned out by the various governments that have ruled the country overtime. It has also resulted in bad welfare of the Nigerian people and negating the principles of freedom, equity and justice (all features of democratic governance) which the people of Nigeria swore to uphold through the constitution.

Democratic governance exists on the platform of and remains sustainable with truth, justice, equity, fairness, equality and sincerity. These are the background with which legitimacy, authority and democratic power emanate. As corruption becomes endemic and ubiquitous in Nigeria, it of course affects all the spheres and stages of Nigerian life and development process.

It is no longer a doubt that corruption hinders development, governance and provision of dividend of democracy to the populace. For instance, in an opinion poll conducted by the Guardian Newspaper of Monday, November 6, 2000, Nigerians picked corruption as the leading issue/worst problem hindering the country's development and by extension its new found democracy. A total of 761 or 42.27% of the 1800 respondents picked corruption as one of the worst and leading problems hindering Nigeria's advancement (*The Guardian Editorial*, 2009:6).

In the case of democratic governance in Nigeria, the concept or issue of corruption has not been different. It has become an acceptable system, term and parlance in government institutions. It is often seen or it manifests in allocation of development project fund, employment or basic social amenities among others to associates, cronies, friends, home communities, relatives etc as the case may be.

The indicators as well as side effect of corruption include but not limited to massive unemployment, poor health care system/facilities, lack of portable drinking water, bad roads, and poor human development as a result of poor education, bad leadership and above all non-provision of dividends of democracy eagerly yearned for by the populace.

Thus, the indicators of corruption mentioned above are present in Njaba Local Government Area of Imo State. The objective of this paper is to explore the effects of corrupt practices in the local government system using Njaba Local Government Area of Imo State as a case study. To achieve this objective, this paper is divided into five parts. The first part examines conceptual issues. The second section explores the theoretical framework upon which the analysis owes its foundation. The next section discusses corrupt practices in Njaba Local Government using

concrete instances to support our theory. The fourth section highlights the effects of corruption in the case study area. The final section offers recommendation and concludes the paper.

Clarification of Key Concepts

Corruption

The theoretical thinking perceiving corruption as a major factor that poses serious threat to democratic governance sustainability and consolidation is not uncommon in the literatures (Osaghae, 1995; Johnston, 1991). These theoretical stance is depicted in various works and analyses as “amoral politics”, “amoral familism” (Osaghae, 1995; Ogundiya, 2009), “prebendalism” (Joseph, 1987), “patrimonialism and neo patrimonialism”, “clientelism” (Seteolu 2005) to mention a few. Corrupt ridden states are also captioned by scholars as “predatory”, “soft state” and so on. The problem with Nigeria is that all these descriptions are suitable to analyse the Nigerian situation.

Though amorphous, corruption in its popular conception is defined as the exploitation of public position, resources and power for private gain (Nye, 1967; Amuwo 2005). For instance Dobel (1978) define corruption as “the betrayal of public trust for individual or group gain”. In a similar vein, Obayelu (2007:2) identifies corruption as: *The effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit.*

Corruption is not only found in democratic and dictatorial politics, It is also found in feudal, capitalist and socialist economics. Even the Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist cultures are equally bedeviled by corruption (Obayelu, 2007). Corrupt practices, in all its manifestations are as old as human race, the nature, form, dimension, character and severity of corruption differs from one nation to the other. While corruption level is minimal in developed countries, it is more prevalent in developing countries as Nigeria as Yinusa and Akanle (2008:297) quoted in Ugwu (2010:126) aptly asserts that:

Corruption has become a way of life in Nigeria, which no one can ignore. Corruption and cronyism have long haunted Nigeria while military has been castigated for generally misruling the country....

Furthermore, in exposition of literatures on corruption, Lipset and Lenze (2000) have noted that it involves the violation of established rules and regulation for selfish, personal gains or profit, resulting in having access to unwarranted advantages, wealth or power through illegal means. Nye (1967 and Chaturved 2006 cited in Ugwu (2010:127) concur with the above authors (i.e Lipset and Lenze 2000) by stating that:

It inculcates behaviour that deviates from the formal duties of occupiers of public offices because of private gains regarding personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains.

For other scholars like Momoh (1991:115), it borders on issues like dishonesty, wickedness, selfishness, embezzlement, moral degeneration, bribery, instability, covetousness etc. Specifically, he aptly describes it as follows:

A corrupt act can be characterized by immoral but non-violent action on the stronger party (the person in a position of authority) to accept or on the part of the weaker party (the person in want of favour) to give, extra-official gratification in cash or in kind in order to induce wrong or urgent actions. (Momoh, 1991:115.cited in Ugwu, 2010:128).

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) document on corruption and Good Government, “corruption is a symptom of something gone wrong in the management of the state”. It went further to note in that respect that institutions designed to govern the relationship between citizens and the state are used instead for personal enrichment of public officials and the provision of benefits to the corrupt. “Corruption”, in the words of Gerald E. Caiden, is the antithesis of morality”.

Corruption is universally decried and constitutes a phenomenon in itself and is invariably the output of a conglomeration of discrete failures; a failure of institutional controls over bureaucrats or a failure of the legal system that checkmates the behaviour of those who perpetrate the crime.

Akçay (2006) advances that corruption is a symptom of deep institutional weakness and leads to inefficient economic, social and political outcomes. It reduces economic growth, retards long-term foreign and domestic investments, enhances inflation, depreciates national currency, reduces expenditures for education and health, increases military expenditures, misallocates talent to rent-seeking activities, distorts markets and the allocation of resources, increases income inequality and poverty, reduces tax revenue, increases child and infant mortality rates, distorts the fundamental role of the government (on enforcement of contracts and protection of property).

Sen, (1999:275) in Igwe (2010:89) describes corruption or corrupt behaviour as the violation of established rules for personal gains and profit. And from a sociological viewpoint, Atlas (1968 in Igwe (2010) considers it as a symptom of dysfunctionality of the relationship between the government and the people, characterized by bribery, extortion and nepotism.

Corruption fosters unaccountable governance as the leadership crew strives to prevent the masses from getting to know exactly how much funds are acquired and how they are put to use. Information on financial allocations to projects and the basis for such decisions are deliberately masked in obscurity. This and its attendant implications converge to erode the quality of governance and eventually create morbid distrust and detestation of the government in question which altogether induces apathy on the part of the populace and may as well induce overt and subversive activities against the political system (Igwe 2010:95).

Alhassan (2008) in commenting on the concept asserts that corruption in its various forms such as contract inflation, outright stealing and non remittance of public generated revenue into the federation account has deprived this country the required funds to develop coupled with the fact that such critical infrastructure like railway, power and energy, healthcare and public education institutions among others are lacking. Mauro (1997) corroborated this claim when he wrote that corruption causes a reduction in quality of goods and services available to the public, adding that the image of Nigeria is badly dented in the international world which is further compounded by the inability to deal with the scourge despite the various institutions set up for the purpose.

Writers like Chuta (2004) further explain that corruption is not simply the abandonment but perversion of these standards. Mere abandonment of standards may stall or impede growth. What really corrupts is the perversion of these standards. An act of perversion consists in the alteration or change in an established normative standard in “an unnatural and other harmful way” (Chuta 2004:3). Based on the above writings, Chuta (2004:3) was inclined to accept Olusegun Olugbeka’s definition of corruption as:

Putrefaction, tainting, debasement, pervasion or venality. Spoiling, destruction of purity or falling away from standard of integrity or rectitude defined by law, upheld by social norms or conscience or recognized by the general conscience of mankind.

Thus, the phenomenon of corruption exists in every society.

However, it is pertinent to note that the reason for the low level of corruption in the advanced democracies is that the control mechanisms are more developed and effective than in the developing countries. The efficacy of the control mechanism in the advanced democracies further accounts for the relative political and democratic stability that these countries enjoy.

Corrupt practices are not an issue that just began today; but the history is as old as the world (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). In Nigeria, it is one of the many unresolved problems that have critically hobbled and skewed development. It remains a long-term major political and economic challenge for Nigeria (Sachs, 2007). It is a cankerworm that has eaten deep in the fabric of the nation. It ranges from petty corruption to political/bureaucratic corruption or systemic corruption. World Bank studies put corruption at over 1 trillion dollars per year accounting for up to 12% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of nations like Nigeria, Kenya and Venezuela (Nwabuzor 2005).

Eigen (2001); World Bank (1999) sees “corruption as a daunting obstacle to sustainable development”, a constraint on education, healthcare, poverty alleviation and a great impediment to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. Also corruption is the abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused through rent seeking activities for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. Public office is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets or the diversion of state resources (World Bank 1997). Thus a person is corrupt if he accepts money for doing something he is under duty to do or not under duty to do. They went ahead to categorize corruption into two viz State Capture and Administrative Corruption. State capture refers to the actions of individuals, groups or firms in the public and private sector who influence the formation of laws, regulations, decree and other government policies to their advantage as a result of the illicit and non transparent provisions of private benefits to public officials while administrative corruption refers to the intentional imposition of distortions in the prescribed implementation of existing laws, rules and regulations to provide advantage to either government or non government actors. (World Bank 1997)

Corrupt is a betrayal of trust resulting directly or indirectly from the subordination of public goals to those of the individual. Therefore, a person who engages in nepotism has committed an act of corruption by putting his family interests over those of the larger society (Gire 1999).

To Ahmed-Hameed (2006:174), most literatures/write-ups on corruption tend to focus on the public or official sector, corruption takes place in all sectors (including the private sector) and at all levels of the society while Osoba (1998:3) captions it as thus:

Corruption is anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermines the authorities' capacity to serve the welfare of all citizens (Osoba, 1998:3).

The concept of corruption can also take different forms and occurs at different levels. These identifiable levels (as mentioned earlier) according to Igbuzor (2005:45) include political, economic, bureaucratic and judicial among others. However, Ahmed-Hameed (2006:174) observes that at each of these levels, corruption occurs whenever rules and procedures are not followed. Political corruption manifests in activities connected with election and succession and the manipulation of people and institutions to retain power. It is also the abuse of public officials for private gains. Economic corruption occurs when business people pervert normal regulations to get undue advantage or value for goods and services. Bureaucratic corruption involves buying favour from bureaucrats who formulate and administer government policies. Judicial corruption occurs when the courts pervert the administration of justice (Igbuzor, 2005:45; Bailey, 1961:21).

Theoretical Framework

Theories are set of postulation used to explain variables. In the choice of a suitable theory for this study, from among the many theories available and relevant, the study used the Observational Learning theory. This theory according to its formulator Albert Bandura (1986) states that much of what we learn is obtained by observing others and that this is much more efficient than learning through direct experience because it spares us countless responses that might be followed by punishment or no reinforcement of any kind. The people whose behaviour is observed are referred to as models.

Learning through modelling involves cognitive processes and is not based simply on imitation since the learner adds and subtracts from the observed behaviour and generalizes from one observation to another. Certain factors determine whether we are going to learn from a model in a given model in a given situation or not. One of the key moderator variables is the characteristics of the model; we are more likely to model powerful people than inept ones, high status people rather than those of low status, etc. A second moderator variable concerns the characteristics of the observer. People of low status/rank, education or power are more likely to model than people high on these attributes. A third factor refers to the consequences of the observed behaviour on the model. If the person greatly values the behaviour being observed, there is a great likelihood that it will be modeled.

Finally, Bandura (1986, 1988) identified four main processes that are crucial for observational learning and they include: attention, retention/representation, behavioural production, and motivation. In order to learn through observation, you must attend to the model. Factors that regulate attention include the frequency with which we associate with people, whether or not we are attracted to them, and whether we think the behaviour is important and can yield some profit to us. Second, we must be able to make some mental representation of what we have witnessed in memory, since we may not have the occasion to use an observed behaviour for up to several years. Behavioural production involves the process of converting the mental representations into appropriate actions. Lastly, observational learning is most effective when observers are motivated to enact the modeled behaviour.

Another theory to be used in this study together with the already described observational theory is the Systems Theory which places emphasis on interdependency of organizations, as well as the human factors that control and manage these organizations. The systems theory thus encompasses an environment which influences behaviour. It also talks about an input-output-

feedback process which takes place within an environment (Sharma and sadana 2010). The systems theory is supported by Anitai Etzioni, Peter M. Blau, Talcot Parsons, and David Eastons, among others who have scholarly studied the actors, inter-relations and organizational behaviour from a system approach. Thus, the central theme of this theory is that organizational behaviour determines the interdependence of the system.

Application of Both Theories to this Work

Beginning with the basic processes, it is obvious that many Nigerians' see cases of corruption being perpetrated in every organization/institutions and in various forms. Many of the kick-backs received by top officials in Ministries, Departments, Agencies (MDAs), local government etc go through intermediaries, some of who are subordinates of these officials who when they rise to the top level in these institutions/systems, tend to replicate same. Thus, people who hitherto live from hand to mouth often begin to build houses and are commonly seen driving around in flashy cars, shortly after being appointed to "lucrative" positions that grant them access to money or influence.

In fact, both theories have shown that the lack of basic social amenities in the country and in its component units (including Imo state and local governments such as Njaba Local Government Area); perpetration of election violence, fraud and rigging, embezzlement, fraud and misappropriation of funds, exclusion of some groups from the social pie (National cake), lack of accountability and transparency, absence of fairness, equity and justice, non-popular participation etc which if in the positive mode, are all tenets of democratic governance, arise or are perpetrated by individuals, groups, governance etc due largely to what was learned or observed in the system they are in, in previous governments or what was previously perpetrated by individuals in the system/institutions but which were swept under the carpet.

For instance, between years 2006 and 2010, the monumental fraud at the 2007 elections that denied people their right to choose their free will leaders was perpetrated because the fraud perpetrators of that of 2003 election and indeed all other elections in Nigeria were seen as heroes and strong men of politics. Also, the huge financial corruption embezzlement and fraud (which if properly used would enhance democratic dividend) perpetrated by government officials (between 2006 and 2010) all happened because previously known corrupt officials are treated like kings, queens and held in high esteem thus allowing up-coming politicians, individuals to learn and observe such habits and to do same because this question "if they did it and were not prosecuted, the why can't I do it question will always arise. Thus, the environment in which we find ourselves be it at national, state or local government further provides a fertile ground for corruption to thrive. The environment of the Nigerian political, economic and social system is one in which, if an individual (notably public officers) diverts or embezzles fund meant for developmental projects or if such public officer does undemocratic things or misgoverns the federal, state or local government is still seen as a hero and supported with no prosecution to serve as a deterrence to others. Thus, the kind of system we operate in this part of our world abet corruption and bad governance

Also, in using both theories to explain our study, when individuals observe and learn that there exist defects and non-cohesion in our institutions and systems which thus leads to and promotes

corruption, and wastages, the urge to continue to exploit such weaknesses will continue unabated so as to secure enough “wealth” for themselves and their children. This thus would continue to lead to bad governance and inability of the people to get good and deserved welfare. The non participation of women fully in the political activities of Imo state, is as a result of previously observed neglect of them by previous government. Thus, previous perpetrators of corrupt act who go unpunished, become models to current/present generation of individuals in the political/economic system in the state. Also, the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the institutions in Imo state, flagrant disregard for the rule of law, lack of transparency in government and bad leadership in the political system of the state, are all caused by corrupt acts which were committed previously in government and unpunished but which have now been modeled by current public officials. Also, the weaknesses of the various systems/ state institutions is as a result of corrupt tendencies.

Effect of Corruption on Democratic Government in Njaba Local Government

The ravaging effect the evil called corruption has done on the quality of governance (democratic governance) that ought to be well felt by the indigenes/inhabitants of Njaba Local Government Area is enormous. There exist individually, state and system induced corruption ranging from political, economic to bureaucratic corruption that has permeated the council thus impinging on good and quality life of the general populace of the council.

First in the past six years (Imo Concorde Newspaper 2010, June 10 page 8), there has not been any local government election for all the twenty-seven (27) local councils (Njaba inclusive). This stems from the unwillingness of the Imo state government to do so and continue to dictate affairs and assume total control, thereby denying the people of these councils their right to choose their leaders (i.e. participation) who they feel can meet their yearnings. Instead, the state government has continued with the method of appointing men and women who are not the people’s choice but whom are party loyalties, cronies, associates etc as care taker committee chairman and members of for Njaba Local Government (and indeed all other councils in the state). These men and women thus, when sworn into office, owe their allegiance to the Governor (who appointed them) and not the people. This appointments is thus a clear case of Nepotism, favoritism etc which are hallmarks of corruption in democratic governance in Nigeria.

Also, it is pertinent to note that, through the observation of the researcher (as an indigene of Njaba) that there has not been any new rural road, portable borehole, drainage or other social amenities constructed by the local council in almost ten years especially through years 2006-2010 despite the huge revenue the council makes from both the statutory sources and internal sources from areas like the daily market at Okwudor, Attah and from the sand excavation site at Umuokwara which runs into millions monthly. All these boils down to embezzlement of these generated funds by first the revenue collectors of these funds and the local government top shots with collaboration of some people at the state government house who are to monitor the activities of these councils. These factors (fraud, embezzlement) perpetrated thus denies the people access to the basic social amenities needed to enhance their well being.

Furthermore, there have been frequent clashes between members of the care-taker committees at one time or the other (especially over allowances) therefore making resources that could be channeled into provision of useful amenities, to be used or the in-fighting. Thus, the issue of

citizen participation, inclusiveness etc which are hallmarks of democratic governance have been an aberration owing to corruption.

Transparency and accountability, which are also tenets of democratic governance, are a ruse in the local government especially under the administrations of Vincent Ejikeme, Chidi Arimnuta, Uche Rajis (who incidentally is the incumbent). This is because, no one knows (except a few privileged council officials) the exact amount the local government get from, especially the internal sources, and also, the council has not bothered to publish an audited account or rather, the state government has not audited the account of the council as stipulated by law. Thus, the tenet of transparency and accountability is also not adhered to, also, the laid down rules for award of contract is most times not followed by the council (Unwana 2006:23).

Appointments especially for grade levels 01 – 06 into the council is mostly based on the allocation principle that is reallocating positions to wards in the council to full up such position which is against the principle of merit. This was the case during the periods of the chairmen mentioned above. Thus, corruption has impacted negatively and a lot in the activities that goes on in the council. Situations also play out in the council whereby before one get a service rendered for him/her, such a person has to tip (bribe) the official rendering such service. This was the case that happened to the researcher when he was trying to get his certificate of Local Government origin.

In fact, the level of corruption, perversion of rules and other irregularities perpetrated at the local government council has made the people resort to Self-Help towards achieving at least a fair living standard especially in areas of security, provision of water (portable water), electrification of homes, drainage clearance amongst other social services, which the local government ought to provide. For instance, the autonomous communities that make up the local government have their own local security outfits, sink their own boreholes and electrify their communities with little or no input from the local government. This was the case in the researchers' home community, Upoiuytre iumuduruogba, where amenities which the local council ought to provide have been taken over by resort to self help

Also, at the state level, the extent of corruption is huge with its attendant consequences on delivery of governance to the people of Imo State. As what the people of Njaba Local Government Area get is also what Imolites see year in year out. From bad and untarred roads, to ill equipped hospitals, absence of blockage of drainages, lack of accountability ethics and transparency by the government officials and civil servants, Nepotism and favoritism,, inequality and disunity among the three zones of the state etc all reign supreme. Funds meant for developmental projects and good governance of the people are diverted to non-existent projects and embezzled by scrupulous and over-zealous government agents. In one report by the *Champion Newspaper* of 28th August 2009, it was reported that Imo state got between Nine Billion Naira and fourteen Billion for January 2009 to December 2009 of same year, yet this huge sum does not/has not reflected on provisions of democratic dividends.

This therefore are effects that corruption has had on democratic governance in Imo State and Njaba Local Government Area in particular

Recommendations

Corruption in the democratic governance of Nigeria cannot fully be eradicated but can be reduced to an acceptable minimum (Effiong 2001:222). For this country and indeed its component states and local governments, realize its objectives of reducing the epidemic of corruption, these suggestions below and its implementation are necessary.

1. There should be a corrupt free value re-orientation in Nigeria. This border on moral regeneration of the social norms and mores of the Nigerian people towards materialistic life as well as greediness. This can be done through the use of governmental and non-governmental bodies like the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Campaign for Democracy (CD), etc.
2. The poverty level within the local government and the country at large should be alleviated. Good and implementable policies should be embarked upon to generate employment for the masses, adequate social service provided and adequate compensation for employment for the masses, adequate social service provided and adequate compensation for employed citizens in line with the economic condition and living index as well as massive development of the rural areas with facilities and infrastructure.
3. The fight against corruption should require direct, clear and forceful support of the highest political authority.
4. Transparency and accountability should be introduced in financial transactions especially in government functions.
5. The slow judicial system of prosecuting corrupt officials in Nigeria should be looked at once more. Thus, judicial reform is necessary for faster prosecution of corrupt offenders in order to deter others.
6. Provision of adequate personnel and technological capacity for fighting corruption in the various anti-corruption institutions in Nigeria is agent.
7. Stiff and enforceable punishment should be fully applied upon offenders such as long jail terms, life ban from political activities, forfeiture of assets of officials who have been found guilty etc.
8. A free press and electronic media should be encouraged to report to the public, corrupt practices in the society.
9. The curriculum of all section of educational institutions from Nursery to primary should be re-organized by relevant bodies, to reflect anti-corruption studies, good ethical practices.
10. Organized civil societies should also play active roles by monitoring government officials, programmes and policies with a view to reviewing their activities and know if any unethical practice has taken place.
11. Religious institutions should also reject unexplained funds and if possible, should go ahead and excommunicate, ostracize and rebuke member who have perpetrated one form of corruption or the other.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is the view of the researcher that if the suggestions above are well implemented/followed, Njaba Local Government and Nigeria at large stands a good chance of

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becoming a great nation that it desires and have shown to achieve. A low level corruption is the only pre-requisite through which democratic governance could thrive, bringing about other correlates of democratic dividends such as economic development, progress etc. Therefore, all hands must be deck to fight the evil of corruption which will help promote good governance.

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