



Africa Leadership Forum

Local Government in Nigeria

Chief. J. M. Olanipekun

Chairman, Ibarapa Local Government Area
Oyo State, Nigeria

27th October 1988

1. The Size of Ibarapa Local Government Area
2. Organization
3. The Functions and Responsibilities of the Local Government.
4. The main occupations of the people
5. Problems and Prospects.

Visits to project sites of interest within the Local Government Area:

1. Femo (W.A.) Nigeria Limited, Eruwa
2. Obasanjo Farms, Lanlate
3. U. A. C. Agro-Industries Division – Marquis Farm – Maya.

Local Government System in Nigeria

1. Greetings:

The Chairman of the Africa Leadership Forum,
The Members of the Africa Leadership Forum,

You are welcome to Ibarapa Local Government Area of Oyo State. I also wish you a successful tour of Nigeria and meaningful deliberations for the progress of Nigeria in particular and the progress of the world in general.

2. Preamble: Introducing Ibarapa Local Government as one of the 301 Local Government Councils in Nigeria:

Ibarapa Local Government is one of the 24 Local Government Councils in Oyo State and one of the 301 Local Government Councils enshrined in the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It has seven (7) major towns, namely: Eruwa – the Headquarters, Lanlate, Igboora, Idere Ayete, Tape and Igangan. The Local Government council has a number of villages and hamlets. According to the 1983 population figures, it has a population of 191,630. The present Administration of the Local Government came into being on Monday, 4th April, 1988 when the incumbent Chairman, Chief J. M. Olanipekun was sworn-in as the first executive Chairman of the Local Government and on the 5th April, the Chairman swore-in his 11 Councillors. The Council is composed of:

1. An Executive Chairman – Chief J.M. Olanipekun
2. A Vice Chairman/Supervisory Councillor for Works –
Mr. A. A. Alabi
3. A Supervisory Councillor for Finance – Mr. S.T.R. Oketoobo
4. A Supervisory Councilor for Education and Health -
Mr. S. A. Bisiriyu.
5. 7 Other Councillors

3. Setting – up of Local Government Administration in Nigeria:

The present Local Government system in Nigeria started with the 1976 Local Government reforms which aimed at restructuring the Local Government administration in conformity with modern society, and at best to make Nigeria's Local Government administration an ideal in Africa. A Local Government unit should have a population range of 150,000 to 800,000. The reform focuses on the administration of the public at the grassroots level where we have the majority of the population of Nigeria. Though the reform started in 1976, it passed through various stages of development in terms of scope of operation, functions and general administration. Some of the aims of the reform are:

- (a) The desire to extend the principle of Federalism to its logical conclusion, by bringing the government to the grassroots level.
- (b) Uniformity of local Government administration in all the Local Government Councils of the Federation of Nigeria.

One would observe that the second phase of the Local Government reforms is the election of the 1st Executive Chairman in all the Local Government Councils of Nigeria and the granting of autonomy to each of these Local Government Councils in 1988. Thus the Local Government, which used to be an appendage of the defunct Ministry of Local Government has now become a true 3rd tier of government in Nigeria. In this connection, one can boastfully say these days that Nigeria operates three tiers of Government; Federal, State and Local Governments. This means that the Local Government Administration in Ibarapa Local Government Council is a replica of any other Local Government Council in Nigeria.

Structure/Organization:

The Local Government has the following structure

- (a) The Policy Making Body, which is composed of:
 - i. The Executive Chairman
 - ii. The Vice Chairman
 - iii. Supervisory Councillors
 - iv. Councillors.

- (b) The Executive Body, which is composed of:
 - i. The Secretary – Chief executive
 - ii. Heads of Departments, and
 - iii. Subordinate Staff

- (c) The Departments in the Local Government Council:
 - i. General and Administration Department – Headed by the Deputy Secretary
 - ii. Treasury Department – Headed by the Treasurer
 - iii. Works Department – Headed by the Civil Engineer/ Technical Officer
 - iv. Health Department – Headed by the Principal Health Superintendent
 - v. The Maternity Division of the Medical Department – Headed by the Senior Midwifery Sister
 - vi. The Dispensary Division of the Medical Department – Headed by the Higher Pharmacy Officer:
 - vii. The newly introduced Farm Division to be headed by the Farm Manager.

Each arm of the policy making body as well as the executive department, has specific functions to perform. These constitute the functions of Local Government in Nigeria.

- (d) Traditional Rulers:

“In order to preserve the traditional position of our Obas and Chiefs, The government has decided that, there should be a Traditional Council for each Local Government authority area or a group of Local Government authority areas over which a traditional ruler has **suzerainty**. (Local Government Reform in Oyo State of Nigeria).

A Traditional Council consists of traditional office holders, the Chairman of the Local Government authority, one or two traditional representatives of each Local Government authority council, as may be considered appropriate and any other person(s) who may be desired, in order to make the traditional Council broadly representative of the major facts of life in the entire area.

4. **Functions:**

The Traditional Council has the following functions:

- (a) To advise the Local Government authority or a group of Local Government authorities on matters referred to them by the elected council;
- (b) To discuss common problems and make suggestions to the Local Government authority or authorities in the area;
- (c) To make representations or express opinions to Local Government authorities, on matters that may not strictly be the responsibility of the Local Government authorities, provided they are of concern to the area as a whole;
- (d) To determine or advise the traditional ruler on all matters including the conferment of traditional titles and appointments there to; and
- (e) To advise on and determine customary laws and practices on all matters referred to it including those related to land.

4. **The Functions and Responsibilities of Local Government in Nigeria:**

The functions and responsibilities of the Local Government administration is generally to assist in maintaining order and good government within the area of its authority.

- (a) A Local Government unit should have a population range of 150,000 to 800,000 and it has both elected and traditional Councils under the direct supervision of the respective State's Ministry of Local Government. (Local Government Reform in Oyo State of Nigeria pages 2 and 3).
- (b) An elected council is made up of the Chairman and Councillors, who are elected by members of the community through direct ballot and on a non-party basis. The Federal Government attaches great importance to the Local Government as an instrument of development and a training ground for administration. To this end, the Government has approved that, in general, the functions which the Local Authorities are to perform should be those:

- (i) which require detailed local knowledge for efficient performance;
- (ii) in which success depends on community responsiveness and participation;
- (iii) which are of a personal nature requiring the provision of amenities close to where the individuals affected live and in which the significant use of discretion and understanding of individuals is needed.

Functions:

Based on the above, the following functions were approved by the Federal Military Government on the findings and recommendations of the Committee that reviewed Local Government Administration in Nigeria.

- (a) Responsibility for basic environmental sanitation and other aspects of preventive health services;
- (b) Administration of maternity centres, dispensaries and leprosy clinics and Health Centres;
- (c) Construction and maintenance of roads and drains, excluding federal and state roads;
- (d) Jurisdiction over local inland waterways not designated as international water ways;
- (e) Rural water supply and extension of urban water supply;
- (f) Construction, and maintenance of primary schools;
- (g) Agriculture and veterinary extension services;
- (h) Town Planning;
- (i) Care of markets, motor parks, and gardens;
- (j) Maintenance of law and order; and
- (k) Afforestation.

The Local Government should, in addition, provide:

- i) Inspection of meat and abattoirs
- ii) Nursery, primary and adult-education
- iii) Information and public enlightenment
- iv) Scholarships and bursaries
- v) Public libraries and reading rooms
- vi) Agricultural and animal health extension services and veterinary clinics.
- vii) Fire services
- viii) Lighting and drainage
- ix) Support for arts and culture
- x) Control of pollution
- xi) Control of beggars and prostitution,
- xii) Homes for destitute, the infirm and orphans
- xiii) Public utilities including road and water transport
- xiv) Public housing programmes
- xv) Regulation and control of buildings
- xvi) Town and country planning
- xvii) Operations of commercial undertakings
- xviii) Control of traffic and parking
- xix) Pipe sewerage systems

Finally, Local Government authorities now have the discretionary power to plan for the development of its area of jurisdiction.

5. **Main Occupations:**

Ibarapa Local Government, like many other Local Government areas of Nigeria, has a predominantly farming population.

Our Farms produce:

- (a) Cash crops including the followings:
Cocoa, Palm produce, Timber, cattle
- (b) Food/cash produce including the following;
Cassava, melon, maize, pepper and yam
- (c) Other occupations of the people of the LGA include:
Trading, civil professional jobs, light craftwork etc...

6. **Religion:**

There are three Religions in Ibarapa as it is the case in all other local government areas of Nigeria. They are Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religions.

7. **Problems:**

(a) Lack of continuity by succeeding Governments:

The major problems facing Local Governments seem to be common nationwide, and one of these is the lack of continuity of the programmes and projects of one government by many a succeeding government. This leads to economic and mental wastage as well as the retrogression of development.

(b) Unemployment:

Unemployment is another general problem confronting this Local Government as well as the entire country generally. In fact, this has led to general under-feeding among the majority of our population, because **the working teams** are smaller than the consuming teams. An underfed population will contribute little or nothing to development.

(c) Financial Constraints:

As much as the Local Government may have rich programmes for execution, the financial means of executing them is not there. Its revenue is by far lower than what is required. The Federal Government should make funds allocation available for the executions of projects embarked upon by Local Governments.

d) **The Need for Skilled Man Power:**

The Local Government does not have the sufficient professional **manpower needs** it requires. In order to make for progress, there is the need to employ competent and qualified hands for the execution of Local Government projects.

(e) There should be constant training courses and workshops for existing Local Government staff from time to time.

(g) Prospects

If the recently announced autonomy for Local Government is allowed to survive, and with its remedies for the problems highlighted above, there are good prospects for the Nigerian Local Government system. These prospects include:

- i) Convenient grassroots governance;
- ii) Quick execution of projects without the usual bottlenecks often encountered in getting approval from the defunct Local Government Ministry;
- iii) Provision of essential services to the public by the Local Government Councils;
- iv) Awareness of the community's responsiveness and participation. In short, the needless bureaucracy with regard to the release of funds for social services is avoided;
- v) By and large, both Federal and State Governments should shed their direct involvement and financial expenditure in favour of Local Government. Rather the two tiers of Government should only allocate funds for the use of Local Government and leave the latter to run its own programmes.