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# **The Catalyst Role of Local Government in the Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS)**

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By

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examines the characteristics and justification of the Local Government with particular reference to its catalyst role as a foundation for economic development. The paper noted that Local Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDS) at the Local Government level was to enable this tier of government fall in tandem with the development plan strategy adopted at both Federal and State Government levels as well as amplify the participatory functions of the Local Government in the areas of Adult Education, Agriculture and Primary Health Care programmes. The paper suggested that to enable Local Government nationwide create the needed impact in grassroot development, the constitution must be streamlined to guarantee financial vibrancy to this tier of government as well as give it full right to tax administration and internally-generated revenue. The leadership question which shall incorporate core values on local development interest should be addressed.*

## **Introduction**

Plagued with the myriad of politico-economic and social problems right from independence, Nigeria has been trying to grapple with issues of development which have pervasively manifest as poverty, unemployment, corruption, poor management of both human, natural resources and poor service delivery to date.

In view of the avalanche of several choices available in tackling these setbacks and problems, Nigerian Government opted for the enthronement of a viable system of Local Government administration capable of enhancing not just rural development, but sustainable development, especially since such is much closer to the people. Also, since the Local Government system has assumed the best and accepted strategy for developing countries of Africa, Asia and South America, the quest for much desired development has at difference point in time, informed the rationale for periodic reforms, restructuring or re-positioning of Nigeria Local Government System since independence.

Basically, the first major institutional empowerment meant to provide “the teeth” for an effective Local Government system was contained in the 1976 Local Government reforms. Regrettably, however, lofty such reforms were, they could not provide the Local Governments with the needed impetus to guarantee sustainable development. Local Governments in the country still writhe under the scourge of poverty, inadequate or poor social infrastructures and economic backwardness. These, of course, are perpetuated by factors such as undue encroachment of their revenue rights and tax-raising powers by state and Federal Governments, poor funding, overlapping jurisdictions, as well as the inability to partner directly with International development agencies.

More recently, even the Local Governments are empowered by Section 7(3) of the 1999 Constitution, regarded as mere extensions of the 1976 reforms, to effectively participate in economic Development plan; they are often arbitrarily excluded by State Governments. Again, instead of working closely with the Local Governments, the States chose to establishment parallel departments, agencies and parastatals to duplicate functions reserved for Local Governments. All these factors are responsible for the general low agricultural activities, inadequate human empowerment, poor commercial activities, low standard of living and other obstacles to effective rural transformation for these reasons, 56% of the Nigeria population still live below poverty line (Adeleye, 2006).

On these notes, the efforts to fight poverty and under-development has not receded as radical approach to development is highly sought especially in an age of globalization where the concept “economic development” holds sway coupled with an associated wider implications. Against this background, the Federal Government of Nigeria on September, 2003 evolved a homegrown development strategy known as “National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy” (NEEDS) launched on May, 2004. This followed the subsequent launch of state Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (AK-SEEDS) and ultimately, the Local Government Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) for Local Governments which remain our focus here.

Specially, Akwa Ibom Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (AK-LEEDS) document backstopped by the State Government in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme, Centre for Population and Environment Development, and Foundation for Economic Research and Training (FERT) as a medium terms plan focus on the philosophy of development. Though a medium term plan document, it is based on a long term vision and goal of reducing poverty, unemployment and as well as, creating wealth to improve the standard of living of the citizenry at the rural areas.

However, in view of the foregoing, this paper raises some fundamental questions thus: How successful is the implementation of LEEDS in the Local Government Areas? How have the Local Governments translated the LEEDS plan to counter those impediments to Economic Development before now? How have they fared in terms of tangible economic development strides? In seeking answers to these questions, this paper will attempt to operationalize the concept of “Economic Development”, define the functions of Local Governments by Constitution, list

projects embarked upon by selected Local Governments under LEEDS and as well as identify pitfalls of Economic Development by Local Governments.

### **Operationalizing Economic Development**

The term "economic development" remains a fluidish concept that defies a generally acceptable definition owing to its relationship with a wide variety of activities and policies that seem not to relate with each other.

Despite these nuances, some theorists have attempted to separate Economic growth and economic development. While economic growth means more output, economic development implies both more output and changes in technical and institutional arrangements by which it is produced and distributed, Kindleberger and Herrick, (1977). Further explanation could be done with human growth. When we consider an individual growing, we are looking at the height or weight but when we emphasized development, we draw attention to changes in functional capacities, learning capacity of adaptation.

Generally, development is an open-ended phenomenon especially when it has to do with society. It is simply an improvement in the quality of life. Put differently, one can rightly view economic development in terms of improvement in the distribution of income and greater participation of broadly-based groups in making decision about the direction, economic and otherwise, in which they should move to improve their welfare.

### **Justification for Local Government**

Most theorists are of the opinion that Local Governments are inevitable in the achievement of economic development owing to their closeness or proximity to the people as well as the perception that development must begin from the lowest ebb of existing socio-political structure. According to Adeyeye (2000), for Local Governments to serve their justified purpose, they should be self-sustaining, "self-reliant and inward-looking"

In the same vein, Ola (1984) opines that Local Government is since qua non for political delivery, resource mobilization and political autonomy. The implication of such assertion remains the fact that if there must be any decentralization or devolution of power for effective and representative governance capable of touching the lives of all citizens irrespective of where they are, it is the Local Government.

For such reason, three schools of Thought, namely: the democratic-participatory school; the efficiency school; and the development school all justify the necessity for the existence of Local Government. The Democratic school believes that Local Government functions to entrench democracy which forms as springboard for political participation and socialization. While the Efficiency services school holds the view that Local Government exists to provide services, the development school places premium on the capability of Local Government to tangibly improve the well being of its indigenes economically, socially and otherwise.

## **The Forces behind Local Economic Development Activity**

It has been variously theorized that Local Governments engage in economic development activities due to some structural features arising, in particular, from economic and fiscal problems posed by the mobility of capital across fixed geographic boundaries. Peterson (1981) asserts that given a situation as this (mobility of capital cross boundaries), local areas being to develop single and overriding interest in the well-being of their economy and in attracting economic activity.

This circumstance, as Peterson conceived, motivates Local Government leaders to develop unitary interest since economy prosperity is required for protecting the fiscal base of local government thereby enabling elected officials to deliver a reasonable quality of Public Services. Secondly, because economic development activity is politically popular and, thirdly because most local government officials have a sense of community responsibility and want to do what is good for the community.

Like Peterson Bowman and Pagano (1992) aver that Local Government engage in economic development activities to foster their set of system maintenance but disagreed slightly with Peterson when they maintain that the propensity for Local Government to engage in economy activity is contingent, that is, while some actually pursue it, some do not.

From above discussion, one can deduce that Local Government engages in economic activities in the search for appropriate response to Local need to survive, to thrive and re-establish a balance. In other words, Local Governments attempt to use economic activities to create equilibrium between their revenue generating capacities and service delivery level.

## **AK-LEEDS as Institutional Framework for Economic Development**

AK-LEEDS being a strategic medium term plan for a long term vision of reducing poverty, unemployment and creating wealth is principally targeted at improving the living condition of the rural populace. It was designed to promote equality, democratic participation, logical ideas, empiricism and people-centredness among the local populace (LEEDS Training Manual, 2007) .

Basically, the rationale for adoption of LEEDS as economic development option centered on some cardinal thrust meant to form an integral part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The believe remains that AK-LEEDS would create, in medium term:

- Basic economic infrastructures like good roads, potable water, electricity, housing etc;
- Income generating activities and micro credit
- Basic health care for tackling disease; and
- Skill acquisition centre for rural empowerment

In the nutshell, the basic thrusts of AK- LEEDS policy include:

- ✓ Human Capacity Development
- ✓ Infrastructural and socio-economic development

- ✓ Agricultural expansion
- ✓ Women and children welfare;
- ✓ Youth and sports development
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Healthy
- ✓ Social welfare ; and
- ✓ Environmental development

### **Local Government Economic Development Thrust**

#### **AK-LEEDS: The Score Card**

From inception, some development projects have been executed between 2004 and 2009. In the early days of LEEDS implementation (between 2004 and January, 2005), some development projects were commissioned in conjunction with inter-ministerial projects (SEEDS in conjunction with LEEDS) in Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State. The table below indicates that within the period under review (2004 and 2005), a total of 60 electricity, 28 water projects and 5 other miscellaneous projects were completed and commissioned thus:

**Table 1**

List of inter-ministerial projects (of SEEDS in partnership with LEEDS) commissioned between December 2004 and January, 2005

<b>Date</b>	<b>LGA</b>	<b>Project Location</b>	<b>Type of Project</b>
13/12/2004	Uruan	Ishiet Ekim Ibiaku Obio Ndoho Use Uruan Emman Ikot Ebo	Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity
15/12/2004	Ibesikpo/Asutan	Business incubation centre Ikot Oku Ubo Business incubation centre Afaha Udoeyo Business incubation centre	Electricity Electricity Mini-water Mini-water Access road
17/12/2004	Ibiono Ibom	Ikot Idaha Civil Service Training Centre, Asanting in Ibiono Ibom LGA & Ekpemiong in Ikono LGA  Obio Ibiono Ikot Edo Ikot Ekwere & environs Ikot Obong Obio Idoro Usuk Inyang Aka Ididep Ekimbuk	Electricity     Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Mini-water Mini-water Min-water Mini-water

		Ikot Edo Snr. Sc. College, Ididep	Min-water
20/12/2004	Itu	Mabk Itam 11 West Itam Oku Iboku Afaha Itam/Ikot Ebom Ikot Ntu	Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Mini-water
22/12/2004	Uyo	Use Ikot Ebio Ikot Oku Ubo Annual Obio Obio Offot Ifa Atai L-H Units, Ewet Housing Estate Ikot Ekpe Police Station, Ewet Housing Estate, Uyo.	Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Staff Quarters
24/12/2004	Essien Udim	Adiasim Afaha Clan Ikot Obong/Ikot Akpan Essiet & Environs Okon Ekpenyong Atai	Electricity Electricity Electricity Mini-water
27/12/2004	Ika	Efen Ikot Ukana Ikot Otong Ikot Onono Ikot Udo Ika	Mini-water Mini-water Mini-water Mini-water
29/12/2004	Ikot Ekpene	Ikot Udousung and Environs Ikot Atasung/Ikot Obong Otoro Ibong Ikot Akan Itak Ikot Udo Ikot Enwang	Electricity Electricity Electricity Mini-water Mini-water
29/12/2004	Ini	Ibiono Iyere Mbaiakpa Ibakesi	Electricity Electricity
31/12/2004	Ikono	Edem Iyere Nung Ukim Ikot Etefia Ibiaku Okpo Ndiya Etok Snr. Science College Ukpom Ibakachi Nkara Obio Mbiafun Nkwongo Ikot Akpa Edo Ikot Akpa Edet Urban Sec. School, Ibiaku	Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Electricity Mini-water Mini-water Mini-water

3/1/2005	Etinan	Ikot Udofia Ishiet Erong Ikot Ekot	Electricity Electricity Electricity
3/1/2005	Nsit Ibom	Edeobom	Electricity
3/1/2005	Nsit Ubium	Ekpene Ukim Atan/Usung Inyang Ikot Ekwere Ikot Ekwere Ukat Aran Ukat Ubium Ikot Imo Ikot Imo	Electricity Electricity Electricity Mini-water Mini-water Mini-water Mini-water Electricity
5/1/2005	Nsit Atai	Ikot Essien Nsit	Electricity
5/1/2005	Okobo, Urue Offong/Oruko	Offi Ubodung/Oduonim Community	Electricity Electricity
5/1/2005	Udung Uko	Eyotai Eyosung	Mini-water Mini-water
5/1/2005	Mbo	Pylon over Enwang River Enwang/Ubodung Efi-Uda Primary School	Electricity Electricity Classroom Block
7/1/2005	Esit Eket	Primary School, Mabk, Uyo	Classroom Block
7/1/2005	Onna	Okat Ntan Ide	Electricity Classroom Block
7/1/2005	Mkpat Enin	Ikot Idiong Esa Ekpo Ikot Ntot	Electricity Electricity Mini-water
101/2005	Ikot Abasi	Essien Etok Nduk Ikot Etefia/Ikot Osudu Regina Coeli College, Essene	Electricity Electricity Electricity Mini-water
10/1/2005	Oruk Anam	Mbon Ebre	Mini-water
10/2/2005	Ukanafun	Ikot Effiong (phase 1) Ohaobu Ndoki	Electricity Health Centre building

Source: Finance News (2005)

\* Amount of the projects was not included in the published source.

Aside from the projects executed by Local Government (LEEDS) in conjunction with inter-ministerial (AK-SEEDS), selected Local Governments through AK-LEEDS embarked on developments capable of improving the living conditions of the rural populace. Thus, the table below indicates list of project embarked upon between 2005 and 2008.

**Table 2**

List of projects embarked upon by some Local Government Area:

S/N	LGA	Project Location	Type of Project	Cost (NM)	Status
1	Etinan	Afaha Efiat	Electricity	10.5	
		Ekom Iman	Mini water project	10.0	
		Ikot Ekot	Mini water project	10.0	
		Mbioto II	Electricity & Mini water	15.0	
		Ongoing	Renovation of Health Centre	6.0	
		Six (6) wards – Urban ward 1, Urban ward 2, Urban ward 3 South 1, South 2; and South 4,	Grading of roads	10.0	
		10 wards, 10 Women per ward	Micro credit of N50,000 per woman	5.0	
2	Itu	Mbak Atai	Renovation of Council Secretariat	15.0	Completed
		Ibiaku Itam	Electrification	6.0	Completed
		Ayadehe	Mini water scheme	3.0	Ongoing
		10 wards	Grading of rural roads	10.0	Completed
		Uyo Itam	Urban electrification	6.5	Completed
		Ekit Itam	Development of rural market	10.2	Completed
3	Uruan	Ibiaku Ishiet	Construction of market stalls	15.0	Completed
		Ifiayong Usuk	Renovation of 1 No. classroom block	4.0	Completed
		Emman Uruan	Mini-water scheme	3.0	Completed
		Ndon Ebom	Electricity	12.0	Completed
		Ituk Mbang	VIP Toilet	1.5	Completed
4	Mbo	Udung Okpo	Grading of roads	12.0	Completed
		Esuk Enwang Etisong, Akai Udo, Oduo Ebughu	Supply of fishing inputs/ implements	7.3	Completed
		Offi Uda	Electricity	15.0	Completed
5	Mkpat Enin	Ikot Obio Itong	Mini-water	3.5	Completed
		Ikot Ntot	Extension of electricity	4.5	Completed
		Ukam		12.0	Completed



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		Ikot Ekpu Ndon Ibotio	Building of market stalls Mini-water Electricity	4.0 10.0	Completed Ongoing
6	Eket	Okon Eket Ikot Abia Edem Uruan Afaha Uqua Eket Urban Ikot Udotia	Renovation of primary school Mini-water Mini-water Electricity extension Grading of urban roads Electricity	6.0 3.5 3.5 7.0 20.0 15.0	Completed Ongoing Ongoing Completed Completed Ongoing
7	Ikot Ekpene	Ikot Ekpene Town Abiakpo Nkap Ikot Abai Idem Ikot Enwang	Building of new motor park Construction of market stall Construction of 1 No. classroom block Electricity extension	20.0 10.0 5.0 6.0	Completed/ commissioned Completed Completed
8	Abak	Atan Midim Afaha Obong Abiakpor Uruk Uso All wards Edem Idim Manta	Renovation of town hall Renovation of Health centre/provision of drugs Mini-water Electricity Grading of roads Renovation of 1 No . classroom block	5.0 10.0 3.0 13.0 15.0 5.0	Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed
9	Ukanafun	Ikot Utiat Ikot Udo Mbang Ikot Obio Ekpe Ikot Akpa Nkuk Ikto Edong Adad Ifang Ward	Electricity Electricity extension Provision of market stall Electricity extension Provision of market staff Grading of roads	7.0 7.0 8.5 5.2 7.0 4.0	Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed

**Source:** A survey of project lists in selected LGAs

### **Conclusion**

The need for a viable and development oriented Local Government cannot be over-emphasized, because despite their meager resources, those selected Local Governments in this paper have been able, in their own way to provide some development strides for the people. These programmes and projects of development range from agriculture, electrification to other social empowerments.

### **Recommendations**

1. To ensure positive change aimed at actualizing AK-LEEDS, the constitution must be streamlined to guarantee a financially healthy Local Government System with full right to generate internal revenue, raise tax and more proactive in pursuing economic development activities.
2. Local Government must develop vision and consensus on core values that are comparable with local development enterprise.
3. Leadership at local level must understand that development leadership facilities ensuring training and re-training.
4. The Local Government must strive to address its problems from the root if it is poised to achieve economic development.

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