

# **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIVENESS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA AND UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

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## **Abstract**

*This study portends that if citizens are allowed to exercise their democratic control over the decision of the polity, the system will equally respond satisfactorily to the collective preferences of its citizens. Therefore the main purpose of this study is to explore how citizen participation in local government activities can elicit government responsiveness in Nigeria and United States of America (USA). As a result, secondary materials were consulted, and content analysis was employed to determine the relevance of the materials. More so, relevant theories were also used to explain the relationship of the variables in this study. However, the study found out that local government system in US engages the citizen in local governance and thus creating a sense of obligation on the part of the elected member of government to be accountable, transparent, and responsive to the community. Contrarily, the activities of the Nigeria local governments are shrouded in secrecy without citizens' involvement in governmental activities. As a result, drivers of local governments in Nigeria carried out their selfish*

*functions without any sense of loyalty, responsiveness, and accountability to the local electorates but to their governors and godfathers.*

*Therefore it is recommended that Nigeria local governments need a well democratic structure of local authorities that can enhance citizen participation in governmental activities. Also, some legally binding mechanisms need to be put in place to force the elected officials involve citizens in the planning, execution, and evaluation of programmes and projects.*

**Keywords:** Citizen, Participation, Local government, Citizenship Participation.

Citizen participation is the active involvement and engagement of citizens in local governmental activities that engender transparency, service delivery and accountability with the benefits of good policy outcomes, development, and social wellbeing of the citizens. With this line of thought, local governments are not only perceived as the panacea that has the capacity to promote political and economic development, but also has the competence to bridge the communication gap between the central/state and the local citizens in any country according to Wampler and McNulty (2013). This is based on the fact that local government are the closest tiers of government to the people, thus helps to create an avenue by which the masses are able to make meaningful contributions by actively participating in the political and economic decisions of the government. This means that if citizens have the opportunity to exercise their democratic control over the decision of the polity, the system will equally respond satisfactorily to the collective preferences of its citizens (Mutekede and sigauke, 2009).

Scholars like Olayiwola and Abdu-Wasi (2012) and Switf, (2009) have observed that most American citizens have daily access and contact with their local governments to raise and discuss issues concerning their needs and welfare. Likewise, the American local government responds rapidly to the concerns raised by her citizens in order to fulfill her obligations. However, Nigerian local governments have been noted for poor delivery of services, lack of transparency, and accountability (Zanna, 2015; Adesopo, 2011; Mapuva, 2011). Due to the non-performance of these local governments, the citizens of Nigeria have become laden in their persistent effort to endure poor policy outcomes, and expected atmosphere that is devoid of development and social wellbeing. As a result, several debates and scholarly writings have been on the increase over an inevitable change that can help to revitalize the despicable non-functional state of the local governments. In some literature, some have argued that instead of scrapping off the local government, it should be given more autonomy so as to be able to exercise control and allocate resources in their area of jurisdiction (Osakede and Ijumakin, 2014).

The proponents of this argument based their explanation on the fact that local authorities being the closest to the people are in better position to be more responsive to the peculiar needs of the people due to the fact that they can easily determine the amount of resources that can be used to accomplish them. Others have equally complemented this by saying that the reason why government strategic policies and programmes have failed in the past is due to the fact that citizens have always been isolated by the local government authority from getting involved in the planning and execution because of government officials' hiding agenda (Abe and Monisola, 2014). As a result, citizens have always been kept in abeyance in the setting of agendas, developing budgets, implementing programs or evaluating outcome (Abe and Monisola, 2014). These authors equally noted that citizens in Nigeria have little or no knowledge of the details of the public business at the local government level. This has created a vacuum in the minds of the citizens that can only be filled by government responsive mechanisms that place the needs of the people at the center. This study proposes that citizen participation in governance will engender local government responsiveness to the political, economic, and social needs of the citizens.

### **Objective of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to explore how citizen participation in local government activities elicits government responsiveness in Nigeria and United States of America (USA). By investigating this phenomenon in Nigeria and USA local governments, the study sought to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To compare how elections can prompt the responsiveness of local governments in Nigeria and US.
2. To examine how consultative forums/public hearing engenders local government responsiveness in Nigeria and US.
3. To compare the influence of participatory budgeting on the responsiveness of local government in Nigeria and US.

To accomplish the objectives of this study, a comparative study between Nigeria and US local governments was carried out in the area of structures, purpose of local government and the three areas (elections, consultative forum/public hearing, and participatory budgeting) by which the citizens are involved in rural governmental activities. A comparative study of this nature is very significant due to the fact that it gives an objective evaluation of the structures, functions and operations of a state and the need to improve on the existing systems. As a result, secondary materials will be consulted, and content analysis will be employed to determine the relevance of the materials. More so, relevant theories will be used to explain the relationship of the variables.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Local Government**

Like other concepts in the social sciences, local government has been conceptualized by scholars from different perspectives. As a result, Olayinwola (2013) looked at it from the word local to mean “belonging to or connected with the particular place where one lives”. He went further to define local government as the “system of government of a town or an area by elected representatives of the people who live there; and also the organization that is responsible for the government of a local area and for providing services. According to Makinde, Hassan and Olaiya (2016: 307) local government is being defined as “a political sub-division of a nation (in a Federal or State system), which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the power to impose taxes as well as exact labour for prescribed purposes”

According to the United Nations documentary on public administration, local government is perceived as a “political sub – division of a nation or state which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the power to impose taxes or to enact prescribed purpose” ( Ajayi 2000:1). Again local government has been loosely defined by Olayiwola (2013) as a “public organization authorized to decide and administer a limited range of public policies within a relatively small territory which is a sub-division of a regional or national government”.

From the forgoing, it is clear that local government is an entity that is established to bring government closer to the people by catering for their local needs, encouraging local participation in politics and governmental activities. According to Aulich (2009), people must be able to have their say – to vote, to engage in political debate and to let those in power know their views on issues which concern them. This is what citizen participation in governance at the local level is all about in a democratic setting.

### **Citizen Participation**

Citizen participation has been approached by scholars from different perspectives. It has been defined as taking part as an individual and as a community in decision making at each step of the development process (ACPD, 2006). In another dimension, citizen participation has been defined as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001). From this dimension, participation could be perceived in the level of consultation or decision making in all phases of development, from needs assessment, to appraisal, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation.

Citizen participation is further defined as the involvement of the broad masses of population in the choice, execution and evacuation of programmes and projects that are designed to bring out significant upward movement in the living

standards of people (Chikerema, 2013). The belief is that if the poor are effectively involved in policy planning together with the local government officials, more efficient policies that can address the concerns of the citizens can be identified. According to Chikerema (2013), local government officials are under obligation to keep the citizens informed about local programs and activities, with the attended opportunities to play their role in the determination and implementation of such local policies. Hence, this study will want to explore competitive election, participatory budgets and public hearing as areas by which citizens can exercise their participatory role in the local governance.

Election is very significant in a democratic setting based on the fact that it constitutes a forum by which individual can express his or her view about the situation at the local level. When elections are well utilized, it facilitates citizen participation by determining the kinds of officials to hold public office (Chikarema, 2013). As observed by Braun and Grote (2000) when citizens are allowed to elect their leaders without any interference, it makes government not only being accountable and responsive to local needs, but also involved citizens in decision making. So, elections constitute a platform for citizen participation in the choice of candidates who best articulate their felt needs.

Another area through which the citizens can participate in local governance is through consultative forums and public hearings. Through this medium, citizens are able to get involved in local administrative matters by channeling their proposals and local issues of concern to the legislative bodies through their elected representatives. In the same manner, the people also get feedbacks from the local administrators through their representatives. This process therefore encourages citizens' initiatives that elicit accountability and responsiveness of the local authorities to the local needs of the people through citizen participation (Aulich, 2009).

The third approach to citizen participation is participatory budgeting whereby citizens are given the access to make fundamental contributions and inputs that can effect planning and development in their locality. In the works of the Urban Councils Act (2006), participatory budget is being explained as a pragmatic effort to strengthening decentralization in local authorities so as to promote civic interest, participation in local governance, accountability and transparency in local public finance and budgeting. Participatory budgeting affords the citizens to make input in the allocation and implementation of public budget, it makes the government official to be more responsive to citizens, given the fact that the citizens are not ignorant of the projections and activities of the local government.

### **Citizen Participation and Responsiveness of Local Government**

The clarity of the concept, responsiveness is very explicit due to the fact that it explains the actions of the government/government officials towards the citizens on behalf of whom they serve. So, responsiveness has been defined as the “degree to

which government listens to what people want and acts on it, and to which public policies and institutions respond to the needs of citizens and uphold their rights” (Donk and Williams, 2015.: 10). This author explains that there are two kinds of responsiveness: shallow responsiveness and deep responsiveness. The shallow responsiveness according to the author refers to established, functioning and transparent communication loops which is related to internal reporting and accountability systems within government and external communication to communities and citizens.

In contrast, the author further explained that deep responsiveness refers to the development, by both the local authorities and citizens, of deliberative democracy. Edwards and McGee (2014) further observed that government responsiveness to the citizens engenders service delivery, accountability and transparency that have the beneficial outcomes that empower citizens. In relation to this, Bertucci (2000) found out that citizen participation does not only serve as democratic control, but equally help to strengthen responsiveness in local governance. However, The Nigerian Presidency (2014) discovered that maladministration and corruption in most of the local governments today is due to alienation of citizen participation which promotes service delivery, accountability and transparency. Furthermore, a communiqué provided by the Babcock University, Department of Political Science first Inter Conference held at the University auditorium on September, 2016 stated that state Governors and local Government chairpersons who were mostly appointed by the governors played major roles in the stagnation and disempowerment of the local government councils due to massive corruption and exclusion of citizens from participation.

In addition, it has also been observed that citizen participation enhances accountability and reduces corruption through the facilitation of information dissemination by which public awareness is being created on the actions of government (Sikader, 2015 and Muriu, 2013). These authors also argued that through citizen participation, citizens cultivate a sense of ownership of the policy decisions and activities and thus increase their willingness to assist and pay for services of the local government. This alone can help the local authorities to be more responsive in its accountability and transparency even as it delivers its services to the people. Elekwa and Eme (2013) equally found that community participation increases demands for effective local governments and also opened the window for building the capacity of the citizens. In another study, it was discovered that local government that were more open to constituent pressure delivered services more efficiently (Muriu, 2013). Again, Michels (2012) carried out a study and observed that citizen participation had a clear impact on policy and the action of government through participatory governance.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on three theories: the decentralization theory, efficiency theory, and system theory. The choice of these theories is based on their relevance to the study.

#### **Decentralization Theory**

Decentralization theory is a theory that talks about dispersion of power from the central to the other units of the government. It is the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organisations and or the private sector (Lawal, 2014). Its main concern is how functions and responsibilities are given to different institutions from the central government for efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. This means that even within decentralization, function and responsibilities can further be decentralized. For instance, the transfer of responsibilities within a local authority in order to fully involve the citizens or civil society in governance for efficiency and accountability and prompt service delivery to the people is a possibility (Sikader, 2015).

#### **Systems Theory**

This theory is one among theories that is very relevant in social sciences due to the fact that it helps to establish a relationship between independent and dependent variables. Furthermore, it explains that within a system, there are component parts that are interrelated and inter-dependent which interact together as a single entity. System theory is being defined as a series of statements about the relationship among independent variables in which changes in one variable is accompanied or followed by changes in other variables (Osekede and Ijumakin, 2014). Some of the proponents of this theory include Anatol Rapoport, Talcott Parson and Dario Easton.

#### **Efficiency Theory**

Efficiency theorists; Adeyemo (2010), Kafle and Karkee (2003), Nico (2008) believe that the position that the local government occupies is a strategic location for efficient performance of specific functions. This is because it is closer to the people and equally consists of a small population. As a result, decisions are easily made, feedbacks are easily received and problem promptly solved.

#### **Relevance of the Theories**

This study is all about the proposition that when citizens are allowed to get involved in local governance, the local authorities function and respond well to the needs of the people. The theory of efficiency stands in this study as the connecting link between the theory of decentralization and system theory. The reason why power

and resources are transferred to the local authority is to allow efficient and prompt response to the needs of the citizens at the grass root.

In addition, the system theory emphasizes that efficiency and attainment of goals within a system cannot be achieved except there is a coordinated and harmonious relationship among stakeholders. The relevance of these theories to this study is very germane since it helps to understand that the decentralization in a democratic setting encourages citizen participation that elicits efficient and transparent governance that benefits the masses through development and provisions of services.

### **Local Government in Nigeria**

In this section, local government in Nigerian is going to be treated within the framework of its structures, purpose, elections, consultative forums and participatory budgeting. This arrangement is very significant due to the fact that the study will want to examine how the harmonious workings and interactions of these variables can invoke the kind of government response that will be of benefit to the local citizens.

Nigeria state practices a federal system of government whereby power is being shared among the three tiers of government which are the central, state and local government. This local government which is the third tier of government, with 774 local governments, has a structure that consists of the executive and legislature. According to Zanna (2015), the executive arm of the local government consists of the chairman, vice Chairman, supervisors and secretary of council. He added that the chairman of the Local Government who is both the chief executive and the accounting officer of the council also appoints the secretary and the supervisory councilors. Furthermore, the legislative arm of the Local Government council is composed of the leader of the council and the other councilors. In addition to the administrative and political structure of the local government council is the financial structure which is composed of the treasurer and the auditor general who are equally assisted by the following committees: The financial and general purpose committee, Police and community relations committee, Education Committee, Works and Housing Committee, Health and Environmental Services Committee, Financial and Economic Planning Committee (Zanna, 2015).

The above structure of the local government is put in place to ensure that the purpose of delivery services that are germane to local development is achieved. Oviasuyi, Idada, and Isiraojie (2010), were of the opinion that the following are the main reasons why local governments in Nigeria were created:

- To make sure that government is brought closer to the citizen for political education, socialization and participation.
- For administrative convenience. Policies and programmes like the collection of rates, radio, television licenses, and registration of births, deaths and marriages are best implemented at the local level than at the central or state level.



- For effective mobilization of resources: this is to encourage the willingness of the citizens to contribute financially, materially, and morally to the management of affairs at the local level. The ideal is that since local governments are closer to the people, the citizens will be able to get involved in the governance of the local units so as to elicit development in their localities through the effective mobilization of resources.

Based on the above purposes, the local governments in Nigeria are expected to perform the following functions as enshrined in the 1999 constitution, for the benefits of the citizens:

- Inspection of meat and abattoirs.
- Provision of nursery, primary and adult education.
- Provision of scholarship and bursaries award.
- Provision of public libraries and reading rooms.
- Agricultural and animal health extension services and veterinary clinics, fire services.
- Lighting and drainage.
- Support for arts and culture.
- Control of pollution.
- Control of beggars and prostitution.
- Homes for destitute, the insane and orphans.
- Public housing programmes.
- Regulation and control of buildings.
- Town and country planning.
- Operations of commercial undertakings.
- Control of traffic and parking.
- Pipe sewage systems.(Nigerian Constitution of 1999:196)

### **Local Government Elections in Nigeria**

In order to actualize the above purpose and functions of local government in Nigeria, candidates are supposed to be democratically elected into various positions in the local government council. Through this electoral system, citizens are supposed to exercise their rights in the election of chairmen and councilors of their choice in all the local governments in Nigeria. These elections are supposed to be held within a period of two or three years as the case may be so that citizens will be able to use their voting right to re-elect or reject any candidate who did not govern well.

However, it has been observed that local government elections are not regularly conducted, even when they are conducted, their results are not reliable (Zanna, 2015). In any democratic society, election is supposed to be the traditional medium by which citizen are supposed to participate in the governance at the local level. However, some groups of people who have vested interest in the affairs of local government have resolved to alienate every other member of the society from

participating in the administration of local government (Mbuba, 2014). This author further explained that in Anambra state of Nigeria for example, local government elections were not conducted for almost a decade. This situation is same in other local governments due to the fact that Governors prefer to use caretaker committee instead of allowing duly elected candidates to be in charge of local administration (Ananti, Onyekwelu, and Madubueze, 2015).

In this way, members of the local community are completely alienated and uninvolved in the determination of those who lead them even at the grassroots. Based on this, the government is not under obligation to be accountable and responsive to the needs of the citizens, but to the political class who selected them into various administrative positions (Obamwonyi, and Aibieyi, 2015; Ananti, Onyekwelu, and Madubueze, 2015). This aspect of citizen participation that is supposed to serve as checks and balancing on the local government administrators is non-existence, the officials therefore see it as an avenue to indulge in looting and misappropriating local funds that are meant for the economic development of the community (Okafor & Orjinta, 2013).

### **Consultative Forum/Public Hearing**

Another approach to citizen participation in local government is consultative forum/public hearing. This is also a traditional method that can afford the citizens to hear from the local government officials and also make their opinions known about the governance of the community. However, literatures have revealed that in Nigeria, apart from River state local governments where town hall meetings are held to pass information to the people about what the government has done without asking for their opinion, there is no forum for the citizen to lay their complaints (Abiona and Bello, 2013 and). Unegbu (2013) and Munyua (2000) have observed that in this modern days, instead of the traditional gathering for public hearing, local government officials sometimes use some media like prints, videos, televisions and cellular phones to get the citizens informed.

However, a study that was carried out in thirteen local governments revealed that majority of the respondents consulted were highly ignorant of the local government monthly allocation and internally generated revenue and its expenditures (Unegbu, 2015). This reveals the level of knowledge and information asymmetry (information citizens possess) in relation to their local government because of absence of forums whereby the citizens can ask questions and expect answers. Based on this, local government officials feel very free to carry out their actions without any sense of accountability and responsiveness to the people.

### **Participatory Budgeting**

Scholars have unanimously agreed that elections and consultative forum are traditional ways of citizen participation in the local governance and that the modern

and comprehensive avenue by which citizens can fully be involved in their own affairs is through participatory budgeting (Muriu, 2013). In other words, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Associations and other organized groups in the community engaged in the formulation, execution, and evaluation of the programmes that concern the citizens. In view of the fact that local government exists basically for the people, the officials of local government are under obligation to involve them in every activity including the financial projections of the government.

However, it has been noted that local governments in Nigeria do not involve citizens in their budgetary planning (Abiona and Bello, 2013 and SDIC, 2013). Abisoye (2008) explains this fact that many development projects in the local communities are being forced on the citizens without the consideration of their relevance to economic and social life of the people. This therefore has resulted into many abandoned projects basically because the government is not under compulsion to complete them due to non involvement of the civil society in the planning and execution of such projects. Abe and Monisola (2014) collaborated with this fact that absence of citizen participation in local governance hinders effective delivery of services which may as well lead to an atmosphere devoid of accountability and transparency in the efficient use of available resources for the benefits of the people in the community. As already established, where there is no accountability and transparency, corruption thrives and this may be the reason why a lot of uncompleted projects are obvious in most local governments in Nigeria.

### **Local Government in United States of American**

United States of America practices a federal system of government whereby power is shared between the central government and the regional government. The local government in U.S is not a third tier but a creation of the state according to the constitution (Olayinwola and Abdul-Wasi, 2012). As a result, the American government has approximately 81,000 local governments categorized under counties, cities, boroughs, villages, special districts, and public authorities. According to National League of Cities (2016), there are about 3,200 counties, 19,000 municipalities; 17,000 towns and townships; 15,000 school districts; and, about 26,000 special districts which is a reflection of the diversity of the American economic, social characteristic and their legal responsibilities.

Furthermore, the counties which are usually less densely populated area than the cities are run by elected boards of commissioners or supervisors, with other elective officers like sheriff, county prosecutor or district attorney, and county coroner. These counties are local units with a population of about 500,000 people or more having a city council that is usually elected independently from each other (Olayinwola and Abdul-Wasi, 2012).

In general, local governments in America perform the following Functions: provision of water supply, fire protection, smog control, public transportation,

provision of housing, soil and water conservation activities, Maintenance of law and order and domestic security, Providing services in special field such as airports services, Economic development constructions, Assisting in carrying out state and federal projects/programmes, Traffic control, Provision of recreational facilities such as parks, gardens, Environmental control and management (Ashcroft, 2001).

### **Local Government Elections in United States of America**

The conduct and dependability of local government election results in US is replete in literatures to be positively high (Post, Stein, Ulbig, 2005; Tausanovitchi, and Warshawz, 2014; Thad, 2012). This shows that local government elections in USA is a sure platform upon which citizens find their footings in active participation of local governance. As a result, the local community is able to determine its representatives that best meet the preferences of the people through voting exercise. Consequently, Tausanovitchi, and Warshawz (2014) and Lubel et al. (2009) revealed that US citizens are able to hold their Mayors and other elected officials in the local government accountable and more responsive to the needs and yearnings of the citizens who elected them into position of responsibilities.

### **Consultative Forum/Public Hearing**

Having noted above earlier that consultative forum/public hearing is one of the approaches for citizen participation, the US local government holds municipal meetings with the citizens so that stakeholders can ask questions and air their views and perceptions about their local government. Montalvo (2008) who supported this fact by categorizing the citizens that attend municipal meetings explains further that the Mayor and other local government officials promptly respond to the observations and issues that citizens raise in such meetings. In addition, U.S local governments do not only use meetings as forum to listen and directly give answers to burning questions, they equally use other traditional methods such as newspapers, radio, and current electronic communication targets that provide an insight into a new wave of possibility of informing and engaging citizens (Gibson, Lacy, and Dougherty, 2009). By deductions, it is clear that average U.S citizens are not only informed about the activities that their local governments embark upon, they are also actively involved in their local governance. They are able to articulate their preferences, displeasure and other proposals on how to improve service delivery and development in their community.

### **Participatory Budgeting**

The third approach is the participatory budgeting which is an advanced dimension of citizen participation. In United States of America, there is the existence of legislation that recognizes civil society and their right to information (Gibson, Lacy, and Dougherty, 2009). This enables organized groups, associations and

members of community residents to get involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of budget in their counties. As noted by Gibson, Lacy, and Dougherty (2009), Coshocton County, Ritchie County, Nicholas County, Morrow County, Hillsborow County just to mention a few have actively engaged citizens in strategic planning linked to budgets, benchmarks, and monitoring. Through these processes, U.S citizens are not only improving governmental accountability through their participation but also making local government to be more responsive to the immediate needs of the local people and thus enhance a sense of trust between the local government authorities and the people in the business of developing the community.

### **Comparative Perspective**

Comparative study is very significant because it does not only make plain why some systems are functioning and successfully accomplishing the desired purpose but also reveals the areas of weaknesses that need to be improved upon for better services and performance. Hence, the following are some of the differences and similarities of the local governments in Nigeria and United States of America from the perspective of this study.

United States of America practices multi-layer system of Local Government. These layers are categorized under five different types of local government system which are the Counties, Municipalities, Towns and townships, Special districts and School districts. Since local governments in US are created by states, each state has the legal mandate to create its own local governments for functional purpose of achieving good governance at the local level. However, Nigeria operates a single tier of local government that has a population within the range of 150,000 and 800,000 with equal status and powers.

Furthermore, Local government elections are sacrosanct and dependable. As a result, the U.S citizens are able to hold their representatives at the local government accountable since they can articulate their policies preferences through a reliable electioneering process. On the other hand, local government elections in Nigeria are not reliable. The local government officials are not accountable to the citizens but to their Governors and godfathers who placed them in positions for their own benefits.

In another dimension, citizens in the local government in US are fully engaged in the governance of their local communities. They have different forums by which they can hear and equally express their opinions about their government to the local authorities. Contrarily, platforms by which citizens can articulate their opinion, displeasure, disappointment and proposal for anticipated good service delivery processes are absent in Nigeria local government system.

Again, US local governments have also been found in the engagement of civil society and other organized groups in planning, implementation monitoring, and

evaluation of local budgets. In Nigeria however, local government budget is treated in secrecy without any public involvement.

### **Similarities**

The first similarity as deduced from the study is the fact that local governments everywhere, including the ones in U.S and Nigeria are created to meet specific needs of the local communities and to be a medium for citizens' political, economical and social involvement.

Secondly, both U.S and Nigeria local governments operate a democratic process of electing representatives into specific positions of responsibility.

### **Conclusion**

Local governments everywhere in the world occupy strategic location that can support the community and engage the citizens for a cooperative effort that is germane to the development and welfare of the local people. This presupposes that the reliability of an election to make elected members accountable, the platform within which the citizens can express themselves to the local authorities and the their level of involvement in planning, executing and monitoring are all necessary for local government to be more responsive to the needs of the community.

Local Governments in U.S are purposefully functional in delivery services to the people because of the level of incorporation of the Civil Society group and other organized groups in the planning, execution and evaluation of programmes and projects of the communities. As a result, local authorities in U.S see it as an obligation to be accountable and responsive to people who voted them into power.

However, Nigeria local governments are yet to be service delivery driven. The activities of the government are shrouded in secrecy without citizens' involvement in governmental activities. As a result, drivers of local governments in Nigeria carried out their selfish functions without any sense of loyalty, responsiveness, and accountability to the local electorates but to their governors and godfathers.

### **Recommendation**

Therefore, the following recommendations are hereby made in order to improve the area of weaknesses that this study has observed with the Nigeria local government system.

1. Nigeria local governments need a well democratic structure of local authorities that can enhance citizen participation in governmental activities.
2. Nigeria local government may also need to decentralize some of their programmes so as to involve the community directly for proximity of government to the people and service delivery.

3. Local government should encourage the participation of civil society from each ward in order to increase the level of involvement in decision making process at the local level.
4. Some legally binding mechanisms need to be put in place to force the elected officials involve citizens in the planning, execution, and evaluation of programmes and projects.

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