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Assessing the Roles of Local Government in Rural Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, rural areas in Nigeria are endowed with a wealth of human and material resources that are underutilised for rural development (RD). This paper assesses the roles of local government (LG) in RD in Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of the changing roles of public institutions and the challenges being faced from time to time. Furthermore, the roles of LG in RD have not been achieved in Nigeria because it is an ongoing process. Secondary source materials were used. The result of findings indicates that the roles of LG in RD include, among others, bringing government nearer to the people, serving as a vehicle for articulation and promotion of local interests, a medium to mobilise and harness local resources, engaging in economic planning, establishment and maintenance of social amenities, development of agriculture and establishment of local industries and cooperatives, control and regulatory activities, and provision of financial/credit facilities and technical assistance. Therefore, the paper concludes that LGs should continue to be empowered to perform their responsibilities to achieve growth, prosperity and development in the rural areas of Nigeria for the empowerment of rural dwellers.

Keywords: Local government, rural areas, rural development, Nigeria,

Introduction

The nexus between local government (LG) and rural development (RD) has long been established and therefore, incontestable (Seeley, 1978). However, for purposes of clarity, it is salient to understand the nexus between LG and RD. This is done with the hindsight to evaluate

the responsibilities of LG in RD. Firstly, both terms are used to characterise the fundamental political structure and the socio-economic activities in society, respectively, in political, administrative, and development studies. Though both are different, they complement each other in the administration and development of a country. The symbiotic relationship between LG and RD can be understood in the premise that while the role of LG is to achieve RD, the goal of RD is to provide development to those who live in rural areas under the jurisdiction of an LG within a given country or federation (Andersson, et al, 2010).

Traditional and Western cultures gave rise to modern local administrations in Nigeria. In Nigeria's federal arrangement, LG is the third and most accessible level of government to the populace(Ayo, 1984). Between the people and the federal government, LG acts as a conduit.

Therefore, it is simple to define local government by its well-known characteristics: first, an elected council; second, a degree of autonomy or independence; third, the ability to carry out certain constitutionally mandated responsibilities; and fourth, the ability to function at the local or grassroots level (FRN, 1976).Nigeria is a federation of 36 states and a federal capital territory (FCT), with 774 local government areas (LGAs). Local governments in several countries are primarily institutions that partner with the central government in delivering services to the populace in compliance with national laws and under the supervision of a given (Barber, 1972; Rhodes, 1986).Consequently, the primary duty of LG is the exercise of public authority at the grassroots level. In other words, rural development is framed by the LG system.

Comparably, in the 1960s and 1970s, rural development (RD) became a distinct field of study and policy (Long, 1987; Rowley, 1996; Moseley, 2003; Van Assche & Hornidge, 2015; Calatrava, 2016). It became even more popular in the past few decades, particularly after the World Bank and the United Nations unveiled the "new strategy" for development planning (Hanna & Agarwala, 2000). This strategy stands out in putting a strong focus on a variety of fair goals—as a reaction to general dissatisfaction with earlier approaches to development planning at the national and sectorial levels (Harris, 1982); a rationality demanding RD to play several salient functions in the course of the growth of a nation.

This article examines the roles of LG in RD in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, the paper is organised into the following sections: first, following this introduction is the extant literature of the paper; comprising of the theoretical framework and conceptual overview of the key terms of the paper; second, is an examination of the roles of local government in ensuring rural development amongst rural areas in Nigeria; and the third section concludes the paper.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

Conceptual Overview

This section lists, clarifies and defines the terms that are important to this paper and undertakes a review of literature relevant to the role of LG in RD in Nigeria; an endeavour that helps the researcher, reader or analyst to grasp and much deeper comprehension of the terms LG and RD with clarity. It is appropriate to note that there is no consensus regarding the meaning of these terms; they are employed in various contexts and manners. These terms can be viewed as ideas, social reality, discipline, and strategy that guide our conversation about each one (Byme & Shrestha, 2014). Therefore, local government and rural development are the main ideas covered here.

Concept of Local Government

There is not a single accepted definition of local government in the international community of practice for decentralisation and localisation. The multidisciplinary nature of local governance is one factor contributing to the lack of a consensus definition. While various academic fields such as political science, economics, public administration, and constitutional law often address the subject separately, few analyses take an integrated approach to examining the characteristics of local governance institutions. Since there is no formal system in place to integrate the knowledge from these disparate fields, it appears that each discipline has come to its conclusions about what local government should be. The fact that local governance institutions differ greatly between nations and that many people mistakenly associate the term "local governments" with the local governance structures that are predominant in their nation is undoubtedly another factor contributing to the lack of a clear, universal definition.

Therefore, it seems that "if it looks like a local government and it quacks like a local government, it must be a local government." This is the litmus test. Of course, researching local governments carries some risk. Thus, local government is often employed in various contexts and viewed as an idea, social reality, discipline, and strategy. Essentially, local government (LG) refers to the management of local affairs by the people who live in a locality (Ayo, 1984). This is hinged on the idea that residents are better suited to manage and address their needs, issues and affairs locally than are federal or state authority-directed; though this in no way implies that the central government has no involvement in the management of local councils. Of course, the provision of legal guidelines by the central government on the workability of LGs speaks volumes of central government control of LGs in Nigeria.

Thus, the term local government designates institutions, organisations or bodies established by national constitutions to carry out designated functions. The briefest but weighty definition of LG was given by Goldie (1975, p. 9) who defines LG as "the management of their affairs by the people of a locality". The *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*(1972, p. 451) defines LG as:

> A public organisation authorised 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. Local government is at the bottom of a pyramid of governmental institutions with the national government at the top and intermediate governments (states, regions, provinces) occupying the middle range. Normally, local government has general jurisdiction and is not confined to the performance of one specific function or service.

This means that local governments are the intermediary public institutions between the national government and states, with a defined territorial demarcation that separates one from the other.It is an administrative unit with jurisdiction in various spheres of authority.

In Nigeria, local governments are considered the thirdtier of government, serving as the administrative unit of the country's local government areas. Consequently, the *National Guidelines for Reform of Local Government* were implemented in 1976 by the Federal Military Government (FMG) of Nigeria to provide a standard framework for local governments throughout the nation. This guideline defines LG as:

> Government at (the) local level is exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the councils substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects to complement the activities of the state and federal governments in their areas and to ensure through active participation of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiatives and responses to local needs and conditions are maximised. (FRN, 1976, p. 1).

The 1976 guidelines on LG reforms in Nigeria which were instrumental to a unified local government system attributed to a few factors: first, it was claimed to have the potential to improve resource mobilisation for development objectives, efficient and equitable delivery of basic services; and second, citizen participation in local government matters (FRN, 1976).

Akpan (1984) sees LG as the division of the nation into smaller units or localities for administration in which the citizens of the various units or localities involved play a direct and

full part through their elected representatives who exercise powers and carryout tasks under the general authority of the state or national government. This indicates that laws passed by the higher level government(s) are instrumental to the formation of local governments and grant them the authority and capacity to carryout particular tasks in a designated area. The authority granted to local governments permits them to exercise significant power and authority over local affairs to stimulate widespread involvement, initiatives, and responsiveness to local needs. This is in line with Orewa's (1991, p. 24) definition which suggests that:

> A local government is the level of government below the central government in the case of a unitary state or below the regional, provincial or state government in the case of a federation, which is obliged to provide a range of services, and authority to do this. It also has legal powers to enforce its executive and regulatory decisions on its citizens without resorting to social pressures to achieve this. Its area of authority and the basis for representation on its political leadership platform are defined by its instruments. It has its staff and revenue.

This means that local government is an administrative unit established by the national government in the case of a unitary system or below state or regional government in a federal system, with the constitutional mandate to provide certain services and empowered by law to rule and regulate the affairs of that locality. It can generate and spend funds on its activities and its staff and provides the requisite leadership and authority in a given area.

However, the avalanche of definitions of LG subsists, this paper adopts the United Nations Office for Public Administration (UN, 1960, p. 3) definition of LG as its working definition stated thus:

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

From the foregoing definitions, scholars generally agree that the purpose of local governments is to relieve the burden of bureaucracy at the federal level, freeing up national leaders from excessive involvement in purely local matters and from tedious details. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the goal of local government operations is to enable local action coordination and expedition (Ayo, 1984, p. 65). This entails that certain characteristics of LGs are commonplace and discernible even as the afore-stated definitions demonstrate; firstly, it is locality-specific in that local government is confined to a specific area and has jurisdiction over a particular population; secondly, the constitution guarantees its legal existence with the right to perform specific duties and exercise specific authority; thirdly, it exercises a great deal of autonomy; fourthly, elected members of the community make up the council; and fifthly, local governments are organised into bureaucratic departments, divisions, and units (Ezeani, 2004).

Concept of Rural Development

Specifically targeted at the rural poor, rural development (RD) is a policy intended to ameliorate the social and economic circumstances of those living in poverty. It entails giving the least fortunate people who reside in rural areas access to the advantages of development (World Bank, 1975). This means that rural development is an action plan with a specific goal in mind; that is,

to improve the socioeconomic conditions or standard of living of those living in poverty in rural areas of a country. For those living in poverty in rural areas to gain from development, higher authorities typically adopt RD strategies to enhance rural development. This led Maboguje (1980, p. 30) to suggest that:

> Rural development is concerned with the improvement of the rural standards of the low-income people living in rural areas on a self-sustaining basis through transforming the socio-spatial structures of their productive activities. It implies a broad-based reorganisation and mobilization of the rural masses and resources, to enhance the capacity of the rural populace to cope effectively with the daily tasks of their lives and with the changes consequent upon this.

Rural development is the process of transforming the economy and institutions of the rural poor people from a low-productivity equilibrium or a state of stagnation into a dynamic process that raises living standards and improves quality of life. This suggests that the process of rural development is dynamic and entails transforming impoverished rural areas from an underdeveloped state of things to contemporary and progressive rural societies.

Similarly, Lele (1975) describes RD as making the process of development self-sustaining and improving the living standards of the low-income populations residing in rural areas. He identified three distinctive aspects of the rural development process which involve; first, improving the living standard of the subsistence population to eventually achieve a desirable goal between the productive and social services that the rural subsistence sector can access, the technique involves mobilising and distributing resources; second, mass participation which guarantees that social classes and low-income areas receive social and productive services, and resources must be allocated to them; and, third, making the development process self-sustaining which demands that guidelines should be in place at the local, regional, and national levels in addition to the development of appropriate skills and implementing competences to ensure the effective use of resources that are currently in place (Lele, 1975, p. 17).

Despite the different viewpoints and interpretations of RD, it is evident that the goal of RD is to improve the living circumstances of those living in poverty in rural parts of a nation. This is, especially, true given that the majority of residents in rural areas are low-income workers who live in substandard housing, lack access to modern amenities and employment prospects, and depend on their means of subsistence. Consequently, RD is an acknowledgement of the appalling living conditions experienced by those who are living in poverty and who reside in rural areas.

Improving the ability of the rural population to manage their everyday responsibilities and the changes that follow, entails reorganising and mobilising the rural masses and resources (Anikeze, 2011). This requires mobilisation for mass participation to improve the living conditions, skills and capacity of rural dwellers for self-sustenance. Therefore, to improve the quality of life for the rural population, RD refers to the process of transforming rural communities into conditions that are socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable (Ojukwu, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

This paper owes its theoretical discourse to the midwifery of the theories of decentralisation and subsidiarity. Decentralisation owes its roots to the scholarly works of Oates (1972, p. 55) who argues that "each public service should be provided by the jurisdiction having control over the

minimum geographic area that would internalise benefits and costs of such provision". This supposition by Oates (1972) is premised on the triple explanations that; first, it is only the government closest to the locality that is far more conversant with the expectations of the locale; second, it saves the rigours of undue overlap of authorities; and third, it is a means of promoting healthy competition among the comity of local governments (Jones & Stewart, 2012). Similarly, the principle of subsidiarity which owes its intellectual roots to Shah and Shah (2006, p. 4) posits that "taxing, spending, and regulatory functions should be exercised by lower levels of government unless a convincing case can be made for assigning them to higher levels of government"

The salience in these theoretical approaches to this paper is twofold: first is that it is only an independent authority enabled with the requisite constitutional powers of taxing and spending that is in proximity to a given geographical locale that easily comprehends the challenges of the locale; second, is that legitimacy is provided by society in an age of globalisation and democratic demands for decentralisation, subsidiarity, and more delicate forms of representation. Because local consent is necessary for leadership, society must be represented in political processes. Modernity's bottom-up, Foucaultian interpretations of the agential subject are obviously at odds with top-down, Weberian conceptions of state legitimacy(Richmond, 2016). It is in such reasoning that Laski (1978, p. 411) corroborates in the submission that:

> The case, indeed, for a strong system of local government in any state is clear and almost beyond the needs of discussion. We cannot realise the full benefit of democratic government unless we begin by the admission that all problems are not central problems and that the results of problems not central in their incidence require decisions at the place, and by the persons, where and by whom the incidence is most deeply felt.

It aligns with these lines of thought that scholars have structured their discourses on local government as an institution (Aleyomi, 2013; Ikeanyibe, 2016; Owu, 2016).

Discussion and Findings

Local governments are widely viewed as true tools for rural development (RD); especially in developing nations of the global South. Consequently, LGs all over the world are assigned specific legal responsibilities (Ezeani, 2006). In Nigeria, the roles of LGs in RD were outlined in the 1976 Guidelines of Local Government Reforms and further provided in the Fourth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN, 1999, pp. 150-151).Specifically, amongst others, the roles of LG in facilitating RD include economic planning, primary and adult education, provision of health services, agricultural services, industrialisation and cooperative services, water supply, protective services, rural electricity, road development, housing estate, recreational facilities, and provision of grants and technical assistance. This was corroborated by Ugwu (2001, p. 137) thus: Local government is widely acknowledged as a viable instrument for rural and community development and the delivery of social services to the people. Local government as the third tier of government is strategically placed to fulfil the above functions because of its proximity to the rural people, which enhances its ability to easily articulate and aggregate the demands of thepeople.

As the third tier of government that is closest to rural communities in Nigeria, the roles of local governments in rural development may, therefore, be understood from its functions as being spelt out in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria(as Amended).First, bringing government

nearer to the people. Across the world, national or central government authorities and their representatives are frequently situated distant from rural areas or communities; the very reason which necessitates the establishment of LGs as a means of promoting the growth of rural areas and communities if the frustration of the local populace with attempts to identify with government policies and initiatives are to be eschewed. Little wonder Dahl (1967, p. 957) submits that the essential point is that nothing can overcome the dismal fact that as the number of citizens increases the proportion who can participate directly in discussions with their top leaders must necessarily grow smaller and smaller.

The inherent constraint is neither evil men nor evil institutions, nor any other eradicable aspect of human life, but rather a dimension of all existence that is morally neutral, because it is implacable, unswerving and inseparable-time. Since governance is a serious endeavour, it can occasionally be challenging to administer from a distance but where local governments operate at the local level, it gives a sense of governance, involvement and participation by the residents of local communities. Stated differently, the level of government nearest to the people is more appropriate for implementing localised policies and programmes.

Second, a vehicle for articulation and promotion of local interests. The idea that LG serves as a means of articulating and promoting local interests is connected to the foregoing. To be impactful on the local population, LGs are expected to comprehend local problems, and their corresponding demands and to explain and support local interests when interacting with higher levels (s) of government. Where LGs are established for a specific territory, the underlying objective of any LG is to empower people with similar interests that differentiate them from those of other groups or huge swathes of the populace to handle those shared interests autonomously. The primacy and urgency of the emphasis herein is that no central government can afford to employ the personnel that would be required for rendering all the essential services in every locality in its realm nor would it be easy for any central government to be responsible for the formulation of all the policies that would meet the domestic needs of every small place in its territory.(Adigwe, 1976, p. 21)

The necessity of LGs in articulating and promoting localised interests; especially as a means of achieving rural development, is further bolstered in that it is commonplace amongst nations that spread widely to leave holes behind in their borders and often local governments are strategically placed to assist in bridging the gap left by these spatial and local peculiarities that federal governments are unable to conveniently and effectively fill due to distance from the communities and the complexity of their enormous tasks (Okoli, 1998).

Third, mobilisation and harnessing of local resources. Characteristically, most rural communities are endowed with enormous human and natural resources that need to be mobilised and harnessed. Mandatorily, local governments are best suited and have a key role in mobilising and harnessing local resources for rural development. Moreso, strong and long-lasting rural communities depend on the mobilisation of resources for their sustenance and resilience to withstand physical and economic hardships. However, accomplishing its mission and goals in resource mobilisation demands that LGs have the requisite resources to carryout its numerous works, undertake new projects and even maintain and strengthen cordial relations with the public sector, commercial groups, donors, individuals and other communities (Ojukwu, 2013).

As a result, local government serves as a veritable catalyst for bringing the wealth of local resources to bear for the development of rural areas. Undertaking this onerous task is bolstered

by the fact that local governments have direct access to the lives of rural dwellers, and firsthand knowledge of rural towns, villages, hamlets and locations a justification that LGs being the closest level of government to the people, are best suited to provide grassroots development vis-à-vis its superior levels of government (i.e., federal and state authorities) (Anikeze, 2014).Additionally, harnessing and mobilising resources for rural development also bears a political undertone.

In Nigeria, a responsive local government chairman works to ensure that political appointments to administration positions are spread fairly throughout the many communities, wards, constituencies or political zones that comprise the local government to promote rural development. This is accomplished by way of nomination of people to political positions like special assistants, supervisors and secretaries to the local government as a tactic widely employed among local governments in Nigeria (Anikeze, 2010). In this way, LGs empower their residents, promote development in the rural areas and foster a feeling of community among all the rural areas within the spectrum of local governments.

The fourth function is economic planning. An adage says if you do not plan, you have already made plans to fail. Thus, both people and organizations plan. Little wonder, economic planning is often adopted by local governments to guide running their operations. In doing economic planning, LGs are conversant with the fact that administration and governance work hand-in-hand with planning; i.e., a type of getting ready to do something. Where local governments are involved in a variety of economic endeavours, planning is a sine-qua-non in concentrating attention on goals that offer rural economic development initiatives direction and purpose (Nkolu, 2009).Similarly, local governments engage in a wide range of activities that have financial implications on the lives of their citizens. These activities include budgeting, project execution, policy making, implementation and evaluation, and many more; assignments and goals that local governments can accomplish when they engage in economic planning.

The fifth is the establishment and maintenance of social amenities. Rural development in any nation depends on the availability of social amenities and facilities. Therefore, the efforts of local administrations to provide comfortable facilities for the public are protected under the constitution. Amongst several examples, LGs are constitutionally responsible for providing social and recreational facilities like primary, adult, and vocational education; building and maintaining roads, streets, street lights and drains; provision and maintenance of health services; provision of rural electricity; establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds, and impoverished homes; establishment, maintenance and regulation of slaughterhouses, markets, motor parks, and public conveniences; provision of rural housing estates, recreational facilities, and water supply, etc. (FRN, 1999).

For example, local governments in Nigeria build public schools and colleges in remote towns, villages, and communities to make education available for rural residents. Where such provisions are made, the local government education authority hires teachers and posts or transfers them to various schools in the local government area. This happens against the backdrop of the idea that education is the cornerstone of any society and that as more individuals get educated, there is a good chance such a society has a high degree of awareness, which improves the lives of residents. By the provisions of the 1999 Constitution, local governments are assigned a wide range of responsibilities in the areas of education (e.g. universal basic education [UBE]), primary health care (PHC), national programme on immunisation (NPI), and social and economic development (Ojukwu, 2013).

The sixth is the development of agriculture, local industries and cooperatives.By fostering the growth of local industry, cooperatives, and agriculture, local governments often raise their revenue profile. A local government may engage in commercial farming and make investments in sectors such as fisheries, poultry, rice farming, plantain and banana plantations, cassava, and so on to provide agricultural services. It, also, provides knowledge of extension services, which rural communities employ to seek guidance and support on matters about agriculture. To enhance progress, local governments exploit business opportunities in their locality through the establishment of local industries by engaging in cottage and agro-based industries such as oil palm plantations, cocoa and rubber farming, palm-win processing industries and the like. Furthermore, local government may exploit business opportunities such as opening recreational parks, shopping complexes, mass transit and stock trading (Njoku, 2009).

In Nigeria, cooperative societies are found at the local, state and national levels. These are established groups, most of whom come from lower socioeconomic classes of people, and cooperative societies play significant roles in helping rural communities develop strong social capital (Juhasz, 2001). Local governments provide support to a wide range of cooperatives in their communities in several areas, such as consumer goods and services, housing, tourism, health, energy, water, handicrafts and agriculture (producing, processing, marketing, purchasing, and sales). Local governments very often set up requirements for cooperative organisations to register and operate in their rural areas to discourage rural-urban migration but encourage rural development in the process.

Seventh, amongst several other functions performed by local governments (LGs), they are also mandatorily required to carry out control and regulatory functions in such areas as outdoor advertising and boarding, the movement and keeping of pets of all kinds; management of shops, kiosks, restaurants, bakeries and other places for the sale of consumables to the public; laundries, licensing the sale of liquor, etc. to maintain sanity and level playing fields for individuals providing services in its domain. The merits derivable from the control and regulatory functions of LGs are that LGs not only facilitate the supply of reasonably priced goods and services but also improve the consistency of prices for goods and services. When and where services are delivered predictably, there are chances that LG authorities draw on investments, which leads to the creation/generation of wealth and productivity.

Eight, to help rural dwellers in their financial dealings, LGs are usually involved in the creation of their microfinance banks and outlets, often known as community banks, where soft loans are given to farmers and businessmen as financial support and inducement. Furthermore, to inspire rural communities into self-help projects and to induce other rural dwellers to follow suit, local governments often offer grants as financial support for specific individual or community-spirited development projects in rural areas. This singular endeavour by LGs promotes the development of rural towns and places. Local governments are in a better position than any other level of government to offer technical support for rural and community development since they are the level of government closest to rural communities (Oates, 1972) and the only level of government that understands the needs of the locale (Jones & Stewart, 2012).

Conclusion

Local governments in Nigeria inevitably participate in rural development; given that it is an enshrined role in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). This all-essential role bolsters the peculiarity of LGs in improving the conditions of rural dwellers in

Nigeria. This paper assessed the roles of LGs in rural development in contemporary times — emphasising, amongst other roles of LGs, such as bringing government nearer to the people; acting as a vehicle for articulation and promotion of local interests; mobilising and harnessing local resources; acting as an agent of economic planning, etc. The paper concludes that whereas it is not apparent that rural development is a continuous process, the roles of local governments in bringing about rural development have not been effectively realised in Nigeria. This may be attributed to undue interference by higher-level governments; which ordinarily should have been allowed to carry out their stator duties to further the empowerment of rural residents by fostering growth, prosperity, and development.

Recommendations

The paper insists that, however, the aforementioned roles of LGs in ensuring rural development, it is still pertinent to make the following recommendations as a measure in strengthening the participation of local government in rural development in Nigeria:

1. Local governments in Nigeria should keep supporting higher-level government initiatives to raise the income-generating potential of rural residents so they can take advantage of job opportunities in the food and agricultural production sectors. This would further strengthen the endeavours to establish a strong basis for the expansion and advancement of food security in the country.
2. Local governments in Nigeria are established by constitutional provisions to support the sociopolitical and economic development of rural areas, but this goal has been a partial success. While not oblivious that rural development is a continuous process, the numerous core rural development-oriented projects by LGs that are meant to improve the living standards of rural dwellers are either still under different stages of completion, haphazardly done or never undertaken at all. LGs must as a matter of urgency always create self-awareness of the need to engage in RD.
3. As a measure of rural development, local government must make use of the numerous resources present in their rural areas,LGs should encourage rural dwellers by way of mass mobilization to participate in democracy; as a measure of taking control of their destinies and organised for democratic involvement in the rural areas and be inculcated in the virtues of transparency, accountability, tolerance and upholding sanctity of the rule of law.
4. All levels of government can only be relevant to the people if their policies and programmes have a beneficial effect on the people. Virtually all the responsibilities of local government are equally performed by other tiers of government. As a result, higher-level governments should enact policies that advance the well-being ofrural dwellers.

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