

Historical Epochs of Local Government Administration in Nigeria: Women and the Poor

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Received: 10 December 2011 Accepted: 1 January 2012 Published: 15 January 2012

Abstract

Local Government administration and development in Nigeria has, historically, undergone a number of epochs: Native Authority or Indirect Rule system; Local Administration system; Democratization of the system and the separation of traditional/ emirate council from democratic Local government system. The last of these epochs is the most spectacular in the way it deepened and still deepens democracy at local government level. To date, this last epoch has had not less than nine reforms: The 1976 Guidelines for Local Government Reform; The 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; The 1984 Dasuki Report on the Nigerian Local Government system; The 1988 Civil Service Reforms in the Local Government system; The 1989 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; The 1992 Handbook on Local Government Administration; The 1989 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the 2003 Review of Local Government Councils in Nigeria. What this paper sets out to examine is the changing nature of Local government system in Nigeria right from the days of Native Authority's system to the present democratic one and their impacts on women and the poor.

Index terms— Handbook, Federal Republic, Native Authority

1 Introduction ocal Administration or Local Government

Administration in Nigeria as the case may be, has passed through four distinct phases. The first phase or epoch covered the period between 1914 and 1950; the second period fell within 1950 to 1966, the third epoch 1967 to 1976, while the final era was from 1976 to date.

local government system was essentially deconcentrative but in 1976, it became devolved and "should do precisely what the word government implies i.e., governing at the grassroots or local level" iii Poor is philosophically interchanged with poverty because they share the same characteristics and whether the phenomenon is referred to as poverty or poor, is mere semantic. The characteristics that the "poor" and "poverty" severally share in common include low income per head, food scarcity and malnutrition, low energy consumption, low savings and low level of capital formation iv . Collectively, the poor or the poverty afflicted people can also be identified by the environment that they occupy. Okunade identified two of such environment, which are the rural areas and the fringes of urban settlements v . Their environment is characterized by a variety of social inhibitions and what Okunade termed infrastructural network handicaps. Compared with urban centres, Olowu says the "the quality of life is very low in the rural areas, whether we speak of life expectancy, food intake, living conditions, literacy level or the primitiveness of agricultural technology. Besides, rural conditions are worsening steadily in view of Nigeria's strategy of development which, because of the wide disparities between urban and rural areas that it promotes, encourages massive youthful rural depopulation to the urban centers with resulting problem both for the urban as well as the rural areas" vi Henry Nwosu, in analyzing the situation of women in relation to poverty said, "Historically, psychologically and sociologically, women have always formed the bulwark

of the family and hence the society. They are solid foundation to every family in every society. Generally, women constitute the majority of the population in every nation state” vii iii Federal Republic of Nigeria. Guidelines For Local Government Reform, Kaduna: Government Printers, 1976. Forward. iv . This is particularly so in our local and rural areas in Nigeria. Phase I Under the colonial administration, local government was known as Native Authority or Administration system. It was a form of indigenous rule under colonial authorities whereby “traditional institutions of chiefs and other traditional rulers administer the natives under the supervision of British Administrative Officer” viii . There was nothing wrong with the use of indigenous institutions, chiefs and rulers in the then newly established local administration, for that was the existing governing structure before the advent of colonialism but there was certainly something wrong with the quality of these people expected to run these traditional institutions in ‘modern governance’ -Indirect Rule system. Very few of them (traditional rulers or chiefs), if any at all, had western education and exposure in modern governance to be able to run this newly introduced local administration. Ayoade expressed this better, according to him, “The policies were transmitted to the traditional rulers who hardly understood the logic and rationale of the policies. Nevertheless, they transmitted those policies to their people and expected compliance” ix Besides lack of western education necessary for these indigenous rulers to understand their ‘superintendents’, some roles expected of them to perform by the new system were also repugnant to tradition of the people. For instance, the Native Authorities were expected to “be able to levy and collect tax for the salaries of the chiefs and other officials and services of the authorities” .

x . But while some communities were already accustomed to this, others were not; though they also had their own traditional ways of carrying out such services . In brief, their lack of exposure to Western education and modern governance hampered their administrative and service delivery capacity in the Native Authority system. It is therefore interesting to note that the operators of this Native Authority system could neither be described as executives, legislators nor administrators. Because they executed, legislated or administered nothing. At best, as Ayoade observed, they (traditional rulers) were mere “administrative carriers” to the colonial officers. This brings into question the status of the Native Authority System itself. Notwithstanding all these, the system made important achievement of whittling down the autocracy of patriarchal traditional rulers because hitherto these traditional rulers, under traditional system of governance, were embodiments of executive, legislative and judicial powers. The Native Authority system dismantled these and shared them among various stakeholders that included the colonial authorities. According to Gboyega, the new Native Authority system “comprised of four main interdependent parts: . Secondly, under the system, communities felt no strong sense of belonging and self-involvement in the system called local government then xv ”The system of Sole Native Authority (SNA) had been a great source of oppression and suppression to the Egba people. Even most of the members of the council were not free to express their minds.

. Thirdly, towards 1946, the system had acquired a new nomenclature -Sole Native Authority System. As a Sole Native Authority System, Egba women expressed their disgust to it this way :

The Alake always passed as ‘Mr. Know all’. The Egba women would very much like the power of SNA removed because we are not happy under it. It is foreign to the custom of Egba

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Fourthly was the restlessness of the educated elites who felt uncomfortable with their total exclusion from the Native Authority System.

In trying to address these defects, the last colonial Secretary of State, Lord Creech-Jones, in 1947, had argued that: “The key to resolving the problems of African administration lay in the development of an efficient and democratic system of local government. I wish to emphasize the words: efficient, democratic and local. Local because the system of government must be close to the common people (the poor in particular) and their problems, efficient because it must be capable of managing local services in a way which will help to raise the standard of living, and democratic because it must not only find a place for the growing class of educated men, but at the same time command the respect and support of the mass of the people” xviii . xviii tended to replace the old one -single tier -that had been in place since 1914. This multi-tier system was a concentric circle of variety of three Local Government systems: e.g. the County, District and Local council or Provincial, Divisional councils. The service types they rendered to the rural people made the distinctions among these three layers. To alleviate the suffering the poor, county or provincial councils were assigned with services related to education, maintenance of roads and bridges. The Districts or Divisional councils were in charge of markets, dispensaries and sanitary services while Local or District councils, the smallest of them all, were responsible for the maintenance of streams and footpaths xix The basic difference between the single and multi tier system of Local Government then was while one emphasizes uniformity the other de-emphasizes it. Although the intention of adopting uniform system might be, according to Adedeji, to promote unity but the opposite is the case . . Uniformity, according to him, ignores the difference in history, culture and modes of social organization of the various communities in a Although, the President of the Local government, under this new dispensation, had purely ceremonial functions like presiding at budget meetings and on other important occasions, he sometimes attempted to exercise executive authorities that tended to cause occasional out breaks of misunderstanding, if not outright fiasco, between him and the executives of the council xxiii . How one expected a peaceful cohabitation of an entirely illiterate president of

Local government with educated treasurer and secretary of Local government seemed not clear. It is not an overstatement that the restless educated elite at that time would actually encourage and work for the success of their colleagues both at the council pools and administration, so that, having formed majority in the council, they could always over turn the decisions or plans of their reactionary opponents. Alex Gboyega alluded to this when he said that 1950 Local government reform tended to produce more participation than even the government wanted and "traditional" members of the councils.

The traditional members according to C. E. Emezi, were either ex-officio members of these councils or to sit on them by and from amongst themselves. The president of the council was the traditional ruler of the place but where they were more than one, the office rotated amongst them. mechanistic. Diversity, rather than uniformity increase latitude of action. This indeed explains why American Local Government system is characterized by great variety and diversity xxi Secondly, Regional governments, especially those of the Southern part of the country began to pass laws that provided for broad political participation under acting on 'order from the above' xxv . The intensity of this was high in places where educated traditional rulers headed the councils. Power tussle, not just on who ran the councils but who is superior in the system, frequently ensued between them and the technocrats. Perhaps the regional governments deliberately xxv Ayoade, John.A.A, Op, cit. P20. created this cleavage between the traditional rulers, as Following these policy statements, regional governments into which the whole country had broken into, began to reform their Native Authority systems to comply with the policy. First was the structure of the new local government system -Multi tier system -that representative or democratic system of local government. The broadened participation included local representatives of the people, traditional rulers and chiefs, which the law still permitted to act as the chairmen of the local government councils xxii . It should be noted that this is the beginning of gradual attempt at xxii Emezi C.E, Op. cit.P10. empowering local government system towards poverty alleviation at the local and rural areas. The local government law of western region of 1952 was more explicit on this when it distinguished between elected the presidents of the councils and the technocrats so as to have inroad into happenings going on at the grassroots, for Local governments, as earlier form of government, were too important to the politicians and the regional governments to be left alone. Hence they, regional governments, held tenaciously on to power to create and abolish Local governments. With this power, they created, abolished and dissolved erring Local2012 u J n e

Civil war era was another important epoch in the administrative development of Local government. Not only was development in the East stalled, poverty was alarmingly skyrocketing as the East was at that time the theater of war. As a result of this civil war there was governments, beside the fact that they "must also approve their annual budget before they can be implemented".

This way, Local governments under this second phase were effectively subordinated to the regional governments. The upshot of this for the local government system was lack of autonomy. The lack of autonomy concomitantly also meant that these Local governments were dependent on the regional governments in a "horse and the rider" relationship. While Local governments were the horses, regional governments were the riders. Given this, Local government system during this period cannot be properly called so, but, as Ayoade suggested, "Agents of the central government at the local level". As agent of the regional governments, they ?? education in the use of power and authority and in the risk of power (d) education in practical ingenuity and versatility (e) that Local Government could serve as a training ground for national politicians (f) that information about the localities can be easily and cheaply made available to the local and central government authorities (g) that Local Government helps to realize the basics of a democratic state (liberty, equality and welfare). Liberty, they argue, is realized through Local Government because (i) Local Government provides for individual access to power and to the point of pressure and control (ii) it enables the minorities to avail themselves of governmental position and power and keep power close to the people thereby facilitating control of government officials by the people (iii) as a level of government it is a countervailing power to other governmental levels (iv) as a power sharing device, it help to localize and confine problems that may arise out of the government process xxxi. Finally, it is believed that Local Government would teach the local politicians and the rural communities in general, the art of weighing and xxxi Fatai Ayisa Olasupo. "Philosophy and Poverty Alleviation". Nigerian Journal of Environment and Behaviour. Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Besty Publishers, 2003, P42.

First, as there are 774 Local Government councils throughout the country today so are there 774 Traditional or Emirate councils. Secondly, as Local Government councils render services allotted to it by the constitution so do the Traditional or Emirate council. Today in the academia, they (Emirate/Traditional Council) are referred to as "fourth level of government" or "fourth estate of the realm", "grass-root" government or community government, "village government" "local development agencies" village development organs etc. These traditional councils are seen as "alternative non state structures that can respond to the economic and social needs" of the people. Conceptually, "it focuses on the totality of structures within the local community that comprises both state and societal organizations xxxiii xxxiv .

Attributes of these types of government are distinct from conventional Local Government system. They non-state organs rooted in the indigenous traditions of social order, voluntary, and most importantly, "active and often successful in the provision of services required by their clientele". In recent time, according to Olowu, some of them have become active in the political arena as well .

However, the way women are making progress democratically in the new Local government system, opposite is the case in traditional councils. While, since, 1987, women are making progress as elected chairpersons of Local

government system, the reverse is the case in traditional council. Below In any case the differences between these "traditional government" and the conventional democratic Local Government system are in the areas of legislative role (making of bye-laws) and democratization. Whereas modern Nigerian Local Government system is democratic, representative, legislative and executive, "traditional government" of Babangida's vision lacked all these attributes and thus merely assists the other levels of government in service delivery, dissemination of information and explanation of government policy to the rural populace. Additionally and more importantly, they engage in conflict resolution at all levels of governments -Local, State and Federal. Hear Sheu Malami, a scion and icon of Sokoto Caliphate:

we called upon now because there is crisis? So we are like fire -fighting equipment, when there is no fire the equipment stays there. You don't maintain it. When there is fire you look for it. You will see when the country return to normal, traditional rulers will go back to the cobwebs In 1988, the Military administration of General Babangida toyed with the uncomfortable coexistence of the democratic Local government system and the traditional rulers whom Ayoade referred to as "over mighty "subject" in the council area" xliii. Thus, traditional rulers were 'privatized' in theory and not in practice. All these show that even though the two councils have been separated to avoid clash of authorities they still maintain uncomfortable coexistence.

xli. Chief of general staff, Vice-admiral Augustus Aikhomu had, in his address to the assembled newly-elected Local government chairmen, directed that "A traditional ruler travelling outside his Local government area should inform the chairman of the Local government" xlii. Again, "A traditional ruler wishing to raise any issue with the state government on matters relating to a particular Local government area should do so through the chairman of the Local Government". Following massive protest of the traditional rulers that threatened the relationship between them and the military government, the military government of General Babangida soon reversed these orders although it had already created superiority tussle between the elected Local government council and the non elected leaders can play in good governance" he advised them (traditional rulers) "to be monitoring the local councils' chairmen and their activities in their domains" xliv IV.

3 Constitutional Roles of Local Government

. To demarcate their lines of authorities, the 1979, 1989 and the Draft Constitutions of 1995 enshrined the different roles of these conflicting councils in their bodies. Three criteria, Gboyega observed, were applied in allocating functions to newly reformed Local Government councils. The parameters applied included:

(i) Require detailed Local knowledge for efficiency performance; (ii) In which success depends on community responsiveness and participation and (iii) Which are of personal nature requiring provision close to where the individuals affected live, and in which significant use of discretion or understanding of individuals is needed These parameters were applied to produce two lists of functions for Local Government. The first list, according to Gboyega, was considered the primary or mandatory functions that all Local Government had to perform. These are: of the traditional or emirate councils. The civilian administration of retired General Olusegun Obasanjo reopened the wound when he became civilian Head of State. Some traditional rulers from Ekiti State, led by the then Governor of the state, Ayo Fayose, visited him at Aso Rock. According to the President, "in recognition of their importance" (traditional rulers) "and the role they advance for comments of the traditional rulers xxxviii. Fourthly, payment of their salaries, just like those of judges and diplomats/ambassadors, were to Given these complementary poverty alleviation roles that the constitution ascribed to the two disparate councils, it is clear which of the councils is ordinate and subordinate. While the new democratic Local Government system is indisputably the champion, the traditional council is there to provide advisory and complementary services. However, "in small towns and remote villages", as Olufemi Vaughan observed, "where state institutions are profoundly ineffective, local chiefs and village heads combine their "traditional" and customary functions with the pressing demands of community development" National Assembly in 1981fixed the proportion of the the expression "zero allocation". "Since Local governments depend on the fiscal transfers to fund their services, "zero allocation" according to Gboyega, "became an excuse for the inability to provide services" liv. As for diversion, Gboyega accused State governments of often withholding their statutory contributions to the Local governments and thereby Often, the claims of what each agency accomplished conflict with one another. This situation according to Nwosu, during General Babangida's regime, required special Directorates of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) presidential teams to inspect in each state of the federation what each state claimed to have accomplished with DFRRI funds as well as special presidential grant of 1million naira to each of the Local Governments for the construction of urban roads. "According to him, it partially resulted into politics of signboards; that is, a particular road at different times would at different occasion, depending on the team inspecting, have sign boards showing that "this is a DFRRI constructed road at another occasion the same road would have a signboard indicating "this is a road constructed with the presidential grant" lviii. lvii Ibid.

4 VI.

5 Conclusion

Local government system in Nigeria did not start as a service delivery agent or channel through which poverty among local and rural folks could be addressed. The first and second epochs in its evolution were meant to lay the structure of modern system of local government although concrete structure that it would need to embark on

service delivery had been laid -appointment of Secretary and Treasurer -and not least, the agitation of educated Nigerians for democratization of the system to accommodate them (educated class). The third epoch, when educated Nigeria assumed the mantle of leadership as leaders of government business and, later as premiers, marked the utilization of local government system as service delivery assistant to the Regional governments. It became a truly devolved body, able to generate fund, initiate and implement policies under military regime in 1976. But corruption at all the levels of government, including the Local Government itself, undermined its capacity to deliver services and thus unable to sufficiently alleviate the suffering of the local and rural poor in the country. lviii Ibid. P 193.

Nevertheless, no other body save current Local government system, can adequately decide the needs and priorities of the local community. This is because, as Gboyega noted, "that decision of the representatives of the people regarding the needs and priorities of the local community are apt to be more accurate and, at any rate, legitimate because it is of the community, rather than if they were made by agents of the central government" lix A What the table above shows is that, in certain typical localities in Nigeria, it should not surprise one to find two federal agencies, two state agencies and even a Local Government agency each executing one rural road or another without much co-ordination of personnel, equipment or funds. This tended to create in some cases the problem of who accomplished what; particularly in the area of rural road construction lvii .^{1 2}



Figure 1:

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Figure 2:

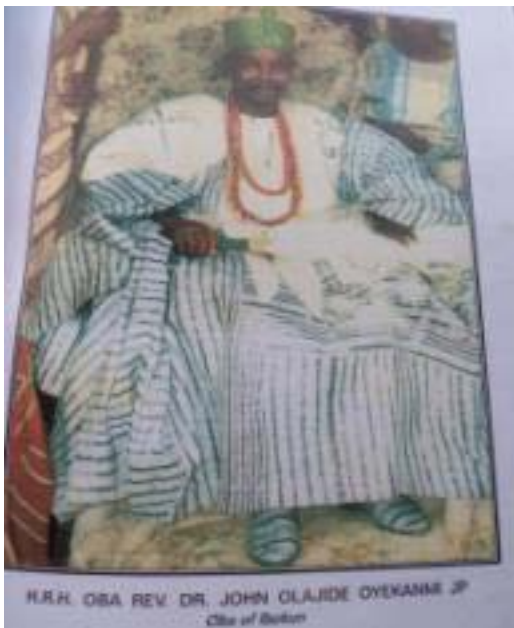


Figure 3:



Figure 4: A



Figure 5: xxviii



Figure 6:



Figure 7:



Figure 8:



Figure 9:



Figure 10:



Figure 11:



Figure 12:

Political Science and Methodological Considerations". Leadership, Democracy And The Poor (Ed.) Jos : A Publication Of The Nigerian Political Science Association, 1991, P19-20.

[Note: v]

Figure 13:

[Note: ix Ayoade John .A.A. "The Development of Democratic Local Government in Nigeria". Aborisade and Mundt (Ed.). Local Government in Nigeria and the United States: Learning from comparison, Ife: Local Government Publication series, 1995, P19. x Emezi C.E, Op. cit. P8. xi Ibid.]

Figure 14:

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Global Journal of Human Social Science It is fraudulent to call it local government because there was nothing governmental about it to warrant that nomenclature. If it was not democratic, legislative (it had no legislative power at all xii) or clientele service delivery system, what then is governmental about it? Some argue that it could appropriately be

Figure 15:

Male and Female Kingmakers in Ilesha West and East Local Government	
Male Kingmakers Obanla Male king Baba Orisa	Female Kingmakers Female king. Yeyerisa-Arise Yeye Orisa
Ogboni of Ilesha Baba Odofin	Yeye Odofin Yeye Odofin
Oba-Odo Baba Aro	Yeye Baodo Yeye Aro
Ogboni of Ipole Ogboni of Ibokun Baba Salaro Baba Ejemo	Yeye -dole Yeye Salaro Lejoka Yeye Ejemo
Ogboni of Ijebu-jesa	Loro
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Global Osolo Saba Sajuku	Male King Onisha (in Anambra state). Below are pictures of those in Ijesha land: Female King Osolobinrin Sababinrin Sajukubinrin xvii Modupe Obiwole.
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Loja of Kajola Ijesha (Oba Omirin)	Yeheloobinrin of Kajola Ijesha Obabinrin (female king) Elizabeth
Owa Obokun of Ijesha land, Oba Adekunle Aromolaran and Yeyerise (Female king) of Ijesha land, C	Modupe Obiwole.

[Note: xvi xv Cletious E.Emezi. Op. Cit.P 25. xvi xvii Ishola Olomola. Bade Ajuwon. Dayo Omotosho. "Oba Ibokun". Prominent Traditional Rulers of Yorubaland (Ed). Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University &Celebrity Publication Limited, Ibadan, 2003, P102.]

Figure 16:

1

S/N	NAME	TOWN OR VILLAGE	L.G.A	STATE	TYPE OF	DATE	TIME SPENT IN OFFICE
1	Yeye-Ladegba	Ilesha	Ilesha	Osun	Owa Obokun	A.D 1646-1652	6 years
2	Yeye gunrogbo	Ilesha	Ilesha	Osun	Owa Obokun	A.D. 1652-1653	1 year
3	Yeye Waji	Ilesha	Ilesha	Osun	Owa Obokun	A.D. 1691-1692	1 year
4	Yeye Waiye	Ilesha	Ilesha	Osun	Owa Obokun	A.D. 1692-1693	1year
5	Yeye Wayero	Ilesha	Ilesha	Osun	Owa Obokun	A.D. 1698-1712	14 years

[Note: Source : At ay ero S. A(1 972) A S hort Histor y of the I j eshas Part I, Ilesha: Olufemi Press, P p 37-41.]

Figure 17: Table 1 :

Figure 18:

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[Note: xxxiii Dele Olowu. Ibid. xxxiv Ibid]

Figure 19: Table 2 :

Traditional Councils, their draft estimates well in

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Included in this list are:

Health centers, maternity centers, dispensaries and health clinics, ambulance services, leprosy clinics and preventive health services;

Abattoirs, meat inspection;

Nursery and primary education and adult education; 5% Information and public enlightenment; Provision of public libraries and reading rooms; Provision of scholarship and bursaries;

5% Agricultural extension, animal health extension services, and veterinary clinics; Rural and semi-urban water supply;

Fire services;

Provision of roads and streets (other than trunk roads),

their lighting and drainage;

Control of water and atmospheric pollution;

Control of beggars, of prostitution, and repatriation of destitute;

Provision of public utilities except where restricted by

other legislation, specifically including provision of roads

and inland water transport;

Public housing programs;

Operation of commercial undertakings;

Regulation and control of buildings;

Town and country planning; and

Piped sewerage systems xlvii .

V. Constitutional Role of Traditional

h) Determination of customary law and practice on all matters including that relating to land;

i) Making representation or expressing opinions to government or any other organization on the collective behalf of the Local Governments in the area.

j) Deliberating on or making representation or expressing opinions to Government or any other organization on, any matters which it deems to be of importance to the Emirate or Chiefdom as a whole or which may be referred to it by Government or other organization xlviii .

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or Emirate Council

a) To formulate general proposals as advice to Local Government

b) To harmonize the activities of Local Government councils through discussion of problems affecting

revenue to be transferred to Local government councils
from the Federation Account and from each State's total
revenue at each"
liii

However, this monumental empowerment of
Local government councils is bedeviled with series of
corruption types: Deductions, Diversions, Withholding,
Duplications, and even, Multiplications of the same
project-execution by different governmental agencies.
With regards to deductions, severally has Federal

2012 government deducted from the statutory transfers from the Local government Federal allocation to "fu
primary school staff salaries" that "often wiped away the
u J entitlements of some Local governments, giving rise to

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and offices, except where these are traditionally the f) Support for Arts and culture. g) Chieftaincy ma

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Proejects	Fed. Govt. Agencies Involved In Execution	State Govt. Agencies Involved In Execution	Local Govt. Agencies Involved In Execution	Non Govt. Agencies Involved In Execution
1. Rural Roads	DFRRI 2. Federal Min. of Agric. (Rural Department)	Rural Authority Ministries of Works Task forces ADP	Development Works Department of LGs Communities	
2. Rural Electrification	DFRRI NEPA	State Rural Electrification Board Rural Development Authority	Works Department of LGs Communities	
3. Rural Water Supply	1.DFRRI Federal Min. of Agriculture	State Water Corporation State Rural Development Authority Ministries of Health in some Anambra Min. of Agric	1.Agric. Departments 2.Communitie 3.Philanthropies organisations	UNDI Europ Union Other intern tional non govern
4. Food Crops	DFRRI Federal Min. of Agric. MAMSER	ADP Various States grains, tree boards and committees	Agric Department Communities Local non-governmental organisation	UNDI Europ Union

Source :

Figure 22: Table 3 :

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5 CONCLUSION

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