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**Collective Action for Local Accountability in Apa:
Beyond Decentralization in Nigeria**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the unforgettable love of my parents, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Isima.

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GLOSSARY

DLG	Democratic Local Governance
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
NGOs,	Non-Governmental Organizations
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People
NYCOP	National Youth Council of Ogoni People
EMIROAF	Ethnic Minorities Rights Organization of Africa
NULGE	National Union of Local Government Employees
UN UNPO	United Nations Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
PMES	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

ABSTRACT

Free, fair, regularly scheduled elections and universal suffrage are the most direct mechanism for ensuring that those who govern are accountable to citizens. Without elections, local government is not democratic. But elections are crude instruments of popular control, since they occur at widely spaced intervals ... and address only the broadest issues... People must be able to indicate their likes and dislikes between elections, as well as their views on specific proposals. There must also be ways to publicize citizens' views and uncover wrongdoing in local government.

— Harry Blair (2000: 27)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Democratic decentralization or democratic local governance, as it is sometimes referred to in the literature, has become a global trend especially since the turn of the 1990s. This is underpinned by a growing acceptance, at least in theory, that government at the local level can become more responsive to citizen demands and more effective in service delivery and overall local economic development by building popular participatory democracy and *downward* accountability into local governance (Blair 2000: 21). Democratic local governance (DLG) involves the devolution of meaningful authority to local units of governance that are accessible and accountable to the local citizenry, who enjoy full political rights and liberty (Blair 2000: 21).

Disappointingly, experience in local government practice, as far as Apa (in Nigeria) is concerned, has shown that DLG does not follow automatically from mere political, administrative and fiscal decentralization, but is mediated by the presence or absence of a number of factors. One of the most important of these factors is the degree to which local government is accountable to communities and local residents.

Community participation has come to enjoy an increasing emphasis in the new governance thinking as it is being seen to raise the transparency not only of the political process but also of the allocation of public resources (Carvalho 1997). It is being feared that decentralization of decisions to local government reproduces the danger of corruption at the local level from the centralized corruption. The way out of the dilemma between centralized corruption and decentralized corruption, receiving growing acceptance, has been decentralization with community supervision of local government decisions (Carvalho 1997). Thus recognizing the critical importance of communities and their organizations, and involving them in making decisions affecting their own livelihood and managing programmes to improve their conditions is indispensable to the evolution of DLG.

A fundamental criterion of the new thinking about local governance is its responsiveness to stakeholders, defined as anyone who influences and is influenced by the local government in the pursuit of its objectives (Edralin 1998: 128). This new thinking about local governance

thus recognizes communities and their organizations as important stakeholders which must be engaged in strategic negotiations by local government planners for enhanced performance. It also recognizes the ability of communities to organize themselves and make claims for their participation where they are excluded and to exert control over local officials for effective accountability (Blair 2000).

This paper examines the experiences of DLG in Apa local government, Nigeria. The creation of sub-national level of autonomous governments with large resources at their disposal has yet to stimulate responsiveness in local governance for effective and efficient local development in Apa. The challenge of DLG in Apa, therefore, has been how to involve local citizens and their civil organizations in local governance and how to hold local government elected officials accountable by citizens through pressure from below.

Yet, putting pressures on local authority by the community is not spontaneous. It is a collective action which involves eliciting the cooperation of an overwhelming segment of the community for the common good. Defection or free-riding constitutes the most critical bane of collective action and the most important challenge of community organizing. This study seeks to understand and explain the relationship between downward accountability through community pressures and the effectiveness of local government.

The study compares Apa Local Government with Khana local government in Ogoniland where the local authority is highly responsive to the local citizens in terms of service delivery and forging partnership for job creation. To achieve this, the study is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is the introduction which contains the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives, questions, methodology and justification of the study. In chapter two, the most important concepts used in the research are operationalized and the theoretical underpinnings set down. Chapter three deals with the inputs that the federal government has made into the creation of effective and efficient local government in terms of local decision-making powers, financial and human resources as well, as accountability mechanisms. In chapter four, an introduction to the two case studies, Apa and Khana local governments, is presented. Chapter five is the analysis of the output from the selected local governments with respect to their responsiveness to local demands. The last chapter contains the major findings of the research, the conclusion and recommendations.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is a federation constituted by the central government (also referred to as the federal government), 36 states (self-governing at the regional level) which are the constitutional units of the Federation, and 774 local governments below the states. Each local government is composed of wards which are in turn composed of two or three villages. However, the lowest level of government is the local government. Each tier of government derives its legal status and existence as well as powers from the federal constitution which defines their respective functions, areas of jurisdiction and overlap. The Federation is a democracy and operates under the presidential system of government with clear separation of powers among the different arms of government at the three levels (federal, state and local). While the federal government is headed by an elected president, the states by elected governors and local governments by elected chairmen.

With the growing revenue base of the federation, the revenues of local government in Nigeria have expanded, as they are now constitutionally entitled to 20% of Federation Account, 30 % of VAT and 10% of internally generated revenue of their respective states (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998: 13). But in spite of this growth in revenue, populations in local government areas in Nigeria have continued to recede into the periphery in terms of political participation, economic development, as well as social and physical infrastructure. Unfortunately, this huge inflow is continually being diverted from its intended use and captured by the local elite who also dominate the politics of local government. Elite capture of federal fiscal transfers to local government fiscal is so prevalent that even the president admitted it by saying, 'chairmen and councillors just share the allocations for councils among themselves', cited by Ezomon (2001: 11).

Apart from a few urban municipalities, local governments in Nigeria have remained inefficient and ineffective in spite of sustained federal government efforts through various reforms as mentioned above to establish a system of viable, strong units of local governments. The set objectives of devolution have become more elusive with the increased autonomy of local governments.

To ensure a system of accountability, the following measures were built into the design of local government: separation of powers, probe/inquiry, documented financial instructions,

Public Accounts Committees, quarterly returns to the State Government, and expenditure ceilings (Onu 2002: 7-11). In addition to these, the Civil Service Reforms of 1988 established the Office of the Auditor-General for local government; an Audit Alarm system; and a review of the sanctions on offences for financial misconduct (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998: 13).

But these measures are predominantly characterized by an upward relationship between local governments and the higher tiers of government. Connections of patronage between local and higher elites have reduced these provisions to toothless documents. However progressive a particular national administration could be, the system of upward accountability appears to have been impaired by the relations of patronage characterizing intergovernmental monitoring.

What is lacking in the design of local governments in Nigeria is a system of downward accountability that would subject local governments to effective monitoring and control by their local citizens. Local citizens constitute the communities within the jurisdiction of a particular local government. They are part of the patchwork of local politics and they are constantly conversant with activities of their local governments, and they are better equipped to keep a constant eye on the budget of councils than agents of higher levels of government (though necessary). Neglecting or not recognizing the capacity of local communities in the design of local governments has defeated the goal of effective decentralization and created loopholes for elite capture of resources meant to transform the grassroots in Nigeria.

1.3. Research Objectives:

The main objective of this study is to explore the causal relationship between the accountability of local governments to their constituency and their development performance. This relationship will be studied by comparing the performance of Khana local government in Rivers State where some downward accountability is taking place with Apa local government where it is relatively absent.

Specific objectives of the study include:

- (a) To explain power of collective action by mobilized and organised communities in building popular control over local government;

- (b) To understand and explain the effect of downward accountability of local government on democratic local governance;
- (c) To explore how downward accountability of local government can be promoted for local development; and
- (d) To suggest other policy options on the basis of the findings in the case studies.

1.4. Research Questions:

The central question of this study is: Does downward accountability of local governments enhance their development performance?

- (a) Does collective action produce accountability of local governments to their communities?
- (b) Under what conditions is collective action effective at the local level?
- (c) What are the roles of the central government, if any, in promoting downward accountability of local governments in the process of decentralization?

1.5. Hypothesis:

This study is guided by the hypothesis that Apa Local Governments cannot be effective and efficient unless the power of local elites is curbed, and this can be done through collective action by local residents.

1.6. Research Methodology and Limitations:

This study is a comparative study based on secondary data sources. These include books, articles, documents, journals and reports, dealing with devolution as well as with collective action in Nigeria.

Cases of two local governments are used in this study for comparison. They are Khana and Apa Local Governments. Apa is a rural local government where no research has ever been

done on local government performance. It has been, thus, difficult to arrive at any piece of relevant information in the literature on the area for this paper. Worse still, media coverage is virtually non-existent in this local government. Therefore most of the information used for this case is based on my first-hand knowledge and experience as a staff and resident of Apa local government in the last ten years. It has also been difficult to obtain information on the internal revenues of the local government. But even in Khana local government, data on service delivery, internal revenue generation and local economic development is also very much less than the actual facts on the ground. Direct observation again is partly used to supplement documented sources.

These local governments have enough in common to be compared. As stated in the background, the local government system is unified nationally. They share similar governmental institutions and structures; they are created and regulated within the same constitutional and policy framework through the national guidelines for local governments and other subsequent national instruments of reforms; they receive roughly the same statutory financial allocation from the Federation Account; and they are given equal powers for local taxation. However, in terms of total revenues, Khana is in a much better position due to the presence of Shell petroleum in the area and because of its proximity to Port Harcourt, one of the richest commercial cities in the country. All the same, since data on internal revenues are lacking in both cases, and since they both enjoy huge financial transfers from the Federation Account, comparison is based on the degree to which they are responsive to the development priorities of their citizens. The argument is not so much about how much they have as about how they respond to citizen demands with what they have.

One major dissimilarity on the basis of which comparison is made is their development performance. Unlike Apa, there are evidences of appreciable local development performance in Khana. Again, Khana is composed of communities with a history of popular collective action, whereas no such tradition exists in Apa. The purpose of this case selection is to isolate the effect of other factors and study the plausibility of relationship between downward accountability and development performance of local government. Thus the sampling is designed to identify the plausible effect of downward accountability on the development performance of local governments.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There has been a shift in the debate on the central concern of decentralization in which emphasis is gradually being laid on local *governance* as against the traditional preoccupation with local government (Helmsing 2001). The latter is concerned with the question of how decision-making power of government should be devolved to local authorities for better local delivery of services. This concerns the transfer of public responsibilities and powers within the public sector. But today, the concern is being broadened to include the question of how other critical local non-state actors could play a role in local service delivery as well as local development. As argued by Helmsing (2000: 5), the traditional questions of 'which level of government is more appropriate' and 'what are the political, administrative and fiscal powers of local government', have, since the 1990s, become secondary to a more fundamental questioning of the relations between the state and society.

The new framework of devolution of decision-making power is not limited to local governments alone but as well to all local players including private enterprises and community organizations. Part of this new framework is the concern to strengthen the capacity of local government, private enterprises and civil society in the identification of need and preferences, setting of goals and priorities, and formulation of policy to promote the development of localities.

As Cohen and Peterson (1997) rightly note, the shift from the monocentric approach, where the local government was the only subject of devolution, the allocation of decision-making authority through local institutional pluralism is the key for promoting accountability and equity in most developing countries. This is because many government programmes (including traditional decentralization) are mere political instruments to buy votes and to serve as a smokescreen for fraud and corruption (Bennett 1990). The involvement of local non-state actors as critical actors is being seen as extending the devolution of decision-making authority beyond local government to society. Of particular relevance to this study is the role of the community, in the chain of decentralization, to take active part in decisions of local governance as it affects their welfare.

In the light of this shifting emphasis, it is important to identify and operationalize the key concepts to be used and to situate the theoretical context in which this study is undertaken.

2.1. DEFINING CONCEPTS

2.1.1. Decentralization

Decentralization has been defined in various ways by different authors, and embraces a variety of concepts which require clarification here. One of the most comprehensive definitions is the one given by Rondinelli and Nellis. They see it as the transfer of responsibility from the central government and its agencies to either field units of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations, lower levels of government, or the private sector (Rondinelli and Nellis 1986, p.5). What is implied here and on what the literature on the concept is generally agreed is that decentralization involves the dispersal of the powers of the national state to other units outside the structure of the central government. It involves a deliberate attempt to move away from centralization – the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector (Litvack 2002). Conventionally, the literature is generally agreed on decentralization as involving three forms, *deconcentration*, *delegation* and *devolution*, although privatization has come to be seen as part of decentralization since the work of Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema (1984). Each of these forms is usually undertaken as a composite of three aspects: political, administrative and fiscal decentralization.

DECONCENTRATION

Deconcentration has been defined as the transfer of management responsibilities and resources to agents of the central government located outside the headquarters at one or more levels (province, region, division and district) (Adamolekun 1999, 49). In this form, the decentralization takes place within the structures of the central government, and merely reduces the concentration at the centre by dispersing functions to field administration. It involves the redistribution of decision-making and administration of public functions among different levels of the central government. It has been

regarded as the weakest form of decentralization and is used most frequently in unitary states (World Bank 2002, 2). Different ministries transfer their functions and authority to regional and local outposts. This means that decision-making still remains at the centre and the decentralization is limited because it only involves relations between central level governments and their lower tiers (FAO 2002, 2).

Deconcentration could shift responsibilities from central government officials in the capital city to those working in the regions, provinces or districts. It could also create a strong local administrative capacity under the supervision of central government ministries. As McCourt and Minogue (2001, 101) would put it, it involves the top-down delegation of central administrative functions and capacity, retaining accountability to the centre.

DELEGATION

Delegation is the transfer of authority and managerial responsibility for *specific* functions to organizations outside the central government (Adamolekun 1999, 50). In this form, specific a responsibility is transferred to regional or functional development authority or other semi-autonomous agency, and it usually occurs in sectors with sound income-generating base (McCourt and Minogue 2001, 101). Examples of such semi-autonomous authorities are management boards for schools and hospitals, and state-owned enterprises in such sectors as public transport, energy and communications.

DEVOLUTION

Devolution occurs when the central government transfers the authority for decision-making, finance and management to quasi-autonomous units of local governments with corporate status (World Bank 2002, 2). An essential feature of this form is the transfer of discretionary authority to local governments so that the supervisory role of the central government is limited. It is a political arrangement whereby specific powers, responsibilities and resources are given by the central government to sub-national levels of government, which could be regional, state, provincial, municipal or local governments. In a devolved arrangement, these sub-national governments elect their own officials, raise their own revenues, and have independent authority to make investment decisions (World Bank 2002). They also have clearly and legally defined geographical boundaries within which they exercise authority and perform their

public functions. It involves the creation or strengthening financially or legally of sub-national units of government (local governments) to perform activities outside the direct control of central government. The rationale of this form of decentralization includes the need to take government closer to the people; the localness of local government functions which cannot be appropriately or efficiently provided by the central government or the private sector; and the need to respond to demands for internal self-government (Rondinelli 1981a) in Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema (1984: 27).

However, for the purpose of this study, the concept of decentralization here is used strictly in the sense of devolution, also interchangeably referred to as democratic decentralization. Three important dimensions of decentralization (fiscal, political and administrative) shall be measured. Indicators of *fiscal decentralization* used include:

1. The power of local government to raise revenue,
2. The size and regularity of national transfers, and
3. Local government budget autonomy.

The *political* dimension of decentralization is measured by:

1. The functions or decision-making powers transferred to local government, and
2. The degree of its political autonomy.

Indicators of *administrative decentralization* here are: personnel management, size and quality of personnel.

2.1.2. Downward Accountability

This concept is an extension of the concept of accountability. Accountability is used to mean the ability to answer for one's actions or behaviour. Within the public sector it is generally established that the individuals who exercise state authority can be held accountable for actions of the state they represent (Olowu 1999). It has also been defined as the obligation of an instrument to perform within the specified jurisdiction and comply with the rules set by its owner (Tayeb 1995).

Accountability in local government is very important in order to ensure democracy and good governance, to check waste and to legitimize resource inflows at the local level. To ensure such a system of accountability, there need to be in place a clear definition of responsibilities, a reporting mechanism and a system of review reward

and sanctions (Olowu 1999). Ribot (1999) describes accountability as the exercise of counter power to balance arbitrary action which can be divided into answerability, and enforcement.

Accountability can be rendered to a higher authority in an upward direction or to a lower authority in a downward direction. Upward accountability of local government may be to the state or federal government or both or to a specialized agency created by higher levels of government to monitor and control the conduct of local government. By extension downward accountability is used here to mean the answerability of local government officials (particularly political office holders) to its local citizens in a truly democratically devolved system. This involves the expectation that local government will be willing to accept advice and criticism from the community and to modify its practices in the light of that advice and criticism in a way that makes government community-owned.

The indicators used for assessing *downward accountability* in this paper include:

1. Community awareness of local government finance,
2. Amount of powers devolved to communities by local government,
3. The extent of community involvement in local government budget as well as its development policy,
4. The obligation of local leaders to provide information and explanations to their constituencies for the decisions and actions they took as power holders,
5. The ability of local citizens to apply sanctions if they are not satisfied with the explanations they get from local leaders, and
6. Legal and political recognition of CBOs by the state.

2.1.3. Community Enablement

Community enablement falls within the rethinking of the role of government from direct intervention in basic service delivery to providing the enabling environment for other critical actors in the quest for development. This new thinking of government as an enabler sees the function of government as essentially facilitating and regulating the framework within which other actors can make their most effective contribution. Enabling governments involve other non-state actors in the formulation and implementation of government policies and programmes. These actors include

communities and their organizations, voluntary organizations as well as private enterprises (Helmsing 2000).

Communities as local actors can be enabled by central and local government by facilitating the efforts of communities and their organizations to take part in decisions affecting their livelihood and welfare. This has to do with government creating the appropriate legal, administrative and public planning frameworks to facilitate community organization, management and action (Helmsing 1998) in Helmsing (2000: 13). For communities to meaningfully participate in local governance there needs to be some form of legal and political recognition of their representative bodies by the state. In other words, community enablement entails granting legal status to community-based organizations (CBOs) and legitimizing them politically as autonomous actors in local decision-making.

Indicators to used for *community enablement* are

1. The availability of voice mechanisms for local citizens to express their views to the state;
2. Exit mechanisms for citizens to switch to non-public services; and
3. Central government legal and political frameworks to institutionalize community ownership and control of local government.

2.1.4. Development Performance

Defining development performance requires a grasp of local development. While development deals with the problem of enlarging people's access to opportunities, what is local deals with the access to opportunities for people living in a locality — part of the national territory (Helmsing and Guimaraes 1997). But because access to opportunities depends on opportunities available (an economic question) and the way they are distributed (a political question), promoting local development entails creating conditions which enable local communities to assume an active role in enlarging their opportunities (Lathrop 1997: 96 & 97).

Development performance as used in this paper, therefore, refers to the output side of devolution. It measures the actual performance of local governments in terms of stimulating local economic development, as a product of inputs such as devolution of

financial and human resources, assignment of responsibilities and application of accountability. It measures the extent to which local government has affected the choices of local citizens.

Indicators for measuring this performance include the responsiveness of local government to local citizens, change in the amount of jobs created by local government, quantity and quality of basic social services provided, level of income generation, and the control of the policy environment for local governance.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The task of holding local governments accountable by communities is quite an uphill one. It is an enterprise that requires a tradition of cooperation for collective action which is only possible in a community that is organised. The difficulties and costs of organizing communities for collective action are quite enormous, posing concerns that generated a lot of attempts at theorizing in the literature.

2.2.1. The Problem of Community Organizing

Since the pioneering work of Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), the major problematique of collective action has come to centre on how to ensure cooperation among members of a group to achieve common group interests (collective goods). Olson's analysis on this dilemma has since then sparked off quite some debate in the literature in attempts to develop a systematic theory of collective action.

Olson sees the problem in human rational motive of self-interest which would not permit cooperative action for the common goal, especially in a large group. As cited by Udéhn (1993: 239), Olson argues that 'unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interest'.

At the base of Olson's argument are two fundamental assumptions (there are other less fundamental ones), namely the nature of collective goods and human rationality. For

him, collective goods are characterized by non-excludability *of group members who do not contribute to the cost of their provision*¹, and so the most rational course of action for individuals in the group is to freely enjoy the benefits of collective goods while defecting in contributing to the cost of providing them (Olson 1965), in other words, free-riding.

Olson's proposition also clearly identifies relatively small group size and some mechanism of coercion as two alternative prerequisites for cooperative behaviour of individual group members. He contends that in a small group free-riding is not a problem because at least a member of the group has an incentive to undertake the provision of collective good as the benefits of a collective good exceeds the its total cost of production (1965: 240). But in a large group individual benefit from the collective good falls too far below the cost of organizing which is too high, a situation that makes collective action impossible as it creates an incentive for free-riding rather than cooperation. In such a situation, concludes Olson, large groups need to employ some coercive measures to secure cooperation.

Though Olson help pioneered the application of the economic model of rationality in the explanation of collective action, his proposition has drawn the criticism of other writers who have sought to take the analysis some steps further (Udéhnn 1993).

One of the most valuable contributions to the development of the theory of collective action is the introduction of the notion of *social capital* by Robert Putnam (1993) in the analysis of the dilemma of collective action in large and complex social settings.

In his work, *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam takes the argument deeper into the insights of what he refers to as *social trust*, *norms of reciprocity*, and *networks of civil engagement* (1993:171). He defines social capital as 'features of social organization such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions', and whose accumulation in a community facilitates voluntary and spontaneous cooperation (1993:167).

Using the illustration of rotating credit association (a pervasive saving system within a group whose members make periodic financial contribution to a common fund which is given to each contributor in turn), Putnam shows the potency of social capital as a

¹ Italics added

force violating the logic of collective action. There is a high risk of a member defaulting in contribution after having received others' contribution, yet rotating credit associations continue to prosper even where there exists no legal authority to punish defection (1993:168). He locates the explanation in the selection of members at the outset where certain criteria are used. The criteria include a reputation of honesty and reliability, ascertained on the basis of previous record of participation in another rotating credit association in the past. The survival and growth of these associations are based, in many societies, on social networks supported by a tradition of reciprocity and mutual trust. Trust is diffused and spread by social networks as people would tend to say, 'I trust you, because I trust her and she assures me that she trusts you' (1993:169).

Putnam takes the analysis beyond rotating credit associations to complex social settings where he identifies norms of reciprocity and networks of civil engagement as two sources of social trust. Generalized reciprocity is defined by Putnam as 'a continuing relationship of exchange that ... involves mutual expectations that a benefit granted now should be repaid in the future' (1993:172). Udéhn thinks along the same line by arguing that agreements that are embedded in the structure of personal relationship create disincentives against defection and breeds trust (1993).

On the networks of civil engagement, Putnam cites such examples as neighbourhood associations, choral societies, cooperatives, etc and contends that the denser such networks in a community, the more likely its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit (1993:173).

One of the reasons offered for this powerful advantage of networks of civil engagement is that they promote rich norms of reciprocity which are reinforced by a reputation for keeping promises and accepting the norms of the local community, Ostrom (in Putnam 1993: 173).

Putnam also makes the case for networks of civil engagement as having the capacity of increasing the potential costs to a defector in a transaction of collective endeavour (1993: 173).

Again, by facilitating communication and the flow of information on the reliability of individuals, networks of civil engagement enhances mutual trust and makes it easier for people to cooperate, Knoke (in Putnam 1993: 173).

Another strength of networks of civil engagement has been identified in its embodiment of past successes at collaboration, which serves as a cultural model for future collaboration, North (in Putnam 1993: 173).

Thus while recognizing the problem of community organizing for collective action, it has been shown that this problem can be overcome by trust, experience and a perception of common cause.

Yet, communities are not homogeneous. They are places of competition and conflict as well as vast power inequality. Even where the community organizing has been achieved, the benefits can be captured by community leaders who are usually the men, the adults, and the educated who have the time and resources. This leads to the problem of elite capture.

2.2.2. Elite Capture

Thoughts about *elite capture* have been developed under different appellations in the literature on corruption in the public sector and public-sector reforms, including decentralization. Most of the concern in the literature has centred on the questions of public allocation of resources, inclusion, participation and empowerment of communities, local population and beneficiaries in decentralized local decision making.

Elite capture at the local level is a situation where access to decision making, power and resources for local governance is monopolized by local elites and from which the ordinary local citizens are excluded. The phrase *rent-seeking* has also been used in thinking about the capture of resources by the elite class. Writing in *Questioning the State*, Mackintosh (1992: 72) defines rent-seeking as the waste of resources as a result of personal pursuit of income-earning opportunities that are created by state regulation. While not agreeing with the argument for total state deregulation, it is instructive to draw from Mackintosh that the deliberate creation of higher incomes for the selected few (rents) by public officials, which their clients waste resources trying to cash in on, establishes the conditions for public sector corruption (1992: 73). This point is further elucidated with the observation that officials as regulators collaborate

with their clients to develop ties of mutual accommodation which is detrimental to the public interest (1992: 73).

On *The Dangers of Decentralization*, Rémy Prud'homme has points out that devolution of powers to local government might be accompanied by more corruption (1995: 211). One of the issues raised on this subject, among others, is the relative underdevelopment of monitoring and auditing reinforced by the lack of media coverage at the local level. He argues that this factor creates an incentive for more corruption at the local level than at the national level.

The question of information is also raised in studies conducted by the IRIS Center under the auspices of the World Bank's Netherlands Trust Fund. IRIS (2000) conducted surveys in Uganda and the Philippines on devolution and quality of governance and corruption to answer the question, "Under what conditions does decentralized governance prove most effective?"

Results of the study show that effective decentralization depends critically on the flow of information. Due to poor media coverage on these cases, as in most local governments in Nigeria, it is discovered that local citizens depend on local elites for information on local politics of resource allocation. Under such circumstances, local leaders may limit the information they make available to residents, thus creating the potential for elite capture of local government and may explain the apparent weakness of local accountability in practice.

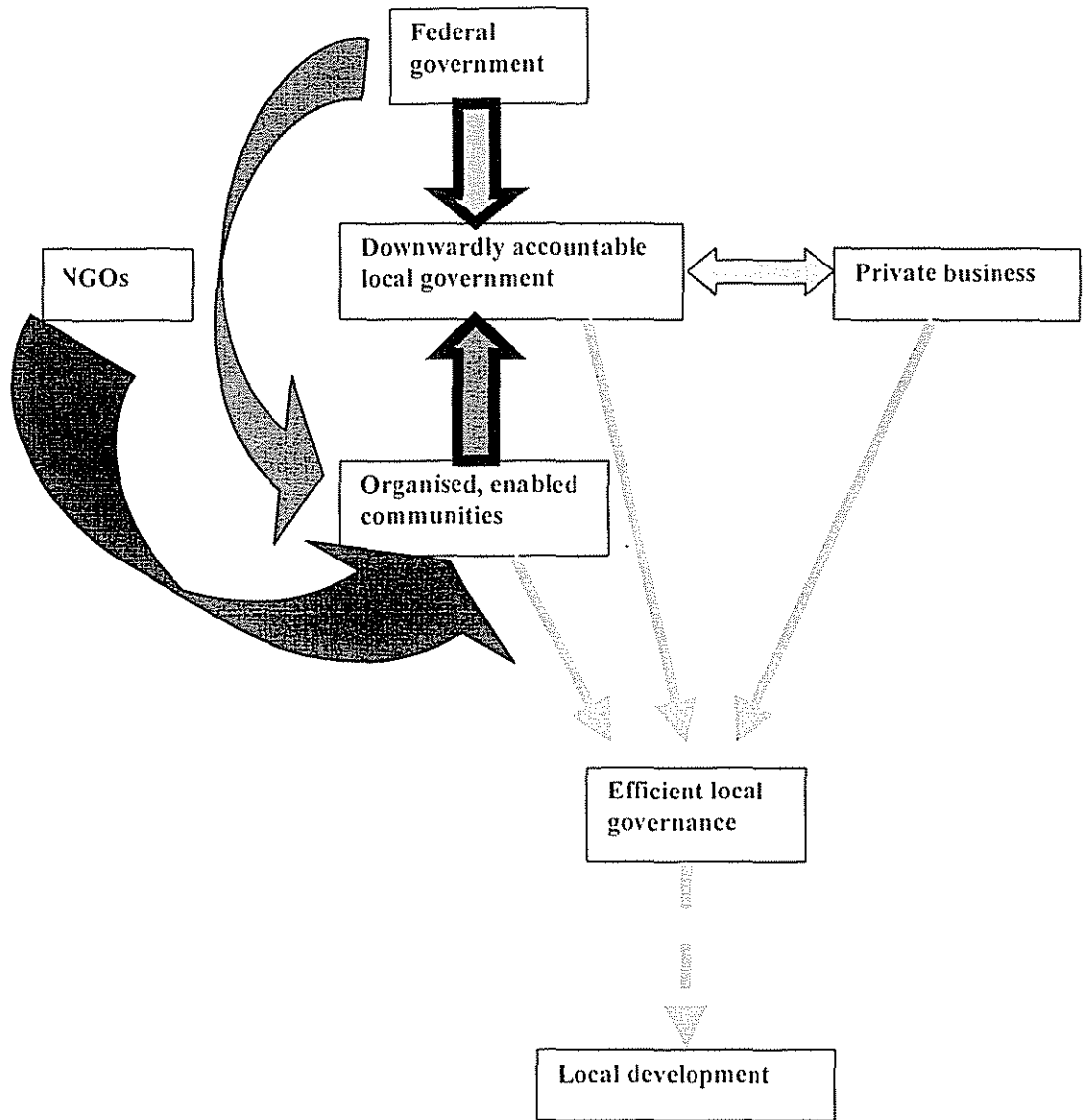
Since information flow is very limited at the local level, effective local governance decision-making requires that the local population be represented in an accountable manner. In the absence of such representation, as Lonsdale (1986) puts it, there is a danger that decision-making could be taken over by elite groups, with potentially harmful implications for effective and efficient local governance.

But, even where government is accountable to CBOs, the benefits do not necessarily spread to every member of the community. Community leaders tend to seek vertical ties with politicians, administrators and other power holders to gain from patronage, and thus perpetuate corruption and reinforce the existing inequality along gender, class and clan lines (Friedmann, 1993: 29; Botes and van Rensburg, 2000: 49).

In the context of the new wave of democratic decentralization, downward accountability or local accountability, as used interchangeably in the literature, is the essence of local governance. It makes local government responsive to local needs and preferences, while officials are made more directly answerable for their decisions and performance (Davey 1993).

The traditional norm of upward accountability where local government is answerable only to the central government or other higher tiers of government has proved to be an insufficient mechanism to make local government responsive to its constituencies and thus lacking the potential to fulfill its *raison d'être*. In the quest for local transparency and accountability, the only answer lies outside the state. In the words of Roy (1999), 'the answer is not in stronger laws, stricter punishment and more visits to the villages to supervise and look at the account books'. It will take the potency of local people organised on a large scale for collective action in the form of political pressures to effect and sustain the change of attitude among officials and local elites, who become constantly aware that they are under close observation (Wit 2000).

This community-led change of attitude is crucial in order to foster efficient and innovative public-private and public-community partnership to create new jobs and stimulate local economic development. Enabled by appropriate legal and political frameworks, and assisted by NGOs, grassroots organizations of the people can organize and pressurize the local state into these partnerships and make them responsive to local priorities. This argument is presented in the chart below:



CHAPTER 3

DEVOLVED POWERS, RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Democratic decentralization in Nigeria began with the Local Government Reform of 1976. Until then local government was characterized by mere deconcentration of central functions to field administrations within the structures of the national government. The reform involved the creation of a uniform national system of relatively internal self-governing local governments with unprecedented responsibilities and financial resources transferred from the central government, and whose legal status as a third tier of government within the federation was later enshrined in the constitution of 1979. It also provided for an elected Chief Executive and a representative council; regular funding of local governments by federal and state governments; powers for internal revenue generation; and the autonomy of local governments for budget appropriation.

Since the establishment of the modern local government system in 1976, the Federal Government under various administrations has continued to transfer powers and responsibilities to local governments, as well as the resources to match these responsibilities. These are inputs to make local governments effective in stimulating grassroots democracy and efficient local service delivery, as autonomous nodes of grassroots development. These inputs have been made through various public service reforms. It should be noted that, since the reform of 1976, the local government system in Nigeria is unified and thus most of the inputs (from the Federal Government) to the local governments are across the board.

In this chapter I consider the inputs in the form of devolution under four categories, namely, functions and decision-making powers, fiscal powers, human resource capacity, and structures of accountability.

3.1. Functions and Decision-making Powers

The local government reform of 1976 devolved profound functions and responsibilities over which the new local governments had a high degree of autonomy of decision – making. The reform laid a set of broad national guidelines for local government within which only minor modifications by each state government is

allowed to suit its peculiarities. The goal of this is to ensure equal opportunities of development for all sections of the federation².

These guidelines includes the abolition of the “provincial”, “divisional” or “development” administration system under which local administration was the responsibility of state governments through state field administrative officers. These were replaced with multi-purpose single-tier institutions called ‘local governments’ (Idobe 1980: 394). This new status of local government as an autonomous third tier of government was enshrined in the federal constitution of 1979, giving it a crucial legal basis and freeing it from the arbitrary interference of overarching states.

The guidelines assigned a number of responsibilities to local governments and these responsibilities are classified into two broad groups: mandatory local governments’ functions and those functions which they have to perform concurrently with their state governments. These responsibilities are enshrined in the 1979 and subsequent constitutions of the federation.

Some of the most important mandatory responsibilities of local government worth mentioning here, as contained in the fourth schedule, Part 1, section 7 of the 1999 constitution include:

- (a) formulation of economic planning and development schemes for the Local Government Area;
- (b) collection of rates, fees, etc;
- (c) construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings drains, parks, gardens, open spaces and similar public facilities;
- (d) provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal; and
- (e) assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a State.

The concurrent list (Nigeria 1976 and 1999) includes:

- (a) provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education;

² The guideline is embodied in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Guidelines for Local Government Reform* (Kaduna: Government Printer, 1976).

- (b) development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals; and
- (c) provision and maintenance of health services;
- (d) rural/semi-urban water supply; as well as
- (e) such other functions as may be prescribed by a State House of Assembly.

Apart from the allocation of responsibilities, the creation and strengthening of local governments with autonomous powers of decision-making has been an important on-going national programme since the 1976 reform. The Civil Service Reform of 1988 abolished the States' Ministries of Local Government, which had been in charge of local government since 1976, and established a system of locally elected Councillors and a Chairman, making up a council with the Chairman as the head of a council and Chief Executive as well as Accounting Officer of a local government. This enhanced the autonomy of local councils which were, until then, headed by State-appointed Secretaries and Administrators.

Furthermore, local governments acquired full autonomy to approve the local budget and to pass bye-laws through the Local Government Decree (No.23) of 1991. This instrument also removed the spending limits of local government above which the approval of the State must be sought (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998, 6).

The guideline on the functions of local governments classifies them as the third tier of government endowed with the freedom of action to perform its constitutional functions unfettered. However, local governments as the third tier of government still retain functional and fiscal relations with the other higher tiers. While the Federal government sets the national guidelines and takes charge of fiscal transfers, the State government offers advice, assistance and guidance (but not control) to the local governments.

3.2. Fiscal Powers

Local governments not only had expanded autonomy, but they also gained enhanced revenue powers. Since 1976 successive national governments have regularly transferred huge resources to local governments in an effort to strengthen their capacity to perform their constitutional responsibilities and to realize the general objectives of the programme of devolution.

To free local governments of incessant interference by state governments with their statutory allocation, the federal government abolished the practice of transfers through the states to local governments. Thus from 1988 all statutory financial entitlements of local governments have been transferred directly from the Federation Account (Federally collected revenues). Local government share of the Federation Account has risen from 10% in 1977 through 15% in 1990 to 20% since 1992. The value-added tax (VAT) system was introduced in 1994, and from 1998, 30% of it is allocated to local governments. States were being mandated to transfer 10% of their internally generated revenue to local governments within their jurisdiction (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998, 11), although State governments have continued to default on this obligation.

The 1976 reform defined the following sources of revenues over which local governments have exclusive rights:

- (a) Property Rating, including subventions in lieu of rates on government properties,
- (b) Levies on undeveloped plots of land used for commercial purposes and
- (c) Development, capitation and other general rates.

Local government tax powers have also been expanded since 1997 to include levy on shops, slaughter fees, marriage fees, motor park fees, and cattle tax.

Yet, apart from a few urban municipalities, most local governments depend on federal transfers and grants for nearly all their revenues. The table below shows the growth of local government revenue and its structure between 1993 and 1999.

Table1. Revenue Structure of Nigerian Local Governments

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
	In millions of naira						
Total revenue and grants	19,617	18,860	24,682	23,790	31,398	36,852	54,124
Federation account	18,573	17,669	18,447	18,272	21,552	27,246	39,527
Value-added tax	...	...	4,265	3,307	7160	6,977	11,394
Internal revenue	1,044	1,191	1,970	2,211	2,687	2,609	3,144
Grants	...	...	...	...	...	20	59
	In percentage						
Total revenue and grants	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Federation account	94.7	93.7	74.7	76.8	68.6	73.9	73
Value-added tax	...	...	17.3	13.9	22.8	18.9	21.1
Internal revenue	5.3	6.3	8	9.3	8.6	7.1	5.8
Grants						0.1	0.1

Source: Adapted from the IMF Country Report No. 01/132, p.10

The data above has been the most recent presentation of the fiscal structure of local government, as most fiscal data are limited to the operations of the federal government and lacking comprehensive and consistent coverage on local governments. It is also acknowledged that the table lumps all local governments together as a uniform system. But of importance is the obvious fact that in terms of actual money, transfers from the federation account have grown substantially every year between 1993 and 1999, apart from 1994 and 1996 when they dropped slightly.

This progressive increase can only be explained by growth in the federation account since local government share of this account has remained fixed at 20%. In terms of proportion to total revenue and grants, transfers tend to fluctuate and then drop as revenue from value-added tax rises. Also internal revenue peaked in 1997 and has slumped till 1999, meaning that both revenues from the federation account and value-added tax have been on the rise up till 1999. Figures on the internal revenues of specific local governments have been difficult to come by apart from what is reflected in national aggregates.

However, the revenue allocation formula since the year 2000 has involved the creation of a special Fund for the Niger Delta Development Commission, set up to compensate the oil-producing states of the Niger Delta, including Rivers State where Khana is located. This means

that Khana local government receives more than Apa. Yet this is a very recent development, and besides, the concern here is more with the responsiveness of local authorities to local needs and preferences for efficient allocation of these transfers

3.3. Human Resource Capacity

There has been no uniform attempt to enhance the human resource capacity of local governments, apart from the establishment of the Local Government Service Commission. The Commission, formerly known as Board, at the State level is responsible for recruiting qualified senior-cadre personnel and deploying them to local governments (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998: 3-4).

However, the federal government created an enabling environment for the improvement of the manpower of local governments. In 1979, it set up training programmes for local government staff in three institutions, the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In addition, the government deducts 1% of local government allocation at source and dedicates it to a training fund administered by the Local Government Service Commission to support local government manpower development (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998: 4).

It is hard to deduce that these provisions do encourage manpower development at the same pace for all local governments. The fact that access to these provisions by junior staff (who form the bulk of staff) vary across local governments is worthy of note. Again, the comparatively better conditions of service in the private sector, usually in the cities, attracts manpower away from local governments as they acquire more education and skills.

3.4. Structures of Accountability

Accountability is a major instrument of instilling public trust or confidence in any organizational set up and is therefore imperative that someone has to answer for the success and failure of local government as an organization (Onu 2002: 8), and accountability could be seen in terms of intra- and inter-organisational relationship. Successive national governments have been concerned with the question of accountability in local government. The most profound attempt to establish a system

of a system of accountability at this level of government came with the 1988 Civil Service Reform. Among the important elements of this reform were the establishment of the Office of the Auditor-General for Local Government and the Audit Alarm Committees at the state level; and the review of sanctions against financial misconduct (Onu 1991).

Furthermore, the Local Government Decree (No.23) of 1991 extended the application of the presidential system to local governments, with the attendant principle of separation of powers between the Council (legislature) and the Executive (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998: 6). The aim of this is to ensure that the executive is controlled against abuse of power and office by the council, acting as representative of the local citizens.

As contained in the Handbook on Local Government in Nigeria (1991), the Chief Executive of a local government shall also be the Accounting Officer. He or she shall render monthly statements of account and annual reports to the Council to ensure checks and balances. The Chief Executive is also responsible to the State Governor to whom quarterly reports are submitted (Onu 2002: 7-11). There are number of other rules, regulations and guidelines governing the roles and conduct of the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer to ensure organizational accountability in local government.

Each local government has an Internal Audit Unit, headed by an Auditor who reports to the Chairman as the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the local government. The Auditor also reports to the State Auditor-General for Local Government. The State Auditor-General for Local Government is also the Chairman of the Audit Alarm Committee. Other members of this Committee are the Director of Local Government Inspectorate (representing the State Governor) and a Representative of the State Accountant-General's Office.³

Profound as these measures may be, it is strikingly apparent that they deal exclusively with the intra-organizational accountability and inter-organizational upward accountability.

The former is concerned with the accountability of the local government bureaucracy to its political leadership. The latter deals with the subordination of the Chief-Executive to the State

³ See details in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1991).

monitoring, a vertical relationship where local government is accountable to its state government. They both involve a system of rules and sanctions to enhance performance and productivity in local government.

What is glaring is the absence of any arrangement of checks on local government by community; or any arrangement that ensures the downward accountability of local government to local citizens. Of course, the Executive and Council are elected by the local population, but there exists no political mechanism within the framework of the 1988 Civil Service Reform (nor any other reform) for exercising effective community control over the political leadership. It is only supposed that community control is exercised through periodic elections, and that a government that is not responsive to community concerns would be voted out of office in the next election.

In sum, local government devolution in Nigeria has been very ambitious, based on the philosophical justifications that devolution creates the opportunities for mobilizing local resources for responsive development, training in citizenship and popular participation in the political process. To achieve these, the government has devolved responsibilities, powers, financial and human resources as well as accountability measures to local governments. The question to ask then is how far has this devolution yielded the desired results, taking Apa as the focus of this study? In other words have the inputs been processed into outputs in Apa local government after more than a decade of its existence?

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES

In this chapter I attempt to explore the background of the case studies, that is the two local governments, in terms of the institutional capacities of their communities, the existing traditional local networks, and their location advantages. The purpose of this introduction is to trace the existence of variables other than downward accountability, and which might result in any marked difference in the output of the cases. Such intervening variables will be identified and controlled as far as possible in the analysis, so as to objectively test the validity of the hypothesis of the study.

4.1. Community Institutional Capacity

Apa Local Government Area

Apa is one of the Idoma-speaking local governments in Benue State, which is in the north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. With headquarters in Ugbokpo, the local government was created in September 1991 as a product of the local government reform of the Babangida administration.

Until 1991 the most important institution was the traditional institution of political administration. The area is composed of such small towns as Ugbokpo, Igah-Okpaya, Ikobi and Oiji, and their adjoining villages, each of which is headed by a chief and a hierarchical council of elders representing extended families. This representative council system, which is as old as the communities, used to undertake responsibility for all major decisions on virtually every aspect of community life, ranging from sanitation to security, from law-making to enforcement, in a particular town or village. Implementation of key decisions was done by families, and for public goods, by all male adults coordinated by an elder appointed by the chief-in-council.

The Church also was a key institution. Churches had existed since colonial days and have come to be embedded in Apa communities as very influential institutions. Apart from the members of

the traditional town or village council, and a few traditionalists⁴, the majority of the people belong to one Christian denomination or the other. Other existing institutions include various trade and craft associations, business associations, rotating credit associations (popularly known as *Igeya*), youth associations as well as community development associations. But these community institutions suffered low resource base and could not compete favourably for residents' aspiration for development with the modern local government financed by huge transfers from the Federation Account.

The most critical institution in Apa is the local government council. Though there were a few community and business associations before the creation of the local government, they were quite weak, disconnected and lacking in networking. These conditions are necessary for building institutional thickness (Lathrop 1997: 101). Thus the local government was created in a vacuum of local institutional paucity, making it possible for the council to retain the monopoly of all important decisions. Policy decisions on local development as well as decisions on projects, revenue collection and use, and, most importantly, the budget are exclusively within the domain of the local government.

The council, like all other local government councils in the country, is politically headed by an elected Chairman and a councilor from each ward. Major policy decisions are taken by the Chairman and the elected councilors and are passed down to the bureaucracy of the council (heads of departments and their subordinates) for implementation. Such projects as primary school structures and primary healthcare units, where they exist, are planned, undertaken and located according to the whims of the Chairman-in-council, with little or no community consultation.

By implication, budget decisions, on the basis of which projects are undertaken, are controlled exclusively by the council. Thus the questions of who gets what, when and how are the exclusive preserves of the council. In other words, it controls the allocation of critical resources for job creation, income generation and social service delivery.

⁴ The word 'traditionalists' is used here to refer to people who do not subscribe to any of the existing

Khana Local Government

The Ogoni people are spread across three local governments in Rivers State, and form part of the famous Niger Delta. The local governments are Gokana, Khana, and Tai-Elеме. Although these are separate local governments, I have decided to look at Khana as an exemplary case, not withstanding the fact that they share cultural homogeneity and a history of strong solidarity for common goals.

The Khana communities, along with their Ogoni kins, as far back as 1945, had begun to coordinate community activities through a common front known as the Ogoni Central Union (Osaghae 1995). Another important community organization, famous for petitioning the then Military government in Rivers State in 1970 over the activities of Shell-BP in Ogoniland, is the Ogoni Divisional Committee (Osaghae 1995).

By the turn of the 1990s, other umbrella organizations in Khana, this time more formidable and radical than their predecessors, were beginning to emerge. Notable among them are the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Ethnic Minorities Rights Organization of Africa (EMIROAF) and the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP). Under the dynamic leadership of the late environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, these community-based organizations mounted intensive pressures on both the national and local state.

It is important to note that, though there exist other institutions such as the local governments and even the church, these radical community organizations appear to be most important to the people and most effective in community mobilization for the common good, undermining in some instances the authority of traditional chiefs and local elders who are seen as standing in the way of change.

4.2 Traditional Local Networks

By traditions local networks, I mean traditions and patterns of relationship existing among individuals and the important institutions, and how they mitigate the efficiency and effectiveness of the institution of local government in these case studies.

Apa local government area

As already pointed out, before the creation of the local government in September 1991, important local institutions consisted of the church, vigilante organisations, traditional councils and community development associations in the constituent villages and towns.

Traditionally, the chief-in-council used to be the highest political authority in Apa. Authority was passed from this body through the representatives of extended families (the *Igabos*), the head of each nuclear family and then to individuals. It also coordinated the activities of other institutions for mobilising voluntary community participation in local development.

One important resource this system drew from was the existence of a social network of relations based on mutual trust. Everyone knew everyone and had rich intimate knowledge of one another resulting from social bonds such as inter-family marriage, participation in rotating credit associations or from collective participation in provision of common goods like community roads, bridges or markets.

Through such network of relationships, individuals came to acquire reputation of trustworthiness and reliability which others form of them based on their past behaviour. Trustworthiness did help to establish a strong norm of mutual expectations for cooperation in the future for the common good. The church also had a strong influence on members and the community as a consequence of the moral authority of its leadership. Members were easily mobilized to volunteer themselves for community development activities like construction of community primary schools, clinics as well as cooperative farming activities.

The creation of the local government in 1991, however, raised expectations for accelerated local development in Apa since it brought the formal structures of government closer to the people. The reason for this expectation may not be far from the conventional wisdom of the time on the role of the state (national or local) as the provider⁵.

With this expectations of the local state, came a gradual decline of people's allegiance to existing local institutions which could have been some elements of civil society as potential forces for social transformation in the new context of devolved local government. No doubt, the creation of the local government brought about an alternative modern institution as an agent of

⁵ Due to the failures of the developmental state to meet the expectations of social transformation throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and thrown into bolder relief by the crisis of the 1980s, emphasis on

development. But actual local government administration also fails to build on local capacities of existing institutions. Ignoring traditional local institutional capacities has resulted in an inappropriate imposition of the modern structure of local administration on and the supplanting of the traditional political institution. It has witnessed a disconnection between the modern and traditional institutions of government in the locality, which has in turn led to the relegation of the traditional institution to a shadowy background.

In turn, the decline of these seeds of civil society with their potential capacity for pressurizing governments left the room for the new local government to assume a dominant role in development. It was also not difficult for the traditional chieftaincy to be subsumed under the authority of the local government, since the reform of 1976 vested all local authorities in the local government as a single tier of government at that level (Nigeria 1976).

Thus the relative lack of civil organizations created a political environment of institutional monocentrism and an acute shortage of a sense of a civic community and civic virtue marked by 'interest in public issues and devotion to public causes', Walzer in Putnam (1993).

Khana

The Ogonis have a rather more enduring tradition of social mobilization and what Putnam would refer to as 'networks of civic engagement' (Putnam 1993: 173-176). As shown earlier the tradition of civil organizations in Khana has been in practice (since the 1940s) long before the independence of Nigeria.

Even with the emergence of modern local government, the people have continued through their civil organizations to participate assertively in the public domain for the articulation and aggregation of community interests. The discovery and exploration of petroleum in Ogoniland in the late 1950s and consequent ordeal of environmental degradation as well as destruction of farmlands and fishing foisted a sense of common threat on the various clans and united them in a common front. By 1970, the Ogoni Divisional Committee had taken their engagement beyond the local administration to the level of the state government. The upgrading of engagement reached its height with the formation of MOSOP, NYCOP and EMIROAF in the early 1990s for high-level engagement with the Federal Government, a military dictatorship at the time.

the role of the state began to shift by the turn of the 1990s from the provider to the coordinator and enabler of other key non-state institutions for sustainable development. See World Bank Report

This institutional pluralism was efficiently utilized by a virile leadership in the person of the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, described by Osaghae as a committed defender of minority rights with extensive connections with the media, international human rights and environmental protection organisations (1995 333).

The strategies of mobilizing a vast majority of the Ogoni people by MOSOP and NYCOP includes awareness raising through campaign tours, securing the support of the traditional rulers, media propoganda as well as incentives to participants.

Thus the Ogonis have come to be known as a distinct people even among the people of the Niger Delta, who suffer from common threat, for these traits of civic community and civic engagement in public affairs.

Thus there had existed a strong tradition of community organizing through community organizations many decades before the emergence of modern local government in Khana.

4.3 Location Advantage

Location advantage as used in this study refers to the economic base of the area, infrastructural capacity, and nearness to major cities. These variables are chosen because they are regarded as critical intervening variables that could influence the relationship between local government performance and downward accountability.

Apa local government

As noted earlier, documented evidence on Apa is virtually non-existent, perhaps owing to the fact that it is a peripheral, marginal and very poor local government with no major socio-economic events attracting attention of scholarly research.

Traditionally, subsistence agriculture and petty trade are the major sources of livelihood of the population, though a few agricultural products like rice and yam are produced for exports to distant cities. Yet, these exports take place on a seasonal basis so that the income generated is only seasonal.

The local government area also lacks industrial presence, except for a single rice mill. Rice mill is a job-creating industry, since it is labour-intensive and employs other subsidiary activities. Apart from the main operation of the machines and actual milling, women are employed in supply of fuel wood and water (no pipe-borne water

supply in the area). Loading and off-loading of the rice also creates job for young men at the mill.

But it should be noted that there is only one of such mill in the local government, and the capacity to provide jobs is seriously limited. This leaves the local government as the highest employer of labour in the area.

Yet, only 858 people are employed by the local government. This is out of the average population of 120,886 people (state population divided by the number of local governments) (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998:100).

Employment as it is used here refers to jobs in the formal sector. Residents have their informal jobs from which they earn their living. Apart from a few small-scale entrepreneurs, most residents are subsistent farmers and are engaged in farming activities round the year. Others who have some vocational skills do supplement their income with other activities such as sewing, and seasonal buying and selling of agricultural produce.

Khana

The major economic activities in Khana local government are petroleum exploration, fishing and farming respectively (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998:403). There is a significant presence of Royal Dutch Shell Petroleum, and the local government is very close to Port Harcourt which is one of the major industrial and commercial cities in the country.

Yet, in spite of this location advantage and the presence of Shell, Khana used to be a marginal area with all the trappings of rural local governments and a miserable lack of basic infrastructure before 1993, Osaghae (1995: 325) until the later part of the 1990s.

Concluding from the foregoing, it is obvious that the two local governments used as cases above clearly manifest close similarities and marked differences. They are both part of the unified national system of local governments, and subject to the same national environment. They also share common administrative and political structures.

Apa and Khana are both rural local governments, and share similar problems of infrastructural paucity and weak local economy until the late 1990s when Khana

began to witness improvement in development. On the other hand, the communities in Khana are however very assertive in organizing and association for collective action. There is also the presence of Shell multinational as a local economic actor in Khana, and the nearness of Khana to Port Harcourt, a large commercial city. It will be shown how these factors of commonality and difference make for comparison and contrast among the cases in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 5

GRASSROOTS PRESSURE AND DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE

This chapter deals with the output of the selected local governments given the input from the federal government and local organizations in the communities. The output is considered in terms of the degree to which formal institutions and private business have become accountable to local citizens to stimulate endogenous development within the local government area. The indicators of such local development are already established in chapter two. They include formal-sector job creation, income generation, service delivery and policy formulation for local governance. This chapter is deals with the dynamic as well as static forces of local development as observed in the two cases.

5.1. Local Institutions as Agents of Development in Apa

As already discussed in chapter three, the most palpable institution of local governance in Apa, and which has remained the most critical in steering the course of development in the area is the local government. There are a number of local organizations and neighbourhood associations, such as churches, women associations, town youth associations in many villages and towns, as well as a traditional ruling council in every community. There are also a good number of small scale enterprises and business associations.

However, these local organizations and institutions pursue their narrow private interests and are disconnected from one another. Worse still they are disengaged from the public sphere, vacating the domain of critical decision-making for local development to the local government. This disengagement presents a veritable case of what Olowu et al (1999: 36) refer to as 'institutional disconnect' in a study of local governance and social capital in Africa. In other words there is a chronic deficiency of civic engagement in the form of participation of citizens directly or through civil society organizations and business establishments with local government to influence decision-making for common goals. Civic engagement has been identified as critical factor in making development policy and strategies responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people and potentially of the poor (Reuben 2002:1). There are no

mechanisms in Apa for citizens to engage either in public policy debate, public service delivery or in the management of public goods.

5.1.1. Exclusion and Downward Accountability

The effect of all this is the absence of any system of accountability of the local government to the citizens, and a lack of transparency of local government activities from need identification, policy formulation, planning, project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Part of the problem may be explained by the pervasive level of illiteracy, poverty and overall disempowerment of the local population. But direct observation shows that since the creation of Apa local government in 1991, local elites who are also the local politicians have systematically excluded citizens and their organizations from involvement in the public space for economic and political reforms, foreclosing the methods of participatory planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.

Moreover, existing civil society organizations are denied access to information and voice in decisions that affect their well-being and opportunities. Local elites approach existing civil society with patronage campaign strategies to secure their votes during local elections and also use it to secure their re-election. Patronage, as defined by Reuben (2002: 9), involves the control of citizens' dispersed interests through distribution of goods and funds, leading to division of their interests along clientelist alliances. During electioneering campaigns, these local politicians distribute salt and seasoning to women organizations and funds to youth associations as well as traditional rulers, all to sway the outcomes of the elections in their favour.

Post election approach towards civil society organizations involves cooptation, and where it fails, intimidation and repression of their leaders with impunity. Cooptation has been successfully used in containing the only existing trade union, National Union of Local Government (NULGE), Apa chapter. Since after the period between 1991 and 1993, when the labour union under the leadership of John Ilodu, put the local government executive constantly on its toes, the NULGE leadership in Apa has remained under the effective control of the local government executive.

The local government executive also uses the local police as a tool for political repression of associations that challenge the non-performance of the local government when cooptation fails. Radical and vocal elements, especially within the student associations, are intimidated by the local police and hunted by hired political thugs from the outside.

Another important observation is that the local civil society organizations operate in narrow and remote isolation without linking up with one another and with external NGOs for synergies. Of equal importance is that they also lack access to the media, which do not penetrate rural areas and cover rural events in Nigeria. This worsens the already serious problem of isolation, and permits the process of social decay to proceed without the attention of the outside world.

The local business community is weak and underdeveloped, with majority of them operating as small scale retail trading. The business climate is not attractive to big investors due to lack of incentives for big business. The non-existence of business associations makes private sector lobby for policy reforms in favour of investment very difficult. More so, social and economic infrastructures are almost non-existent. There are no means of communication with the outside, apart from a sub-postal agency for mail delivery. This agency is located in Igah-Okpaya, another town outside Ugbokpo, the headquarters of the local government. The implication is that in-coming letters are dumped in Igah-Okpaya and take too long before they finally arrive at Ugbokpo.

Another disincentive to investment is the absence of commercial or community bank. The New Nigerian Bank ran a branch in Ugbokpo for a few years before it closed down in the early 1990s, owing to grave financial crisis at headquarters.

The Benue State government implemented a rural water supply project in Apa by the turn of the 1990s, involving the installation of a pump station and several public taps in Ugbokpo. The taps ran for less than a year and ceased. The pump station could no longer function for lack of funds for fuel energy. Though the equipment is still on the ground, water supply as a social service has been abandoned in about the past decade. Finally, feeder roads connecting the various towns and villages are almost impassable, especially in the wet season of the year. Sometimes communities through collective

action do attempt to repair these roads and bridges, but in most cases their best falls short of the capital investment sufficient to undertake such projects.

5.1.2. *Local Responsiveness and Development Performance*

The social and economic conditions of Apa as given above make it unattractive for big business to invest in the area. At the moment, the main operation of Apa LGC has been limited to the day-to-day running of the local government, with little attention to the concerns of basic service delivery, income generation and job creation.

However, between 1992 and 2000, the local government embarked on the provision of class rooms to already existing primary schools in different villages across the local government. Yet it is instructive to note that these projects are implemented without consultations with communities concerned, usually at pre-election periods and by incumbent political leaders seeking re-election. This makes the projects appear as tools of vote-buying, rather than genuine citizen-driven development efforts.

All these take place within a context of growing federal government fiscal transfers to local governments. Though the actual figures that go to Apa from the Federation account is shrouded in secrecy, what is known is that oil prices have increased astronomically since 1999 and that since then the Federation Account has swollen. It follows then that, since local governments percentage share has not reduced, revenues accruing to Apa is as well on the rise. But since information concerning the budget of the local government is kept from the public and there are no administrative mechanisms for making local governments accountable to citizens, it has been possible for the local political leaders and elites to capture federal transfers meant for the transformation of the local government.

5.2. Local Institutions as Agents of Development in Khana

The formation of MOSOP in 1990 marks the turning point for drastic social change and transformation in terms of community participation for local development in Khana local government.

Until then, Khana, and the entire Ogoniland for that matter, had remained a very rural and marginal local government. The discovery of oil in 1958 in Ogoniland, and the marginalization and social exclusion that follows from its exploitation, fostered a

perception of danger on the whole Ogoni people. This informed a reorientation of community development associations towards political demands for change. Until 1990, communities through their organizations and their leaders had exerted some forms of soft pressure on corporate entities operating in the area and the state (local, regional and national) for improvement in the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the people. There had been an acute shortage, and lack in some cases, of basic infrastructure and social amenities such as electricity, roads, schools, hospitals, potable water, etc (Osaghae 1995, 329).

Poverty and unemployment were very high, in spite of the endowment of petroleum oil and rich presence of big business in the oil sector. The most critical player in the oil sector is the Royal Dutch Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (hereafter known as Shell). Yet, activities of these big multinational went on without attention for the social and economic concerns of the local communities. Profits made from the oil and allied sectors were repatriated away from the area without regard for the environment, employment of locals, local income generation as well as inclusion of communities for major local decision-making.

Previous pressures and strategies by communities to redress their frustration failed to elicit any meaningful response from the big business and the state. But this failure only fuelled the frustration of the local citizens and provided the impulse for the local organizations to federate for high-intensive collective political action. Thus the birth of MOSOP was the culminate point of networking among local organizations driven by the grievances with the nature and social effects of exploitation of the oil in the land. The major grievances were with negative environmental fallouts of oil exploitation such as pipeline spillages across farmlands, destroying farmlands and fishing, socio-economic neglect and the control of oil resources (Osaghae 1995, 327). In the words of Suberu (1999: 125), the grievances were about resource control, about ecological restitution, about restructuring of the polity and about the existing oil revenue sharing formula.

5.2.1. MOSOP Strategies of Community Mobilization

MOSOP is a mass movement, and a federation of local or community-based organizations (CBOs). At the beginning of the movement in 1990, MOSOP assumed a

radical orientation and approach in its activities. One explaining element of this orientation is the character of its leadership. Ken Saro-Wiwa, the president of MOSOP, had been president of another civil organization, Ethnic Minorities Rights Organization of Africa (EMIROAF). Committed to the defence of minority groups, Ken Saro-Wiwa had developed an extensive network with the media and international human rights as well as environmental protection NGOs such as the Amnesty International and Green Peace (Osaghae 1995, 333).

At the first stage of the movement MOSOP worked very hard to mobilize the communities. The main strategies for this social mobilization included community awareness raising of the injustices they were suffering from the oil business. This strategy involved awareness-raising through campaign tours. MOSOP also negotiated and enlisted the support of local leaders and traditional chiefs. A third and very important strategy was the intensive use of propaganda through the media (Osaghae 1995, 334). Through these strategies MOSOP succeeded not only in securing overwhelming local acceptance and authority, but, of crucial importance, external sympathy with its cause and the subsequent struggle against big business, specifically Shell, and the state.

To make its credibility felt, MOSOP successfully executed an anti-state/Shell mass rally at Bori (the headquarters of Khana) on January 3, 1993 in a bold defiance of state ban. The rally, tagged 'The Ogoni National Day Rally', saw the suspension of Shell operations in the area until the year 2000, when the collapse of military dictatorship and the new democratic environment paved the way for negotiations with the communities for the return of Shell.

This episode was a major loss for the state, in that it not only eroded its authority and credibility, but it also asserted the growing importance of MOSOP as an alternative and credible authority for local governance, enjoying an overwhelming allegiance of the local population. Reinforced by this success, MOSOP organised yet another collective action in March of the same year through a mass vigil involving a number of churches (Osaghae 1995: 336), and effectively organised a massive boycott of the

ill-fated general elections of June 12, 1993⁶ throughout the land. Within this period (1993 – 2000), it is recorded that not a single barrel of crude oil was lifted from the area (Daily Times in Olowu et al 1999: 127).

By 1994 the MOSOP leadership, including Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others, was arrested and charged with incitement to murder of the four community leaders. They were hurriedly tried by a military tribunal and subsequently executed by hanging in November 1995, in circumstances in which Shell was accused of complicity (Greenpeace 1995 & McIntyre 295). Thus, the chapter of mass movement and popular collective action in Ogoniland was effectively put on hold, at least in the immediate time.

5.2.2. Analysis of the Movement

With their leadership eliminated, many of the outspoken and active element within the movement fled on exile, leaving the organization in the hands of the former Vice – President, Ledum Mitee. Military intimidation soon helped the state to contain the aggressiveness of MOSOP and reduced it to a passive state. Yet by the time the struggle was defeated, so to say, the message had been driven home successfully: no longer would the operations of public and corporate institutions be safe in the locality without being responsive to the preferences of the communities and their institutions. Though the uprising lasted only between 1990 and 1993, it was so determined and effective that till date it has bequeathed a legacy of youth militancy and a culture of community pressures on public and corporate institutions in the locality, including Khana Local Government. As rightly put by Osaghae (1995: 326), no community had sought redress in ways which involved mass action and direct confrontation with the state as the Ogonis did between 1990 and 1993.

Seen from the perspective of its ends, one would say the movement failed, at least in the short run. The state won by the use of superior force of military brutality against unarmed population. The goals of complete environmental, social and economic justice have not been realized in Khana. Social infrastructural development, though far better than pre-movement, is still below local expectations. The most important

⁶ The results of the elections were later annulled by the military dictatorship of General (rtd.) Ibrahim

and obvious factor for the failure of the movement is the repressive posture of the military government at the time. The dictatorships of Generals Babangida and Abacha, which ruled the country during the hey days of the movement, 1990 to 1995, were bent on crushing the uprising and marshaled state power against it. Corporate profits, economic interests and rent-seeking of the military leadership informed a harmony of interests between Shell and the government, and pitched the later against the movement (Bennett 2000). The brutal execution of MOSOP leadership and exiling of many of its ranks by the military beat MOSOP into submission and brought the militant front of the war to its end.

5.2.3. Local Responsiveness and Development Performance

Yet, judging success from the point of “means”, it is not difficult to point at some victories on the side of MOSOP. The mere fact that Shell operations in the locality were grounded for 7 years is commendable of the effectiveness of the mass action. With the commencement of democratization in the country from 1998, MOSOP has been able to meet openly again. The state and the oil companies have openly acknowledged the acute lack of development in the area (Right Livelihood 2000). More so the communities remain highly mobilized against any unilateral reentry of Shell into Ogoniland in general, and Khana in particular, for business or for any project for that matter. Such unilateralism by Shell acted out in an attempt to execute a road construction project in K-Dere community was met by resistance from MOSOP and led to a violent clash between the communities, on the one hand, and on the other hand the police and the local government authority (The Tide 2000 & Amnesty International 2000). It has been a struggle for the control of local resources and how it is used for local development in a way that reflects the preferences of the local communities. It has also been a struggle about holding other formal actors in local governance accountable to communities for sustainable endogenous local development. It is thus an on-going struggle if only on a low profile.

Increasingly, Shell and other corporate entities in the area are being compelled to always negotiate terms of corporate operation with the communities to the point that it has become a pervasive tradition. Acting under pressure from the communities, Shell

embarked on a project of providing a cottage hospital to Kpean community in Khana local government area in 2001. However, the project was given to a contractor from Gokana, another local government, in defiance of a resolution reached by community leaders of Khana earlier in the year (The Tide 2001). According to this resolution, all local development projects by Shell must be given to contractors resident in the area (The Tide 2001). The violation of this resolution was met with determined resistance by Oilfield Youth Association in the community, insisting that they must discuss the terms of contracts in their community, assess any contractor coming to the area and the competence of the contractor, and fight the imposition of contractor by SPDC (The Tide 2001). The resistance was sustained until the contract was terminated. This tradition is a bottom-up enforcement of what Helmsing refers to as 'localizing of tendering processes as a tool for promoting poverty reduction impacts and democratic governance through local collective action'. He further argues that localizing tender processes also 'increases the propensity of the community to leverage its own resources, as this flows back into the community in the form of project work for local enterprises', (2002: 11-12).

Acting under strong pressures from the community through their local organizations, Shell, the Rivers State government and Khana local government have shared responsibilities to provide basic amenities like electricity, roads, bridges and cottage hospitals. Since late 1991 stable supply of electricity has been provided to residents of Khana, among the two other Ogoni local governments. This powered by a gas turbine plant cited in Eleme, was made possible through the constant pressure for improvement by the communities (Dakoru 2001 and Yornamue 2002). This tradition is a long-term victory whose immediate gains might not be valued very high. But it is a social capital in terms of enhanced community bargaining power against the other actors — the state (local or national) and the private sector — and community participation in the game of local governance.

The electricity supply is one high profile project among a list of other services which the local government, the community and Shell have shared responsibilities in providing. These include, community bridges, agricultural extension projects and bore holes for water supply.

In concluding this chapter, the questions to ask are, what factors made the relative success of the struggle possible? What challenges were on the way of the struggle that the movement had to overcome? And what were the limitations of the struggle that could hamper similar attempts elsewhere? How can lessons learned be applied in Apa for responsive local governance?

Many factors can be deduced from the foregoing to account for the success of the struggle. One of them is the leadership of MOSOP in the person of the president, Ken Saro-Wiwa. Himself, educated, former politician, administrator and, until his death, a renowned published writer, belonged to the Nigerian national elite class. He also channeled his energies and skills as writer to human rights and environmental activism. This profile provided him with the extensive connections and networks (local, national and international) which MOSOP used to its advantage after he was made the president and made it possible for him to be very popular among his clans at the beginning of the struggle. The sympathy and support of traditional rulers, other political organizations, Amnesty International, the Green Peace, the UN UNPO, helped to give both domestic and international credibility and legitimacy to the struggle.

Another important factor is the ability of the organizers to weld the many different local organizations into an umbrella second order organization or a federation of associations from Khana, Gokana and Tai. MOSOP was put together in 1990 by a group of local leaders after the failure of past attempts by local organizations to address their grievances (Osaghae 333). One advantage of this is that it helped to raise the voice of the communities. Again, the large size the movement acquired provided it with the requisite autonomy and bargaining power against the state and SPDC. Thirdly, as Helmsing (2002) has pointed out, second order associations create the sharing of information and experiences among CBOs, and this is very evident in the case of MOSOP.

A third factor is the ability of MOSOP to mobilize an overwhelming section of the local population for the struggle. Leaders of the organizations mounted intensive campaign tours of the various clans and villages, raising awareness of their common

cause (Osaghae 334). This helped to enlist the firm support of youths, women and traditional local chiefs and internalize the goals of the struggle.

Among the possible challenges and limitations of the struggle, two prominent factors stand out. One is the harsh political environment in the country at the time. This factor has already been explained and need not be belaboured here. The importance of mentioning it again is the fact that it reveals the need for an enabling legal and political environment to make collective action possible for local organizations and or their federations.

The second limitation, and which provided the military rulers the pretext to crush the movement, was the existence of internal division within MOSOP itself. This division became manifest when the organization began to intensify its activities and step up strategies to mass action and sabotaging of SPDC oil facilities, especially by its younger members (Bennett 2000). This led to an ideological divide between the more conservative older members who did not support violence and the more radical younger members. The internal struggle resulting from this led to the murder in May 1994 of four Ogoni chiefs by an angry mob that saw them as pro-government elements (Amnesty International 1995). This murder was blamed by the military on the leadership of MOSOP, who were arrested promptly and tried by a special military tribunal in circumstances that, investigations by Amnesty International (1995) shows, is dubious and premeditated. Their conviction and subsequent hanging in November 1995 sealed the end of militancy on the side of MOSOP in the struggle.

Obviously, this kind of struggle has never taken place in Apa. Given the low level of community organizing in local government, putting this kind of political pressure on the state is not foreseeable at the moment. It would require the evolution of strong and assertive civil society organizations to mobilize community interests and to engage the local state in a bargain for responsive development strategies. The challenges are daunting. There would need to emerge community leaders who are educated, fearless and who have their own resources. There is also the challenge of linking up with other civil organizations like external support NGOs and sympathetic larger movements.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Summary

In spite of the growing suspicion against the state and its institutions, local government (especially when elected) still remains the most appropriate institution to be entrusted with local representative management of public resources. Yet, bringing about a system of downwardly accountable local governance has remained one of the most daunting challenges of effective decentralization to local government in Nigeria. While decentralization holds, in theory, the promises of efficient local service delivery, improved local planning and implementation, enhanced local democracy and responsiveness (Blair 2000), this study shows that the actual practice of local government may not be necessarily so.

The study examines the question of downward accountability for effective local governance in Nigeria. It argues that downward accountability makes local government responsive to the development goals of citizens. This responsiveness, made possible by downward accountability, is argued to be the desirable end of democratic local governance. This end can only be reached by going beyond the devolution of powers to local government where the goal of local development is thwarted by powerful local elites who capture local government resources.

The study focuses on Apa local government which has been observed to have performed very low in terms of local development measured by income generation, job creation and service delivery. Apa is compared with another local government, Khana, which appears to have achieved a relatively high degree of local development. Below are the major findings of the study.

The mere creation of sub-national levels of autonomous governments with large resources at their disposal does not necessarily stimulate democratic local governance and local economic development. As the case of Apa local government shows, devolution of governmental authority and resources in a socio-political national context of weak democratic culture could even portend dangers to development at the grassroots. Where a tradition of accountability

and participatory democracy is not entrenched, or even encouraged through conducive institutional and policy frameworks by the central government, local government has a high propensity to replicate the ills of centralization at the local level. Resources and powers devolved from the central government are easily captured by the local elites and power holders to the detriment of local development (Prud'homme 1995).

In truly democratic local governance the local community is a critical stakeholder (Blair 2000: 21). Unless local communities are empowered to put effective legitimate pressures on local authorities, the activities of all-powerful local political leaders can and do make devolution counter-productive. Local government must be responsive to community goals and become downwardly accountable in order to be effective and efficient (Neg'ethe and Kanyinga 1998). This can only be realized where the community is well mobilized and empowered to participate in local governance decision-making and to hold local officials accountable for managing local resources on behalf of the citizens, as seen from the activities of MOSOP in Khana. Communities have a crucial role, at least potentially, in monitoring local government institutions and checking the abuse of power and resources devolved from the central government by the local leadership.

The limited presence of mechanisms of downward accountability in Apa has made it difficult for the local government to respond to the crucial questions of poverty alleviation, public-private and public-community partnership for job creation and income generation as well as service delivery. It has permitted a trend where democratically elected local officials hoard information, shrouding local government activities in secrecy and capturing resources meant for development of the area. Though the degree of responsiveness of local government has been argued to depend on its representativeness (Fenta 2002), the case of Apa shows that direct election of local councils in itself is only necessary but not sufficient to make local officials accountable and responsible to their constituencies. But as Smoke (1994) rightly notes, there needs to be some institutionalized voice and exit mechanisms to the local electorate. This will make it possible for them to subject local officials to the removal of all or any of them when they fail to respond to the needs, interests or demands of the local population.

Finally, creating downward accountability is not spontaneous as local officials do not willingly subject themselves to community control. Downward accountability of local officials is only established through effective pressure from below. But the pressure needs to be organised through local organizations and to join higher-order organizations to form mass movements needed for pressurizing local government. In Khana, MOSOP has succeeded in keeping elected local officials under constant surveillance. It has also succeeded in enforcing the responsiveness of the local government to local preferences and priorities in its decision making and implementation as well in negotiations with Shell for local economic development through projects. The local government has been steered into meaningful partnership with Shell to create jobs for locals, provide services and provide skills for income generation.

6.2. Making Decentralization Work

While I make no pretensions to having the panacea for successful local governance in Apa, the findings of this study suggest that getting the local government to become effective in development performance elected officials must become accountable to the local citizens. However, meeting the challenges of creating this downward accountability requires the following inputs.

Organizing local communities

To be able to undertake effective collective action, and collective political pressure for that matter, local communities must be organised. Collective actions are not executed in abstract, but through organizations. Communities in Apa must evolve strong community-based organizations in order to exercise voice to demand for participatory democracy as a civic right. Organizing communities into strong associations in a place like Apa, where the tradition is not entrenched, requires more than internal community efforts. NGOs (both advocacy and development NGOs) have a responsibility to penetrate communities to help build and strengthen local organizations. There are dangers, though, with trusting NGOs to this job. NGOs do represent the interests of their donors and may not be sensitive to local priorities. There is also the danger of tying up with so-called NGOs that are only social-service contractors (Helmsing 2002: 14) and self-serving entities. Yet, while it may be difficult to distinguish between the good and the bad, it is important to note that

NGOs can assist communities to claim their rights and to convey their claims and proposals effectively as well as provide critical connections to other support agencies (Helmsing 2000: 14).

Networking

To build synergies and increase the necessary political clout for effective bargaining, community-based organizations, where they are established need to link up to higher federation of civil organizations. Community control over the affairs of local government in Khana has been possible due to the immense pressure of MOSOP as a collective of various CBOs in the entire Ogoniland. This makes it possible to place local community issues on the agenda of second or third level community organizations with more ability to bargain with other local institutional actors for change in the interest of communities. Creating this kind of network between organizations in Apa and the external civil environment would again require the assistance of NGOs as support agencies. NGOs are the right actors with critical information and the will to link up grassroots organizations.

Government enablement

However, even where communities are organised into associations with ties to larger civil organizations, there is still a need for them to be enabled by government. Government enablement of community should involve the legal and political recognition of communities and their organizations as legitimate and indispensable actors in the practice of democratic local governance. Whether or not this is practicable is difficult to say as it is a question of political will. But while there is no assurance that the Nigerian government will do this, it is important to note that creating the following enabling conditions will foster the accountability of Apa local government to its citizens.

First, the government must legally and financially facilitate the formal registration of community organizations. Second, government must create appropriate legal and political frameworks that recognize, legalize and legitimize free expression of community wishes and preferences in local governance. Creating such frameworks will lead to changes in institutional arrangements, with a greater involvement of civil society, through which public policies are initiated, formulated and implemented

(Helmsing 2002). A crucial indicator for this enablement is the enactment by central government of the participation of communities and their organizations in the planning, budgeting, financing and administration of local government (Helmsing 2000). This legal enactment of their status and activities provides a legal basis on which communities can demand to be involved, claiming the exercise of a political right (Patel 1998); it also creates the legal basis for communities to hold local government elected officials accountable for local development or the lack of it.

It also makes downward accountability of local governments autonomous and sustainable. It makes the exercise of political rights and exertion of pressure by communities less dependent on chance or on what Helmsing (2002) describes as a temporary favourable political situation like a committed mayor (chairman).

Transparency

Communities must have access to critical public information at the local level, especially information regarding local government budget. People at the grassroots must have answers to the questions of how much money is transferred from the federal to the local government every month, how much of it is used for what and why. This will substantially reduce, if not eliminate, the possibility of elected officials and local elites to capture information and resources and hoard them for their personal aggrandizement. It will also facilitate the application of participatory budgeting and community involvement in development planning, monitoring, evaluation systems (PMES) in local governance for locally responsive development. Again, providing answers to these questions will encourage local residents to pay their rates, service charges and fees for efficient internal revenue generation and greater financial autonomy.

Making such information widespread is the responsibility of the central government. To undercut elite capture of budgetary information, the central government must publish, either in the dailies or some special periodic release, all the transfers it makes to particular local governments as soon as they are made. Communities must also be given access to information on the statutory responsibilities of local governments. Communities need all these information to appropriately make decisions on the allocation of resources for local development.

Media coverage

The media has a role in promoting the transparency of local government by disseminating public information both within and without the locality. It is important that the media, especially the press (for documentation), makes local political news public because, as Blair (2000: 29) notes, it is only when people know what is going on that they can hold government accountable, otherwise political news will remain the property of the inside few. A second role of the media is to expose the misdeeds of local government officials. This may not be done directly but by penetrating rural local government areas and giving local communities space to publicize any such misdeeds they would have discovered.

6.3. Conclusions

In conclusion, collective political pressures from below, from communities and their organizations, is critical to development in Apa. This factor made it possible for communities in Khana to maintain effective control over the activities of the local government, and plausibly explains the responsiveness of Shell and the state to local development priorities and goals. Even though Khana enjoys a higher revenue base than Apa and has location advantage, Shell and the state could not have become locally responsive without the collective political pressures from below. These actors have their narrow interests which do not coincide with community interests unless they made so through compelling pressures from the communities through their organizations.

Furthermore, with the growing level of local government allocation from the Federation Account, Apa can do more than just pay staff salary. It might or might not be able to grow as fast as Khana given the differences in their economic profile, but its resources can be used in a way that meets citizens' priorities. It is not a matter of the size of resources, but the principle of being responsive to constituencies with available resources.

Given the prevalent condition of elite capture in the local government and the inadequacies of upward accountability, it will take downward accountability to make the local government responsive. It will require the emergence of strong CBOs, with

external support, to democratically act as watchdogs on the local state and steer its activities in response to the goals and priorities of the people. Without these measures being securely established, the goals of devolution in Apa, and the attendant hopes of local development will continue to elude the people, given the plague of elite capture.

However, it is important to note, in agreement with Berner and Philips (2002), that communities themselves are not homogeneous and are not effective antidotes to elite corruption of local government officials. MOSOP as a movement has its internal contradictions as members are divided among rival factions. Berner and Benedict (2002) have also posed the pointed question: 'Is the will of the "community" the same as the will of the community leadership?' Of course, not. Surely there are residents of community who are not members of community organizations, and the organization cannot be said to be always acting benevolently on behalf of the 'community'. Even among the members, the leadership of the organization is likely to be elitist and subject to the same indictment of elite capture of benefits of collective action.

The question of ensuring homogeneous and harmonious communities for fair representativeness of all interests (gender, class, age, ethnicity, etc) in the quest for local development is, no doubt, a daunting challenge and deserves further research attention. Nevertheless, under conditions of elite capture of local government, mounting political pressures from below by grassroots civil organizations as agents of change is critically needed for effective local governance in Apa.

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