

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY: CASE STUDY OF IKOLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EKITI STATE, NIGERIA (1999-2013)

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ABSTRACT

The constitution of Nigeria recognises local government as the third tier of government whose preoccupation is to enhance effective service delivery at the grassroots. The challenge of effective service delivery at grassroots despite the huge allocation accruing to it from the federal account calls for great concern. This study empirically investigates service delivery at Ikole Local government of Ekiti State in order to assess the quality of service provided and factors responsible for ineffective service delivery at the local government. It was discovered that the quality of service delivered was poor. It was further discovered that poor performance at the local government was attributed to poor governance devoid of transparency and accountability of successive governments. The study suggested participatory democracy at the grassroots, transparency and accountability of political leaders as well as maintenance culture on the part of the citizens for improving service delivery at Ikole Local government.

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INTRODUCTION

Local government in Nigeria is created as a third tier of government to ensure effective service delivery to the people at the grassroots. Everywhere in the world, irrespective of the system of government, local government is created to ensure efficient services at the local level (Adeyemi, 2013). According to Pretorius and Schurink (2007), access to effective public services is no longer seen as an advantage enjoyed by only a privileged few in the community, but as a legitimate right of all residents. This expectation emphasises “service to the people” as parameter for local government transformation (Pretorius and Schurink, 2007). One of the most important indicators in assessing the performance of local government is the experiences and perceptions people have of service delivery in their day-to-day lives. The local government is to transform its promises into realities by prioritising and satisfying the needs of the people at the grassroots.

In spite of the huge resources committed to rural development in Nigeria, the local governments have not been able to perform up to expectations as development at the grassroots still remain a mirage (Akinleye, Awoniyi and Fapojuwo, 2005). Though the successive governments in Nigeria acknowledge the place of local governments as agents of development, effective service delivery has been the major challenge. The local government has been a shadow of its envisaged roles, offering little or nothing to overall development of the country (Dosunmu, 2012). Egberi and Madubueze (2014) identified corruption as a major problem which has constrained local governments in Nigeria from contributing meaningfully to the improvement in the standard of living of the local people. Others identified the quality of human resources at the local levels, lack of accountability and transparency, the constitutional status of the local governments among others as factors militating against effective service delivery at the grassroots (Adeyemi, 2013; Dosunmu, 2012; Ukwueze, accessed 2013; Abe and Oluwaleye, 2014)). The failure of the local governments to deliver services effectively has made it difficult for people to trust in government and in the promises made by political leaders.

Considering the dependence of Ekiti State on Federal allocation as major source of its revenue, with meager internally generated revenue, it is apparent that ample place should be given to transparency and accountability if the envisaged development would take place. It is against this backdrop that this paper assesses the performance of local governments in effective service delivery, using Ikole local government of Ekiti State as a case study. It examines the efforts of local government in provision of good roads, potable water, rural electrification and healthcare service delivery in the state.

The study would be guided by the following research questions which constitute the basic research problem of the study:

- i. What was the quality of social services undertaken by Ikole Local Government between 1999– 2013, whether completed or uncompleted?
- ii. Were the political leaders at the local level transparent in the choice of social services needed by people?
- iii. Were the political leaders at the grassroots accountable of their stewardship?
- iv. What were the challenges to effective and efficient delivery of social services mentioned in item ii above?
- v. What can be done to enhanced effective and efficient social service delivery by Ikole Local Government?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Ho: Service delivery in the study area does not have significant impact on the living standard of people.

Ho: Factors influencing service delivery such as popular participation and accountability do not play a significant role in the performance of the local government in the study area.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Arowolo (2008), Local government is that tier of government closest to the people, "which is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain". A local government is created with the expectation of playing the role of promoting the democratic ideals of a society and coordinating developmental programmes at the local level. It is also expected to serve as the basis of socio-economic development in the locality.

Malinda and Janneke (2007) conceived service delivery as the essential function of government. They asserted that good quality and affordable service delivery is also a condition for the good image of government. They emphasized the importance of local governments for better service delivery.

Numerous studies have sought to describe the relevance of Local government in development. Oviasuyi, Idada and Isiraojie (2010) noted that, the broad objective of establishing local government is placed on the service delivery function. He submitted that when roads are bad, when there are no markets stalls, no health centres, when there is no water, no drugs in the local dispensaries and when refuse is littered all around the place etc., the ordinary citizen blames it on the local government. It follows, therefore, that local government administration is established to affect citizens through the service delivery function.

In the same vein, El-Rufai (2012) opined that effective LGA administration can strengthen democracy in Nigeria, improve the quality and cohesiveness of government, entrench democratic values, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery and create an enabling environment for local economic development. He asserted that due to their relative proximity to people, scale and scope limitations, they can be more efficient (or at least as responsive) at providing certain public services

compared to states and federal government if properly organized and resourced.

Khan, Kundi, Shah, Khan and Kamal (2012) lend credence to the position of El-Rufai by postulating that decentralization can generate financial efficiency and quality gains by devolving resources and decision-making powers to local governments for the delivery of services. Being closer to the people, it is assumed that local authorities can more easily identify people's needs, and thus supply the appropriate form and level of public services.

In the works of Agba, Samuel, and Chukwurah (2013), they discussed extensively about service delivery at the grassroots. They carried out an empirical assessment of service delivery in Nigerian Local Government system using Idah Local Government Area of Kogi State as a case study. The study revealed that Idah Local Government has performed averagely in service delivery.

Khan, Kundi, Shah, Khan and Kamal (2012) investigated the Prospects for New Local Government System, using multiple regression analysis. They submitted that popular participation and government intervention is necessary for effective performance of local government system.

Many scholars have discussed the challenges of local government service delivery. Olowu (2002:6) identified recentralizing decentralized power, weak capacity of local governments and inadequate financing as major problems of local governance. He observed that local governments in most Less Developed Countries are directly accountable to central government due to the instrument of suspension or closure of local governments. He stressed the dilemma of elite local capture obstructing development by diverting decentralized resources to personal uses (Olowu, 2001). Arowolo (2008) and Oviasuyi (2010) highlighted the problems confronting performance at the local governments. These include misplaced priority, lack of participation, undue government interference, corruption, unskilled workers, lack of continuity and constitution inadequacies, confusion and complexities.

Uhunmwangho and Stanley (2013) criticized local governments for poor performance in terms of scope, depth and quality of services, particularly in such areas as provision of infrastructure, medical and health services, water supply, waste disposal and many other services listed in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution.

Most of the existing literatures appear too general and theoretical in approach without considering the peculiarities of some local governments such as financial capacity, leadership's transparency and accountability, nature of governance etc. However, this study is empirical as it adopts questionnaire, interview and observation in study the performance of Ikole local government in Ekiti state.

THE STUDY AREA

Ikole is one of the 16 Local Government Areas of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Geographically, Ikole Local Government is entirely within the tropic. It is located between longitude 45o East of Greenwich and latitude 7° – 8° – 15° North of the Equator. Its neighbours are Kwara State to the North, Kogi State to the North east, Ekiti East to the East, Gbonyin Local Government in the South and Oye Local government in the West. The headquarters of the local government, Ikole Ekiti is about 22.5 kilometres from Ado – Ekiti, the Ekiti State capital. The local government is mainly on the upland zone rising to about 250 metres above the sea level.

The Local Government occupies an area of about 374,940kms of land and according to the 2006 National Population Census figure, the total population of the local government was 168,436; Male:87,976; Female: 80,460 (ekitistate.gov.ng/administration/local-govt/ikole-lga). The LGA comprises of twenty four town and villages. Towns that comprise the LGA are: Ikole, Ijesha Isu, Oke Ayedun, Ootunja, Odo-Oro, Ipao, Itapaji, Ara, Isaba, Usin, Orin Odo, Odo Ayedun, Ayebode, Oke Ako, Irele, Iyemero, Ikosi, Igbona, Asin, Esun, Temidire, Ikunri, Ijebu-Agege, and Ilamo. Among the villages in the LGA are: Aba Dam, Ita Gbangba, Aba Audu, Aba Fatunla, Arinta, Aba Ebira Ayedun, Aba oko Ijebu, Iwetin, Aba Oke Oko Igbona (ekitistate.gov.ng/administration/local-govt/ikole-lga).

OPERATIONALIZATION OF KEY VARIABLES

The key variables of the study are operationalized in order to situate them within the context of our analysis make bear their ‘empirical indicators’. The variables operationalized in the study are: service delivery, accountability, participation, transparency, corruption, effectiveness.

Service delivery: In this study, service delivery refers to the provision of social services, such as potable water supply, good roads, healthcare delivery and electricity, intended to alleviate human suffering and by extension, enhance the quality of life of the citizens (Agba, Samuel and Chukwurah, 2013).

Participation: Political participation as used in this study refers to taking part of people in the process of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies that affect them. Participation could be seen in the level of consultation or decision making in all phases of a project cycle, from needs assessment, to appraisal, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation.

Accountability: Accountability in this study refers to the degree to which local governments have to explain or justify what they have done or failed to do. It require that people, interest groups, civil society, the courts, the press, and opposition parties must insist that those who govern follow legitimate mandates and explain their actions. It can be used by people hold local government responsible for its actions.

Corruption: In this study, corruption refers to diversion of resources from the benefits of the community to the gain of individuals at the

expense of the community. It is dishonest, illegal and immoral dealing with public resources.

Effectiveness: This refers to the ability to use the available resources to realise some of the goals of the local government councils. Effective service delivery is characterized with timeliness, quality and satisfaction.

Development: Development refers to an economic, social or political process which results in a cumulative rise in the perceived standard of living for an increasing proportion of a population. (Adesote and Abimbola, 2012). This definition suggests that an increased standard of living involves a social and political process as well as an economic one.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The contribution of this study to existing knowledge is that most works reviewed were too general and theoretical in approach. The works tend to discuss the effectiveness of local governments in service delivery as if all local governments are the same without considering the peculiarities. This study is empirical in that it adopted survey method like questionnaire, interview and personal observation in studying the performance of Ikole local government of Ekiti State from 1999-2013.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A survey design on the performance of Ikole Local Government of Ekiti State, in service delivery from 1999 to 2013 was taken. Data were obtained primarily through personal observation, interview and questionnaire administered on respondents selected from residents of Ikole Local Government Area. The data obtained were used descriptively on the variables studied.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The population of the study consists of residents of Ikole Local Government. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered.

A sample size of 100 respondents consisting of 40 respondents from the local government headquarter and 60 from the communities under the local governments. This sample size was randomly selected to assess the overall development in the local government. However data gathered through questionnaire were complimented with personal observation and interview.

Methods of Data Collection

Data for the study were sourced through primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consisted of questionnaire, personal observation, and interview. The study used the following secondary sources: textbooks, journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, government publications and internet-based materials.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

To ensure the content validity of the research instrument (questionnaire), the researcher compared the items raised in the questionnaire with the research questions. Through this, it was ensured that the research

instrument covered the variables investigated in the study. The research instrument was also subjected to professional scrutiny of other experts for the purpose of boosting its content validity.

Reliability was ensured through comparing the findings from the research instrument with similar study like Agba, Samuel and Chukwurah (2013). The result shows that the research instrument is reliable, as there are consistencies in the data supplied by the respondents with the findings of the previous similar study.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data from questionnaires administered are presented in tabular and pictorial forms followed by brief discussion. The research questions of the study were analysed using simple percentages. The results of personal observation, and interview conducted were also incorporated into the discussion.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Data presented and analysed in this section were generated from personal observation, interview and questionnaire administered to 100 residents and indigenes of Ikole local government who were purposively selected. Descriptive analysis Showing Respondents Demographic variables.

Table 1: City/ Town

Items	Frequency	Percent
Itapaji	12	12.0
Ara- Ekiti	12	12.0
Ikole	40	40.0
Odo- Oro	12	12.0
Orin -Odo Ekiti	12	12.0
Oke Ayedun	12	12.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2014

Table 1 shows that 40% of the sample was chosen from the local government headquarter, while 60% was chosen from five other towns/villages randomly selected by simple random technique.

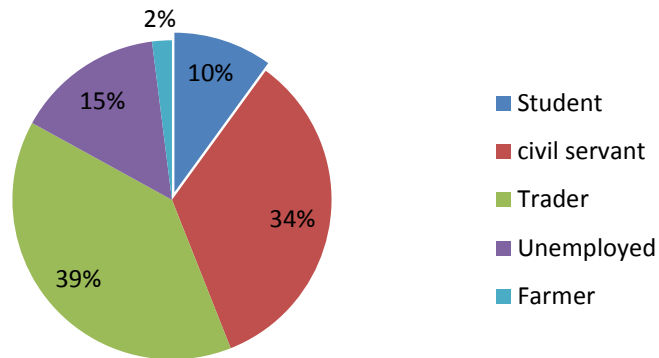


Figure 1: Job/Occupation

Source: Field Work, 2014

Figure 1 shows the occupational distribution of the respondents. The figure revealed that 34% of the respondents were civil servants, 39% were traders, 2% were farmers, 10% were students while 15% of the respondents were not engaged in any vocation.

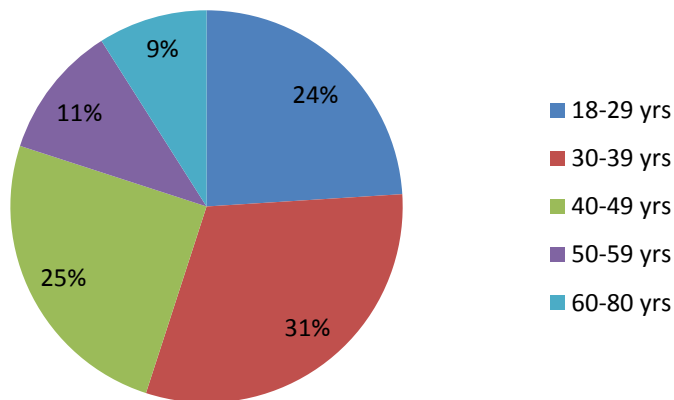


Figure 2: Age group

Source: Field Work, 2014

The age distribution in Figure 2 shows that 24% of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 18-29years while 31% of the respondents fall within the age of 30-39years. In the same vein, 25% of the respondents fall within age bracket of 40-49years of age while 11% of the respondents fall

within age bracket of 50-59years. However, 09% of the respondents fall within age bracket of 60-80years of age.

Table 2: Sex

	Frequency	Percent
Male	65	65.0
Female	35	35.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2014

Table 2 shows that 65% of the respondents were male while 35% were female.

Table 3: Academic Qualification

Item	Frequency	Percent
First Degree	16	16.0
Undergraduate	11	11.0
HND	8	8.0
NCE	7	7.0
SSCE	14	14.0
Primary School	4	4.0
Uneducated	8	8.0
Total	68	68.0
Not indicated	32	32.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2014

Table 3 shows the educational qualification of the respondents. 16% of the respondents were graduates while 11% were undergraduates. The table further revealed that 8% of the respondents have acquired HND while 7% of the respondents have NCE. Moreover, 14% of the respondents have acquired West African Secondary School Certificate and Secondary School Certificate (WASSC/SSC) while 4% of the respondents have Primary School Leaving Certificate. However, 8% of the respondents were uneducated while 32% did not include their academic qualification.

Research Results

Four (4) Research Questions earlier raised in the study were answered inferentially using Percentages.

- (1) What was the quality of the social services undertaken by Ikole Local Government between 1999 – 2013?

The above research question was tested using some questionnaire items. In choosing questionnaire item to test this question, the

researcher considered some factors of measurement of quality of social services such as awareness, availability of drugs, equipment and other services in the health centres, regularity of potable water, reliability of roads, and regularity of electricity supply. The rating of social services such as potable water, healthcare delivery, good roads and electricity supply was assessed with the results in Table 4 – 10 below:

Table 4 : Awareness of social services

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	80	80
No	16	16
Undecided	4	4
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work: 2014

Table 4 shows that 80% of the respondents were aware of social services provision like potable water, healthcare delivery, good roads and electricity supply. 16% of the respondents said they were not aware while 4% did not indicate their opinion. It can be noted that the high level of awareness among the respondents is a strong potential to harvest the quality, effectiveness and satisfactory service delivery in the study areas.

Table 5: How do you rate the quality of services received at the health centre in- terms of availability of drugs?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Good	11	11
Poor	25	25
Average	62	62
Missing	2	2
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

Table 5 shows that 11% of the respondents rated healthcare delivery as good in terms of availability of drugs, 25% of the respondents rated the services at the health centre as poor in terms of availability of drugs while 62% opined that the quality of healthcare delivery in terms of availability of drugs is average. 2% of the respondents did not indicate their opinion. From the above, we can infer that the availability of drugs at the health centres is average since majority of the respondents supported the above position.

Table 6: Can you say that the health centre in your local government is well-equipped?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	33	33

No	41	41
Undecided	26	26
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

Table 6 above revealed that the provision of equipment for the health Centres is below average, 33% of the respondents supported that the health Centres were well-equipped while 41% submitted that the health Centres were not well-equipped while 26% of the respondents did not give their opinion. Serious cases that involved the use of equipment were referred to General Hospitals.

Table 7: Can you say the health Centre is well-staffed?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	49	49
No	38	38
Undecided	13	13
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

From the result of Table 7 above, it is inferred that there is need to improve the staffing of the health centres at the local governments in the study area. 49% of the respondents supported that the health centres are well-staffed, 38% indicated that the health centres were not well-staffed while 13% did not give their opinion.

Table 8: How would you rate the reliability of public roads in your local area?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Good	19	19
Average	56	56
Poor	25	25
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

Table 8 shows the rating of the reliability of public roads in the study area. The rating of the reliability of roads in the community as good by only 19% of the respondents revealed that much attention needed to be given to construction and rehabilitation of roads in the study area. 56% of the respondents indicated that the reliability of the roads is average while 25% indicated that the roads were poor.

Table 9: How would you rate the regularity of potable water supply to you in this local government?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Good	06	06
Average	20	20
Poor	73	73
Missing	01	01
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

From the results in Table 9 above, it is inferred that regularity of potable water was a major problem in most communities in the study area. Only 06% responded 'yes' to regular supply of potable water, 20% rated the regularity of potable water as average while 73%, majority of the respondents revealed that there is poor supply of potable water in the study area. 01% of the respondents did not give their opinion.

Table 10: Do you have access to regular electricity supply in your community?

Options	No of respondents	Percentages
Yes	32	32
No	50	50
Undecided	18	18
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

The rating of regular electricity supply in Table 10 above shows the non-satisfaction of the communities in the study area about access to regular electricity supply. 32% of the respondents supported regularity of electricity supply while 50% revealed lack of access to regular electricity supply in the communities. 18% did not indicate their opinion.

(2) Were the political leaders transparent in the choice social services to be provided to the people?

The transparency of the political leaders was assessed with relevant items on the questionnaire with factors such as awareness about local government policies for the people, involvement in decision making and reaching consensus with the government. The assessment of the transparency of political leaders was based on the results of the data in Tables 11-13 below and response to interview:

Table 11: Are you always aware of the policies/programmes of government for your local areas?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	41	41
No	44	44
Undecided	15	15
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

Table 11 revealed the awareness of people about government policies/programmes for the local area. The result shows that people were not adequately aware of government programmes as positive response to the question of awareness is below average, 41% of the respondents. 44% of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of the policies/programmes of government for their local area. 15% of the respondents were undecided.

Table 12: Were people been involved in decision making on local needs?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Often	09	09
Rarely	33	33
Not at all	52	52
Missing	06	06
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

From the results of data in Table 12 above, it is inferred that people were not involved in decision making on local needs. Only 09% of the respondents indicated being involved in decision making. 33% of the respondents revealed that they rarely involved while 52% of the respondents indicated that they were not involved at all. The remaining 06% did not indicate their opinion.

Table 13: Do you often reach consensus with government at your local level on what is the best interest of the society?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	20	20
No	59	59
Undecided	18	18
Missing	03	03
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

Table 13 shows that the government at the local government level did not reach consensus with the people on what is the best interest of the society. Only 20% of the respondents indicate that they used to reach consensus with the government while majority, 59% shows that it was not a common practice for government at the grassroots to reach consensus with the people on the services to be provided. This is corroborated by the response to interview with one of the traditional ruler on participation in decision making, he replied that he would have prefer a Comprehensive health Centre instead on a particular town hall started then. 18% of the respondents were undecided while 03% did not indicate their opinion. I conclude that people at the grassroots were not evolved in decision making nor reach consensus with the local government on provision of services needed by the communities. Government at the local level had not been responsive enough to the relevant needs of people at the grassroots.

- (3) What were the challenges to effective and efficient delivery of social services mentioned in terms (2) above?

In an attempt to investigate the impediments to effective service delivery, some items on the questionnaire such as transparency, accountability, corruption, monitoring committee and feedback mechanism were considered. The outcome of the factors impeding to service delivery were based on the results from Tables 14- 18 below:

Table 14: How do you rate the transparency of government policies at your local area?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Good	06	06
Average	44	44
Poor	45	45
Others	05	05
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

The rating of the transparency of government policy in Table 14 above shows that the level of transparency at the local government level is weak. Only 06% of the respondents rated the level of transparency as good. 44% of the respondents indicated that the level of transparency is average while 45% of the respondents revealed that the transparency is poor. 05% did not indicate their opinion.

Table 15: How often do your leaders account for their stewardship?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Often	10	10
Rarely	24	24
Not at all	61	61
Others	05	05
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

From the results in Table 15 above, it is inferred that there is problem of accountability in the study area. Most of the respondents, 61%, revealed that leaders at the local government level do not account for their stewardship at all. 24% supported that leaders rarely account for their stewardship while only 10% indicated that leaders do give account of their stewardship. 05% of the respondents were of different opinions. This is corroborated by response to interview by one of the traditional leader in the local government that nobody used to come to him to give any account.

Table 16: Was there any monitoring committee set up to ensure sustenance of the services provided?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	26	26
No	53	53
Undecided	15	15
Others	06	06
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

Lack of monitoring committees for the projects at the local government, according to the results in Table 16 above, is one of the impediments to effective service delivery in the study area. Only 26% of the respondents supported the above position. The response of 53% revealed that there were no monitoring committees to ensure the sustenance of services delivered at the local government level. 15% were undecided while 06% were of different opinion.

Table 17 Did government provide for feedback mechanism for the services provided?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	25	25
No	58	58
Undecided	17	17
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

Lack of feedback mechanism is identified as an impediment to effective service delivery at the grassroots. In results from table 17 above, only 25% indicated that there is feedback mechanism for services provided while 58% revealed that there is no feedback mechanism for the services provided. 17% of the respondents were undecided.

Table 18: Can you say corruption is one of the major causes of poor service delivery in your local govt.?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	81	81
No	13	13
Undecided	06	06
Total	100	100

Source: Field Work, 2014

The result from table 18 above revealed that service delivery is ineffective majorly as a result of corruption in the use of resources available to meet the needs at the grassroots. Most of the respondents, as many as 81%, supported this position. Only 13% indicated that corruption is not one of the major causes of poor service delivery in the study area. 06% of the respondents were undecided.

(4) What can be done to enhance effective and efficient social service delivery by Ikole Local Government?

Questions in the research instrument on responsiveness of local government, involvement in decision making, transparency and accountability of political office holders and the recommendations are used to address this research question. Responses revealed that effective service delivery can be enhanced through the participation of people in the policy process, transparency and accountability of political office holders, election of honest and people of proven integrity in order to avoid corruption. Other means identified by respondents include:

- i. Judicious use of available resources
- ii. Having monitoring committees for effective implementation of projects at the local government level.
- iii. There should be feedback mechanism for services provided.
- iv. Sustainance of services delivered must be ensured.

Source: Field Work, 2014

Summary of findings

This study has empirically investigated service delivery at the local government level, Nigeria, using Ikole local government in Ekiti State as a case study. The research questions were tested with the use of percentages.

The rating of the responsiveness of local government to the needs of the society is poor. The availability of potable water is not satisfactory

despite the Itapaji dam in the local government. Many of the local roads are untarred and some tarred roads are full of potholes, for instance, Ikole township roads. Some tarred roads are incomplete, for example, construction of the road from Ikole through Ara to Isinbode was not completed (not even to Ara town) but already commissioned (as at the time this survey was carried out). Attendance evidence of poor performance can be supported by the analysis above. Government provision in terms of social services for the years under study is not encouraging enough, especially in construction of roads, potable water, healthcare delivery and rural electrification. Some of the roads graded did not last as most graded roads deteriorated during raining season. Besides, some of the projects, especially construction of roads and health centres were not completed.

The result can be attributed to poor governance devoid of transparency and accountability of successive local governments. Lack of openness in governance at the grassroots has incapacitated effective service delivery.

From interview and the response to questionnaire, insufficient use of available fund was identified as one of the reasons affecting effective service delivery at the grassroots, pointing to the failure to judiciously use the available fund to meet the needs of the society. Lack of participation of people in policy making and implementation is another noted factor for inadequate provision of social services in the local government. Others pointed to the insincerity of political leaders who only showed up when their votes were needed but usually fail to re-surface or fulfill their promises. In response to interview on transparency and accountability of local representatives, one of the traditional leaders in the local government submitted “I am sorry I can’t say anything about that, I don’t belong to Local Government and I don’t have anybody coming to me. There is no transparency at all. We don’t know what is going on there”.

Lack of transparency and accountability has led to corruption, poor service delivery and lack of response to the needs of people at the grassroots. As rightly observed by Uhumwuangho and Stanley (2013), the misplacement of council funds by Local Government chairmen is one of the problems confronting local government performance. They pointed that some Local Government chairmen deposited Local Government allocations into private savings account and loan companies in which the Local Government had no Account. This is done with the intention to collecting the accruable interests on such funds on maturity. The above point was corroborated by El-Rufai (2012) who questioned why the responsiveness of Local Governments to the needs of their citizens has been deteriorating as their revenue-dependency increasing. He noted that in the year 2011, the 774 Local Governments and the 6 Area Councils (LGAs) in Nigeria received almost N1trillion (about \$7billion) from the Federation Account, which is equivalent to the entire annual budgets of Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Burundi and Togo combined. He submitted that

there is little or nothing to show for this huge transfer of free cash to the Local Governments. It is therefore not surprising that the quality of services provided at Ikole local government fail to meet the expectation of the people.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing analysis of service delivery in Ikole Local Government Areas of Ekiti State, this study concludes that Ikole local government has not performed effectively in delivering social services to the people.

The following recommendations made have the potentials of injecting the needed service delivery fundamental in facilitating development in rural areas.

Participation of the people in decision making, implementation and sustenance of projects at the local level should be employed. Transparency and accountability should be ensured if the available resources will be judiciously utilized. Avenue should be created for leaders to account for their stewardship.

The government at the grassroots should be sincere in meeting the needs of the people at the local level. Opportunity to serve at the grassroots should not be seen as a privilege to amass quick wealth but as privilege to serve. Corruption must be stamped out of the system. Honest and people of proven integrity only should be given the privilege to serve at the grassroots.

Elections to local government posts should be free and fair from primary elections and should be handled by Independent Electoral Commission. The practice of chosen caretaker committee to oversee the affairs at local level should be avoided. Leaders should be elected and made to be accountable to the electorate, not to the House of Assembly.

There is need to cultivate the culture of maintenance of local government projects. Any project to be carried out should be well monitored to ensure quality and durability of such projects.

Local governments should be given free hand to carry out projects needed in their locality. Political interference and dictation must be avoided.

Besides, there is need to improve the skill of technical and professional staff across various sectors (health, works and maintenance, infrastructural development). There is need for training and re-training of workers to rid the local government of mediocre staff. The recruitment process of local government staff should be void of favouritism, nepotism, ethnic and political consideration and other factors that unseat qualification, experience and performance.

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