Nigeria has 768 Local Government Areas and 6 Area Councils. The 1999 Constitution guarantees the system of local governments by democratically elected councils comprising of an executive and legislative arm. Since 1999, each of the 768 Local Governments and Area Councils has “received” not less than N30Billion each from the Federation Account. This is over N23.220Trillion accruing to LGCs. Yes, received is in quotes because the bulk of the money never got to the Local Governments Councils (LGCs). It was hijacked by State Governments through the State Joint Local Government Account.

There is practically nothing to show for this huge funds collected by the State Governments on behalf of LGCs. Poverty is increasing at the local level and our people have been denied access to the basic necessities of life such as portable water, functional schools, primary health care services, electricity, feeder roads, etc. If N30billion or even half of it had been invested in every local government, poverty would have been a thing of the past in Nigeria or at least significantly reduced.

In many States, LGCs are not elected. They are run by caretaker committees appointed by the Governor. And where LGC elections have been held, they have been abused and manipulated by State Governments using the instrument of the State Independent Electoral Commission as the ruling party in each State declares itself the winner of virtually all the seats. Where an opposition party wins or the victory of the ruling party is challenged, incumbent Governors set up sham Electoral Tribunals that do the will of its appointers. Whether it is a caretaker committee or a purported election, the will of the people have been subverted. State Houses of Assembly made laws limiting the tenure of LGCs and tenures range between 2-3years. In many instances, the LGCs are dissolved before the end of their tenure.

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LGC Chairpersons and Councilors are paid salaries but are rendered redundant by the State Government and their duties in Schedule 4 of the Constitution are left unattended. This is not the way of democracy. It cannot be allowed to continue. Nigerians can no longer be treated as slaves by persons who they elected to serve them

To The Rescue Of Our People
Following consultations with the Nigerian people in all the federal constituencies, the National Assembly has proposed the following amendments to the 1999 Constitution on LGCs:

a. Direct funding of LGCs from the Federation Account and cancellation of State/Local Government Joint Account.
b. INEC to organize all LG elections and abolition of State Independent Electoral Commissions.

c. No allocation from the Federation Account or State Government to an unelected or caretaker LGC and no recognition of such LGC as a Council properly so called under the Constitution or any law for the time being in force.

d. “The House of Assembly of every State shall...ensure the existence of democratically elected Local Government Councils under a Law which provides for their funding from the public revenue of the State and the autonomy of the Local Government Councils.”

e. “The democratically elected Local Government Council shall be a tier of government in Nigeria and shall consist of executive and legislative arms.”

f. Four year tenure for LGCs as against the varying tenures fixed by different States of the Federation.

g. The Chairperson of a Local Government working with the Vice-Chair and Supervisors is now empowered to determine the general direction of policies of the LGC; coordinate the activities of LGC and generally discharge the executive functions of the LGC; etc.

The Bigger Challenge

We need at least 24 State Houses of Assembly voting in support of the National Assembly position. But the 36 Governors are reported to have vowed to resist LGC autonomy through the State Houses of Assembly. They want more poverty for our people; more children out of school; more pregnant women dying during child birth; more Nigerians dying of water borne diseases, malaria, typhoid fever, etc. BUT WE MUST FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS AND RESIST EVIL

Call To Action

We call on all Nigerians to join the struggle for autonomous local government. Action points include:

1. Sign petitions in support of the autonomy for Local Government Council.
2. Join mass rallies in support of the autonomy.
3. Send “grant autonomy to Local Government Council” as text message to members of your State House of Assembly and State Governors.
4. Engage members of the State House of Assembly in their various constituencies individually to endorse Local Government autonomy.
5. Join us Twitter, Facebook and other social media for discussions
6. Engage the Media in support of LGC autonomy

We all must take this advocacy to the doorsteps of all State House of Assemblies. Local Government Autonomy Now!

May God continue to bless Nigeria!!!

Advocacy by

MAKE OUR DEMOCRACY WORK

Local Government Autonomy Now!

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES
LGA BUDGET WATCH PROJECT

Centre for Social Justice