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Accountability and Good Governance at the Grassroots Level in Nigeria: Option for Rural Poverty Alleviation

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Abstract- Nigeria is the only country in the world that is rich in oil and other mineral resources and yet its citizens remain at the very lowest ladder of the poorest people in earth. It is estimated that most Nigerians live on less than a (Us) dollar in a day. This poverty situation has affected the general perception and of doing things among Nigerian so negatively that it has become a problem in Nigeria mostly at the grassroots level. Although poverty is a Universal phenomenon that affect the Socio-economic and political well being of its victims whether in developed or underdeveloped countries however, statistics and data show that poverty in poor countries is absolute and more pronounced in rural areas due to lack of accountability and good governance among council officials. Since our independence the rural folks that constitute significant segment of the Nigerian Society live in abject and hopeless poverty and are neglected in terms of socioeconomic and political wellbeing. There is therefore an urgent need for elected local government officials to be accountable and ethical imperative for good governance at the grassroots levels. This paper has provided an ethical and empirical analysis of the problems, and points out that poverty cannot be totally eradicated but it can be alleviated and that its rest on transparency and good governance at the grassroots in Nigeria.

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Accountability and Good Governance at the Grassroots Level in Nigeria: Option for Rural Poverty Alleviation

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Abstract- Nigeria is the only country in the world that is rich in oil and other mineral resources and yet its citizens remain at the very lowest ladder of the poorest people in earth. It is estimated that most Nigerians live on less than a (Us) dollar in a day. This poverty situation has affected the general perception and of doing things among Nigerian so negatively that it has become a problem in Nigeria mostly at the grassroots level. Although poverty is a Universal phenomenon that affect the Socio-economic and political well being of its victims whether in developed or underdeveloped countries however, statistics and data show that poverty in poor countries is absolute and more pronounced in rural areas due to lack of accountability and good governance among council officials. Since our independence the rural folks that constitute significant segment of the Nigerian Society live in abject and hopeless poverty and are neglected in terms of socioeconomic and political wellbeing. There is therefore an urgent need for elected local government officials to be accountable and ethical imperative for good governance at the grassroots levels. This paper has provided an ethical and empirical analysis of the problems, and points out that poverty cannot be totally eradicated but it can be alleviated and that its rest on transparency and good governance at the grassroots in Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

“NO democracy can become dynamic, acceptable and sustainable if the system of governance at the grassroots level is not people oriented, friendly, participatory and accountable” (Adedeji, 1999). Sachs, (2005) postulated that, “The stability of a fledging government depends to a large extent on the ability of the governing elites to eradicate poverty For government cannot thrive in an impoverished country where people live below \$1 per day, and where stresses of diseases, famine and climate shock are pervasive”. These quotations capture the central objectives and theme of this paper on accountability and good governance at the grassroots level in Nigeria options for rural poverty alleviation.

The origin of local government in Nigeria dates back to the very beginning of colonial administration with the introduction of indirect rule, which marked the genesis of self rule and shared rule. Since then, several adjustments have been made based on several

theories of local government without success. The current efforts appear to be blindly directed towards bringing the poverty level to the barest minimum level, with the result that there are so many local governments that are not making any impact on socio-economic and political lives of their people. A visit to any rural settlement in Nigeria, which constitute about 73-75% of the nation's population will reveal dirt and unmotorable roads, women and children walking barefooted and trekking long distance to get water and firewood, pupil studying under trees, dilapidated and ill-equipped health centres and scores of poverty driven problems (Aderonmu, 2007). The rural dwellers suffer on many fronts and are powerless to improve their situation because of ill health, poor education and lack of access to many opportunities available to them. They are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters and economic upheavals as well as to crime and violence. The rural dwellers are often deprived of basic rights that urban dwellers take for granted.

Although successive governments in Nigeria since independence to date have attempted severally to eradicate poverty in the country through various programmes, the assessment of their contributions to poverty reduction is scanty compared to the huge amount of resources committed to the programmes (Egware, 1999), because local government official are not always accountable and lacks good governance. The situation where local governments merely collect budgetary allocations and taxes and rates without any form of change in the lives of the people and their environments is not good enough, and it is also unethical, undemocratic and anti-governance. The local government must begin to affect the lives of rural communities more positively by reducing poverty than ever before as such; positive changes in the lives of the lives of rural communities will cumulatively result in the growth and development of the national economy.

Anybody that has experienced poverty especially in rural Nigeria will agree with me that poverty is a very dangerous human situation that has the capacity to influence and alter the psychic and intellectual Constitution of the person especially where it has become abject as we noticed in most of our local government areas. According to Ahmed, (2007), Poverty in the rural areas has become a common phenomenon

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that it is almost becoming an accepted factor of life because the elected officials and rulers lack accountability, vision and mission of governance". The Nigeria poverty situation, be it at the state and local governments however, presents itself as a paradox in the sense that the country is richly endowed in both human and material resources yet its people remain among the poorest people of the earth planet.

Some scholars have posited that, the extreme poverty of rural Nigerians is one of the greatest hindrances in the fight against corruption and bad governance in the country. Although the local governments are most endowed in resources with ever expanding budget yearly in Nigeria, yet corrupt elite that remains a stranglehold on political power has reduced its citizens to destitution. Consequently rural Nigerians who ordinarily resent any form of slavery are only too eager now to go into slavery in Western, Asian countries for survival. Poverty is so deeply etched on their faces and in their psychology that it can be truly regarded as the major underlying factor for the moral turpitude that other people so readily point to in Nigerian rural dwellers. In its full manifestations, albeit in material, moral, intellectual and psychological spheres, rural-poverty has created political thugs, professional prostitutes, constant migrations and sycophancy, Boko Haram membership etc, that makes the running of government very difficult in Nigeria. These are some of the missing ingredients in our local government system which this paper is out to address. The paper is divided into eight parts including this introduction, the remaining parts is organized as follows part two dwellers on theoretical and conceptual framework of accountability and good governance which will provide basis for part three which examines the concept of good governance and that of local government which will provide basis for part four which examines rural poverty situation in Nigeria. Part five discusses Accountability and good governance for poverty free rural government in Nigeria. Part Six, Seven and Eight contain challenges of Accountability and good governance at the grassroots level, suggestions for the improvement of accountability and good governance in rural Nigerian then the conclusion.

II. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Although accountability is widely believed to be a good thing, the concept is highly abstract and is often used in a very general way. According to Robertson (1993) a typical definition is that "accountability concerns the process by which those who exercise power, whether as government elected representatives or as appointed officials, must be able to show that they have exercised their powers and discharged their duties

properly". Such a broad definition is necessary as the detailed nature of accountability varies greatly from one situation to another.

Ohonba (1986) has argued that accountability is not confined to democracy or local governments as some writers appear to assume. He argues that where as it is the case in demonstrably government officials are accountable to the electorates, this is not to say that officials in other economic systems are never accountable to those over who they work with/for even if the form of accountability and degree to which it seems to obtain differs from western type of government and economic ideology. It therefore means that for a specific country, one can identify a set of different relationship procedures that constitutes main element of accountability.

Oshisami (1992) posits that generally people tend to quote accountability as given account of one's stewardships of what is entrusted to the leader by the people. The dictionary further defines accountability as responsibility or expected to give an explanation. This he said is not always true. The fact, according to him is that, one can have responsibility for carrying out a number of functions or for a number of things, whereas he may be accountable for only a few of them or for only one of them. Accountability in general is more specific than responsibility. Accountability in government has been observed to be beyond the stewardship function. This is because there is the added dimension of complexity, which is one of the most significant aspects of managing government complexity not irrationality, in assessing whether or not one us or allocation of resources is better or more beneficial than another. Accountability in public places can be nebulous or articulated as possible, depending on circumstances and societal values In other words, there are also many patterns of public accountability (Ademolekun 1986) for instance, identified five patterns of public accountability thus political, legal, financial, social and ethical accountability.

The popularity and acceptance of accountability stem from the fact that it is necessary to control and check the work of leaders and managers and their accountability, according to Dariani, (2006) due to the following reasons probable mistakes in human being, prevention from probable corruption, prevention from wasting of resources and government facilities, best selection in programming and policies and justification of citizens rights. Our values has always emphasized on accountability in all affairs for proper governance of the society. The modern theorems of accountability also stem from the fact that all persons are exposed to corruption, (Lewis, 2006). The position of this paper is that corruption is evil and must be avoided in all spheres especially at the grass root level to alleviate the type of poverty experienced in Nigeria.

Again the basics of accountability as posited by Ademola (2007) include monitoring which is the first and important base and pre-theorem of accountability in a way that without it, there is no meaning for accountability and practicality with lack of monitoring. It is impossible to invite people, government and organizations to accountability. The second base of accountability is transparency, because without transparency in all affairs, it is impossible for accountability to be the base of positive effects and results. Thirdly, accountability which may result from an accountable system and guarantees its continuous and correctness is consideration of the claims. It is good to prevent any violation and convince the people that there are real penalties for those who may violate the rule (Lewis 2006).

III. CONCEPT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Governance can be defined as the fundamental process by which the lives and dreams of people are jointly pursued by deliberate and systematic strategies and policies for the attainment of their maximum potential. It is the combination of responsible leadership and enlightened public participation" (Jegade 2001). Governance rather than being perceived in political term as institution is construed as the management of the lives of people in a systematic, organized way for the best possible results, using the consensus of the people's will, vision, wisdom and aspiration, (Jegade, 2001).

Thus if governance embraces all of the methods-good and bad that societies use to distribute power and public resources thus problems of good governance is therefore a subset of governance wherein public resources and problems are managed effectively, efficiently and in response to critical needs of society. Effective democratic forms of governance ideally should rely on public participation, accountability and transparency. This implies a high level of organizational effectiveness in relation to policy formulation and policies actually pursued especially in the conduct of economic policy and its contribution to growth, stability and popular welfare-poverty alleviation. Thus good governance also includes openness and the application of the rule of law.

As a necessary condition for development, a system of good governance in a limited administrative sense, would consist of a set of rules and institutions, (that is, a legal framework for development in this case poverty alleviation at the grass root level) and system of public administration which is open, transparent, efficient and accountable. Such a system would provide clarity, stability and predictability for interested investors/developers which would constitute the essential engine of economic development and in turn reduce poverty in the rural areas.

In recent years, people have been much more concerned about good governance than anything else especially as attempt to sustain and consolidate the hard-won democracy continuous to gain ground at the grassroots.

According to a newspaper report (New Nigeria, October 3, 2000), Good governance is the positive action undertaken by a government to promote democracy and achieve social justice".

For governance to be considered good, scholars have come out with the following attributes: accountability based on the notion of popular sovereignty are public choice, a legal framework that guarantees the rule of law and due process, popular participation in decision-making process based on political and social pluralism, and on freedom of association and expression and bureaucratic accountability based on impersonality of office, uniform application of rules and rationality of organizational structure.

IV. USING THE UNDP REPORT, CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE INCLUDE THE UNDERLISTED

- Participatory activities
- Legitimacy and acceptability to the people
- Sustainability
- Transparency
- Promotion of equity and equality
- Ability to develop the resources and methods of governance
- Promotion of gender balance
- Tolerates and accepts diverse perspectives
- Ability to mobilize resources for social purposes
- Strengthens indigenous mechanism
- Operates by rule of law
- Efficient and effective in the use of resources
- Engenders and commands respect and trustable to define and takes ownership of resources
- Enabling and facilitative
- Regulatory rather than controlling
- Able to deal with temporal issues
- Service oriented

V. CONCEPT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government unit is almost universally found in modern politics and in both developed and developing countries. Local government continues to be vital in political and economic issue in Nigeria since the 1976 Reform. It continues to place strains on politics in general and inter-governmental economic relations in particular. But what is local government? Where does local government derive its power? What is involved in referring to local government as "third tier" of government? These are some of the questions that we set out to provide answer.

The conceptualization of the term has been rather problematic. Because of this; there has been no universally accepted definition of the term "local governments". A number of authors have pointed out the problematic nature of the term. For example, Mackenzie (1994) said that, there is no normative general theory from which we can derive testable hypothesis about what local government is. Wickwar (1970) seems to agree with Mackenzie when he stated that no greater authors like Austin, Bentham, Buchana or Mill have thought it fit to determine the principles of local government in general.

While it is difficult to fault all the foregoing especially Wickwar's observations, it does not negate the fact that we are struck with reality that there is something like local government, which has to be dealt with. Anyway we will like to go with scholars who define it as the level of government closest to the people. It is vested with some powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain. The United Nations Division of Public Administration defines local government as a political sub-division of a nation (or in a federal system or a state) which is constituted by laws and has substantial control of local affairs including the power to impose taxes or exert labour for prescribed purpose. The government body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected.

The 1976 Nigeria Local government Reforms sees local government as "Government at the local level exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within a defined area".

Arising from the above definitions, we can reasonably be sure of what local government is all about. The characteristics of local government can be deduced from the above definitions are:

- Is a sub-system playing its part within the larger political system (Oladoke 1984).
- It is established by law and has certain functions and responsibilities
- It is the lower level of government in a unitary political system and lowest level of government in a federal three-level government
- It is a legal entity of its own and can sue and be sued
- Its council members could be elected or selected
- It is a political unit with defined territory and certain specific population, (150,000-800,000) as prescribed by the 1976 Reforms

VI. POVERTY SITUATION IN RURAL NIGERIA

Just like the concept of "accountability" and "good governance", poverty defies precise definition due to its multidimensional nature. Dike (2003) affirms this when he argued that "poverty has narrow and broad definition partly because it is a physical matter and

partly because poverty is relative". He asserted further that it is physical because a poor person in one country may not be perceived as such in another country. Nweje and Ojowu (2002) defined three categories of poverty, absolute and subjective poverty. These scholars argued that families or groups are said to be absolutely poor when "they have inadequate resources particularly real income to obtain the types of diets needed to enjoy some fixed minimum standard of living determined by a given society, which Schiller (1976) considers as some amount of goods and services essential and that these who are unable to obtain them are said to be "absolutely" poor. These essential goods and services include water, food, clothing, housing, health care, sanitation and education.

Relative poverty on the other hand implies a situation in which an individual or household has goods and services which are lower than those of other people or households in the society. Schiller (371-413)? on the other hand posited that subjective poverty is expressed in a range of non-material and intangible qualities based on a respondent's feeling of their standard of living. Newje *et al.* (2002). From Vaidyanathan's (2002), perspective poverty is the feeling of whether one is poor or not depending on the absolute minimum standards of living below which one may be categorized as poor. While Odey (2008) sees poverty as an all inclusive hydra, problematic of unacceptable human deprivation of general welfare, denial of opportunities, choice and expectations.

This paper is more concerned with absolute poverty because this category of poverty is prevalent among rural Nigerians. On this basis, the definitions of poverty as argued by the World Bank, the Copenhagen Declaration on poverty 1995; and in the Journal of Poverty would be examined. According to the World Bank, Poverty is a living condition in which an entity is faced with malnutrition, illiteracy, low life expectancy, insecurity, powerlessness and low self esteem. It implies economic, social and political, cultural and environmental deprivation" World Bank (2001).

The Copenhagen declaration on poverty in 1995 also argued that poverty has various dimensions and manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient enough to ensure sustainable livelihood, hunger and malnutrition, ill health, limited or lack of access to education and productive resources sufficient enough to ensure sustainable livelihood, lack of basic services, increased mobility and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environment, social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision making and in civil social and cultural life. Copenhagen Declaration (2001).

Moreover, the Journal of poverty explained poverty to mean more than less been impoverished and

more than lacking financial means. It is an overall condition of inadequacy, and deficiency of economic, political and social resources". This overall condition of inadequacy extend to the denial of the expression of basic human rights among others, in rural Nigeria At independence, in 1960 through to the era of oil boom in the 1970s the poverty level in the grassroot was not so escalated. However, records have shown that since 1980 and throughout the 1990's to the present poverty level in the grassroots has been on the increase. For example the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) (2000), poverty profile of local governments first published in 1999 revealed that the level of poverty rose from 28.1% in 1980 to 46.3, percent in 1985 but dropped slightly to 47.2 percent in 1992 it however, rose sharply to 69.6 percent in 1996 and has ever since been on the increase in an alarming proportion. This increase was/is associated with the prolonged military rule in the county which was characterized with anti-democratic norms. Their anti-democratic posture was seen as capable of causing any local government official unaccountable and of bad governance, hence the prevalence of poverty among the rural Nigerian populace. The military administration in Nigeria thwarted the democratic process and institutionalized anti-rural values in Nigeria it was under the military that such vices like corruption in all its ramification, ethnicity, religious fanaticism and negation of merit amongst others became more pronounced especially at the grassroot level because the military actually entrenched, in local government politics of calumny, sit-tight syndrome, unaccountability, bad governance and abuse of scarce resources. All these anti ethical of rural values precipitated abject poverty of the grassroots in Nigeria.

Moreover, despite the 1976 Local government, which was aimed at restructuring the council to meet the aspiration of the people for greater political participation and economic empowerment, empirical evidence has shown that accountability and good governance is yet to take its rightful place at the grassroots level in Nigeria Because the Constitution establishing them does not allow the rural populace have a control, contributions or checks on the elected officials. They are not accountable to the people they are supposed to serve and this no doubt encouraged bad governance. It is therefore correct according to Victor 2009: 31-34 "to say that most of the crises of corruption which is perpetuating poverty at the grassroots level in Nigeria can be traced to constitutional provisions".

For example the Nigerian constitution gave local government a separate status as a third tier of government, but at the same time subordinates local government to the state government. With this, who will the officials be accountable to? This provision is contained in the 1999 constitution as follows:

The 1999 Constitution by virtue of section 7 provides that:

The system of local government democratically elected is under this guaranteed and accordingly the government of every state, shall be subject to section 8 of this constitution ensures their existence under a law which provide for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and function of such councils.

The implication of this provision is that local government derives its existence from the state. It therefore means that the state government shall make laws to regulate its local government, and of the same time local government is expected to function as a tier of government with some of the residual powers. What a contradiction? This provision greatly affects accountability of the elected officials to the rural populace and good governance at the grassroots level because they merely dance to the tune of those in the capital and are also responsible to them as well Abaje, (2009).

In addition, the listing of all the 774 local government areas in the constitution by Decree 15, 1989 and subsequent unification of the structures of administration regardless of the level of socio-economic, educational and political development as well as differences in culture and traditional political system population and financial resources disparity, all cumulatively have serious implications for the accountability and expected good governance at the grassroots level Abaje, (2009).

Besides, there is the question of ethical issues, which are non-statutory because it borders on equity and fairness, morality, normative as well as norms and tradition. Ethical issues are subjective which have different expression from place to place. However, in all human societies, ethical issues in governance seems to have universal expression as the essence of accountability and good governance is to proved for the welfare of the governed. The ethical issues in local governance can be discussed under the two roles of local government in every political system i.e. political and social-economic. Local governments are set up to promote the idea of accountability and good governance while at the same time providing socio-economic services to alleviate poverty of any form at the grassroots. These roles have some theoretical underpinning.

This could have prompted the writings of Mills and his associate who writing as far back as the 16th century believed that the purpose of local government is essentially to promote democracy at the grassroots level with respect for ethical values and patriotism at heart But some other writers and theorists such as Langrod and Moulin, (1995) argue instead that the aim of establishing local government should be that of service delivery. This has been the argument as to which of those roles is primary and, which is secondary? Irrespective of which line of argument that may receive

our sympathy, we may dare say that both roles are complementary and not substitute to each other. The best of each of these two roles must be applied so as to alleviate poverty at the grassroots level in Nigeria.

VII. ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR POVERTY FREE RURAL GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA

The high level of poverty at the grassroots level in Nigeria today is unbelievable more so that: First, Nigeria is well blessed with natural and human resources, and she is under the yoke of a democratic rule. These are potentials for development and reduction of poverty of any type and inequality at the grassroots level Since Nigeria has abundant resources the answer to this could probably be explained in the nature of accountability and good governance. But there are state government manipulations of local government finances and even programmes. This manipulation has so many manifestations. Some of which include the failure of poverty alleviations programmers, failed elections, failed leadership, political and ethnic crises. The poverty Alleviation programme (PAP) for instance gulped 10 billion naira but its impact was not felt at the grassroots. Why? Because it was infested with corruption on the part of the council officials and other officials charged with the implementation of the scheme (News Watch, 2000). The same was said of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) another government rhetoric concerning poverty alleviation. According to Benard (2001), "Most of these programmes creates more poverty it is designed to alleviate because after the 'launchings, corrupt officials at the three level of government hijack the objectives of the programmes".

According to Ademolekun (1993), "Much has been said about the need to develop the grassroots level, but solutions should mainly be aimed at providing good governance and responsible local government official. That he went further by positing that, enhance the development at the grassroots and thus tackle the problem of abject absolute poverty confronting the vast majority of rural people in the midst of plenty" Indeed leadership should be purely based on the principle of accountability and good governance. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria clearly provides what should be accountability and good governance at any level of government. It provides that Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice and that "Sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this constitution derives its powers and authority". It further provides that" the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government and that "the participation of the people shall be the primary purpose

of government" and that "the participation of the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of the constitution" Specifically in section 15 (5), the constitution stipulates that the state shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power". These and other provisions in the constitution aimed at achieving social justice are contained in chapter two of the constitution as fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy. Again section 13 of the constitution also provides that "It shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and of all authorities and person, exercising legislative, executive or such powers to conform to observe and apply the provision of this chapter of the Nigeria constitution Therefore the local government leaders/Officials should manage the councils in strict compliance to the rule of law as stipulated by the constitution by been accountable and good governance to the people at the grassroots level Victor (2009).

VIII. CHALLENGES OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

It needs be emphasized that the challenges of accountability and good governance has been attributed to popular participation of the rural folks in the day to day running of local government Beyond pervasive culture of poverty that renders our local governments too weak in attaining greater efficiency because of their limited resources. The available scarce resources are far from being judiciously used Agreed that corruption is taking a large chunk of the scarce resources but wastages, duplication of efforts, and palpable inefficiency makes local government to be too alienated from the citizenry In an insightful piece Femi (1989), a political scientist, bemoaned the spate of civil uprising against constituted authorities which raised a fundamental question about the relationship between the local government officials and her Citizenry. The indication is that there is a simmering feeling of exasperation among many which carries with it a readiness to renege on the obligation to obey the law or even take up arms against the council managers From 1989 when this observation was made with respect to the "Criminal" neglect of state functions in terms of provision of social amenities and a decade later, the deplorable living condition of an average Nigerian of all strata of the society was a Childs play when juxtaposed with the present state of poverty, squalor and deprivation at the grassroots level.

Compounding the problem of poverty of the citizens at the grassroots level is the civil society in Nigeria, which unlike in other African countries exhibit t clear traits of weakness. The Civil society suffers from some limitation in its capability to serve as vanguard for rural poverty alleviation through accountability and good governance and promotion of popular participation It is

beleaguered by an authoritarian state. It is one that has to contend with a very strong state either under military autocracy or one party rule. The civil society in its form is rather segmentary and non-additive because they contend also with regional and religious factionalism, with membership dominated over others by a particular ethnic group. This segmentation usually undermines national and grassroots alliances around common demands.

Another problem of the Nigerian civil society is that it is non-combative in its struggle for accountability and demand for good governance at the grassroots, whereas accountability and good governance is never handed down arbitrarily on a platter of gold, talk less of its sustenance, it is always fought for. The embarrassing level of illiteracy and general mediocrity limits the mobilization of the civil society in its perennial struggle and consolidation especially on issues of poverty at the grassroots (Idenojie (2007).

IX. SUGGESTIONS ON IMPROVEMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN RURAL NIGERIA

In order to achieve accountability and good governance in the alleviation of poverty in the grassroots level, the following strategies are suggested.

- Political Rights should be granted the rural populace to elect the officials whom they prefer the government that will pursue their interest
- Committed Government officials that will be accountable and good governance should be sponsored into local government officials
- If democracy is understood, there should be no support for any democratic government that abandons, unattended the gross inequality of wealth and continuing impoverished daily living conditions in the rural areas
- Political stability In the extant literature on grassroots development and sustainability generally, there seems to be a kind of consensus that without accountability, probity and transparency in the conduct of the their tier of governance political stability will be a mirage
- Weak accountability mechanisms tend to facilitate corruption, prolong poverty and other abuses of office and thereby undermine good governance more generally. Therefore for a governance to be considered good, it must be open which suggests that policies are generally subject to prior consultation and deliberations and that there is legally enforceable right of public access to local government records and other instruments to check the activities of the officials
- An Active Civil Society should be demonstrated at all times. Civil Societies, such as non-governmental

- organizations, - human rights, pro-democracy organizations, the media, Religions assemblages, cooperative unions and professional association as facilitators and defenders of accountable and good government should be widely acknowledge to the extent that they are seen as important instruments that can force the local officials to be transparent and accountable in poverty alleviation programmes
- The putative role of the independent media in sustaining political stability, is that of providing the public, space for a wide range of societal opinion to be expressed and supplying the populace which objective is needed help create a feeling of nationhood among the rural people traditionally divided by tribal loyalties to be united to prosecute officials who derail from the dreams and aspirations of the council

X. CONCLUSION

In a country like Nigeria where more than seventy-five percent of the population lives in rural areas outside the direct influence of either the Federal or state government, it is clear that our promotion of accountability and good governance remains the greatest antidote to the problems of poverty of the grassroots level. And when modern institutions government collapse at other levels, governance is sustained through the traditions at the grassroots. No doubt the quest will be an ongoing learning process. There are bound to be several ups and downs along the path, it is important that we alleviate poverty if democracy will be sustained in Nigeria.

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