# Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria: The Role of Good Governance

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**A b s t r a c t**

The year 2019 is a general election year in Nigeria. Events that occurred in Ekiti, Osun State 2018 Gubernatorial Election is a source of concern to all Nigerian and international observers. A new system of rigging has emerged such that election results of some polling units are deliberately doctored so as to increase or decrease a political party's chance of winning an election. This paper examined the Role of Good Governance in Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria. The features of good governance were examined. The study employs sampled survey technique for the study. Questionnaires were used to source for data from respondents. On the whole one hundred and twenty (120) respondents were sampled using stratified random sampling technique. Descriptive and inferential statistics was employed to process the data. Finding reveals that there is a significant difference in citizenship participation in decision making process in the studied area. However, there are challenges of adequate security of life and property, transparency and accountability, equity in allocation of government position. The Author advocates the following decentralization, inclusion, equity, transparency and accountability and adequate security of life and property.

**Keywords:** *Governance, Sustainable Development, Decentralization, Citizens Participation*

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**Background to the Study**

Since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in May 29, 1999. Her electoral process has witness a tremendous progress ranging from electronic card readers to voters education programs. However, events that occurred at Ekiti and Osun State 2018 gubernatorial election is a concern to all Nigerian and international observers. A new method of election rigging has emerged, where election results at some polling units are deliberately doctored to increase or decrease a political party's chance of winning an election and security operative got compromised.

In Nigeria context; mean different things to different people depending on prison and political divide of and individual. To some it means regionalization, while others sees it as decentralization and devolution of power. Other sees it as resource control and fiscal federalism. The above concept by the advocates of restructuring in Nigeria centres around the campaign for good governance. The goal of the Global Campaign for good urban governance is to reduce urban poverty through good urban governance. Its objectives are the increased capacity of local governments and other stakeholders to practice good governance and raised awareness of an advocacy for good governance. The campaign can thought of as a series of co-coordinated action designed to achieve the goal and objectives.

The strategy for achieving this is to advocate and, most importantly, operationalize, agreed-upon norms of restructuring good governance. It is UN-Habitats experience that inclusive strategic planning and decision-making processes are the key to good governance and sustainable cities.

This experience was confirmed in the Habitat Agenda's Endorsement of the "enabling approach". The approach is characterized by several strategies, decentralization of responsibilities and resources to local authorities based on the principle of fiscal federalism; encouraging the participation of civil society, particularly women in the design, implementation and monitoring of local priorities, using a wide-variety of partnerships, including with the private sector, to achieve common objectives; building capacity of all actors to contribute fully to decision-making and urban development processes.

**Conceptual Framework**
**Literature Review**
**Sustainable Development**

In 1987, the Brundtland Commission published its report our common future, in an effort to link the issues of economic development and environmental stability. In doing so, this report provided the basic definition of sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs" (United Nations General Assembly, 1987: 43).

The concept sustainable development aims to maintain socio-economic advancement and progress while protecting the sustainability. The board focused on the seemingly inherent distinction between what advocates and analysts sought to sustain and what they sought to develop, the relationship between the two, and the time horizon of the future, (National

Research Council, 1999). Thus, under the heading "what is to be sustained", the Board identified three major categories; nature, life support systems and community, as well as intermediate categories for each, such as earth, environment, and cultures. Drawing from the surveyed literature the Board found that most commonly, emphasis was placed on life support system, which defined nature or environment as a source of services for the utilitarian life support of humankind. In contrast, some of the sustainable development literature long-term value of the environment provides a framework for the integration of environmental policies and development strategies" (United Nations General Assembly, 1987).

In the years following the Brundtland Commission's report, the creative ambiguity of the standard definition, while allowing a range of disparate group to assemble under the sustainable development tent, also created a veritable industry of deciphering and advocating what sustainable development really means. One important study by the Board on Sustainable Development of U.S National Academy of Sciences sought to bring some order to the broad literature which its members reviewed. In its report, Our Common Journey, A Transition toward valued nature for its intrinsic value rather than its utility for human being (Nnodu, 2008).

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development marked a further expansion of the standard definition with the widely used three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The Johannesburg Declaration created "a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually rein forcing pillars of sustainable development; economic development, social development and environmental protection at local, national, regional and global levels". Thus, while the three pillars were rapidly adopted, there was no universal agreement as to their details.

**Governance**

Governance is the enabling environment that requires adequate legal frameworks, efficient political managerial and administrative processes to enable the local government response to the needs of citizen. It can be defined as the many ways that institutions and individuals organize the day-to-day management of a city and the processes used for effectively realizing the short-term and long-term agenda of a city's development. Urban governance is the software that enables the urban hardware to function. Effective urban governance is characterized as democratic and inclusive, long-term and integrated; multi-scale and multilevel; territorial; proficient and conscious of the digital age. Local governments are instrumental in urban governance.

Strong and capable local governments are the key levers to ensure inclusive and sustainable urban development, accountable and transparent city management and a dynamic multi-stakeholder engagement. They have the proximity and legitimacy; in most countries of the world, to effectively manage, govern and lead the development of the city. Un-Habitat works at empowering local governments as pivotal actors of urban governance, by improving their capacities related to urban planning, local finances and budgeting, public asset management, e-governance and open government, stakeholders' participation. In doing so, our work is oriented towards the strengthening of institutional capacity and local leadership skills.

Effective multilevel governance is the overarching prerequisite for urban governance, which should be characterized by well-defined spheres of government (national, regional and local) and based on appropriate decentralization policies. It calls for a balanced distribution of resource and responsibilities between the different spheres of government, enabled by legal and financial instruments that take into account the key principle of subsidiary. UN-Habitat work focuses on the establishment of permanent structures of dialogue between the local and central governments on one side, and the public and private sectors, on the other.

### Institutionally and Financially Sustainable Local Governments

Urban governance mostly rests at the hands of local governments who have the responsibility to provide affordable, reliable and quality basic services and to ensure equitable urban citizenship. To be able to 'do their job' local government need good public financial management systems to ensure that public services reach all, including the urban poor. As presented in the https://unhabitat.org/books/international-guidelines-on-decentralization-and-access-to-basic-service-for-all/. Local governments should work along with national governments and public, private and the informal sector in order to achieve these objectives. Effective provision of services need to be coupled with national urban and territorial policy that promotes a strong system of cities and balanced territorial development.

### Legal and Institutional Framework

At the metropolitan level is also the enabling condition that leads to a dynamic, sustainable and equitable urban future. Metropolitan governance arrangements require adjusting the distribution of power and resources to match the reality of where people live and work (functional urban areas), while helping to address externalities and spillover issues and creating synergies to boost metropolitan development.

Sustainability of local public action relies also on the integration of different spheres of government and a wide range of participating actors – formally or informally, in policy formulation and implementation. Local governments are key facilitating of participating processes, responsible for creating an enabling environment for all actors. Urban governance is inextricably linked to the welfare of the citizenry. It must enable women and men, youth, ethnic minorities, the urban poor and other disadvantaged groups to access the benefits of urban citizenships. As such, local governments are bound to facilitate and promote inclusiveness, civic engagement and effective participation of the civil society in city management.

### Transparent and Accountable Local Governments

With the devolution of powers, responsibilities and budgets, local governments are playing a greater role in designing policies and delivering key public services often within a context of weak institutional and governance structures as a result, some sectors and services are prone to corruption and misappropriation and thus to inefficient and mismanaged administration. Consequently, there is a tangible effect on the quality of services, eroding public trust in the accountability and merits of government. Transparency and accountability are essential for cities today as the essential means to create the necessary trust with citizens. Local government

need to communicate better and to understand the needs of their constituency. On the other end, citizens across the world are also requesting better instruments to control the public administration in efficient and accountable manner. Opportunities for a more regular and direct way for citizens to participate in the development, control and monitoring of the formulation, spending and performance of public policies are higher at local level.

## Participation and Inclusion

Ensuring municipal governments leverage economic growth to address inequality and foster inclusion is a multidimensional challenge. A central facet of urban governance is negotiating the relationships among stakeholders. This can be facilitated by governance frameworks that encourage policy coordination at local and regional levels but also include the voice and participation of the poor.

Given the growth of urban poverty (UN-Habitat, 2013b), it is clear that the poor have both an interest and a central role to play in governing urban area (UN-Habitat, 2013b). The urban poor have, however, largely been excluded from participating in the governance of urban areas, with interests ignored or only partially addressed in exchange for political support. Large gaps exist between poor and better-off urban residents in terms of access to social, economic and political opportunities (particularly decision-making) and more broadly, their ability to participate in, and leverage, the benefits associated with urban living, this inequality influences a range of issues including gender equality, reductions in child mortality and improvements in reproductive health, education, income, housing and security. Much of this discrepancy has to do with the interrelationship of discrimination, uneven capacity to draw a patronage networks, and urban management and governance.

According to UN-Habitat (2016) many urban areas suffer from an imbalance of political power and insufficient inclusiveness and participation. Collective decision-making has failed to address the gap between national development agendas and local needs. Women, youth, minorities, the urban poor are often excluded from decision making (UN-Habitat, 2016) further exclusion can be influenced both by who you are (i.e. your ethnicity, class or religion) and where you live (i.e. those in informal settlements or peri-urban areas may fall outside the defined administrative responsibility of city government and influence collective decision making over the allocation of local public services (Shah & Shah, 2006: 1-2). Formal political institutions play a role in determining the process for electing leaders, the roles and responsibilities of executive and legislature; the organizations of political representation (through political parties); and the accountability and oversight of the state (Scott & Mcloughlin, 2014). These institutions and systems play a pivotal role in regulating political, social and economic engagement and determining how public authority is secured and used (e.g. constitutions, laws, customs etc). They also determine how, where and upon whom resources are allocated and spent.

## Political System and Institution

A critical factor whether cities are governed in a sustainable, inclusive and pro-poor manner is the operation of local institutions and whose interest they represent. These institutions define

the framework for citizen-citizen and citizen-state interactions, and influence collective decision-making over the allocation of public resources and delivery of local public services (Shah & Shah, 2006: 1-2). Formal political institutions play a role in determining the process for electing leaders, the roles and responsibilities of the executive and legislature, the organization of political representation (through political parties); and the accountability and oversight of the state (Scott & Mcloughlin, 2014). These institutions and system play a pivotal role in regulating political, social and economic engagement and determining how public authority is structured and used (e.g. constitutions, laws, customs etc). They also determine how, where and upon whom resources are allocated and spent. Informal and customary political systems, norms and rules can operate within or alongside these formal structures (Scott & Mcloughlin, 2014: 1).

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In many cities there is recognition that it is at the local or neighbourhood level of government that increased responsiveness and improved service delivery can be delivered. However, as with higher levels of government, the representativeness and effectiveness of local governance depends on its legislative basis, the powers and resources available, the arrangements for representation, the nature of leadership and the relation between it and higher tier of city and regional government.

Democratic representation at this may be based on elections but it is also here that opportunities arise for innovative democratic practices, such as direct, deliberative or participatory democracy. According to Andrews and Shah (2005), to create political system and institutions that work for the poor, a framework of urban governance must facilitate citizen empowerment through a rights-base approach (i.e. direct democracy provisions); facilitate bottom up accountability involving evaluation of government performance as facilitator of a network of providers by citizens as governors, tax-pays and consumers of public services.

**Methodology**
The methodology employed for this research work was sampled survey. The population of the studied was 560 while the sampled size was 120. Questionnaires were administered to respondents using stratified random sampling technique. The questionnaire survey was complemented with focus group discussions. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data collected from the field.

**Results and Discussions**

**Table 1: Frequency of Responses on Good Governance**

| S/N | Description of Items | Strongly Agree (5A) 4 | Agree (A) 4 | Disagree (D) 2 | Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 | Mean | Decision Rule (2.3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Decentralization of power constitutes restructuring and good governance. | 27 | 45 | 21 | 27 | 2.6 | Accept |
| 2 | There is security of life and property. | 4 | 8 | 43 | 65 | 1.6 | Reject |
| 3. | Transparency and Accountability is required for sustainable democracy. | 97 | 15 | 5 | 3 | 3.7 | Accept |
| 4 | There is citizenship participation in decision making. | 61 | 35 | 7 | 17 | 3.2 | Accept |
| 5. | There is equity in the allocation of resource and appoint decision making | 3 | 7 | 22 | 88 | 1.1 | Reject |

**Source**: Author's Field Survey, 2018.

Table 1 reveals the perceptions of respondents on the various attributes of good governance in Lokoja/Kotonkarfi federal constituency. 73% of the respondents agreed that decentralization and devolution of power constitute restructuring and good governance in Nigeria. While 93% of the respondents are of the view that transparency and accountability are required ingredient for a sustainable democracy. Moreover, 80% of the respondents perceived that there is citizenship participation in decision making process in the studied area. However, 90% of the respondents disagreed that there is security of life and property while 91.7% disagree that there is equity in the allocation of resources and appointments to government offices.

**Test of Hypothesis**

$H_o$: There is no significant difference in citizenship participation and equity in Lokoja/Kotonkarfi federal constituency.

$H_i$: There is a significant difference in citizenship participation and equity in Lokoja/Kotonkarfi federal constituency.

**Table 2.**

| | O | E | O – E | $(O - E)^2$ | $\dfrac{O\ E}{E}$ | $X^2$ Tabulated | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SA | 38.4 | 530 | 8.4 | 70.56 | 2.352 | | |
| AA | 22 | 530 | -8 | 64 | 2.13 | | |
| DD | 19.6 | 530 | -10.4 | 108.16 | 3.61 | | |
| SD | 40 | | 10 | 100 | 3.33 | | |
| | | | | | 11.422 | 1.782 | Significant |

The calculated chi-square is 11.422

The Degree of Freedom is:

$$df = (R-1)(C-1)$$
$$df = (4-1)(5-1)$$
$$df = 3 \times 4 = 12$$

Where R = the number of rows

C = number of columns.

X = 0.05

The tabulated chi-square value is 1.782

**Decision Rule**

If the calculated chi-square's value is less than the tabulated value, at 5percent (5%) level of significance, we accept the null hypothesis ($H_o$).

Table 2 above reveals that the calculated value of chi-square (11.422) is greater than the critical value (1.782) at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 12. Therefore, we reject $H_o$ and accept $H_i$. This indicates that there is a significance difference in citizenship participation and equity in Lokoja/Kotonkarfi federal constituency.

**Summary of Major Findings**

The study sought to assess the role of good governance in sustainable democracy. Finding from the study reveals that decentralization, transparency and accountability, citizenship participation and inclusion are prerequisite feature of a sustainable development. However, security of life and property are components feature of good governance but they are lacking in the studied area. Finding reveals, there is a significant difference in citizenship participation in decision making in the study area.

**Conclusion**

Restructuring in Nigeria as it is agitated in different quarters centres on good governance, which is characterized by several strategies; such as; decentralization and devolution of power to local authorities, equity, transparency and accountability. It is at the local level that services are best provided. The local government and state should be allowed to generate and manage their resources. There should be transparency and accountability in the management of the local affair.

**Recommendations**

Toward sustainable democracy in Nigeria, the Author recommends the following:

1. Decentralization of authority and resources. Responsibility for service provision should be allocated on the basis of the principle of subsidiary; that is at the lowest appropriate level consistent with efficient and cost-effective delivery of services.

2. Equity of access to decision-making processes. Women and men must be equally represented, their need and priorities equally addressed.

3. Transparency and accountability of decision-makers and all stakeholders. The accountability of local authorities to their citizens must be a paramount concern; there is no place for corruption. Transparency and accountability are essential in allowing stakeholders to have insight into local government operation and to asses which sectors of society are benefiting from decisions and action.

4. Civic engagement and citizenship. People must actively contribute to the common good. Citizens, especially, women, must be empowered to participate effectively in decision-making process.

5. Security of individuals and their living environment. Every individual has the inalienable right to life, liberty and their security of person. Insecurity has a disproportional impact in further marginalizing poor community.

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