

AN ASSESSMENT OF DIVIDENDS OF DEMOCRACY IN BURUKU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE NIGERIA (1999 – 2011)

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Abstract:

Democracy in Nigeria has brought very few gains and these gains have been rendered insignificant by the negative, uncompromising, depressing and devastating state of the nation. Findings show that the dividends of democracy provided by the government for the masses are enjoyed at a low extent. They are also not equitably distributed. The major reason for the non – equitable distribution of dividends of democracy is corruption in governance aside god fatherism, costliness of Nigeria’s democracy, electoral malpractices, ethnicity, religion and externally triggered democracy. It is therefore recommended that corruption, which is the core impediment to our growth and development, has to be tackled aggressively under a willed and purposeful leadership.

Key Words: Dividend, democracy, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria’s return to democracy on May 29, 1999 was seen as an end to the torture, suffering of the military era. It was seen as the requirement for the country to develop following the triumph of democracy as system of government at the end of the cold war where democracy became new world political order. The process of democratization in Nigeria can be traced to the Ibrahim Babangida’s political Bureau in 1986 (Omotola,1997).This was a failure because of the annulment of the June 12,1993 presidential election which was rated as the freest and fairest in the annals of electoral history in Nigeria (Izah, 2003). The regime was unable to cope with the crisis that followed this annulment hence the institution of an Interim National Government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan (Ojo, 1998). This was greeted with mass protest that it will not put things under control. This allowed for the military takeover of power by General Sani Abacha in November, 1993. However, he was not interested in any transition process. There were resistance, resentment, protests from various groups. General Sani Abacha resorted to arrest, detention, extermination and harassment of his opponents. At the demise of late Sani Abacha on June 8, 1998, this brought in General Abdulsalam Abubakar as the Head of State whose regime successfully completed a transition to civilian administration, which ended by handing over power to a democratically elected government with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the president on May 29, 1999.

Democracy is defined as “rule by the people”. After the prolonged military rule in Nigeria and the subsequent return to democratic rule in 1999, the Nigerian people hoped for a life much better than during the military rule.

According to Chaj (2008), democratic governments and legitimate systems all over the world concerns center around providing welfare and basic necessities that will make life easier and prepare its citizens for the challenge of nation building. Some countries even though not endowed with natural

resources, have used their initiatives to guarantee that lives of their citizens are at least comfortable and satisfactory.

From the onset of the fourth republic in Nigeria, there have been repetitions via media, government officials, and populace of the slogan “dividends of democracy” The high expectations of African leaders Nigeria inclusive to connote the slogan “dividends of democracy”. The dividend of democracy means the benefits and the advantages of democracy. These include rule of law (supremacy of the law, equality before the law and fundamental human rights), legitimacy of the state, improved standard of living for the majority of the populace, improved atmosphere of peace and stability etc. All these suppose to be prerequisite for nation’s development (Igba, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Democratization trend is taking shape in many states of Africa in order to produce the expected result of societal transformation. However, this process is dotted with civil war, genocide, poverty, corruption, insecurity among others still exist in many African countries (Fayemi, 2009).

In Nigeria, people’s desire for democracy is with the hope that it will bring about the nation’s development came to reality on May 29, 1999 with the handling over by General Abdulsalam Abubakar to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the civilian president of Nigeria. The transition to democracy poses some challenges for the new democratic government (Agbu, 2000; Eyinla, 2000). These challenges include how to nurture the nascent democracy to maturity such that it can no longer be reversed or eroded. Can we really say there is good governance, respect for human rights and empowerment? Is Nigeria really a democratized nation? These questions brought in the concept of dividends of democracy that has earlier been mentioned.

Democracy in Nigeria has brought very few gains and these gains have been rendered insignificant by the negative, uncompromising, depressing and devastating state of the nation. Since the inception of the fourth republic instead of democracy delivering dividends (electricity, infrastructures, education etc.) as promised by the political leaders, there have been high rate of unemployment, increase level of corruption, increased poverty rate, ethno religious crises, industrial strikes, inception of Boko Haram and its destructive activities (bomb blast, killing, shooting etc.), increased fuel price, inflation despite the fact that the country is experiencing its first longer tenure of democracy.

One can imagine whether Nigeria has experienced thirteen years of unbroken civilian. A critical look at it will reflect that it has nothing close to genuine democracy but a woeful failure to improve the living standards of her populace (Omotola, 2007). The standard of living continues to worsen by the day while the social infrastructures and educational system are still on the decline. Nigerian economy has not showed enough signs of recovery, a phenomenon that has been complicated by the haphazard implementation of the privatization exercise, without due recourse to its social, economic and political cost. The atmosphere of instability has given place to no meaningful development.

Recent reports show that despite Nigeria’s plentiful resources and oil wealth, Nigeria is now considered one of the 20 poorest countries in the world, with over 70% of its population classified as poor, with 35% living in absolute poverty. Also reports indicate that 59% women die during or soon after childbirth every year. The second highest in the world after India (Chaj, 2008).

However, only few Nigerians could testify that democratic rule from 1999 – date has direct positive impact on their lives. Among the very few are the politicians themselves, their families and cronies, business moguls and, consultants who have connections with politicians, professionals and academics given appointments to hold public offices and those that get tokens as defenders and promoters of politicians and public office holders. Furthermore, the Nigerian people who don’t have connections with politicians are continuing to live in hardship and uncertain future. Poverty, maternal

deaths, unemployment, insecurity, underpayment, corruption, rigging of elections, lack of electricity, good drinking water and roads etc. seem to be the order of the day.

Therefore, one will begin to wonder if Nigeria is really on the path to democratization which will deliver the promised “dividends of democracy”. With the democratic rule in Nigeria from 1999 to date, will the Nigerian people testify to any meaningful change that has brought about any positive change in their lives? Have they reaped any meaningful dividends of democracy? Is there will at the polls true reflection of their leaders and representation? Are their leaders and representatives performance anything to hail up about? And have they held the trust invested on them sincerely?

This study seeks to address the following questions. What is the perception of people towards dividends of democracy in Nigeria? Why are Nigerians not enjoying dividends of democracy? What are the possible ways by which dividends of democracy can be equitably distributed so that the masses will enjoy them?

Perception of People towards Dividends of Democracy

Dividends can simply be called the gains or profits realized from democracy. It is an obvious fact that military government operates by decrees while in an ideal democratic government, law operates. Rule of law is what is unique to democracy. It includes supremacy of the law, equality before the law and fundamental human rights. It is only in democracy that rule of law can be obtained. Therefore, rule of law can be said to be part of the dividends of democracy.

Many policies, programmes and plans have been termed “dividends of democracy” by politicians and people since the beginning of the fourth republic till date. They include the introduction of new salary scale for civil servants by the Obasanjo led Administration, multi-party system, deregulation of the communication sector that led to the introduction of Global System for Mobile telecommunication (GSM) was introduced and debt relief during the same administration, the seven point agenda of President Umar Yaradua. The passage of the freedom of press bill, the establishment of nine federal universities and the recent action of the federal government to deregulate the downstream sector in this Goodluck Jonathan’s were also seen as “dividends of democracy” (Igba,2012).

According to Omotola (2007) by dividends of democracy we mean the benefit and positive gestures which the new environment of democracy has brought to bear on the state and society. Ideally, it would include rising legitimacy of the state; improved standard of living for the majority of the populace; improved climate of human rights in all its ramification; all culminating in popular empowerment, participation and enhanced atmosphere of peace and stability as a prerequisite for development.

The Pattern of Dividends of Democracy in Nigeria

The pattern of dividends of democracy in this project signifies how dividends of democracy happen or are arranged in Nigeria. Are the promises of the dividends of democracy fulfilled? In the eventuality of being fulfilled, are they equitably distributed? Have they transformed to improvement in the standard of living of the populace and development of the economy?

The so called dividends of democracy are not enjoyed by the masses but by those in corridor of power and their allies. The minority ethnic groups feel left out while the supposedly enjoying majority ethnic groups are fighting over the rotation policy that decides who assumes office. There have been more cases of ethnic religious crises, bomb blast, unemployment, corruption and other social vices even as the country celebrates its first longer tenure of democracy. Electricity, infrastructures, education etc.

That were promised by politicians during campaigns were not enjoyed. Even when the promises are fulfilled after much plea from the masses, they are either substandard and few. Most times people that are in the grassroots are not carried along.

The government actions to wholly or partially privatize public owned sectors e.g. communication, power and downstream sectors from 1999 till date has little or no positive impacts on the nation's economy. According to Omotola (2007)

Nigerian economy has not showed enough signs of recovery, a phenomenon that has been complicated by the haphazard implementation of the privatization exercise, without due recourse to its social, economic and political costs.

The communication sector is dominated by foreign companies who are known to be loyal to their home countries. They did not give space to local companies to be a major player. The only local company that has been able to contend is GLOBACOM. Despite the fact that GSM have brought ease in communication, it is obvious that Nigerians often experience network problem and providers give out substandard services. The major employment opportunities given to Nigerians are selling of recharge cards, open call centres. Up till now, some villages are still not connected to these networks. The power sector that was partially privatized has not changed in its services. The only thing that changed about it was just the change of name from NEPA PLC to PHCN .Some Nigerians even turned PHCN to "Problem Has Changed Name". Inefficient and ineffective power sector in the country has contributed to slow economic growth as many industries have packed up (Igba, 2012).

The 2011 Report of Transparency International rated Nigerian as the second most corrupt countries .Even though the salary of civil servants increases, the country experienced increased inflation because of that. Civil servants though form a large percentage of employed people in Nigeria, can never be compared to the percentage of the unemployed. The inflation led to downward trend in the exchange rate of the naira. When we are talking about increase GDP, this economics statistics cannot be said to be a measure of economic development in a country like Nigeria where there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor (Igba, 2012).

Reasons why Nigerians are not Enjoying Dividends of Democracy

(a) **Externally Triggered Democratization:** According to Welzel (2008), there are four types of democratization. The first one is responsive democratization where the human empowerment path to democracy is responsive to mass pressures for democracy. It is only *responsive democratization* that responds to mass pressures for democracy. The other types of democratization processes that do not respond to mass pressures can be classified as *enlightened democratization, opportunistic democratization and imposed democratization*. In each of these types, the power elites' vested interest in monopolizing power is overcome by reasons other than mass pressures and in each of these types lead to socially detached rather than embedded democracy. The latter of which can only result from mass responsive democratization. Enlightened democratization is a process where one of the reasons why power elites might succumb to democratize is when negative historical experiences have discredited alternative forms of government.

According to Ogundiya (2010), democracy as it is practiced in Africa today is an imposed one. He said:

It is clear that the form of democracy as it is practiced in Africa today is an imposed one. Most Africa states are forced to democratise in order to be able to access foreign loans and aid. Therefore, the third wave was not a natural wave. Democracy is adopted to suit the desire of foreign donors and advanced capitalist democracies. The problem here is that liberal democracy does not evolve, as it was in the west, with the African societies.

(b) **God fatherism and Electoral Malpractices:** The presence of god fatherism and electoral malpractices in Nigeria has impeded good governance which provides dividends of democracy in Nigeria. The elections in Nigeria (both primary and general elections) are not free from the firm grip of god fathers and electoral malpractices. Most of political office holders (including political appointment) that get to office are either through a god father or electoral malpractices or both. Many aspirants to political office in Nigeria lack the access to resources usually needed to get to office. The

two most popular political godfathers in Nigeria are late Chief Lamidi Adedibu of Oyo State and Chris Uba of Anambra State. Most times, the god fathers dictate to their protégés on how to run the government. Any opposition from the protégée means disaster as was the case of the fall out between Adedibu and former governor of Oyo State, senator Ladoja who was Adedibu protégée (Human Rights watch, 2007).

(c) **Political and Bureaucratic Corruption:** Nigeria democracy is an externally triggered one. Corruption has rendered our democracy ineffective. There is no commitment to the rule of law, that is needed to enforce civic freedom defines democracy, but commitment to their pockets. According to Ogundiya (2010), corruption is an aspect of poor governance and is defined as the abuse of public office for private gain. Nigeria is a nation where corruption thrives. From 1999 to date, Nigeria has been consistently ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world (Transparency International, www.transparency.org). According to the World Bank (2006), Nigeria harbours one of the largest numbers of the poor in Africa. There is gross inability of most Nigerians to achieve a certain minimum standard of living. Corruption has led to acute youth unemployment in Nigeria. Various estimates put unemployment rate in the country between 20% and 50%. According to Ogundiya, among graduates of tertiary institution, unemployment rate is put at between 50% and 75%. This has resulted in general insecurity and high crime rate in the Nigerian society (Ogundiya, 2010).

(d) **Inefficient and ineffective Legislature:** The legislative arm of government is expected to provide adequate checks on abuses of power by the executive and recklessness of politicians. Effective legislature contributes to good governance. Ogundiya (2010) in his views stated that a legislative house must not only be capable of making laws for the safety and general well-being of the people, but must also be able to manage funds in order to provide good life for the entire citizenry. The legislative arm has not been able to manage this responsibility and this has denied the people the gains of democratic governance or dividends of democracy. Legislative arm has not been able to promote good governance through equity in the distribution of resources. Also, the judicial arm that supposes to be an indispensable complement to good governance in Nigeria is inefficient and ineffective. Oyebode (1996) stressed that the Nigerian judiciary is to a large extent subject to the whims and caprices of the executive but has also been excessively politicised. The state of affairs in this country can also be attributed to the corruption of the judiciary.

(e) **Ethnicity and Religion:** Nigeria is a multifaceted society with diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. If these diversities have been properly managed, it would have brought in development most especially through tourism and cultural exhibitions. However, the improper management of these diversities has proved detrimental to the country's democracy largely because of unequal distribution of the country's resources (Igba, 2012). According to Karl Marx "religion is the opium of the masses". Poor people turn to religion as a solace and to a common identity "ethnic" to find comfort. Economically, it is the religion and ethnicity that the politicians use to fulfil their selfish desires in Nigeria. According to Toyo (1994), democracy cannot be genuine and flourishing in a country where citizens are grossly unequal in wealth and the poor, who are the majority, are dependent on the wealthy. The poor are marginalized as they are exempted from the dividends of democracy which was their rights. They do not feel any sense of belonging as a Nigerian. Most of Nigerians are loyal to ethnic group and religious group. There is no common solidarity and when you want something done, the question is no more are you a Nigerian? It has now turned to which tribe are you or what religion do you practice?

(f) **High Cost of Nigeria's Democracy:** Nigeria's democracy operates on the principle of federal character with so many portfolios. Servicing their offices has made our democracy the most expensive in the world while the citizens suffer. Also, 70% of the Nigerian budget is for recurrent expenditure while 30% is for capital expenditure. The recent reaction of the federal government to reduce by 25% the salary of its cabinet was explained by the president as a means of cutting down the costs of running government (www.nationalmirroronline.com).

Methodology

Location of the study

This study was conducted in Buruku local government area in Benue State. Its headquarters is Bukuru town. It has an area of 1,246km² and a population of 203,721 as at 2006 census. The local

government is one of the twenty three (23) local governments in Benue State. The major ethnic group in Buruku local government is the Tiv and Christianity is the major religion. Farming is the major occupation of the people in the local governments. The main reason for the choice is premised on the fact that it is one of the local governments where Tiv, one of the popular minority groups in Nigeria but where the largest ethnic group in Benue is domiciled. The choice of the local government is due to time and financial constraints.

The target population for this study consisted of the residents of Buruku local government area in Benue State who are between 18 years and above.

Sampling Procedure

Probability sampling was employed in order to get sample which is representative of the total population. A total of 120 respondents were randomly selected. The population is large, therefore multi – stage cluster sampling technique was adopted to reach the target respondents. The local government has thirteen (13) council wards. From these wards, three (3) wards were randomly chosen. Furthermore, there was identification of household in each of the selected streets. From these identified households in each of the selected streets, eight (8) households were randomly selected as where the target respondents were reached with one (1) respondent per household. This amounted to eight (8) respondents from each of the selected streets and forty (40) respondents from each council wards. All these came up to 120 respondents from the three (3) wards.

Methods of data collection

Data for this study was gotten from both quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaire was utilized as instrument for quantitative, while in-depth interview was used for qualitative .The questionnaire focuses on the socio-demographic attributes of respondents, perception of people towards dividends of democracy, nature and pattern of dividends of democracy, reasons why people are not enjoying the dividends of democracy and what needs to be done for masses to enjoy the dividends of democracy. Also, five (5) in-depth interviews were conducted. Key informants include one youth leader, one women leader, two religious leaders and one traditional leader.

Descriptive analysis was carried out on the quantitative data using social science statistical package to obtain the frequency and percentages. Qualitative data was transcribed verbatim to complement the qualitative data.

Findings

Socio-demographics Attributes of Respondents

This section examines sex of respondents, age, marital status, religion and occupation of the respondents.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Attributes of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	64	54.2
Female	54	45.8
Total	118	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percentage

18 – 22 years	32	27.1
23 – 27	43	36.4
28 – 32	26	22.0
33 – 37	11	9.3
38years and above	6	5.1
Total	118	100.0
Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	71	60.2
Married	35	29.7
Divorced	5	4.2
Widowed	7	5.9
Total	118	100.0
Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Islam	23	19.5
Christianity	81	68.6
Traditional	14	11.9
Total	118	100.0
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage

Civil servant	19	16.1
Private worker	24	20.3
Student	40	33.9
Farmer	23	19.5
Unemployed	8	6.8
Others	4	3.4
Total	118	100.0

From the above table, 54% of the respondents, which is the majority, are males while 46% are females. As for the age distribution of respondents, about 86% of the respondents are between 18 and 32 years. This implies that majority of the respondents are youths. Majority of the respondents are single. The table also reveal that about 69% of the respondents practice Christianity. This is not surprising because the study area is predominantly Christian. As regards the occupational status of respondents, 36% are civil servant and those who work in the private sector. This is closely followed by students with 33%. This is true bearing in mind that majority of the respondents are single and mostly youth.

Perception of People towards Democracy

This section deals with people's perception on dividends of democracy, awareness of dividends of democracy by respondents and their sources of awareness.

Findings reveal that 93% (110) which is the majority of the respondents are aware of the concept of dividends of democracy .We can say that the concept is not new to people in the study area.

Table 2: Sources of Awareness about Dividends of Democracy by Respondents

Sources of awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Media	32	27.1
Politicians	33	28.0
Religious leaders	7	5.9
All of the above	46	39.0
Total	118	100.0

It was revealed that majority of the respondents 39% said they got the information about the dividends of democracy from the media, politicians and religious leaders. This is followed by 33% of

respondents who got the information from politicians and 32% claimed their source of information is the media. We can therefore conclude that politicians and media houses talk of dividends of democracy more than religious leaders.

Similarly, during the in –depth interviews conducted, all key informants said that though religious leaders talk about dividends of democracy, politicians and media houses are more conversant with dividends of democracy. A youth leader said:

Politicians and media houses are the major sources of awareness about dividends of democracy most especially during election campaigns. Though religious leaders do talk about dividends of, democracy, it is not like that of politicians and media houses.

Similarly, all the key informants opined that dividends of democracy stand for the gains and benefits of democracy. According to them:

When we talk of dividends of democracy, it means what we gain from democracy that cannot be gotten from another system of government, let's say in the military. Example of dividends of democracy is enjoyment of rule of law, where there is respect for fundamental human rights, equality before the law and supremacy of the law. Other things like access to free education, health care facilities are additions.

Patterns of Dividends of Democracy

As regards the dividends of democracy enjoyed by residents, it was found that majority of respondents 39% (46) said that access to basic social amenities such as electricity, safe drinking water and health facilities are enjoyed by the people. This is closely followed by 32% (38) who said that free education is enjoyed by the people in the community; while 5% (6) mentioned equality before the law. This implies that dividends of democracy that are enjoyed in the community are basic social amenities and free education. Similarly, in the in depth interview, all informants agreed that social amenities especially electricity is being enjoyed.

When asked about the extent to which the dividend of democracy is enjoyed, findings show that 56% (66) said the extent is low. Although 335 (39) claimed it was enjoyed to a moderate extent, while only 9% (10) of respondents said it is to a large extents. From the in depth informants a religious leader sums their views as follows:

Though there is provision of electricity and free education. The people's enjoyment is to a low extent. The free education provided is not standard. This reflects in the parents' preference of private school for their children. The electricity provided is not equally enjoyed by all communities in the local government.

On the contrary, one out of the 5 informants, a traditional community is of the view that dividends of democracy are enjoyed to a moderate extent. According to him.

There is provision of basic amenities especially electricity. Our children can go to school on the bill of the government. As to the extent at which these dividends are enjoyed, I will say that it is to a moderate extent.

Perception of people on while Dividend of Democracy was not Enjoyed

Majority of respondents 85% (100) said that dividends of democracy are not equitably distributed, while 15% (18) stated that it was equitably distributed.

Similarly, four of the informants said that dividends of democracy are not equitably distributed. According to them, *the dividends of democracy are not* equitably distributed and that is why the people are not enjoying them. If you do not belong to the ruling party, or the ruling class, you are on your own. You might not even see them with your eyes let alone enjoying them.

As for the reasons why dividends of democracy are not enjoyed, findings reveal that 100% (118) of the respondents agreed that it was due to corruption in governance. This implies that corruption in governance is a major reason why dividends of democracy are not enjoyed by the masses.

From the in depth interview, a youth leader stated that

“The major factor militating against the growth and development of Nigeria as a country is corruption in governance. It is a major factor behind the non equitable distribution of the country’s resources. It is a major reason why the masses are not enjoying the dividends of democracy. All other factors are secondary. Remove corruption in Nigeria, Nigeria’s problem is 99.9% solved.”

Furthermore, other factors stated by respondents why dividends of democracy are not enjoyed include godfatherism 94% (111); costliest of Nigeria’s democracy 86% (100); electoral malpractices 92% (109) ethnicity and religion 90% (106) and externally triggered democracy 85% (100).

The findings correspond with what was gotten from the in depth interview informants. A women leader argued that

“Apart from corruption, other reasons why dividends of democracy are not equitably distributed are ethnicity and religion, god fatherism, and electoral malpractices. It is an obvious fact that getting jobs in Nigeria is not based on your qualifications but on your ethnic group or religion. Elections are violently rigged and that is why we don’t have good leaders.”

Another informant, a religious leader said that:

Nigeria’s democracy is too costly. The cabinet is too large. Imagine having a Minister of Information and still having a Minister of State of Information whereas all the States have their own Commissioners for information. Also, the allowances that are paid to each senator or honourable are too much. Imagine a senator going home with millions of naira monthly. It is too much.”

Conclusion

The dividends of democracy provided by the government for the masses are enjoyed at a low extent. They are also not equitably distributed. The major reason for the non – equitable distribution of dividends of democracy is corruption in governance. Hence, there is a significant relationship between corruption in governance and non- equitable distribution of dividends of democracy. Other reasons for the non-equitable distribution of democracy are godfatherism, costliness of Nigeria’s democracy, electoral malpractices, ethnicity and religion and externally triggered democracy.

Various measures have to be put in place for the dividends of democracy to be equitably distributed. The equal distribution will enable the masses to enjoy the dividends of democracy. In achieving this, government and individuals have role to play.

Recommendations

Government should ensure that the system is free from corruption. There should be sound anti-corruption policies that will be devoid of rhetoric. There should be transparency and accountability in the policies adopted.

There should also be popular participation. People should be carried along in decision making processes without ethnic or religious bias. When every member of the society is carried along irrespective of his/her class, status, religious or ethnic background, there will be development which will deliver dividends of democracy.

Government should ensure that cost of governance is reduced to the barest minimum. Reducing the cost of governance by limiting the size of the National

Assembly and that of the President’s cabinet will make governance more efficient. It will reduce deficit budgeting particularly on personnel and in general on recurrent expenditure.

There should be viable political parties as political parties are the platforms used by politicians to reflect their political ideas and context for elections in a democratic dispensation. Viable, strong political parties are needed as they are the foundation of good democracy. The more viable political parties are, the more the democracy is strengthened.

Individuals too should find a way of contributing positively to the development of the nation’s democratic institution. Individuals should make sure that they vote for the right person. Voting should not be based on religious and or ethnicity. It should be based on personal qualification of the

candidate. When the right person is put in the right post, he/she will do things correctly. Citizens should shun corrupt practices. They should resist giving and taking bribes. They should fulfil their civic responsibilities. They should stand up for their rights.

Corruption, which is the core impediment to our growth and development, has to be tackled aggressively under a willed and purposeful leadership.

Nigerian leaders have to work extra hard to win back the confidence of the Nigerian people that democratic governance is all about service to the people not service to themselves. Real dividends of democracy should be felt by all Nigerians irrespective of tribe, religion, political differences and social status through enabling the atmosphere to be conducive.

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