

# **Creation of Local Council Development Areas in Southwestern Nigeria: A SWOT Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

The study examines the nature and rationale behind the creation of Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs) by some states in Nigeria, especially in southwestern Nigeria. In this paper, critical consideration is given to understanding why the creation of more local governments has not influenced development. Ordinarily, it is expected that the more government is closer to the people, the more development ought to be to the grassroots. Yet, this has not always been the case. This can be traced to the fact that the creation of local governments in Nigeria has always been influenced by political considerations rather than developmental considerations. The methodology used for this paper is based on content analysis. The SWOT Analysis tool was used to describe the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing local government creation and administration in Nigeria. The findings revealed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that are likely

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to occur. The paper suggests that creation of local government should be more on viability that would lead to development at the grassroots rather than the political gains surrounding such creation.

**Keywords:** Local Government Areas (LGAs), Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs), Southwestern, Nigeria, SWOT

### **Introduction**

There is no doubt that local government plays a vital role in bringing sustainable development to the local populace and the more government is closer to people the more development is guaranteed to the people at grassroots. Therefore, creation of local government is best justified only in an environment where there are sufficient resources to sustain it, without much dependence on other tiers of government. In Nigeria, local government has been identified as the third tier of government with distinct functions. These functions are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN).

Another issue that deserves attention relates to the essence of creations of Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs) in Nigeria today. Apata and Yemi (2011) have observed that the reasons for creation of local government in any country include economic viability, bringing people of the same culture together and socio-political development. These being the reasons, one say rightly conclude that most of the existing local governments in Nigeria today are not economically viable. Some state governments, especially in the fourth republic, embarked on creation of local governments but some of them could not survive as LCDAs due to many problems that bedevilled them. Some perished after few years of their existence, while others suffered from problems ranging from politics to lack of continuity, dearth of funds and inability of the national assembly to recognise LCDAs as belonging to any tier of government due to politics of confrontation and mockery of the state, where the dominant party at the federal level is not in control of such state. A clear picture of this was obtained in Lagos state during Governor Hameed Bola Tinubu's administration. The state attempted to create additional local government, but the process was politicised due to party differences and the creation was not recognised by the Federal

Government (Danjuma and Muhd, 2012). This led to the reversion of Local Government Areas (LGAs) created into Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs).

The wave of creation of LCDAs by state government blew across the south-western states of Nigeria. Nearly all the states replicated this creation of LCDAs, except Ondo State. The paper intends to look at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of these newly created LCDAs in south-western Nigeria. The paper is divided into six parts. Part one is introduction, part two deals with the methodology employed in carrying out this study. This is followed by the examination of the constitutionality of Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs). The fourth part discusses the quest for creation of local government, while part five examines the creation of LCDAs in south western states. The last part presents the conclusion and recommendations on how to have viable local governments in Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The methodology used for this paper is based on content analysis. The data were sourced through publications, journals, newspaper and online materials. The SWOT analysis tool was used. The SWOT analysis of the creation of LCDAs especially in south-western Nigeria states, where the creations are forthcoming nowadays would help in analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that would likely follow the creation of such.

### **Constitutionality of Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs)**

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gave powers to the state governments for the creation of local government and subjects same to the National Assembly for ratification. This is the major reason state government could not use the nomenclature of “Local Government” to describe such areas but settled for nomenclatures like “Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs),” “Area Councils” and so on. Dasuki Report of (1984) even clearly stated that “Military Governors in consultation with the local government concerned could create Area Office(s) after clearance with the General Staff Headquarters” (Federal Military Decree 1985).

However, the 1999 constitution empowered the states to create local government but such creation becomes constitutionally recognised only after it is approved by the National Assembly.

The procedure to follow in creating local government areas (LGAs), which need the ratification of the National Assembly for enlistment into the constitution has been a major challenge. Meanwhile the state house of assembly of various states have the constitutional power to make laws for the structure, function, composition and finance of local government which the Section 7 of the 1999 constitution guarantees. It is required that the House of Assembly, of any state, that wants to embark on creating a new local government area, passes a bill for the purpose with at least two thirds majority of members supporting the motion. Also, CFRN (1999) states that a proposal for the creation of the local government area must be approved in a referendum by at least two-thirds majority of the people of the local government area where the demand for the proposed local government area originated and the result of the referendum is then approved by a simple majority of the members in each local government council, in a majority of all the local government councils in the state. The referendum normally originates from the people, the traditional leaders, and the elites in the communities. They are expected to agree to live together and the boundary adjustment will also be agreed upon. It is also pertinent to state here that creation of local government is expected to start from the local populace with the involvement of traditional rulers, communities' leaders and the people's representative at local government level. The state government, both executive and legislative arms, is then expected to take it up from there.

Constitutionally, the states are supposed to create local governments and the due process for doing so is laid down by the constitution (Ogunsola, 2009). According to Maduagwu (2003), the return to civil rule in 1999 threw up a serious debate as to which level of government has the constitutional power to create local government. Lagos State created more local governments, but the Federal Government refused to recognise them, insisting that creation of local government requires constitutional amendment by the National Assembly. Due to politics and other reasons, many state governments: Lagos, Kebbi, Ebonyi, Katsina, Nassarawa, Niger and Yobe

States that created additional local governments without recognition by the National Assembly had to abolish them. These states, except Lagos, reversed back to the existing Local Government Areas (LGAs) in their various states, while Lagos State Government insisted on the creation but adopted the nomenclature of Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs) and operated them with the statutory allocation of the constitutionally recognised 20 LGAs from federal government backed by substantial Internal Generated Revenue that sustained them since year 2005.

It is also pertinent to state here that creation of local government in Nigeria starting from 1976 has been done by the military governments. Obasanjo administration created 229 local governments in 1976, which were increased to 589 during Babangida administration in 1991. In 1996, Abacha administration increased the number to 774 Local Government Areas. And this was enshrined in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. By being created by military rulers, one can assert that the creation and spatial delineation of local government territories just like state government territories did not have the advantage of democratic processes.

#### **Quest for the Creation of Local Government Areas and Local Council Development Areas**

The agitators, in different communities, for creation of more local governments argued that local government creation will bring development closer to the door-steps of many Nigerians. They also maintain that such an exercise will create an opportunity for marginalised people or ethnic groups to have access to power. In their argument, the Federal Executive Council is rested on the number of states in existence, with decisions being democratically reached by the body through votes. This will therefore give some regions or ethnic groups more weight in their bargain for the allocation of values. They also maintain that by creating new bureaucracies, it will give mass employment to youths and qualified graduates (Vande, 2012).

The political elites mobilise and instigate groups with ethno-regional interests towards campaign for local government creation and development. These elites often argue that local government creation fosters growth and development, bring government nearer to the people, prevent rancour while ensuring popular participation. The political class argues for local government creation to foster access to state institutions and structures and engender

political inclusion of marginalised sub-nationalities. These arguments of the political elites are flawed in the light of the historical antecedent of local government creation and its politics in Nigeria. The political class is the greater beneficiary; as the replications of local government structures provide new bases of political competition and patronage. The local governments are domains of political contestations among factions of the political class for strategic self-serving advantage. The 774 local structures had not eased the agitation for local government creation; rather new social forces align and re-align to canvass for new spheres of control and influence (Danjuma and Musa 2013).

The creation of local governments has always been influenced by political considerations rather than developmental considerations. Local government creation in Nigeria remains entirely an elite affair. It is an enterprise controlled, prosecuted and employed by the elite for the satisfaction of elite desire for power and relevance. This was verified and confirmed by the way the opposition party of various states seriously frowned against the creation. For instance, in Ekiti state where the creation of 37 LCDAs was signed into the law by Governor Kayode Fayemi at the tail end of his tenure in 2014, during the political campaigns in his quest for a second term in office, the opposition kicked against that and it was reversed back to the original 16 LGAs when Governor Ayodele Fayose assumed office. There was an argument among the people in Osun, Oyo and Ogun states that there will not be notable development or actions in various LCDAs created now until the tail end of their tenure so as to use that for campaigns in various communities because most of the community dwellers will see it as “Our Local Government” and with that, their loyalty and votes will likely go for “the Governor that gave us Local Government” which to some extent has answered part of their needs. There is this common submission that at the end of creation by the state’s house of assembly that the new council areas should operate as Local Council Development Areas, LCDAs, pending the approval of the National Assembly, which would accord them the status of full-fledged local government councils which is one of the ways of correcting perfidious impression of any state government on any community.

Politically, the creation of LGAs or LCDAs would definitely score

some political points for whoever created it but economically, they might not be viable except in Lagos State where the resources are enormous to cater for them especially through their Internally Generated Revenue. The poor viable status of the local government has further vitiated the argument for local government creation. The local governments, except a few, depend on the federation account and least generates internal earnings. The dependent nature of the local government, therefore, creates a subordinate status to the state government (Danjuma, *et, al.* 2012).

The major reasons why Lagos State Government created another 37 LGAs and changed it to LCDAs may be traced to the 1984 Dasuki led panel of local government reform, which listed a few criteria for the creation of local government, even though the military in 1985 also set up a specific criteria for such purposes too. These criteria according to 1976 local government reforms are: Minimum population of 150,000 to 800,000; Minimum tax-paying population of 20,000; traditional association and wishes the community seek in the area of geographical contiguity, financial viability and administrative convenience (Gboyega, 1987). The minimum tax-paying population of Lagos warranted the creation of more LGAs and the state is equally financially viable to run 57, even more LGAs without much dependence on any other tier of government. The wishes of the community, geographical contiguity and administrative convenience can be seen in other states that embarked on the creation of more LCDAs but the minimum tax-paying population of 20,000 and viability in terms of finance are a mirage. Therefore, because LCDAs are effective in Lagos State does not connote that they will be effective in other states of the southwest or federation.

Moreover, Agboola (2016) also observed that experience has shown that local government creation in Nigeria over the years has not brought about the desired or expected effects. The creation of local governments is therefore not a solution to the problems of development and democracy in Nigeria. Rather, the exercise will create opportunities and developments which will liberate new forces and throw up more challenges. The continued agitation for the creation of more local governments is simply an easy way of having access to power and wealth. To actually get the government and development to the people, there is need to reposition the Local Government, which is the closest tier of government to the grassroots. For now, the

Local Governments are operating under the strangulating control of State Governors. They are centres of corruption and mediocrity. The powers and functions of the Local Government system was enshrined in the constitution and their finances ensured. Consequently, Local government creation has not only failed to solve the problem of ethnic minorities or even the ethnic majorities, but it has also become a veritable tool with which a string of unitary leaders have dealt a fatal blow to the Nigerian Federalism.

#### **Creation of LCDAs in Nigeria's South-Western States**

There is no doubt that creation of local government areas by state government is confronted with the constitutional barrier which led state governments to make laws for the existence, structure, composition and finance of local government. Due to these barrier, some state governments that embarked on such creation resulted in making law to establish adoption of LCDAs in changing the nomenclature of local government areas (LGAs), which technically removed the word "government." The creation of LCDAs is now the common policy within the south-western states. Lagos State has established and sustained itself in the creation of LCDAs over the years, while Ekiti and Ondo States have failed in achieving that. The 18 LCDAs that were created by Governor Kayode Fayemi at the tail end of his tenure were scrapped by his successor. Osun, Oyo and Ogun states also follow suit in creating LCDAs in year 2016.

There are different views and opinion on the necessities for these LCDAs. In April 2016, the South-West chapter of the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) condemned South-West governors for the creation of LCDAs, alleging that Federal Allocation meant for existing councils had been hijacked by the governors. They are of the view that South-West governors preferred the use of caretaker chairmen in order to plunder the finance of the councils, thereby killing council initiatives. They also expressed the fear that creation of LCDAs would lead to duplication of administrative expenses at a time when the states were facing financial difficulties. The creation of LCDAs under whatever guise is ought to bring development closer to the people and increase participation of the people in governance. However, in the present day reality, when councils cannot mobilise resources to pay salaries, the decision to create more LCDAs is unwise.



Lagos state created 37 LCDAs in addition to the existing 20 LGAs while in year 2016 Osun, Oyo and Ogun states created 31, 35 and 37 LCDAs respectively in addition to the existing LGAs in their states. The decision to create LCDAs in Ekiti was reversed by the new administration of Governor Ayodele Fayose. Ondo state is the only state that has not embarked on this creation of LCDAs. This may be traced to the fact that the state belongs to a different political party – Labour Party. It can also be deduced that the creation of new LCDAs can be traced to the political party, All Progressive Congress (APC), operating in the other South-western states. Though there has not been any policy statement towards this, it, however, seems that it has become the consensus of the party in the region because Lagos, Osun, Oyo and Ogun are APC states; and the ones that were created in Ekiti was during an APC administration while the decision was reversed during the administration of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP). Although Ondo State, which use to be under Labour Party (LP) did not take this step, yet with the All Progressive Congress emerging as the political party piloting the affairs of the state, it is just a matter of time before we will know if they will follow suit.

**States with LGAs and LCDAs in South-western Nigeria**

<b>State</b>	<b>Old LGAs</b>	<b>New LCDAs</b>	<b>Total</b>
Lagos	20	37	<b>57</b>
Osun	30	31	<b>61</b>
Ogun	20	37	<b>57</b>
Oyo	33	35	<b>68</b>

Source: Field survey 2017

From the table above, it is clearly stated that Lagos state has 20 constitutionally recognised Local Government Areas (LGAs) and 37 Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs) to make the government at the local level a total of 57. In Osun state, the LGAs recognised by the federal constitution is 30 until the recent time when the administration of Ogbeni Aregbesola created additional 31 LCDAs. He also created addition 3 Area councils to add to the existing one and two administrative offices. It is also presented from the table above that Ogun state is constitutionally known

with 20 LGAs but later created 37 LCDAs, making a total of 57 local government administrations. At present, Oyo state has a total of 68, which is the highest in south-western Nigeria. This could be as a result of being the largest geographical area in the country. The state is constitutionally acknowledged with 33 LGAs only. It is important to mention that all the states that created LCDAs within their capacities are responsible for meeting their financial needs.

### **The SWOT Analysis of LCDAs Created in Nigeria**

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creation of LCDAs will bring government closer to the grassroots.</li><li>• It would fast track community based development.</li><li>• It encourages effective grassroots development</li><li>• It also addresses the yearning of the people at the local level.</li></ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of recognition by the Federal Government.</li><li>• Insufficient funding</li><li>• Dearth of infrastructures</li><li>• It would increase head costs and recurrent expenditure.</li></ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It would help in avoiding rancour in many communities.</li><li>• It would help in accelerating even development at the grassroots.</li><li>• If properly managed it can lead to more revenue mobilisation and generation.</li><li>• Also if properly manage, it can correct the problem of personnel maximisation and utilisation that have made the local government system to deteriorate.</li><li>• It can be a good template to consider when considering the creation of more states/local governments in the future.</li><li>• It has a chance of becoming full fledge LGAs in the future.</li></ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Political insinuation</li><li>• Lack of continuity</li><li>• Corruption</li><li>• Problem with sustainability</li><li>• Threat to service delivery</li></ul>

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper attempted to analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the creation of Local Council Development Areas. There is no doubt that the closer the government is to the people, the more development gets closer to the grassroots. The developmental consideration should surpass the political consideration, which is the hallmark of creations of LCDAs in Nigeria. Creations of more LGAs or LCDAs are essential where the necessary criterion and processes are met, especially in relation to financial or economic viability. Also the state government should consider the interest of the populace, the community it serves and the national interest should be prioritised for overall development.

Considering the population expansion of many states in Nigeria *vis-a-vis* the 1976 local government reforms' provision for the creation of local government based on population capacity of 150,000 to 800,000, one could assert that all the states of the federation deserve more local governments or local council development areas. Government at the central and state levels should work harmoniously together in revamping the strategies to sustain the existing and envisaged local governments or local council development areas across the federation.

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