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**ASSESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
FUNCTIONS IN A COUNTRY**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Local government of any country is a form or a system of public administration that exists as the lowest rank of administration with a state. The term is used to differentiate between state-level offices which are referred to as the central government, national government, federal government, and also governments that deal with governing institutions between states. Local governments are bodies that act generally within powers that are being delegated to them by the legislation or directives from the higher level of government. In Federal states, the local government usually occupies the second or third rank of government but with even greater powers than other higher administrative divisions of government. Local government was established in 1909 when the four former colonies became provinces. All of these provinces were governed by a white elected provincial council with limited legislative powers. All administrators for each of the provinces were appointed by the central government. They were presided over by an executive committee that represented the majority party in the council. Local government determines and executes measures within a restricted and smaller area than a whole state or country. Some element of local government is common to every country in the world. There are basically four types of local government which include country, city, village, and township and no matter what city, town, village or country you live, the three forms of government are present and functional. It is only the forms of government that differ from country to country, for example, some countries have a government of Monarchy that is ruled by one person, Oligarchy rule by a small handful of people, Democracy rule by the majority of people, Republic rule by law and Anarch where there is no government. The local government units are the main point of contact for delivery of services and for delivery of national programs to the citizens---community.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The system of local government in post-independence Sierra Leone can be traced to the system of direct rule that existed in the protectorate during the colonial era. Mahmood Mamdani proposed the term 'bifurcated state' to describe his concept of the African colonial state, ( Mamdani (1996) He argued that the European powers faced the question of how just a small number of Europeans could rule over the large numbers of African natives. To answer and solve this problem, different strategies were formed to deal with problem. One of the strategies was the direct rule that made Europeans ruled the Indigenous population by imposing the legal framework of their country and then grant citizenship rights to just a handful of natives or the 'civilized'. This was done for those who accepted the European civilization.

The other strategy was called the indirect rule. This meant that the Europeans channeled their colonial rule through traditional heads/leaders based on the laws of the customs and traditions of the land. This was called centralized despotism and decentralized despotism.

Sierra Leone is one of the states where the remnants of these dual structures have persisted very strongly after independence. The modern state of Sierra Leone has its history back to 1787 when the freed slaves were referred to as the Black poor. These Black poor living in England founded a colony on the Peninsular of Sierra Leone. In 1808, the colony became a British colony controlled by the British Crown. Accordingly, the territory under British rule expanded, encompassing Freetown the capital of Sierra Leone, the peninsular where Freetown is located, and the islands nearby. On the other hand, the colony of Sierra Leone's hinterland became a protectorate in 1896. Consequently, at the end of the 19th century, a new African colonial state had emerged which was the colony and protectorate of Sierra Leone.

The local government is a subordinate territorial unit that owes its creation and existence to the state from which it derives powers from the general laws made by the state. Following the creation of the Native Administrative bodies in Sierra Leone by the British colonial administration, local government units between 1964 to the early 1970s were largely democratic, viable, and effective. This was justified because of their successes in providing some essential services to their areas of the establishment. For this reason, Sierra Leone was viewed as a peaceful, respected, and relatively progressive country in the West African sub-region.

Before the political drama of 1972, when the ruling party suspended ( All Peoples Congress government suspended the local institution the local institutions, it was initially suspended by Dr. Sir Milton Margai the then prime minister in 1962. It was conceivable at the time when the prime minister reacted sharply to the local institutional disorder, mismanagement, and the lack of transparency and accountability, corruption and bribery coupled with poor infrastructural facilities. In consultation with tribal authorities, Sir Albert Margai who succeeded Sir Milton Margai reinstated/ reinstated the local institutions in Sierra Leone in 1965.

Shortly afterward the local governing process was again disrupted by the National Reformation Council which toppled the SLPP Government. When the All Peoples Congress party came to power in 1967, president Siaka P Stevens decided to suspend the provincial and district councils, centralized the functions and finances of chiefdoms councils, and replaced them with a Management committee in 1972. Before the first suspension, the government authorized a commission to probe into the failure of the local government and to make recommendations as a way forward. The commission recommended the improvement of local infrastructures to enhance efficiency but never recommended the suspension of the local government units As a regional-oriented party, the APC was suspicious about the loyalty of local authorities especially the tribal heads/rulers. In a way to discredit the local political institutions, the APC highlighted the negativities of the local governments ranging from poor development planning, implementation, and management activities. It led to widespread neglect and under-development of the rural areas where the majority of Sierra Leoneans expressed their desires.

The need for the re-establishment of local government stemmed from the fact that every Sierra Leonean has a local loyalty coupled with national interest so as to be patriotic. Since the central government cannot entirely provide the essential services, the local election acts as subsidiaries in the provision of local facilities. In view of this, the central government relies on the local loyalties by delegating local functions to local administrative units. However, various considerations have been made by the central government bodies. Some of these factors are the high recorded level of unemployment, the non-creation of the necessary structures and institutions to enable the effective functioning of the local government, abject poverty which has been experienced by many Sierra Leoneans, the mass exodus of people migrating to urban areas, towns and cities in search of jobs and inadequate, availability and accessibility of public amenities such as public parks, goods, and services, good schools, water supply, and electricity.

As Sierra Leone practices a centralized system of government, the consequent rapid decline in democratic and administrative management in the past two decades, increasing the negative image of the central government in the social, economic, political, and infrastructural development of the country. The centralization of power and functions from the 1970s to the early 1990s gave priority items by the government of Sierra Leone in the strategy to improve from emergency response to medium and long term development. The program framework focuses on these concrete project areas that are critical.

To devolve substantial public functions and powers from the central government to the provincial district and chiefdom levels

To restore and support local democratic governing bodies, including the District, Town, and Chiefdom councils

To develop an integrated rural development policy framework for strategic decision-making by local governing bodies

To inform and incite the general public about the need for strong and participatory local governance

To build the capacities of local administrators to discharge their duties more effectively. The full programs of activities contained hereby contribute to the efforts for the advancement of human development in the country.

Local government units are administrative and political government units that are auxiliary /subordinate to the national government. This consists of subunits as in the case of a province or a municipality. These units of local government mean countries, municipalities, townships, special districts, and units designated as units of local government by law, which exercise limited governmental powers or powers in respect to limited governmental subjects. There are three different styles of government which are the mayor-council form, the traditional commission form, and the council-manager form of city government. All over the world, every government has three basic kinds of power and also exercises these powers are the Legislative power---- which is responsible to make laws and frame public policies, Executive power----to execute, enforce and administer laws and the Judicial power—to interpret laws.

Local government is some functions that have been devolved from the central government to administration on the spot. Power is still administered through officials appointed by and responsible to the central government. In other words, decentralization represents local governments in areas where the authority to decide has been devolved to a council or locally elected persons acting on their own discretion with officials they freely appoint and discipline. Local government is referred to as the third level of government. It is created to bring the government to the grass-roots population as a sense of involvement in the political processes that control their daily lives. Local government is classified in five common forms such as mayor-council, council-manager, commission, town meeting, and representatives. It is known that elections are held for council or mayor and in addition elections are also held for positions such as local judges, the sheriff, prosecutors, and some other offices.

The preamble contained in the local government Act of Sierra Leone 2004 empowers the central authority for the creation of local political and administrative units makes provision for amendments. It consolidates decentralization and devolution of functions, powers, and services to local councils. Decentralization of their activities includes government powers and functionaries on day to day basis at local or regional levels. There is a framework exercise of re-establishing, reforming, and strengthening Sierra Leone's local government machinery. It acts as an administrative convenience to the state because legislatures would not be in a position to obtaining information about the needs of territorial groups within the country. Local government can more satisfactorily designate the income and expenditure of funds allocated to local communities than centrally base. It usually fosters interest and responsibility of public affairs which may be carried into realms of democratic government.

The Local government Act of 2004 paved the way for setting up the local political institutions throughout the country, to elect local councilors through elections, delegation powers to local authorities and councilors hence bringing the central government closer to the people. In effect, therefore, the local government ensures wider popular participation which arouses popular participation.

The political consciousness of the citizens for future national leaders. Furthermore, it also enlarges the opportunity for experimentation since government actions neither are nor reduced to a level of uniformity, instead differences are allowed to suit local conditions. To engage in the activities of local government will enable the people of Sierra Leone to move actively and to participate in the planning and implementation of programs. An essential step forward to allow citizens the opportunity to decide and be electively represented.

## **2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Local governments is administrative convenience to the state because it would be unwise for the legislature to spend time trying to obtain information about the varying needs for government services among the many territorial groups within its citizens. Local governments in Sierra Leone are created in order to satisfy the practical demands of the population for self-government in matters that are not countrywide concerns. Since the central government cannot entirely provide the essential services, the local election acts as subsidiary in the provision of local facilities. In view of this, the central government relies on the local loyalties by delegating local functions to local administrative units. However, various considerations have been done.

### **3.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to identify and bring out the responsibilities of local government and the important bearing it has on the daily lives of its citizens. The local government is responsible for holding elections of both local officials and national elections. It is very true that a government is meant to change after a specific period of time. It is also very important to understand that local government is meant to bring the people nearer to their government and allows popular participation in politics as it reduces the centralization of power in the central government.

### **4.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Sierra Leone has practiced a centralized system of government. The consequent rapid decline in democratic and administrative management in the past two decades has increased the negative image of the central government in the social, economic, political, and infrastructural development of the country. Local government has a wide range of vital services for people and for businesses in different and defined areas. Some of these functions are social care, schools, housing and planning, waste collection, licensing, business support, register services, and pest control. Local government has powers such as local policing, school borders, property tax, local economic development, construction zoning responsible for utilities, and other local political matters. Certainly, the local people know better than a distinct legislature, what should be done about such things as local building ordinances and local traffic problems. It can also be more satisfactorily designate how local revenue should be spent.

### **5.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives are

1. Discuss the Freetown municipality and its management.
2. To discuss the parts contained in the local government act.
3. Highlight the main important sections of the local government act.
4. Explain some benefits of the local government act.

### **5.1 Methodology**

This study was carried out in the Kenema District, Eastern Province of Sierra Leone. The study investigated the important functions of local governments in Sierra Leone. The study targeted local government officers and key stakeholders of government.

### **6.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Local government units are good for civic morale because they help to foster an interest in and responsibility for public affairs, which may be carried into the larger realms of democratic government. The City Council of Freetown is the oldest municipality in West Africa, which was founded by the Royal Charter in 1799 and reconstructed as a modern municipality. The council draws its authority from the Freetown principality Act No 20 of 1973, which confers the government of the city on the city council of Freetown. The city

council is the local authority of the city of Freetown with a population of over one million now taking cognizance of the internally displaced persons who have swelled up to population.

The machinery of the city council of Freetown is supposed to be superintended by an elected council of 32 councilors/Aldermen from 8 wards and should be headed by a mayor.

This trend changed over the years and today council is politically managed by an appointed committee headed by a chairman. The present committee was appointed by the government through the ministry of local government and community development. The councilors deal with issues relating to policy matters while the staffs implement the policies.

The present management organized on a committee system and there are nine committees headed by a chairman. These committees are;

1. Finance and General Purpose Committee.
2. Establishment Committee.
3. Assessment Committee.
4. Education Committee.
5. Social Service Committee.
6. Public and Recreational Facilities Committee.
7. Protection Work and Public Utility Committee.
8. Health, Housing, and Building Scheme Committee.
9. Municipal Trading Committee.

The operations of the city council of Freetown are managed by seven departments.

1. Town Clerk Department.
2. Treasury Department.
3. Engineering Department
4. Education Department
5. Evaluation Department
6. Municipal Trade Department
7. Internal Audit

All the departments are supposed to be under the supervision of the Town Clerk and the heads are expected to report to him directly and he takes final responsibilities. Responsibilities and duties of the city council of Freetown are contained in the Freetown municipality Act No 20 Of 1973 Section 40-41, in brief, include the following:

1. To provide markets
2. Slaughterhouses
3. To cause names and numbers of public roads
4. To provide and maintain municipal schools.

The city council of Freetown has made the following achievements:

- a. The construction of 38 municipal schools in the Western Area/Freetown.

- b. Six home economics centers
- c. The rehabilitation of markets through the help of the Freetown Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project and SAPA.
- d. Reconstruction of feeder roads in depressed communities like Kroo Bay etc.

In spite of all these achievements, the city council of Freetown has some weaknesses.

1. Political interference in the appointment of management committees to run the affairs of the council. The committee only works in the interest of the party or the government of the day.
2. Corruption and mismanagement of council funds by these appointed officials.
3. Poor collection and mismanagement of city rates and market dues by council officials.
4. Poor conditions of service for workers.
5. Lack of infrastructural facilities to run the affairs of councils.

### **PARTS CONTAINED IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT**

The Local Government Act, 2004, is divided into twenty (20) parts which were subsequently arranged into someone hundred and twenty-nine (129) sections. In numerical order these parts were categorized as follows:

**PART I:** In the Act the preliminary.

This part defines the keywords or phrases that would otherwise cause ambiguity or misinterpreted for instance in this part, devolved function means a function performed by the central government but transferred to local councils. (Under Section 20).

**PART II:**

This part lays the foundation for the establishment of localities and local councils. The president has the power to establish a council for the locality and assign a name to the locality under sub-section 2 of section 2 paragraph a, b, c, d, e, and p.

**PART III:**

This part treats the composition of local councils and how the elections of councilors should be conducted. It lays down the conditions for those qualified to elect as councilors.

**PART IV:**

The setting of committees within the Local Councils and the process of meetings of council members should be chaired by a chairperson, who according to section 125 shall be elected by the universal adult suffrage by-elections of the locality.

**PART V:**

The functions of Local Councils and Councillors. They ascribe powers conferred upon them by the central government and the role of the Ministry of Local Government in his respect.

**PART VI:**

It addresses the staffing of Local Councils and the establishment of the Local Government Service Commission. The appointment of a Local Council Chief Administrator and the composition of the Local Government service commission which is imposed of a member from the Ministry, a representative of the Public Service Commission, a representative of the Public Service Commission, a representative of the Establishment Secretariat, and four other persons, three of whom shall be women. They must be appointed by the president with the approval of parliament.

**PART VII:**

This examines the financial matters of local councils. Under Section 45 subsections 3 and 4 local council's finances should come from Government grants, property rates, fees and charges, the share of mining revenues, receipts from local taxes, interests, and dividends.

**PART VIII:**

This part also examines property rates which include, any church, chapel, mosque, the building used as public hospitals and clinics, charitable purposes, cemetery, buildings owned by diplomatic missions, etc.

**PART IX:**

Accounts and Audit. This part examines how the accounts of Local Councils must be maintained and the opening up of all account-related documents to be audited to ensure transparency and accountability.

**PART X:**

Internal Audit. The Act authorized each local council to establish an Internal Audit Department

**PART XI:**

Development Planning. Each Local Council should draft a development plan in consultation with the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning.

**PART XII:**

Bye-Laws. A local council may make bye-laws for its locality but has to be ratified by the Minister, who is bound to consult the Attorney General to ascertain that it is consistent with the constitution.

**PART XIII:**

Ward Committees. Committees shall be created for each locality comprising elected councilor from that ward; the Paramount Chief of the locality, five men and five women.



**PART XIV:**

Responsibilities of the Ministry of Local government.

**PART XV:**

This part examines transparency, accountability, and participation. Section 104 subsection (1), stated: "that every councilor, appointed or assigned member of staff of each local council shall not later than thirty days after assuming or leaving office make a declaration of assets in such form as the Anti-Corruption Commission may determine".

**PART XVII:**

The formation of an Inter-ministerial committee on decentralization.

**PARTXVII:**

This part is more miscellaneous

**PART XVIII:**

Transitional provisions

**PART XIX:**

Regulations

**PART XX:**

Repeals

FIRST SCHEDULE

SECOND SCHEDULE

THIRD SCHEDULE

FOURTH SCHEDULE

FIFTH SCHEDULE

**FIRST SCHEDULE (PART I)**

**LOCAL COUNCILS**

There shall be the following localities:

**A. DISTRICTS**

<b>BO</b>	<b>DISTRICT</b>
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BOMBALI	“
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BONTHE	“
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KAILAHUN	“
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KAMBIA	“
KENEMA	“
KOINADUGU	”
KONO	“
MOYAMBA	“
PORT LOKO	“
PUJEHUN	“
TONKOLILI	“

### **Western Area Rural District**

#### **B. TOWNS**

• BONTHE	Towns
• KENEMA	“
• KOIDU/NEW SEMBEHUN	“
• MAKENI	“

### **SECOND SCHEDULE**

#### **OATH OF COUNCILLORS**

### **THIRD SCHEDULE**

#### **FUNCTIONS DEVOLVED TO LOCAL COUNCILS**

1. Ministry of agriculture
2. Ministry of Development and Economic Planning
3. Ministry of Education
4. Ministry of Energy and Power
5. Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
6. Ministry of health
7. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
8. Ministry of Internal Affairs
9. Ministry of Land, country Planning and Environment
10. Ministry of Labor and Social Services
11. Ministry of Local Government and Community development
12. Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and children's Affairs
13. Ministry of Mineral Resources
14. Ministry of Tourism and Culture
15. Ministry of Youth and Sports
16. Registrar-General's Department
17. Sierra Leone Roads Authority

### **FOURTH SCHEDULE**

#### **DEPARTMENT UNDER LOCAL COUNCILS**

Each council shall have the following departments:

- Administration
- Planning and Development
- Finance
- Internal Audit

## **FIFTH SCHEDULE**

Valuation List

Rate Books

## **THE MAIN IMPORTANT SECTIONS**

The Local Government Act 2004 comprises 129 sections which among other matters spelled out the activities, powers, and functions of all local councils in the country. As in other Act, it would be impossible for us to give detailed examination with regards to the 129 Sections which constitutes this Act. Nor would we be in a position to outline here the importance of each of these sections in the Act. What we intend to analyze in brief are those sections in the Act that we considered to be morally significant and to levy any criticism(s) thereof.

The most striking sections in the Act are Sections 103 and 104 under Part XV captioned ‘Transparency, Accountability, and Participation.

In Section 103 it reads: “Staff of a Local Council shall be subject to the Anti-corruption Act, 2001.

In effect, this Section caters for thorough transparency with regards to all councilors. History has thought the nation many lessons about how state funds and apparatus are embezzled and mismanaged by so-called political leaders. The absence of transparency dumps the nation into a state of mess. Both civil and political leaders alike have enriched themselves overnight due to the inadequate process of transparency in the system. Money for the nation becomes money for the few. And as a remedy to this rampant corruption, the Act stated under Section 104, subsection 1: “every councilor, appointed or assigned a member of staff of each Local

The council shall not later than thirty days after assuming or leaving office make a declaration of assets in such form as the Anti-Corruption Commission may determine”.

This measure is been instituted in the Act in order to tamper with the flow of corrupt practices of Local Officials.

The Act also seeks to promote good Governance throughout the country by allowing the general populace to participate in the process of Local Governance. In Section 108 the Act reads: The Ministry shall promote participatory processes in Local Councils and encourage citizen’s inclusion and involvement in Governance”.

Local Governance would not succeed without the people's participation in the process. In decentralization, the participation of the local populace is required. This would enable the local people to elect the councilors to represent them in the Local Councils.

Section 20 in the Act specifies the functions of Local Councils. The following paragraphs of sub-section 20 stated the functions of the Local Council to:

- Mobilize the human and material resources necessary for the overall development and welfare of the people of the locality.
- Promote and support productive activity and social development in the locality
- Initiate and maintain programs for the development of basic infrastructure and provide work and services in the locality; etc

The Local Government Act is an Act in transitions. Contains transitional period for Local Councils should be four years minimum. A chairperson shall be elected by a simple majority of all councilors from among the elected councilors. Under this section, the Minister responsible for Local Government should make regulations specifying the functions that are to be devolved to Local Councils within six months after the coming into force of this Act (Section 126). Subsection I of section 127 authorized the establishment secretary for the first year of the transition period assigns to Local Councils such public officers as he thinks fit and for not more than one year to:

Perform the functions of Local Council Chief Administrator;

Assist the Local Councils to perform their functions.

Section 6 in the Act lay down the requirements for a person to be elected to a local council. Prospective person(s) must be a citizen of not less than 21 years of age; is on the Register of Electors and is ordinarily resident in the ward in which he seeks election; and has paid altaxes and rates in that locality as required by law, according to the paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of sun section I of section 6; No person shall be eligible for councillorship if he/she is serving member of:

- a. Parliament
- b. The Armed Forces
- c. The Sierra Leone Police
- d. The Judiciary
- e. The National Electoral Commission
- f. The Civil Service

The establishment of the Local Government Finance Committee under Section 52 is a good provision in the Act. The committee shall comprise of a senior representative of each of the Ministries responsible for finance, Local Government and Development and Economics Planning; and four persons nominated by the Chairpersons of all Local Councils. The members of this committee shall be appointed by the President with the approval of parliament.

In order to ensure efficiency, members of this Committee shall be appointed for not more than three years but could be eligible for re-appointment for another term if his or her performance is considered satisfactory during the first three years in office. And if he/she does not condole corruption or involved in any corrupt practices or he is being incapacitated from work due to illness.

In Section 85, the Local Government Finance Committee shall in accordance with paragraph

- a. Recommend to the minister responsible for finance the number of grant allocations to each local council and
- b. Indicate the formulae used in arriving at the various amounts recommended

Section 56 authorized each local council to issue a license to any person in a locality. This is part of local council revenue collection

Section 57 authorized local councils to levy fees for:

5. The use of markets
6. The use of bus, taxi, car or lorry parks
7. The extraction of fish, timber, sand, and other
8. Services provided by the councils

Section 58 states that revenue raised from local taxes are from mining revenues, other than those collected by the government, shall be shared between the local councils and chiefdom councils.

Section 81 sub-sections 2 authorized the "Auditor General or an auditor appointed by him within six months after the close of the financial year and the council shall provide the auditors with all the necessary and appropriate facilities for the examination of the accounts and statements of the council.

In section 85 the local councils shall approve the development plans of their localities. Sub-section 4 of section 85 reads: a local council shall before approving or reviewing a development plan consult residents of the locality, agencies of government, and non-governmental and international organizations that have an interest in working in the locality.

### **SOME CRITICISMS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT**

In consultation throughout the twelve districts in the country women were supposed to be given 19% of seats in the local councils. But when the government introduced this bill it does not discriminate in favor of women.

For more than three decades women in Sierra Leone were marginalized in the political arena by successive governments. Women were rarely chosen to stand for a political party in any constituency and if they do the electorates must tune refused to cast their notes for female candidates. As a result the political giants in Sierra Leone over the years were mostly men with an exception of one or two women. To create an equitable balance the local government Act should have recommends that women be given a fair share of seats in Local Councils and to discriminate against them.

## **SOME BENEFITS OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SIERRA LEONE**

The political history of Sierra Leone after independence has characterized by political party rivalry, violent intimidation, and widespread mismanagement and corruption. Alongside intermittent coups, the concept of good governance in Sierra Leone was laid to rest for more than three decades.

In its program of transition from military to civilian democratic, the NPRC erected decree I of 1994 establishing the independent interim national electoral commission (NEC). Its mandate among other things includes the compilation of all public elections and the education of the people on the electoral process and its purpose.

The election that follows in 1996 which was said to have been fairly contested was won by Dr. Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabba the leader of the SLPP by implication President Kabba's vision reflected both hopes and challenges, all related to common features of good governance.

He was aware of the fact that a balance of power is essential to stabilize the country which was constantly under the threat of the R.U.F. marginalization and power-greed over the years had created a bad omen for the country and many malcontents youths, tribes, and politicians alike were forced to join the rank and file of the R.U.F in its brutal civil war against the government. The over-centralization of powers had exacerbated the worse negative political scenario in the country and many social and economic structures in the interior of the country were left unattended. The gradual deterioration of all local political institutions and the lack of basic social amenities in the rural areas was a tremendous blunder by then government.

Conscious of these realities gripping the nation, the S.L.P.P government (after the victory of the 2002 general elections) tabled a bill in parliament titled the Local Government Act. After widespread consultations throughout the country this bill was passed on 2004 by parliament which calls the formation of Local Political Institutions throughout Sierra Leone.

The re-establishment of Local Governance enacted in the Local Government Act 2004, has paved the way for the setting up of local political institutions throughout the country; to elect Local Councilors through elections; to devolve some powers from the central government to elect local councils, and to bring the people closest to the central authority.

Local Governance is most efficient in Sierra Leone where most of the people lived in rural areas, miles away from the national capital, and where means of communication is inadequate.

Since the functions of the central government are constantly increasing and some forms of local governance would relieve the government of some of its burden and allows it to concentrate on matters of national interest.

Local Governance in Sierra Leone would ensure a wider populace in government and arouse the political consciousness of the citizens and would serve as a training ground for future national leaders. Furthermore, it also enlarges the opportunity for experimentation since

governmental actions are not reduced to a level of uniformity; instead, differences are allowed to suit local conditions.

Local Governance brings the central government home to the rural people. This ensures that administrators understand the feelings, needs, and problems of the rural poor, and they on their part understand the working of the government machinery.

Mutual trust is therefore created between the people and their administration.

An important priority of the present government is to promote popular participation at the local level and to re-establish democratically elected, transparent, accountable, and efficient local government bodies nationwide. At the heart of the program framework of the local government reform, capacity building and decentralization is the desire to provide ordinary citizens with the opportunities to participate in identifying their needs and priorities. Engaging in the activities of local government will enable the people of Sierra Leone to move actively and take part in the planning and implementation of programs intended, their choices, and quality of life. An essential first step is to afford all citizens the opportunity to decide and elect who should govern them in their local councils. By so doing civil society will own and lead the development process and democratic government practices will take root at the community level.

## **7.0 SUMMARY**

The Local Government Act, 2004 of Sierra Leone is one that has been an Act consolidated with amendments, the law on local government, and to provide for the decentralization and devolution of functions, powers, and services to local councils and for other matters connected therewith. [1st March 2004] ENACTED by the President and Members of Parliament by this green, white and blue.

Local government is very essential and its importance cannot be over-emphasized by the functions and delivery. Local government brings the government nearer to its people. It is known to allow for popular participation in policies and reduce the centralization of power in the central government. In so doing the workload in administering of the affairs of the state and people. The local government makes sure to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the government's implementation of policies. This clearly shows that Sierra Leone is a democratic country and it has delegated some of its functions to the local government and not centralized everything.

Sierra Leone has a democratic form of government where there is freedom of speech, freedom of movement, people are best represented, respect the rights of citizens, promote the right of people, there is accountability and transparency. The local government is responsible for social services and offers a lot of services to families and the community.

Local government executes measures within the restricted areas inside and smaller than a state. Some degree of local government is characterized by every country in the world. Local government acts generally within the powers delegated to them by the legislation or directives of the higher level of government.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

The decentralization of local authorities or other authorities or other government departments is the way forward now for accountability, participatory, development and transparency as the people will be eyewitnesses and part of the problem. Local government is most effective and responsive to people's needs when run by popular participation. This can be through a free and fair electoral process. An important priority for the present government is to promote popular participation at the local level and to re-establish democratically elected, transparent, accountable, and efficient local government bodies nationwide. The political drama of the past has taught us a lesson that the over-centralization of all powers of government could not move this country which had only recently emerge from a brutal civil war forward. Over the years corruption and mismanagement by government officials weaken the government's desire to improve the social and infrastructural amenities in the rural parts of Sierra Leone. It is therefore recommended that decentralization of local authorities is the only way forward to ensure accountability, participation, development, and transparency. Our only hope in this regard is for the authorities in question, both local and central to abide by the letters of the Local Government Act 2004. The establishment of district and chiefdom councils and the entire decentralization process have positively impacted the lives of the people of Sierra Leone, which are issues which experts in governance and development studies should look into" The Act of 2004. In 2004 a new Local Government Act facilitated the resuscitation of elected local authorities by providing for the creation of 19 local authorities, 12 District councils; 1 metropolitan council; 1 rural district council, and 5 town councils led by District Council Chair Persons and Mayors. The Local Government Act 2004 specifies 80 functions to be devolved to local government, all of which were to be devolved by the end of 2012. In the early days of the reintroduction of local governance, there were initial successes such as the 'big bang' of devolving three basic services of primary health care, basic education, and agricultural extension from central government to the new local councils. The Local Government Act (2004) has provision for the setting up of an Inter-Multilateral committee on decentralization with the Vice President as Chair and the Ministry responsible for Local Government serving as Secretariat. This committee if it met regularly could enhance the implementation of the decentralization programmer by promptly addressing all problems existing within the system and abele by the supervising Ministry of Local Government, which is responsible for agenda-setting. In almost all 19 local councils in Sierra Leone. It is regrettable that most of them have generally failed to implement the transparency obligations placed on them by Articles 107 and 108. Here are a few examples to consider: Out of the 20 Wards in the Nesters Rural District, only five have erected notice boards. Where there are notice boards, they are rarely updated.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

To identify the various many more challenges and find adequate and lasting solutions.

Ward Development Committees, which are supposed to provide a link between the councils and the people, should try as hard as possible to be competent or committed to the task and convene regular meetings.

Committees must try very hard to keep the people posted on development issues.



Ere selection of WAD members must be characterized by nepotism, with councilors mostly hand-picking political cronies and friends.

The Local Government Ministry, which is obligated to promote participatory processes in local councils and encourage citizens' inclusion and involvement in governance, must do what is expected of them in terms of promoting mass participation in velveteen issues at the local level.

The councils should seek the views of the people when preparing annual development plans and the felt needs of the people must not be ignored but fully implemented. That all 19 local councils in Sierra Leone trying to implement the transparency obligations placed on them by Articles 107 and 108, examples to consider: Out of the 20 Wards in the Nesters Rural District, only five have erected notice boards/ try to update notice boards.

That the present government tries to promote popular participation at the local level and re-establish democratically elected, transparent, accountable, and efficient local government bodies nationwide.

To embark on capacity building and provide the ordinary citizens with the opportunities to participate in identifying their needs and priorities as this will help them to actively plan and bean of part of implementing their intended programs, choices and improve quality of life.

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