

The Chieftaincy Institution and the Quest for Grassroots Development in Tivland

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Abstract

The role of traditional rulers in any society is very important. This is because they occupy a critical and vantage place in traditional administration. Apart from being the custodians of their cultures and traditions, they are seen as crucial agents in grass root mobilization and development. The chieftaincy institution must be historically located as a carry-over from the days it was a viable means of governance. The advent of formal governance and evolution of elaborate structures of administration has made the continuous restructuring of the institution ever imperative. The chieftaincy institution in Nigeria and Tiv land in particular has functioned and operated in various capacities resulting in recent times as a mere ceremonial and informal establishment. Chieftaincy or traditional institutions represents the indigenous instruments by which the various Nigerian peoples organized themselves and managed their affairs long before the advent of colonialism. This paper takes a cursory look at the chieftaincy institution in Tiv land and its role in the development of the area. The prospect and challenges of the chieftaincy institution as it grapples with the challenges of modernity and its diminished status in the face of modern system of governance are also interrogated by the paper. The paper concluded that Tiv chieftaincy institution has contributed immensely to the development of Tivland. The paper employed the analytical and expository methods in its investigation.

Key words: Tiv, Chieftaincy Institution, Grassroots, Development

Introduction

There has been a change in the role of traditional rulers in Nigeria as it applies to development at the grass root since the introduction of local government reforms in 1976. Leadership roles were clearly outlined in the reforms. As expressed in the reforms, it was not the intention of government to destroy the organic unity of the traditional institutions. Though the traditional chieftaincy institutions will remain however, their roles will be modified to reflect prevailing realities. According to Miles (2007) although the authority and powers of the chiefs were watered down by the colonial administration, it is however indubitable that, traditional rulers have served as important adjuncts in the administration of post-colonial governments in both Nigeria and Africa. In spite of changes and modifications occasioned by modernity, the traditional political institution has endured all challenges and has continued to reinvent itself for more relevance. Despite the

challenges, the chieftaincy institution has continued to be a predominant form of traditional political system in many societies.

The historical development of towns and cities in Nigeria often demonstrate the diligence, astuteness and resourcefulness of their respective traditional rulers in the growth and development of each of them. It suffices to say that, the organized and developed nature of this institution reinforced the belief of the British colonial authorities to build on its foundation by way of the indirect rule system under Lord Fredrick Lugard in 1914. This was predicated on the belief by the British colonial authorities that the best and easy way of reaching their colonial subjects was through channels and agencies familiar to them, those who command their respect and were acknowledged as custodians of their cultures and traditions.

The Tiv on whom this paper is premised, prior to

colonialism had no administrative divisions and no chiefs nor councils. Leadership was based on age, influence and affluence. The leaders' functions among others were to ensure safe conduct, arbitrate dispute within their lineages, lead their people in all internal and external affairs. The idea of a king (Tor) has not been part of Tiv tradition from antiquity. The Tiv had been classless and egalitarian. This fact engaged the attention of social and political scientists in the west, on how a society could be organized to survive the class structures that capitalism engenders. However, this republican position was assailed by the Fulani Jihads, which the Tiv successfully repelled as well as holding out to the several punitive expeditions of the British against them for failing to align with the indirect rule policy of the British. The Tiv struggle against alien rule and bureaucratic conquest inter alia eventually birthed the Tor Tiv institution in 1946. The Tor Tiv (king of the Tiv) was chosen as the paramount chief of the people. His power was not drawn from autocracy, but through consensus to lead the Tiv against their enemies and aggregate their collective aspirations for development of Tiv land. The challenges of development in Tiv land especially at the grass root where majority of the people dwell has necessitated an appraisal of the role of the traditional rulership vis- a-vis development in Tiv land.

The role of chieftaincy institution in Tiv land has undergone changes as the democratic dispensation within the country evolves. Traditional rulers in Tiv land, subsumed under the Tiv chieftaincy institution remain for a variety of reasons critical to the design and implementation of development projects within their areas of jurisdiction. Their core functions include mobilization of their communities for development purposes, which inter alia, include the provision of infrastructure for enhanced standard of living of their people as well as initiating developmental projects and securing the support of development agents and partners for execution of such projects. Thus the paper aimed at critically assessing the role of the

Tiv chieftaincy institution and how it impact development at the grass root in Tiv land.

Overview of the Tiv

Tivland is located in Benue state-one of the thirty six states of Nigeria's present political structure in the middle belt region of Nigeria. The Northern Nigeria statistical year book of 1965 put Tiv population at 2.7 million. Today it is estimated that they number close to 5 million or more. That makes them the most populous ethnic group in Benue and the middle belt and Nigeria's fourth largest ethnic group (wegh 1998). The Tiv are also found in Nassarawa, Taraba and parts of Plateau states. Tivland extends on both sides of river Benue and occupies an area of 30,000 square kilometres.

The word **Tiv** has a triple meaning. It is the name of the ethnic group; it refers to their language; it is also the name by which the Tiv know their ancestor-father Tiv. The Tiv believe they are all the descendants of one man called Tiv. Tiv had a brother called Uke and their father was Takuruku. However, it is difficult to identify the personality of Takuruku and to understand his relationship with Aondo (God) the supreme being who created the universe. Takuruku has apparently lost the claim to deity. According to Rubingh (1969), as theism and especially monotheism gains ground among the Tiv, it is likely that Takuruku would be relegated more and more to the background and eventually pass from the genealogy. Tiv the ancestor on the other hand is tied up with the socio-cultural and political experience here and now. The Tiv ethnic group draws its identity and sense of solidarity from Tiv. Thus Tiv has cultural as well as political significance. For this reason the name is bound to live on. Tiv had two sons- Ichongu (the circumcised) and Ipusu. The Tiv are descended from these two Tiv sons, and this segmentation is reflected in Tiv soicio-political organization.

There is no agreement among writers regarding the original home of the Tiv from where they may have started their migration. This is of course the case

with most if not all the ethnic groups in Nigeria. The general assumption has been that the Tiv are of Bantu stock, and therefore must have had their original home somewhere in central Africa. There is some socio- linguistic evidence to this effect, though inconclusive. There is however some agreement regarding their place of settlement prior to their migration to Tivland. Accounts points to the south-east of the republic of Cameroon (Wegh, 1998). The linguistic approach attempts to establish a link between the Negro groups by pointing to the similarity of language. Abraham (1933) bases his thesis on a Congo origin for the Tiv on a 67 word list. The list purports to demonstrate some similarity between the Tiv language and the language of the Nyanza Banza who live in present day Malawi. In addition to the linguistic “evidence”, Abraham (1933) and Gbor (1974, 1978) have contended that the Tiv share some cultural and physical traits with some central African groups. These traits include physique, dance, arts and worship forms.

The Tiv say they lived on a hill called '*swem*' before moving down and dispersing into the Benue valley in various parts of Tivland. Dorward argued that, *swem* is a mythical place comparable to the biblical Garden of Eden. Such an assertion is however not acceptable to the Tiv. East (1939) identifies *swem* with a hill located in the sub-section of *Ikurav-ya* known as *Iyon* in south-eastern Tivland. The time of Tiv migration to their permanent homeland cannot be known with certainty. Downes (1933) estimates that the general migration into the present area began around 1800, and that the Tiv were present south of the Benue river in large numbers by 1850. The various clans shifted positions until 1890 when the boundaries were rather well established and permanent settlement undertaken.

Tiv Social and political Organization

Organically, social organization in Tivland rests on kinship. People who are kith and kin settle together in small social units called *uya* (compounds). A number of compounds constitute *ityo* (kindred),

which is a smaller unit of *uipaven* (clans) under *tar* (country). There is no rigid definition of these terms and their English equivalents. There is much flexibility in the use of the term for instance of *uipaven* for districts or clans (Denga 1995). The head of the compound (*orya*) is expected to be the oldest male member of the family who has acquired enough knowledge of the forces of nature and whose *tsav* (magico-mystical powers) are deemed capable of protecting him and his household or compound. Such a compound head commands respect as he has lived long, used his knowledge, experience and *tsav* to repulse all kinds of evil directed against him either physically or mystically. All social activities such as marriages, burials and so on are presided over by the *orya* or a person so delegated by him. He is his compound's representative in social activities outside his compound within his *ityo* or *ipaven*. Inorganically or physically, the social organization of the Tiv rests on *tar*. *Tar* is used in this context to construe any geographical area that contains a group of people bound together by kinship relationship. (Rubingh 1969). *Tar* connotes more of a society than the geographical territory. The essence of *tar* is the area inhabited by the descendants of Tiv.

Over the decades, some anthropologists associated government with the state. They maintained that only states had governments, which was characterized by a centralized power structure, administrative machinery, and judicial institutions. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1987) classified African political systems into two main groups. One group consists of those societies with centralized authority, administrative machinery and judicial institutions. In this government, cleavages of wealth, privilege and status corresponds to the distribution of power and authority. The other consists of societies which lack centralized authority, administrative machinery and judicial institutions. In these governments there is no sharp division of rank, status, or wealth. The Tiv belongs to this later group and therefore have no government in the

classical sense of the word.

This designation of government is contentious. Schapera (1956) for instance argues that every society recognize certain roles which can be as government and that there are certain persons whose “recognized and regular activity” it is “to attend to the conduct of public affairs”. Tiv have their own political system in which law is maintained by a series of meetings of the elders of lineages of various depths. These meetings convened to tackle particular issues provide the opportunity for airing of grievances between conflicting parties.

The British colonial administration worked with the “state model” of political organization. The British found that this was not applicable to the Tiv, however, they did not bother studying the Tiv model and adapting it. According to Tseayo (1975) the form of administrative reforms in Tivland appeared to be an attempt to recreate a system that existed in Britain in which people's state was explicitly defined in a given hierarchy of vertical ties. He concluded that in Nigeria, the British found something similar to their own status stratification among the Hausa-Fulani and consequently gave it a high rating. The British mistook the power of the Tiv elders and assumed the Tiv political structure was rooted in gerontocracy. However the elders were the custodians of the people's beliefs and aspirations and not an embodiment of the supreme authorities of the various genealogical units. Based on this, the British introduced chieftaincy in Tivland.

The Tiv however did not want a chief in the sense in which the term implied among the other societies. The Tiv society was egalitarian in nature. Egalitarianism among the Tiv implies that, positions in the society are not fixed at birth; the ranking system is fluid and in principle allowed everyone the opportunity to compete in any capacity. Among the Tiv, the lineage system is the basis both for geographical and political organization. The function of the political system

is to control law and order. Since the territorial framework is conceived in lineage terms, political and government actions must also be understood in these terms.

The Tiv have no term that precisely describes political activity. They describe their government activity as *tar soron* (repairing the land). This implies ritualizing the land when necessary to that both the physical and social are harmonized for the wellbeing of the society. This government revolves around two genealogical units: *ya* and *ityo*. *Ya* may be translated as compound or home. Each *ya* has its head known as *orya* (man of the compound or compound head). The *ya* is a place of deep emotions. Laura Bohannan (1958) concurs that the strongest emotional centre of Tiv is the *ya*. The *ya* is organized around a *ya* council made up of the *orya* who is the most eldest personality in the *ya*, and other senior male members of the family. The *orya* takes decisions in almost all issues whether political, social or religious, though often in consultation with the council.

Next to the *ya* council is the *ityo* (patrilineage) council. The political significance of *ityo* among the Tiv is expressed through the dictum: *ityo hemba* (*ityo* is supreme). A man's “*ityo*” provides him with a wife, fields and allies in war. He has the unquestioned right to live in the minimal “*tar*” of his “*ityo*”; and through his *ityo*, he takes his place as a citizen. The power of *ityo* among the Tiv is rarely challenged because the Tiv are essentially patriarchal society. The Tiv say that: “*mba te hwande a ityo ga*” (one does not challenge *ityo*). *Ityo* is man's backbone without which he can do nothing. The power of *ityo* is not transferable: it is not extended to the members of the *ityo* council. *Ityo* sits in a council which the Tiv call *ijir* (judgment). *Ijir* is a Tiv council in which jural, religious, witchcraft, economic and other issues are discussed and settled. The *ityo* council is made up of most prominent elders representing the several *ya* groups. The council possesses the highest political and religious powers. When the council is in session, the Tiv say “*ityo zua ijir*”

(*ityo* has constituted judgment or *ityo* has held court). All members of the council have equal right of speech. Tseayo (1975) captures the significance of *ityo* council when he avers:

When the whole group is assembled for the purpose of *ijir*, it is presumed by all Tiv that they are assembled under the Sovereignty of *ityo*.... Since is not the Tor (chief) but *ityo* that is sovereign, the conclusions of the *ijir* are accepted as binding on all. (p56)

The tar was the highest council of elders. The tar was responsible for the taking of decisions on all matters of warfare (*ityav*) whether internal or external. They appointed war commanders (*kur u ityav*) who after being blessed by the *orsoron tar* (repairer of the land), were mandated to prosecute the war on behalf of the people. The *tar* council decides the terms of peace after war and performs the necessary rituals to mark the end of hostilities. Unlike the *ya* and *ityo* councils, no single individual exercise absolute leadership over the tar council. Decisions were based on consensus of all members present.

Tiv Chieftaincy Institution

As earlier observed, the Tiv were egalitarian in nature and no single individual exercised traditional authority over members of a tar. Members worked in consensus. However, political exigencies in the 19th century occasioned by the great expansion and colonization of the Benue plains necessitated a change in the traditional administration of the people. The Tiv benefitted from the political exigencies of their neighbours and borrowed some of their ideas in the process. This led to the appointment of a *Tor* (king or chief) in each tar. Thus the traditional leadership for the first time came to have a permanent executive official who presided at the tar council of elder meetings and acted as foreign minister (Denga, 1995). The need for a Tor (King or Chief) was occasioned by some of these reasons among others:

i. The *ugenyi* (Chamba) wars at Ushongo

necessitated the need for a military leadership, the Tiv had to face people with superior military organization commanded by war chiefs.

- ii. Dispersal had created new additional issues.
- iii. Incessant wars between expanding *ityar* and refusal by pioneer settlers to allow passage of new immigrants

The British on their own part had attempted appointing their own *Utor* (chiefs) who had no support of the people, consequently the administration achieved little hence the need for a reorganization of the district administration with the wise counsel of the elders which eventually led to the right caliber of people being appointed *Utor* (Chiefs) over the *ityar*. In line with other societies with paramount rulers, the Tiv exerted pressure on the colonial administration for the appointment of a paramount chief of equal status with other chiefs like the Aku of Wukari, Emir of Nassarawa, Lafia etc. Sequel to the foregoing, the first paramount ruler for the Tiv was appointed in 1946 with the title Tor Tiv (King of the Tiv). This has remained the practice till date. The appointment of the Tor Tiv alternates between Tiv two sons Ichongo and Ipusu.

The Concept of Development

The conventional model of determining and explaining development is usually based on the ability of the national economy to generate and sustain an annual increase in the Gross National Product (GNP) at an average of 50%. This is the amount of goods and services available for consumption and re-investment for the average citizen of the country (Kalu & Nwogwugwu 2010). However, this description of development has been overtaken since this is no longer the only parameter for measuring development. This paper will attempt to look at development from a perspective that is more holistic; this approach is the new and more generally accepted concept of development. This new approach was occasioned by the unfortunate experience of the 50s and 60s

when countries of the southern hemisphere actually met the expected United Nations (UN) growth targets without a corresponding impact in the living conditions of citizens of these countries. The implication was that something was fundamentally wrong with the narrow definition of development merely on the basis of GNP. The inadequacy of this conception of development necessitated a call by economists and policy makers among others for a more holistic conception of development. Subsequently, development has been conceived and explained as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes, and institutions as well as acceleration in economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty.

Essentially, development must represent the entire changes by which an entire social system turns to the diverse basic needs and desires of both individuals and social groups within the system. This can also represent moves for a condition of life generally considered as unsatisfactory both mentally and materially so that sustenance and improvement occur and are abreast with the progress of the time (Kalu & Nwogwugwu, 2010). Through development, political independence acquires its true meaning and significance; this is because development implies self-reliance and the ability to meet the changes of the time both individually and collectively. Ake (1984) define development as a “systematic and continuous increase of man's capabilities for mastering his environment, satisfying basic human needs and for realizing his potentials”. In fact, development is never haphazard and cyclical, but a systematic and sustained process of change, movement and transformation usually manifested in the occurrence of desirable changes in the various aspects of life of the society.

The Chieftaincy Institution and Grass roots Development

Local governments are creations of state governments. Sequel to this, the Benue state government under the delegated powers enacted

the 1976 local government edict number 14 of 1978. This in consequence streamlined the procedure for the selection, recognition and roles of traditional rulers. This formed the constitutional framework for traditional democracy, by a community selection of an acceptable traditional ruler. There were the warrant chiefs during the indirect rule system, subsequently, the colonial authorities recognized local chiefs who functioned as native court judges. The first class chiefs were recognized in the middle belt of Nigeria during the colonial era. All these categories of traditional rulers contributed immensely to the development of their communities (Ojo, 1976). It is pertinent to look at some of the functions of traditional rulers in community development. These include:

- a. Traditional rulers chair meetings of the council of elders which formulate and enforce the rules that govern the domain. This gives direction, political and economic stability in the community.
- b. Advise local government officials for development of their communities. This helps the local government administration in the formulation of policies; the local governments work with the traditional rulers in the provision of beneficial projects to the communities such as health centres, boreholes, roads etc.
- c. Maintenance of law and order in the community by ensuring peaceful co-existence of the people
- d. As custodians of culture, they initiate and preside over celebration of cultural festivals in order to keep maintain the cultures and traditions of the people.
- e. They help in the settlement of land and other disputes within their communities
- f. They help in mobilizing the people for government policies like tax, immunization, counterpart efforts etc. (Usifo, 2017).

The Tiv traditional society is basically republican;

governed by ideas of political sovereignty, egalitarianism and human co-operation. With the chieftaincy institution today, the Tiv came under the rulership of an institution that is hierarchically structured. At the apex of this hierarchy is the Tor Tiv (King of the Tiv) who is the paramount ruler of the entire Tiv nation. Next in the hierarchy is the *Utor* (Kings) who are in-charge of the various segments in Tivland. Though these *Utor* are also first class chiefs like the Tor Tiv, they are however under the supervision of the Tor Tiv. The powers of the Utor are restricted to the different segments of Tivland they are overseeing. The Uter are next in line in the hierarchy. They are in-charge of sub-segments of Tivland and under the supervision of the Utor, they are second class chiefs. The Utyombaiov (District heads or chiefs) are next in line and under the supervision of the Uter. The district chiefs are third class chiefs. Next in line to the district chiefs are the Mbaterev (Kindred heads), they are in charge of kindred within the districts. They are last on the rung of the chieftaincy administration and they are fourth class chiefs. The duties and functions of all these chiefs are subsumed under the general functions of traditional rulers enumerated above.

Chieftaincy Institution and Grassroots Development in Tivland

The challenges of development in Tivland are multi-faceted. They range from insensitivity and misplaced priorities of political leadership, lack of critical infrastructure, poverty, the pull him down syndrome occasioned by “iyuhe” (envy), among others. The consequences of these on the people are severe and far reaching. The general consensus is that the situation in Tivland regarding issues of development is abysmal. It is incumbent collectively on the Tiv to aggregate their collective aspirations in tackling these challenges. To this end it incumbent on all sectors of Tivland to address this problem from their perspective.

The Tiv chieftaincy institution has in its own way contributed in no small measure in trying to remedy this abysmal situation. For instance, in the

area of settlement of land and other disputes, the chiefs have played crucial roles in resolving such issues thereby contributing immensely to the maintenance of law and order in their communities. But for the traditional rulers, some of these conflicts would have assumed frightening dimensions. The resolution of such conflicts, create a conducive environment for meaningful development. This no doubt made the job of the government easier in this regard. Consequently many of them have appointed as members of peace and security committees both in their localities and even at the state level.

Another aspect which the Tiv chieftaincy institution has contributed in no small measure is in mobilizing their people massively for government policies. Since they are at the grassroots and closer to the people, they are more in a vantage position as the traditional authorities who command the loyalty and respect of the people to galvanize support for government policies thereby serving as a link between their people and the government. For instance, during immunization exercises, advocacy and enlightenment campaigns etc. the services of the traditional rulers are always essential for the success of such exercises. This to a large extent, helped in bridging the gap between the government and people in the rural communities.

Government depends on revenue from various sources to carry out its programs. Tiv traditional rulers through the *ator ukpande* (Tax chiefs or Tax collectors) help in mobilizing and collecting revenue for the government at the grass root. Such revenue is used by the government for its developmental programs. They also help in identifying the needs of the people at the grass root and passing it to government for proper attention.

The Tiv chieftaincy institution is not just a passive onlooker in the dynamics of development of the society, but active participants in helping to develop their communities. This is true to the extent that, many of the traditional rulers have

initiated programs and projects which impact positively on the lives of their people. For instance some of them have established schools which are complimenting the efforts of government in the educational sector. Some have instituted scholarship schemes which are helping indigent children in their communities. Culverts have been constructed by some traditional rulers to ease the flow of goods and services in Tivland. For instance in Guma Local Government Area, the former Ter Guma (Father or Chief of Guma) embarked on the construction of culverts at Mbagwen/yandev as well as the construction of earth dam at Yandev/Tse Ivokor etc. (Iyol, 2010). Recently the Tor Tiv announced the formation of a foundation known as the Aya Tutu foundation. This foundation among other things will help in promoting the cause of development in Tivland through scholarships, empowerment programs, micro financing of small scale ventures etc. the impact of this laudable initiative will definitely be profound and will re-echo in the annals of Tiv history.

The wise counsel of Tiv traditional rulers on a wide range of issues is often sought by the community and individuals for proper guidance. Politicians of different political divides often consult the traditional rulers and solicit their royal and traditional blessings and endorsement in their political activities. They have contributed in brokering peace and reconciling politicians and prominent persons in different parts of the country. These efforts at peace building are impacting positively on the nation at large.

As custodians of culture and tradition, the Tiv chieftaincy institution has continue to protect and promote the Tiv culture both within and outside the shores of Nigeria. Recently the Tor Tiv was in South Africa for an agricultural symposium and also took time to rob minds with the Zulu king on cultural and other sundry issues aimed at promoting and strengthening cultural ties between the Tiv culture and the Zulu culture. The Tiv day celebration which is an annual event supported and

encouraged by the Tiv traditional council and preside over by the Tor Tiv has continue to be a cynosure of all eyes as people come from far and wide to witness the occasion. This has contributed to the tourism industry not only in Tivland, or Benue state, but the country as a whole. The Kwaghir (Tiv puppet theater), and the popular Swange dance under the guidance of the Tiv chieftaincy institution are among the rich cultural components which has placed Tivland and Nigeria on the world cultural map.

Challenges of Tiv Chieftaincy Institution and Grassroots Development

In spite of the invaluable contributions of the Tiv chieftaincy institution to grass root development in Tivland, the institution is plagued by a number of challenges that have continued to hamper its activities and affect its quest for development at the grass root. Some of these challenges include but not restricted to the following:

i. Constitutional Impediments

Beyond the 1963 constitution, successive constitutions have failed to ascribe roles to the traditional institution in Nigeria. This has to some extent constrained their effectiveness as most if not all their activities have no force of law. Certain actions and decisions cannot be enforced due to these constitutional impediments. The implication is that, they can only bark but cannot bite. This waters down their authority to some extent and limit the scope of their operation. The forgoing underlies the situation in the chieftaincy institution in Tivland also.

ii. Political Interference

Political interference is another challenge affecting the activities of the chieftaincy institution in Tivland. Activities of politicians and the political leadership have continued to impinge negatively on the chieftaincy institution. The selection processes of chiefs in Tivland in most instances have been hijacked by political considerations, in some instances candidates for such positions are imposed by politicians, thereby

flouting the procedures and denying the rightful people from been selected. Many of those so selected become pawns in the hands of politicians. Sometimes traditional rulers are unduly harassed by the government for refusing to acquiesce to its bidding. Some of the chiefs have become partisan in their activities, taking sides and pitching tents with political parties. This to a large extent has compromised their integrity and neutrality and affected their communities negatively.

iii. Lack of Funding

Lack of adequate funding for the traditional rulers in Tivland is another challenge in their quest to effectively impact in the lives of their communities. The activities of the traditional rulers are greatly hampered by lack of funds as many of them rely on their meager income to initiate projects and other services that are beneficial to their communities with little or no assistance from the government.

Recommendations

In view of the important roles the chieftaincy institution is playing in the development of Tivland, this paper recommends the following:

- a. The need for constitutional roles for the chieftaincy institution cannot be overemphasized given its strategic importance to the country. This will enhance its capability to improve on its activities.
- b. Adequate funding should be made available to the traditional rulers to enable them complement the efforts of government at the grass root level, since they are the only vestige of governance at that level.
- c. Political interference with the activities of the traditional institutions should be discouraged. This will create a conducive environment for them to operate efficiently and objectively.
- d. Traditional rulers as fathers of communities and custodians of tradition and cultures should rise above partisan politics as this may create divisions within the communities which in turn will not augur well for unity, peace and

development in the community.

- e. Continuous training and capacity building mechanisms should be put in place to enhance the work of traditional rulers in order for them to be abreast with existing realities and best practices.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, the chieftaincy or traditional political institution has shown a remarkable degree of resilience, their political fortunes have fluctuated over the years. Constitutional developments over the years have been key barometers of the ebbs and flows of the powers of traditional rulers. Though even as constitutional impediments and other factors have to a large extent diminished the political significance of the chieftaincy institution, nevertheless, the institutions still remain the most effective mediating link between the government and the rural areas. This is because the traditional chieftaincy institution is virtually the only means of governance in the rural areas. The apparent absence of modern state structures in many rural communities in Nigeria has accentuated and enhanced the importance of traditional rulers as crucial actors in a loosely defined coalition at the federal, state and local government levels.

The chieftaincy institution in Tivland has played significant roles in the development of their communities. Despite some of the challenges enumerated above, the Tiv chieftaincy institution has remained resilient and has continued to serve as the vestige of government at the rural level and has continued to command the respect and esteem of the people. They have continued to be architects of peace and unity in their communities.

This paper generally appraised the role of the chieftaincy institution in Tivland as regards development and surmised that, the institution has played crucial roles in the holistic development of their communities. It is therefore imperative for the institution to be properly encouraged and situated to maximize its output for the benefit of not just Tivland in particular but the country in

general.

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