

VEC as common good

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ABSTRACT

Visit Every Community (VEC) programme is a product of the comprehensively articulated, non discriminatory, inclusive, integrative, people-oriented and sustainable development blueprint; the 4-Point Agenda of the Governor Sullivan Iheanacho Chime. The VEC programme went beyond ascertaining and establishing the infrastructural needs and status of on-going projects in various communities. It was also an exercise in civic education of the people. Civic responsibility, human rights, the need for security consciousness, the place of agriculture in eradicating poverty, how to form and establish cooperative societies, modalities for securing loans to establish small scale industries, the need for partnership between the communities and the government and non government organizations were issues that were exhaustively canvassed. VEC, indeed, is a conscious and deliberate exercise in the promotion of active citizenship in the sense that citizens are not only encouraged to know, embrace and exercise the full range of their political, civil and social rights, but also encouraged to use these rights to improve the quality of their political and civic life through getting involved in the formal economy or formal politics. In other words, VEC encourages the people to have "a voice in deciding their own destiny rather than be treated as passive recipients of welfare or government action." VEC programme is laced with principles that characterize genuine democracy by promoting participation of people in affairs that concern them, by emphasizing the need for accountability and transparency in the governing process, constitutionalism and the rule of law. Again, if development connotes progressive movement from one state to the other, then VEC's message on the need for increased skill and capacity among the people, self discipline, responsibility, creativity and freedom, and change in attitudes are all designed to achieve authentic development in the State.

Keywords: VEC, common good, Civic responsibility, human rights and people.

VEC Initiative

St. Thomas Aquinas defined law "as an ordinance of reason for the Common Good, promulgated by him who has care of the Community" [1]. It is most appropriate to analyse VEC Initiative from the perspective of Aquinas' definition of law. The reasonability of VEC is clear [2]. It is a product of deep introspection and sound reasoning, and the reception accorded to it by all Communities in the State is a confirmation of its reasonability [3]. It is designed for the realization of the Common Good - the good of all. You

may also call it common welfare, common interest or public interest [4]. It was also promulgated or initiated by a person that has been widely perceived as having done tremendously well in serving his people [5]. Therefore, the question of whether there was care by the person who is in charge as required by Aquinas definition of law is roundly evidential and substantial. By the social nature of man, a system of cooperation is inevitable [6]. People need the cooperation of others to survive. Services, goods or benefits that are

products of cooperative endeavours are the Common Good of any given society [7]. The common good as defined by Maritain include: The collection of public commodities and services, the roads, the ports, schools etc., a sound fiscal condition of the State ... the body of just laws, good custom and wise institutions which provide the nation with structures ... it includes the sum of sociological interpretation of all civil conscience, political virtues and sense of right and liberty ... Justice, friendship and happiness. The workability and sustenance of the Common Good would require the reconciliation and harmonization of various private and public interests of all the citizens for the benefit of the entire Community [3]. The message of VEC is the promotion of a sense of oneness, unity and solidarity in the maintenance and sustenance of the common good, to ensure that the proverbial sheep owned and fed collectively do not die of starvation. Another name for VEC is therefore "joint possession or use, participation, partnership, sharing "... it is also about" social relationships, fellowship, socialites, organized society, obligingness". The realization of common, however, can become a reality only when responsible and public spirited persons are at the helm of affairs [4]. The message of VEC was long echoed in Arusha, in 1990, by the resolutions of the African Charter for

Government connection with the people

Practically speaking, disconnectedness is avoided if government officials, especially the appointees of the Governor, recoils from any form of deliberate self centered aloofness,

Each person, withdrawn unto himself, behaves as though he is a stranger to the destiny of all the others. His children and his good friends constitute for him the

popular participation which says: We affirm that nations cannot be built without popular support and full participation of the people, nor can the economic crisis be resolved and the human and economic conditions improved without full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of the vast majority of the people ... we are convinced that neither can African's perpetual economic crises be overcome, nor can a bright future for Africa and its people see the light of day, unless the structures, patterns and political context of the process of socio-economic developments are appropriately altered ... We believe strongly that popular participation is, in essence, the empowerment of the people to effectively innovate themselves in creating structures and in designing policies and programmes that serve the interest of all. From the above, it becomes obvious that the Enugu example has no alternative. It is the most authentic route to achieving transformational changes in the communities [3]. Again, the structure of VEC and its dynamism provide the necessary linkages of Government with the entire State. The implication is that the government is connected, attached and engaged with the people, and according to Kalu, the former Governor of Abia State, "shares theaches, the pains, the passions, the hopes and aspirations of the people.

indifference and emotional distancing from the people. Such are persons whom Alexis de Tocqueville described this way:

whole of the human species; as for his transactions with his fellow citizens, he may mix among them, but does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms there remains in his mind a sense of family, there is no longer remains a sense of society

The point is that appointees of Government who wear such garbs as described by Tocquville may not be in a position to drive VEC [4]. Such persons would create a paradoxical situation where no matter how the Governor had worked assiduously in providing social and physical infrastructures for the people, his efforts could still be negatively, and jaundicely assessed, occasioned by the anti social and inaccessibility of his officials with his local people [5]. The point remains that VEC, if sustained, would be a great institution of transformation and as Barrack Obama clearly stated during his visit to Ghana in 2009, "Africa does not need strongmen, it needs strong institutions. So, apart from massively providing social and economic infrastructures and achieving great strides in several sectors - Health, Agriculture, Housing, the hallmark of the Governor's good governance principles of transparency, accountability, respect for the rule of law and creating

partnerships in building capacities for transformational change, are, in the words of Chuks Ugwoke, "enduring virtues and values we must inculcate in youths for the needed rebirth of our nation. We had earlier said that this work is not a treatise on how His Excellency, Governor Sullivan Chime governed Enugu State [4]. It is only a philosophical analysis of a governance institution, he created. Besides, according to Ugwoke, the constant refrain of the Governor has been "Why do you want to distract yourself by screaming that you have done what you were elected to do." This perhaps explains why the Governor rarely embarks on any form of commissioning of projects that would have attracted attention to himself. Nevertheless he has through his good works written his name in the inner recesses of the peoples hearts. Admirers of His Excellency's "silent" approach should be consoled by the sobering words of the great Napoleon who once said:

Alexander, Caesar and Charlemagne and I have built great empires. But upon what did they depend? They depended upon force. But long ago Jesus started an empire that depended on love and even to this day millions will die for him.

Enugu State today is witnessing an era of an administration that had seen the building of strong institutions and the enthronement of good governance

principles in the running of public affairs as the only way of building a solid and sustainable society and in the words of Ugwoke:

What is certain is that this day, as in many decades to come, the people will continue to have the fondest

memories of this proverbial cat with nine lives, who made huge personal sacrifices for the overall well being of his people, who will long remember him for what he did in the State than what we write on the pages of newspapers.

His Excellency, the Governor, Sullivan I Chime, could as well, despite his

humility and self effacing attitude, tell himself in the words of Henry B Gonzalez:

“I have served with honour and integrity and success. I have never failed myself and I have never failed you.”

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