

Chapter 11

Akwa Ibom Women: Contributions to Hospitality and Tourism

Stella Ekpe, Imo A. Emenyi & Umana Nnochiri

Introduction

Akwa Ibom State is famous for the rich variety of its natural and cultural heritage as is obvious even to the casual observer: friendly people, enchanting topography, lush vegetation, vast beaches, traditional art works, games, musical instruments, songs, dances, dramas, choral musicals, grooming, naming system and cuisine, all of which date back to classical antiquity, and which continue to evolve.



*Source: Akwa Ibom State Hotels & Tourism Directory
(2nd Edition)*

Akwa Ibom State has won prizes for its peerless representation various times at the National Food Exhibition held in Makurdi

and at the Abuja Carnival in 2005. It was in the attempt to capture and formally document the culinary skills of Akwa Ibom indigenes that two First Ladies of the State and Chairpersons of the Better Life for Rural Women, Mrs Patience Abbe and Obonganwan Uduak Nkanga had in 1989 and 1991 respectively published and revised a 32-35 page book entitled *Akwa Ibom State Delicacies*, complete with glossary and illustrations in colour.



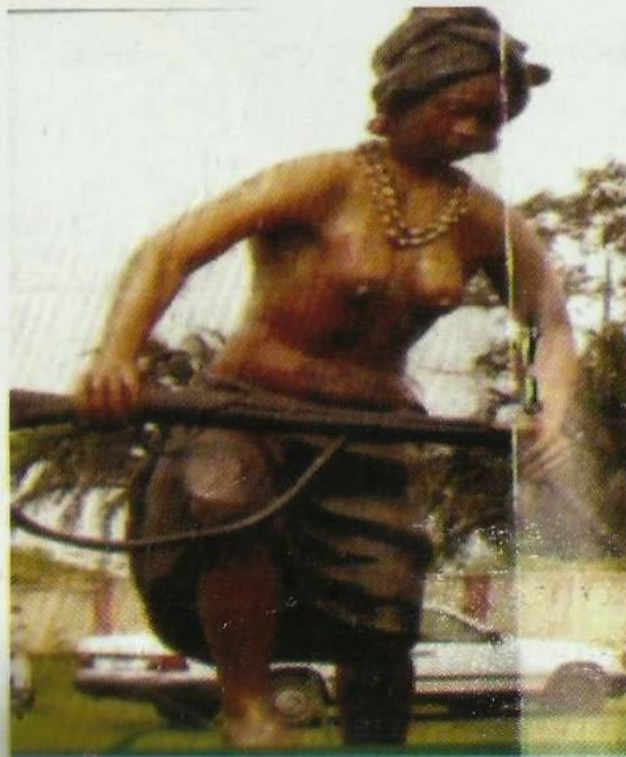
Source: ATDC (August 2013) Tourism Impressions Magazine

It was also along these lines that the State Tourism Board held the maiden edition of its food festival in November 2013 under the theme: *Health, Taste and Tourism*. The forum brought together all local government councils in Akwa Ibom, with food companies, food processing and food-related factories in Nigeria. In all of these endeavours, women have consistently, enthusiastically and emphatically participated side by side with their male counterparts, whether in the traditional or modern settings, and at the local or national levels.

While it is evident to the casual observer that hospitality is inscribed into the gene pool of the Akwa Ibom personality,

tourism is a more recent development. Achu (2009) describes international tourism as including other forms of tourism activities, involving natural, social and cultural elements operating within the society of interest, and consisting of typologies which form the basis for attracting visitors from nations around the world. By this view, the Akwa Ibom situation lends itself very easily to ecotourism, heritage tourism, beach tourism and community tourism. Here again the women are proving to be indispensable: carrying out instructions, taking control, giving command and generating unparalleled media and world attention.

Mention must be made of the 1929 Women's Riot to resist the indiscriminate imposition of taxes, which war cry has reverberated throughout Africa, producing the likes of President Helen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; President Catherine Samba of Central African Republic; and President Joyce Banda of Malawi. For the women who fought the tax war, the world of tourism turns its attention to Ikot Abasi where the memorial statue stands at the Local Government Council Headquarters.



More recently in 2013, a 101-page publication commissioned by Mboho Ikot Abasi entitled *Ikot Abasi: Origin and heritage* was released. It was written by an eminent daughter of Akwa Ibom, Obonganwan Edith Eno Ettete (née Amos Etukakpan) originally from Ikot Akpan Village and married in Ediduo, Edemeya both in Ikot Abasi Local Government Area, this well-researched volume is considered a useful contribution to the Nigerian tourism development thrust with a focus on Ikot Abasi, Akwa Ibom State. In the words of the author,

The work has traced the origin and migration, ancient socio-cultural organizations, role of traditional rulers, traditional institutions of government, European interference, the 1929 Women's Revolt, trade in slaves and local products... (p.iii)



Source: Ettete, E. E. E. (2013). *Ikot Abasi: Origin and Heritage*. Ikot Abasi: Mboho Ikot Abasi .

Included in the volume is an analysis of the content with a view to providing suggestions for the future of Ikot Abasi. In our opinion it is a timely, seminal and vital contribution to the on-going tourism drive in Akwa Ibom State.

Another milestone was reached in the involvement of Akwa Ibom State women in tourism development and promotion

when under the leadership of Lady (Barr) Valerie Ebe as Commissioner, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Akwa Ibom State, launched the first cultural festival of its kind in recent times which generated so much interest that it drew the attention even of the neighbouring countries. This is the opinion expressed in the feature story of the December 2013 edition of *Tourism Impressions Magazine*, and to underscore the scale of the impact of that singular event, the source reports that:

The momentum four years later has pioneered the industrialization drive of Akwa Ibom State government, generated employment, and provided a platform for rebranding the state and attracting investors (p.35).

It is against this backdrop that we highlight in this section, the contributions by an initial selection of Akwa Ibom State women's contributions to the development of tourism and hospitality in the one hundred years of Nigeria's history. We cite HRH Atai Akwa Obonganwan Ikpaisong Deaconess (Dr.) Atim Rose Atakpo; Princess Dr. Helen Atakpo her daughter; Senator Helen Esuene; Mrs. Umana Nnochiri and Mrs. Bassey Osusanya.

**Her Royal Highness, Atai Akwa Obonganwan Ikpaisong
Deaconess (Dr.) Atim Rose Atakpo OON, NPOM, JP, Eka
Mbong Akwa Ibom**



*Source: Programme for the Funeral and Thanksgiving Service of
HRH. Atai Akwa Obonganwan Ikpaisong Deaconess (Dr)
Atim Rose Atakpo, Eka Mbong Akwa Ibom State*

Family Background

Her Royal Highness, Atai Akwa Obonganwan Ikpaisong Deaconess (Dr.) Atim Rose Atakpo, Eka Mbong Akwa Ibom State was born in Uyo in March, 1922 to the family of Chief Johnson Okon Inyang and Princess Magdalene Johnson Okon, first daughter of King Udo Otung Ubo Umoh Abasi Nya (the first and only Warrant Chief of the Ibibios). Raised by her elder brother, Chief James Johnson Okon, a mathematician, after the passing of her mother, she received the best possible education available in the region at the time, before settling

down in marriage to Mr O U Atakpo, a scientist from Ibesikpo Asutan, a marriage blessed with two children.

Education

The young princess began her formal education at Offot Jubilee School, Uyo and completed it at the famous "finishing school" for young women, Edgerley Memorial School, Calabar, in 1940.

From then on, Atai Akwa Obonganwan Ikpaisong Atim Atakpo embarked on a voyage of self development and self-education in dressmaking, embroidery, beadwork, woolcraft, catering and confectionery making through the Teach Yourself textbook series, which she pursued assiduously with an uncommon focus, zeal determination and candour. She trained herself to become a renowned seamstress, providing boarding facilities for her numerous apprentices who came from various ethnic groups, and transforming herself into a colossus through hard-work and practice of the skills that enabled her to help other women in their various fields of endeavour. As a counselor, a motivator and an arbitrator, she stopped at nothing in the pursuit of peace and harmonious co-existence among women. The structures she laid in women's development are still yielding abundant results, particularly in the organization of market women groups. These sterling attributes won Akwa Obonganwan Ikpaisong Atim Rose Atakpo innumerable awards in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria and internationally.

Described as a woman with a heart of gold, a preserver of the very best in African values, an epitome of African motherhood, an inspiration to African womanhood, Akwa Obonganwan (Dr.) Atim R. Atakpo is credited with numerous outstanding achievements in a variety of fields of human

endeavour, especially the promotion of industrial development in the areas of hospitality and fashion designing, and the provision of community and humanitarian services, with support to religious organizations.

Development of The Hospitality Industry

Atai Obonganwan Ikpaisong (Dr.) Atim Rose Atakpo played an iconic role in pioneering the development of the hotel and catering industry in Nigeria through her establishment and operation of Helena Hotel in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. She was a leader in the development of small scale industries in Akwa Ibom State as the proprietress of Helena Soap Industry, Uyo. As the proprietress of the pioneer Fashion Design Institute for women's fashions from the early 1940's in what is now Akwa Ibom State, her consummate technical expertise and managerial capacity in the area of industrial effort exerted a strongly positive and all-encompassing influence on the development of the fashion industry in Akwa Ibom and in Nigeria.

Selected Honours, Distinctions And Awards

Atai Akwa Obonganwan Ikpaisong Atim Rose Atakpo expectedly was the recipient of a steady flow of copious local, national and international honours in her time. A selection is listed in chronological sequence as follows:

- *International Women's Cooperator, Certificate of Honour and Recognition* by five countries: Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain and Germany
1961
- *Fellow, Institute of Corporate Administration*, 1977
- Installation as *Obonganwan Ikpaisong Ibibio*, Uyo.
1980

for working mothers and market women, which she ran for two years, but which was forced to shut down because of financial constraints.

- In 1982, she represented Cross River State (now Cross River and Akwa Ibom States) at the International Conference of Women's Societies in Seoul, Korea. Her participation at the conference was self-sponsored, earning her the nickname "Emergency" from the sitting President of NCWS.
- She once served as a Court Assessor for juvenile delinquency, and was also appointed as a Prison Visitor by the government of the then Cross River State.
- She is founder and President of Council for Women of Dignity (*Mbono Ukpono Ibaan*), a Non-Governmental Organization concerned with the protection and enhancement of the dignity of women against various forms of assault and abuse.
- She, in many ways, contributed to the development, survival and maintenance of the children's home at Otop Otop in Cross River State, and the motherless babies home in Akwa Ibom State.
- She engineered and financed the clearing and subsequent tarring of the street called Igwe Street, which has since been renamed after her: Atim Atakpo Street—by the Uyo Local Government Area in 1987. She financed the extension of the three major utilities: water, electricity and telephone, to this street.
- After the Nigerian Civil War, she voluntarily bought materials and used them to go to villages and homes, teaching women handcraft, baking, cooking, food service and homecare for self-employment through small scale entrepreneurship, without asking for any form of

- In 1960, she was the only woman from Nigeria who attended the International Congress of Women's Guild during which period she had the privilege of visiting Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Britain in order to obtain a better understanding of the world cooperative movement. Her contributions at the conference received copious published commendations from delegates from several countries, including Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden, in the *International Woman Coordinator*, 17(1), Organ of the International Cooperative Women's Guild, London, published in 1961. This publication was later presented to the Nigerian government.
- In 1962, she piloted the people of Owot Uta Ibesikpo to open a commercial weaving centre. Two women and two men were given scholarships by her to be trained to run the centre.
- Her interest and tireless effort in voluntary service earned her various honorary memberships and fellowship awards from many organizations, associations and corporate bodies. She was a life member of several organizations: The National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), the Bible Society of Nigeria, the Red Cross Society of Nigeria and the Girls Guide.
- Under the aegis of the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), of which she was a founding member in Uyo, and its President for nine years, she devoted much of her financial resources, material, energy and time to mobilize and organize market women into groups to engage in trading in order to facilitate identification and moral control. As a corollary, she single-handedly opened a day care centre, also on the platform of NCWS,

in a book entitled; *"Obonganwan Atim Rose Atakpo"* 1996

- *Membership Award*, by Association of Business Executives of Nigeria 1997
- *National Productivity Order of Merit Award (NPOM)* 2000
- *State Award of Excellence in recognition of Meritorious Service to the Education Industry*, by Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) 2003
- *Prestigious Mother Award*, by the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Women's Guild, 73, Wellington Basseway, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State 2003

Obonganwan Ikpaisong Ibibio, the Atai of Akwa Ibom State, the Eno Aka Offot, and member of the Obong's Council of the Uyo Local Government Area, remains the first and only woman ever to hold this esteemed traditional title of Obonganwan Ikpaisong in the whole of Ibibio land.

Community Service and Social Work

- As President of the Obot Idim Women's Cooperative/Thrift and Credit Society, Obonganwan Ikpaisong Atim Rose Atakpo piloted the society to a position which earned it an "A" Award. As a result, in 1961, she was appointed a government nominee to represent Nigerian women overseas at a world conference of cooperative societies in Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Akwa Obonganwan Atakpo was the State President of the Akwa Ibom Market Women's Association (AIMWA), a Non-Governmental Organization which she established in 1999 for the coordination of the activities of market women in the State.

- Coronation as *Obonganwan of Aka Offot, Uyo* 1983
- Cited in the Lutheran Women's Quarterly Magazine
- Vol. XIII, No. 4, part 1, page 15, for her *numerous Christian activities and her committed devotion in the struggle to uplift the generality of her fellow citizens, especially women.* (Research Article, by Miriam Carter) 1984
- *Director, Cross River Breweries Limited (now Champion Breweries Limited)* 1984-1988
- *Pilgrimage to the Holy Land (Jerusalem)* 1986
- *Honorary Membership of the Legion* by Nigerian Red Cross Society, Akwa Ibom State Council 1988
- *Certificate of Appreciation and Recognition* by Nigerian Red Cross Society, Akwa Ibom State Branch 1989
- *National Council of Women's Societies (N C W S) Honours*
- **Award** signed by the former National Patron, Her Excellency, Mrs. Maryam Babangida 1990
- *Certificate of Honour as Pillar of Development* by Uyo Students' Association: The Polytechnic, Calabar and the University of Uyo 1992
- *Patron of Youth*, Akwa Ibom State Youth Assembly, by Ministry of Youth and Sport 1993
- *Prime Mover* by Kiwanis International Club. 1994-1995
- *Honorary Doctor of Divinity*, by Muskegon Bible Institute Inc. Indianapolis, Indiana 46222, USA 1995
- *Certificate of Honour*, by Joint Council of YMCA and YWCA 1996
- Her contributions to the development of women moved the women organization called Women in Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State Branch, to publish her biographical sketch

payment. This was to enable the women use the skills so acquired to provide some financial support for their husbands in the hard times that followed the end of the war.

- She was a force behind the siting of a Labour Office at Uyo by the Federal Ministry of Labour, Lagos. Prior to this, there had been none in Uyo.
- In 1979, she functioned as the catalyst in resolving a serious dispute in the Uyo main market between the Chairman of the local government and the women traders. This achievement earned her the title "Eka Ibaan" (Mother of Women).
- She sponsored many seminarians through their training, and contributed to the development of her church by donating bicycles to the clergymen who graduated from the Lutheran Church of Nigeria Seminary in 1974. In subsequent years, she donated pastoral gowns and other items to the seminary, in addition to providing spiritual support for them. These acts earned her the nickname "Mother of the Seminary".
- She single-handedly and successfully mediated in a serious long-standing land dispute involving several villages, which had claimed many lives for years. As a result of her effort, the land was donated to her by all the warring chiefs, in appreciation of her role. She, in turn, donated the large piece of land to the Lutheran Church of Nigeria for community activities.
- The beehive tempo of activities in her palace was a physical confirmation of her social and humanitarian disposition. Indeed, her palace was constantly besieged by all categories of people seeking counseling, favours,

settlement of disputes or the disposal of complaints, all of which they received.

The story of Her Royal Highness, Atai Akwa Obonganwan Ikpaisong Deaconess (Dr.) Atim Rose Atakpo, Eka Mbong Akwa Ibom captures the essence of the wise man Solomon's declaration that "Every enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts" (Proverbs 24:3-4).

Women of every generation everywhere may justifiably be proud of the outstanding accomplishments of this daughter of Akwa Ibom, this seasoned Nigerian, this citizen of the world. Her resourcefulness, hard work, altruism, compassion, honesty, enterprise and humanity are the stuff that legends are made of.

Princess (Dr.) Helen Atakpo

This distinguished daughter of Akwa Ibom State is an Ambassador as well as a Justice of Peace. Born into the Atakpo royal family in Afaha Ikot Obio Nkan (formerly in Uyo but now in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area) in December 1942, she, by hard work and dedication to duty rose to the position of Obonganwan Ikpaisong Ibibio and Eduiek Ibesikpo Asutan. As the Proprietress/CEO of HAARKTA Institute of Catering and Hotel Management, a Government Approved institution in Uyo, she has raised generations of women in the hospitality industry for Nigeria.

In the polygamous family setting where she was raised, Princess Helen Atakpo's father had eight surviving children and numerous grand children, but she is the only surviving biological child of her mother.

This enigmatic woman is the daughter of the late Chief Okon William Atakpo, from Afaha Ikot Obio Nkan, a man who obtained his London Matriculation after his secondary school education. He worked as a Soil Chemist with the School of Agriculture in Moor Plantation, Ibadan and later with the School of Agriculture, Umudike, Umuahia. He was also a transporter, a livestock farmer, a renowned mechanized baker and confectioner with the trade name "Ata Royal Manna." An industrialist, Chief Atakpo tried his hands on the production (brewing) of aerated waters (what we call soft drinks) in addition to processing meat, establishing poultry farms and setting up cold rooms for the storage of sea foods. He was a pathfinder in all these.



Parental Background

Princess Helen Atakpo descends from a generation of powerful women. Her mother was Her Royal Highness, Atai Akwa Obonganwan Deaconess (Dr.) Atim Rose Atakpo, OON, MPON, JP, Eka Mbong Iban Akwa Ibom the First. This pioneer women's leader of steel was from Aka Offot in Uyo Local Government Area, and her own mother, Princess Magdalene Johnson Okon (née Udo Otung Ubo), first daughter of King Udo Otung Ubo Umoh Abasi Nya.

Educational Background

Princess (Dr.) Helen Atakpo began her academic journey as a pupil of Boecler Memorial School, Nung Oku Ibesikpo before she proceeded to Lutheran High School, Obot Idim for her secondary education. She sat for the WAEC/City & Guilds, London and obtained the Advanced Certificate in Cookery (Diploma equivalent). In addition, she attended a short course in Catering in ARMTI, Ilorin and in Western Germany to learn the German Art of Cooking.

Honours, Recognitions, Awards and Prizes

As a result of the positive impact she has created on humanity, Princess (Dr.) Helen Atakpo has been honoured with the following awards among others:

- *Honorary Doctorate Degree for Human Development* by Muskegon, University, Indianapolis
- *Ambassador for Peace (AMBPP) for Arbitration and Peace Advocacy* by the United Nations UN-POLAC, USA
- *Award of Excellence in Women's Development* by Pan-African Women Project, South Africa
- *Award of Excellence in Women Development* by All African Women International, Lagos

- *Excellence Award for Expertise in Catering and Humanitarian Services* by Lutheran Church Nigeria Headquarters, Obot Idim Ibesikpo
- *Award of Excellence in Humanitarian Services* by the Goodnews Community International, Abak.

Community Development Services

This great woman has distinguished herself in different areas of service within and outside Akwa Ibom. She served on the Board of Manilla Insurance Company, Calabar, which was a foremost financial institution in the former Cross River State as well as worked as the Home Economics Demonstrator in the Ministry of Agriculture in the then Ikot Ekpene Division. However, it is among women that she has made indelible imprint in her service to humankind. Princess Atakpo served the National Council of Women's Societies in the Akwa Ibom State in many strategic capacities. She has been a Chapter Secretary, Chapter Vice-President, State Vice-President and State President. At the national level, she is also a member of the National Executive of National Council of Women's Societies. This icon is also a member of the Virtuous Women Services Foundation (VWSF), a project which has carried out various life-transforming programmes within and outside Akwa Ibom.

Significant Achievements

Princess (Dr.) Helen Atakpo has distinguished herself with the following achievements:

- As a Pathfinder, she has succeeded in pioneering and creating awareness in professional catering in Akwa Ibom and beyond.

- As a professional, she has succeeded in producing efficient and qualified catering service personnel in the hospitality industry in Nigeria.
- As a human resource developer, she has contributed to meeting the manpower needs of the Akwa Ibom State and Nigerian governments through the training of young men and women in the catering profession.
- Between 1975 and 2014, Princess Helen Atakpo has touched the lives of over 5,000 youths (male and female) through short and long term training in catering and hotel management skills acquisition, fashion designing and computer operating skills. All of whom are either gainfully employed in various establishments or are self-employed throughout Nigeria.

Source of Inspiration and Role Models

Princess (Dr.) Helen Atakpo derived much of her inspiration from her parents and through her personal determination to overcome the challenges she has experienced in life, her educational background notwithstanding. She believes in legitimate hard work and trust in God, persuaded that He can use her to positively impact on the lives of others to the glory of His name.

First, her parents, especially her mother's views, aspirations, patience, skills and practical approach to life have influenced her a great deal. Her sister, Mrs. Eka M. Obong, her Principal, Lady Adun Olaniwu Ajayi, Nigeria Hotel of Catering School, Lagos, of blessed memory; Her Excellency, Obonganwan Nne Clement Isong; Apostle Dr. Edu Elijah Mboho; Evang. (Prof.) Comfort Memfin Ekpo, the Vice-Chancellor, University of Uyo are among those who have served as her role models. Their humility, perseverance, hard work

and love for human resource development have encouraged her to go on.

Professional and Other Affiliations

Princess (Dr.) Helen Atakpo is a member of different associations, including:

Virtuous Women Services Foundation (VWSF); National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS); Esop Mbong Iban Akwa Ibom State; Nka Ima Women's Association; Nka Unwam Women's Association (among others).

Philosophy of Life

Princess Helen Atakpo believes that she can do all things through Christ who strengthens her. She believes, like her mother, in the dignity of womanhood. She has a deep passion for human resource development considering that every human being in her right mind has the potential to live a fulfilled life if properly groomed. Driven by this belief, she has trained the high and the low, recording tremendous results.

What to Be Remembered For?

As a pathfinder in professional catering in Akwa Ibom State, Princess Helen Atakpo is convinced that she has played a vital role in the field and in raising catering awareness in Nigeria. She firmly believes that her contribution has gone a long way in erasing the stigmatization and unsavoury impression earlier held about women working in the hospitality industry, especially the hotels. Through her work, women lacking formal education but trained in the catering profession are happy to find relevance in the society, managing their lives independently. She has contributed to the development of others through job creation and poverty reduction.

Advice

From her personal experience, Princess Helen Atakpo observes that many women who would have climbed to top positions in life in gainful professions have fallen short. They are not encouraged by fellow women who are in the positions where they can render the necessary assistance and encouragement to stay on in business. Rather, women conspire to phase out one another's business. Princess Helen Atakpo is of the opinion that women should review their mind set and help fellow women to come out of the shame and reproach that characterize the daily experience of many.

Also, lack of formal educational qualifications should not be a barrier to the development of women. Their refusal to exploit other aspects of their endowments for their own growth cannot keep hunger and hardship away. Women must work hard to acquire relevant skills, using these to climb up the socio-economic ladder. That way, women can be relevant and lead honourable lives. It is her conviction that service to God through humanitarian services and the fear of God who is watching all are the things that really matter in life. They are avenues through which all women everywhere may escape scorn, shame and reproach.

Senator Mrs Helen Esuene (Nee Udo)

Helen Udoakaha Esuene was born on the 23rd of November, 1949 to Mr. & Mrs. Udo of Ifa Atai in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. In the course of time, Helen met and married Brigadier General Udoakaha Jacob Esuene, a one-time Military Governor of Cross River State.



Education

She attended Cornelia Cornelly College, Afaha Oku, Uyo and graduated in 1965 with the West African School Certificate. She then proceeded in 1966 to be trained in secretarial studies at the Federal Training Centre, Kaduna, and in 2005 she studied for and obtained a Masters degree in Finance from the University of Leicester. She worked as a civil servant for 17 years before voluntarily retiring from service.

Positions of Responsibility

A natural leader, Helen Esuene has since been appointed and elected into offices within and outside Akwa Ibom State. At one time or the other she has served as:

State Organizing Secretary, Better Life for Rural Women Programme; Chairman of the Board of Akwa Ibom State Commission for Women; Member, Board of Directors, Uforo Community Bank; Member, Board of Directors, Champion Breweries; Member, Board of Directors, Plasto-Crown, Nigeria

Limited; Member, Political Reform Conference; Minister of State for Health; Honourable Minister of Environment; First ever Minister of Environment, Housing and Urban Development; Chairman, African Ministers Conference on Environment (Ad-hoc); Member, National Universities Commission (NUC) April; Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2011; Member, Board of Governors, Mobil Pegasus School; President, Rotary Club of Eket; Vice President, International Christian Chamber of Commerce, Uyo; Facilitator, 11 – 15 Boys and Girls National Soccer Tournament from 2001 to 2007; and Founder and Facilitator of Esuene Foundation.

Contributions to Hospitality, Tourism and Development in Nigeria

Helen Esuene has empowered over one thousand women and youths of Akwa Ibom State. She has provided succour to the motherless and widows, and scholarship awards for over 100 students in tertiary institutions from 1997 to date. She is the largest single provider of employment in Akwa Ibom State (2013) South Senatorial District, with a total employment capacity of over 300 staff, cutting across not only the Senatorial District, but also the State and the nation.

Mrs Esuene is the Chief Executive Officer of Villa Marina Limited, the largest hospitality centre in the South Senatorial District and CEO of Grafen Integrated Oilfield Service Limited, also a hospitality as well as an oil and gas related technical service. She has boosted the tourism potentials of Akwa Ibom State, and through her, tourism drive continues to develop and generate sustainable income and employment for the people of Akwa Ibom and Nigerians by extension. She intends to continue to develop tourism by striving to conserve and

commercialize sites where colonial legacies and monuments exist as her contribution to the sustained growth of the sector. She has encouraged private investment by her peers in world class hotel and hospitality businesses, setting the pace when she established the Villa Marina in 2000.

Selected Distinctions and Awards

Senator Esuene has in her profile distinguishing awards and recognitions. They include:

Best Club President in Rotary District?; Significant Achievement Award for Outstanding Community Service by Rotary International; *Excellence Award for Human and Industrial Development* by Women in Nigeria; *Special Recognition* by Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria; *Distinguished Achievement Award* by UNESCO; *Best Youth Sports Organizer* by National Association of Primary Schools Games and Sports Teachers; *Distinguished Honour Award* by Nigerian Red Cross Society; *Special Recognition and Award of Honour* by Aso Villa Chapel; *Paul Harris Fellow (Two Star)* by Rotary International.

The Future

Mrs Esuene longs to see an Akwa Ibom State and a Nigerian nation that will some day speak with one voice, and where peace will reign in the hearts of its people, irrespective of ethnic affiliation; a State where brilliant youths will no longer settle for menial jobs in other climes. She desires to make Akwa Ibom State a hub and tourism destination in West Africa ushering in an era of economic prosperity and abundance.

UMANA GINIGEME NNOCHIRI (NEE EKPE)

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Umana Ginigeme Nnochiri (née Umana Ekpe) was born to Chief A. J. Ekpe of Ikwa in Ikot Abasi Local Government Area and Mrs. Ekpo-Akpan Ekpe (née Ekpo Assam Nsudoh) of Ede Urua in Eket Local Government Area, both in Akwa Ibom State.



Education

Umana attended Immaculate Conception Secondary School, Itak and proceeded to the then University of Cross River State (now University of Uyo) where she studied Fine and Industrial Arts, specializing in Textiles. She later studied in the University of Uyo for the Master of Arts degree in Art Education (Textiles) graduating in 2011.

Umana is currently a lecturer in the Department of Visual Arts and Technology of the Cross River University of Technology, Calabar. She practices Arts and produces fabrics with indigenous designs, fashioning them into functional items and handy souvenir items for tourists. She has trained over

two hundred women and youths in the art of fabric production, decoration and fashion.

Contributions to The Tourism Industry

Mrs. Umana Nnochiri has been actively involved in the production of carnival costumes for Calabar Carnival since 2005, as well as for the Abuja Carnival and the Rivers State Carnival, CARNIRIV. She has consulted for the Cross River State Government on and the Cross River State Carnival Commission on carnival issues and is the Chief Costumier for the six-time champions of Carnival Calabar: the Passion 4 band. Umana has been a carnival costume facilitator and has trained *at least one hundred youths* in the skills of carnival costumes and accessories production. She has been involved in community development and skills acquisition projects in Nigeria, Ghana and the United States of America.

Awards

Umana is a member of national and international associations, among which are Society of Nigerian Artists, Female Artists Association of Nigeria, African Studies Association and the Arts Council of the African Studies Association.

The Future

Umana Nnochiri envisions a state and nation whose youths are trained, skilled, competent and confident. She believes that this is one way out of the challenges of unemployment and rising crime, resulting ultimately in empowerment and economic stability.

Umana is currently studying for a Ph.D in textile and fashion design at the University of Port Harcourt.

Bassey Osusanya (Nee Andem)

Family Background

Miss Bassey Andem now Mrs. Bassey Osusanya originally comes from Ndon Ebom in Uruan Local Government Area and is by marriage from Magbon, Abeokuta, Ogun State



Bassey's father, Mr Edet Andem, a qualified paediatric nurse, was a member of the Nigerian medical team that was despatched to serve in Burma during World War II, while her mother Regina, a multi-talented and industrious woman with a modern secondary school education, supported the growing family by cooking, sewing, baking and teaching. Mrs Osusanya had seven siblings: four male and three female.

Education

Young Bassey attended three primary schools following her father's transfer from station to station: St Andrews Primary

School Offa, (1959); Bosso Road Primary School, Minna (1961 - 1962) and Ideal Girls Secondary School, Lagos (1963 - 1966), before proceeding to complete her secondary education in the war-torn south-eastern section of the country. She attended; Methodist Girls' Secondary School, Utu Ikpe (1967); Mary Hanney Secondary School, Oron (1968) and St Theresa's Secondary School, Edem Ekpat (1969 to 1972) where she obtained her West African School Certificate.

After securing her 'O' Level, papers, Basseyy Andem left the shores of Nigeria to further her education in the Higher Institute for Theatrical Studies, Sofia, Bulgaria from 1975 to 1976. She obtained a Diploma in Theatrical Arts during this period, and returned there in 1983 for postgraduate studies. This she successfully completed in 1988 when she obtained her Masters in Puppetry.

Basseyy Andem held a number of positions of responsibility while in school. As the Discipline Prefect it was her duty to check lateness, loitering and other undesirable habits among her peers by writing names of defaulters and submitting the list to the Principal for disciplinary action. Naturally, this position earned her a reputation and a great deal of respect. In drama, it is on record that for three consecutive years until she left secondary school (1970 to 1972), Miss Andem remained unbeaten as the best actress in her secondary school. And in sports, Basseyy specialized in field events where she excelled, breaking the record in discus during the Southeastern State Athletics Competition in 1971.

Career

After her qualification, Mrs Osusanya has held several positions of responsibility serving as Senior Artist in the Cultural Centre, Calabar (1973-1978); Senior Producer with the Nigeria Television Authority (1978-1991); Guest Lecturer in

the University of Calabar (1991 - 1993) and Full Time Lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Media Studies, University of Calabar since 2006.

Distinctions, Awards, Recognitions and Prizes

Mrs Osusanya has been the recipient of a number of awards. Among them are: Award of Excellence (by Catholic Women's Organization); Mother Africa Award (by Catholic Archdiocese of Calabar); Merit Award for Cultural Activities (by the Higher Institute for Theatrical Studies, Bulgaria); African Living Legend Award (by Royal International Magazine) and the Honoured Mother Award (by AME Zion Church).

Community Service

As a Deaconess of the Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Mrs Osusanya has been a flag bearer for the church women in Houston (2007) and Florida (2011) at conferences for overseas women members. As a practical demonstration of her faith, Mrs Osusanya regularly and consistently reaches out to prison inmates and the underprivileged.

Mrs. Bassey Osusanya was a member of the team that successfully negotiated and secured the release of Akwa Ibom State indigenes from Camerounian gendarmes in 1982, ensuring television coverage of the persons and procedures, since there was no other source of media documentation available at the Cameroun end at the time.

Contribution to Tourism

A member of the Fashion Designers Association, Calabar Chapter, and a total Nigerian, Mrs Osusanya played an active role both in the background and in the full glare of cameras during the first ever Christmas Carnival in Calabar held in

2005. Even now that the event has metamorphosed into Carnival Calabar, also known as “the biggest street party in Africa”, Bassey Osusanya continues to contribute her quota of creative Ingenuity, adding colour to this major income-generating tourism event of global proportion.

Sources of Inspiration

Mrs Osusanya’s greatest inspiration has come from watching her mother work and from thriving in the enabling psychological environment provided by her father, who tended to give his female children special attention and care.

In addition to her loving parents, Mrs Osusanya has adopted role models, mentors, motivators and influential others along her life’s journey: Miriam Makeba; Chief Davies; Mrs Onari Duke; Mother Therese; Elder Chief Mrs Eme Nwakamna Okoro and Sister Anne Mary. She would like to be remembered for her kindness to fellow human beings.

The Future

It is worthy of note that Mrs Osusanya remains the first ever female to be installed as a Chief among her Uruan people of Ndon Ebom. She is currently working on projects to empower Nigerian women through the acquisition of education and relevant skills. In this way, she hopes to contribute her efforts towards curbing prostitution and other social vices that degrade women and men.

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