

**THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN ENSURING
THE SUCCESS OF THE TRANSFORMING PROJECT
IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

BY

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PROTOCOL

Preamble

Let me start this presentation by thanking the organizers of this event for giving me the opportunity to be the guest lecturer on a topic as interesting as this. I do not know exactly what the organizers expect from me concerning this topic, but since I have been told that I am free to explore and analyze, I hereby plead that they should not feel disappointed if the line of discussion I have decided to tow does not entirely fit into their expectation. Nevertheless, this topic will enable me to express my appreciation of the Government for what has been described as **uncommon transformation** in Akwa Ibom State. In the process of this lecture, we will also assess the content of this transformation, commend the benefits, identify the shortcomings, and suggest how this transformation could be further boosted for stability and sustainability. As you are all aware, I am not a politician; I am an academician, thus although this topic is eminently political, I will treat it at an academic issue unless where being political is unavoidable.

The Concept of Transformation

Transformation can be defined as superlative and momentous change, usually positive, from one level of existence and operation, considered to be lower and less desirable, to another level considered higher and more

desirable. Transformation could be positive or negative depending on how it affects the lives and welfare of the citizens. A positive transformation is one which benefits the citizens; one which raises the standard of living of the citizens and enables them to attain their full potentials. Positive transformation creates a link between citizens' expectations and government's performance. Every aspect of human life and every sector of the society is amenable to transformation; moving from one stage to another.

In a very simple term therefore, transformation means development. However, it connotes a particular kind of development; one that is rapid and very clearly noticeable. I do not want to engage in the polemics of development in this lecture, but suffice it to put it in our context as **rapid positive transformation**. In this regard, we agree with Paul Baran (1957) that development is a far-reaching transformation of society's economic, social and political structure of the dominant organization of production, distribution and consumption. Development has also been severally regarded as a process in which a system or institution is transformed into stronger, more organized, more efficient and more effective form and proves to be more satisfying in terms of human wants and aspirations. It has also been argued that development should be distinguished from progress as development is subject to measurement on empirical scale, whereas, progress is concerned with moral judgment for which it applies normative criterion.

However, there is a special type of development which underlies the struggle for development in the entire developing world (Africa, Asian and Latin American countries). This is modernization, that is to say, development is conceived by several scholars and theorists in terms of modernization. Modernization here is taken by most of its theorists to mean Westernization. A renowned scholar of social sciences, Eisenstadt (1966) for instance argues that modernization, in its historical sense is the process of change towards those types of social, economic and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and then have spread to other European countries and in nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the South American, Asian and African countries. In its content modernization entails rapid social and economic transformation of the society based on increasing application of science and technology in the processes of production and in solving problems emanating from the physical environment. Hence, modernization theorists see development from Western perspective in which the Third World countries aspiring for development must do away with their irrational traditional cultures and imbibe Western ways of economic production and socio-political organization.

This perspective of development, to say the least has been subjected to severe criticisms by Third World and even American and European

scholars. In the first place, the approach is Euro-centric and wants African countries to be transformed into Euro-American models. Secondly, it takes no consideration of the momentous social dislocation that would be generated in the process of dismantling the traditional societies to create modern ones. It does not also consider the economic and social cost entailed in such transformation and the capacity of the countries to bear them. We do not need to be transformed into Europeans or Americans before being adjudged to be developed. Nevertheless, we cannot talk about development or transformation in the modern context without reference to putting economic, social and political structures in place, of which models are derived from Europe and America directly or indirectly. Our political leaders regularly visit Europe and America and they see roads, bridges, factories, airports and so on, which they try to build when they come back. Thus, to a large extent those theorists that see development as modernization and modernization as westernization have a strong point too. However, this will not solve the problem of development, which as we know must meet the needs of the people. It is possible to replicate in Nigeria some European models of houses, roads, airports, recreational facilities and so on, but the questions we need to ask ourselves are: "what percentage of the population will use these facilities? Have the mentality and orientations of the people been changed to enable positive utilization of the facilities? Indeed, are we changing the mentality or behaviour of the Nigerians to become Europeanized, or are we adapting the European structures and

infrastructures to the Nigerian society? These are some of the questions we need to ask ourselves as we seek to transform our local societies to meet “international standards”. There is yet another model of development, which I think is very germane to this lecture, but I want to reserve it for my conclusion.

Ladies and gentlemen please permit me to end this section of the discourse by presenting what a renowned scholar, Ulf Himmestrand noted as the six criteria of development. These will provide us with the yardstick for assessment and opportunity to evaluate, realistically the pattern and content of our transformation programme. These are:

- ✚ The capacity of a given society, increasingly, to use its own resources of land, minerals, and manpower to feed its own people – even in a situation of population growth,
- ✚ Increasing capacity to produce or make available to farmers/peasants the basic tools needed in food production or capacity to import food where there is lack of arable land,
- ✚ Acceptable rules and regulations governing relationships between the main actors involved in economic or other important social activities accepted by the majority as legally and/morally binding,
- ✚ Creating indigenous entrepreneurs and labour to generate development. The existence of labour, and of indigenous entrepreneurial and innovative activities to manage labour, and

to manage other products as well, is a necessary element in defining the very process of development,

- ✚ A development of export/import relationships but with a reasonable balanced transaction of this trade so as to avoid too much of an unequal exchange, and
- ✚ The growth of a considerable measure of autonomous, self-rule and democracy is required in a given national or other political unit in order for it to qualify as clearly developing or developed. For instance, a country that is a colony and does not control its policies cannot be said to be developing or developed; so also a country that depends overwhelmingly on donor countries.

I want to say that I support these conditions as the basis of development. These are the things that should be transformed to make them more modern and effective in meeting the needs of the people.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have taken you through a lengthy discussion of the theories and perspectives of transformation whether as development or modernization, not necessarily because I am an academic, but because I want you to see and know the components of development so that you can appreciate and assess properly the rapid transformation we are witnessing in Akwa Ibom State. So let us now move to the issue of transformation in Akwa Ibom State.

Transformation of Akwa Ibom State

Transforming Akwa Ibom State is a necessity because of its present state of development. Which is quite low in many sectors. Akwa Ibom ranks one of the lowest in terms of indigenous productive and manufacturing capacity. Even basic items such as tissue paper and candle are produced outside Akwa Ibom State. When people need to celebrate one thing or other or organize big events that require large purchases of items, they go outside Akwa Ibom State to buy. This contributes to the underdevelopment of the state through capital flight. Where we do not go outside the state, the needed items are brought in by non-indigenes.

Apart from Uyo, which by United Nations standard, is about the only urban centre in the State, the rest of the state is either rural or semi-urban. Urbanization is not defined by the size of the city alone but also by the quantity and quality of infrastructures. Facilities in other towns and villages are rudimentary and underdeveloped. School buildings had become old and dilapidated with grossly inadequate learning facilities. The same goes for hospitals: unmaintained buildings, broken down and unreplaced facilities, in addition to insufficient manpower and scarcity of drugs. Communication had become a problem as built-up roads were either broken down or non-existent. The environment and physical appearance of the state, even the state capital, Uyo still retained that picture of the old local government headquarters. There were few imposing public buildings and other such monuments. In addition, the

roads were old, broken with potholes, and with narrow junctions that caused traffic hold-ups unnecessarily. Generally, the physical attentiveness of Uyo and the environs was quite low.

What all these mean is that in reality Uyo in particular and Akwa Ibom in general needed transformation, which, by the grace of God, has started coming momentarily. In the process of this transformation, existing roads are expanded; new ones are built both within Uyo city and the linkages with other towns and villages in the state. These roads are constructed according to international standards with all facilities for both functionality and aesthetics. Thus, the roads are beautifully paved and designed with the various traffic designated colours and styles. In addition, there are over head bridges and flyovers, which apart from making for smooth flow of traffic, add enormous beauty to the state capital.

The transformation has also brought an international airport to Akwa Ibom State. Right now, this airport handles air transportation of people and cargo domestically and internationally. Apart from this, when fully operational this airport will serve as maintenance and servicing centre for airlines in many parts of Africa. Thus, visitors from outside Nigeria coming to Akwa Ibom State will not encounter difficulties associated with connecting the state from either Calabar or Port Harcourt. Besides the airport, other facilities have been created to boost tourism in Akwa Ibom

State. For instance, there is the Le Meridian Resort – a Five Star hotel of international standard with a standard golf course and other recreational facilities. There is the Tropicana created for a variety of activities for entertainment and relaxation. In the educational sector, many dilapidated school buildings have been renovated, while new classroom blocks have been constructed for primary and secondary schools. In addition, the state runs a free and compulsory education programme covering primary and secondary schools. At the University level, the government gives substantial amount of money to students as scholarships and bursaries. Also, much money has been put into the establishment of the Akwa Ibom State University, which had since taken off.

Problems Associated with Development in Akwa Ibom State And Nigeria in General

We have noticed the impressive strides in the transformation of Akwa Ibom State by the present government in power. We must understand that in Akwa Ibom State, like every other developing society, all aspects of development are in crisis; that is, nothing is yet sufficient, while every sector still requires so much to be done. Hence, it will not be possible for any government to tackle all the problems of development in just a few years. This is why we should appreciate the efforts of the Governor Godswill Akpabio's administration in doing so much within such a short time. Nevertheless, there are areas that have not been attended to, yet

they require urgent attention; there are issues that have not been properly prioritized; there are programmes that are implemented as political programmes when they should have been taken as social welfare programmes. Besides, there are cases in which the pattern of implementation appears to be killing the lofty policy of the administration.

The first area of transformation that requires urgent attention is **human development**. The attention of government so far is overwhelmingly on infrastructural and material transformation, human development which borders on capacity building does not seem to receive much attention. For instance, in the Free Education programme, many schools have been built, old ones have been renovated, learning equipment have been purchased albeit insufficient, but the teacher that will give the instructions has remained where he/she was. There are no new incentives to motivate the teachers towards increased productivity. There are no systematic structures to develop the teachers as facilitators of learning. When a training programme is introduced into the system, there is no driving force for its sustainability. Few years ago, I introduced teacher development programme tagged, "Read and Write Now", a fast track reading strategy for the training of pupils in primary schools. The project became a political tool. I am referring to the Jolly Phonics Project which many states are glamouring for but we do not pay much attention to.

Teachers lack new training to update their knowledge or even an orientation programme to make them imbibe the new philosophy.

Similarly, we erred in not developing enough manpower for effective take off of our higher institutions designed to train engineers and technologists. Manpower development for growing state is not a political tool, it is a need. A significant aspect of human capacity building lies in the fact that the world has gone extremely technological. Modern technology is required in the performance of every sector in modern society. Hence, effort should be made to give training in modern technology to Akwa Ibom people. The facilities established by the government require expertise bordering on modern technology to run. We should build our local manpower for the running, maintenance and replacing of these facilities. If we do not do this our economy and industries will be controlled by outsiders, which will generate political problems such as domination and marginalization in the future.

It is one thing to build facilities and infrastructures, and quite another thing to keep them functional over time through proper maintenance. This takes us into another serious problem of development in Nigeria: absence of **maintenance culture**. Our roads, airport, Tropicana, Five Star Hotel and other facilities will deteriorate and fall into abeyance after sometime if not properly maintained. Maintenance should form part of the daily running of these facilities. Maintenance should not only be thought of when the facilities breakdown. The modern approach to this issue is preventive maintenance. One effective way of ensuring proper

maintenance is therefore, to train our local people to reduce the cost of bringing expatriates. Maintenance of facilities that is dependent on foreign experts will be too costly to retain after sometime.

When facilities are established, their proper usage by the people should not be taken for granted. That is, it should not be assumed that everyone will automatically know the proper way to use these facilities. Proper and sustained orientation on their usage should be carried out. One major factor that causes the malfunctioning of facilities is improper usage. There should be a deliberate effort to train the minds of those that will use the facilities.

Transformation should also move into the wide socio-political arena of the State. Chief among this is the transformation of Akwa Ibom from a civil service State to an entrepreneurial and productive State. This should be treated as a priority with heavy governmental and political involvement. Akwa Ibom should deliberately create a cadre of industrialists, entrepreneurs, producers and manufacturers. In short, government should be involved in the building of the private sector. Currently, the idea is that if one empowers the local people either through contracts or loans and grants, they could then invest in various types of businesses. That orientation should be modified; grants or awards should be directly tied to a specific type of venture. Ensuring that the beneficiaries would get into the specified ventures should be the basic condition for the

awards. Of course, other condition of award should be included to make the beneficiary serious. There is, of course a powerful move by the government in this direction with the first ever Akwa Ibom Entrepreneurs forum just concluded. Let us create investors; empower people to begin strengthening the economy of the state. For instance, the government can acquire land between Uyo – Ikot Ekpene – Abak axis to build an ultra modern market and empower indigenous Akwa Ibom businessmen to build ware houses and import goods directly to this market in order to curtail capital flight from the state. Agro and petrochemical industries could also be set up at various strategic locations in the state. If pipe borne water and electricity are equitably distributed across the state small and medium scale investors will emerge.

The Role of the Stakeholders

Stake means having a share or interest in something jointly owned, or in something affecting many. Thus, within the context of transformation in Akwa Ibom State, the stakeholders are those who stand to benefit from the product of the transformation. Who are those to gain if the transformation project succeeds, and who are those to lose if it fails? Stakeholders are trustees, guarantors, promoters and beneficiaries of an enterprise or a venture. So, who are truly the stakeholders of the Akwa Ibom Transformation project? The answer is; every person residing in Akwa Ibom State, individually and collectively. That is every citizen and resident of Akwa Ibom State as an individual or as member of one

organization or another is a stakeholder; he/she has the responsibility to promote, project and defend the transformation project. Perhaps few simplified illustrations will explain what I mean here.

First, Mr. Effiong for instance, is a taxi driver as an individual and member of the Nigerian Union of Road Transport Workers as an organization. He can key into the transformation project by helping to keep the beautiful roads clean. A passenger eating banana in his taxi and throwing the peel outside the window is unacceptable. The driver must not only warn passengers against such acts but should also provide waste disposal baskets in his taxi. This can be a policy of the NURTW which will make them functional stakeholders of the transformation project. Eka Nkoyo who sells vegetable by the roadside should properly dispose her rotten goods at the end of the day's business. Another illustration; Mr. Johnson is a new landlord who needs to connect water from the other side of a beautifully constructed road to his house on this side of the road. The previous practice had been to cut across the road and lay the pipes. This was a destructive practice that nobody cared to prevent over the years; from the excavated spots, the roads will begin to break. To support the transformation project such landlords would have to use the horizontal drilling techniques to pass the pipe across the road rather than cut across it on the surface. Thirdly, Otuekong Obuma is a contractor that has been given a contract to renovate a dilapidated hospital. He must key into the transformation project by using good quality materials to execute the job.

Hon. Peter is a politician that belongs to the opposition party, this notwithstanding, he is still a stakeholder. Hence, his responsibility will be to analyze and criticize government policies objectively to bring out the best for the people, not just criticism to rubbish the government in order to make it unpopular. Chief Jumbo is a chief executive; his policies and programmes must be based on the long and short term interest of the people, not on personal economic and political aggrandizement. Aluminum pipes and bars used to support and beautify our roads, bridges and flyovers should not be vandalized by our welders, mechanics and other artisans. Bulbs and wires used in the street lightings should not be removed for sale.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can go and on with various illustrations, but we will only arrive at the same destination that every Akwa Ibomite is a stakeholder in the ongoing transformation project and therefore has the responsibility to promote and protect it.

Conclusions

When I was discussing the various models and theories of development, I had reserved one model for my conclusion. That model is known as **sustainable development**. It is the model of development which means two things. First, it means that development is people centred. That is, development must be based on the need to improve the welfare and living standards of the people. Secondly, development in one generation

should not deprive future generation of the resources to generate their own development and wealth. This is the model of development Akwa Ibom transformation should take. In initiating development projects the benefits derivable by the people should be the primary consideration. White elephant projects to score political points and self aggrandizement by the leaders should be avoided because they will lead to wastages that will not be of benefit to the people and will also deprive future generation of the resources they would have used for their own development. On the other hand, with all Akwa Ibomites as stakeholders, we all have a duty to guide the government properly through public opinion, and we also have the responsibility to protect and preserve whatever development projects that have been established for the Akwa Ibomites. At the end of the day, these projects do not belong to a man called, GOVERNMENT, they belong to Akwa Ibom people. Remember the popular saying; "government comes, government goes, but the people remain".

Dear ladies and gentlemen, I must thank you for listening to me. I wish you all God's blessing.

Thank you.

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