

AKPABIO: DOING GOD'S WILL IN GOD'S STATE

(CITATION OF HIS EXCELLENCY, CHIEF GODSWILL OBOT AKPABIO, EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF AKWA IBOM STATE.)

According to William Shakespeare, *“There is a tide in the affairs of men Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life Is bound in shallows and in miseries.”* When the good people of Akwa Ibom State, elected Chief Godswill Obot Akpabio as their governor, two years ago, they took the tide at the flood and this has led onto fortune for the entire state. He has become a metaphor for administrative excellence and people-centred leadership.

PERSONAL DETAILS

The son of Chief Obot Akpabio and Madam Lucy Obot Akpabio (nee Inyang Eto) of Ukana Ikot Ntuen in Essien Udim Local Government Area, His Excellency Chief Godswill Akpabio was born on December 9, 1962. Having lost his father early in life, he was raised by his mother, who painstakingly inculcated in him the value of hard work, discipline and honesty.

He had his primary education at Methodist Primary School, Ukana. And his secondary education at the prestigious Federal Government College, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, where he obtained his West African Senior Certificate Examination/General Certificate of Education at Ordinary and Advanced Levels. Afterwards, he proceeded to the University of Calabar, where he obtained a Degree in Law. And after completing his studies at the Nigerian Law School, he was called to the Nigerian bar.

A MIRROR ON A LIFE OF SERVICE

Destiny prepared His Excellency, Chief Godswill Akpabio, for leadership from early childhood. At Federal Government College, Port Harcourt, a

microcosm of the Nigerian society with students from all over Nigeria, he was appointed the General Senior Prefect. And later in the University of Calabar, (a federal university with a true federal character in its student population) his charisma endeared him to the students and he was elected the Speaker of the Students' Parliament.

He also had a brief stint as a teacher and as an associate partner with Paul Usoro and Co., a leading law firm in the Country. His stint as a teacher exposed him to the educational crises in our society and his legal practice gave him insight into the needs of justice administration in Nigeria.

He would in 2002, become the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of EMIS Telecoms Limited, a leading privately-owned fixed wireless company in Lagos. In this position, he helped in developing the current crop of management in the telecom industry. His genius was recognized even before he became the MD of EMIS and he was elected the National Publicity Secretary of the Association of Telecom Companies in Nigeria, (ATCOM), while he was still the Company Secretary of EMIS Telecoms.

THE CALL OF SERVICE

In 2002 His Excellency was appointed the Commissioner for Petroleum and Natural Resources. He left his stamp of efficiency in this ministry as an astute administrator and was subsequently re-assigned commissionership duties in key ministries like the Ministry of Local Government & Chieftaincy Affairs and the Ministry of Lands and Housing.

As a Commissioner in the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, he was responsible for the supervision of the 31 Local Government Councils and traditional institutions. His immense conflict

management skills came to the fore and he commanded the respect of local government administrators and traditional rulers for always standing on the side of truth.

As a commissioner, His Excellency Chief Akpabio related with people based on their character and not where they come from. Completely detribalized, he is imbued with a passion for excellence and driven by a sense of mission and purpose. All these attributes, his charisma and his many virtues put him in a pole position in the governorship election of 2007, and led to his landslide victory in the April 14, 2007 Governorship election.

MILESTONES OF GOVERNANCE

The ancient Italians had a proverb “that the right man comes at the right season.” Akwa Ibom is endowed with tremendous natural and human resources and needed the right man to come and fulfil the promises which define the state as the “Land of Promise” and, thereby, give a sense of fulfilment to the people. His Excellency Chief Godswill Akpabio came at the right season.

Within two years of the most eventful administration in the state’s history, the entire state has become one big construction site. In his first year in office, he commissioned over 250 projects, and has currently commissioned over 1400 projects. Over 480 villages have benefited from electrification projects and been linked to the national grid.

One of the most revolutionary steps of this youthful governor is his intervention and development of Federal infrastructures. So far his administration has spent over N80 billion on the tarring/rehabilitation of Federal Roads (including roads in the University of Uyo, a federal institution and the premises of the Nigerian Television Authority, Uyo).

Through his administration's financial assistance, the University of Uyo had over 28 of its courses accredited by the National Universities Commission. The administration is currently building a paediatric centre along with a children room and nurses' bay at the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital.

Arrangements have been concluded for academic activities to commence in the State-owned University of Technology. The university will offer courses designed to meet the needs of a developing country like Nigeria, including courses not currently offered in any Nigerian university in the areas of ocean science and technology.

Perhaps, the most widely-acclaimed and celebrated policy of this young man is his free, compulsory and qualitative education program from primary to senior secondary school. The policy seeks to exterminate all kinds of fees by the payment of subvention to secondary school principals at the rate of N300 per student per term and to primary school headmasters at N100 per pupil per term. This will cost over N7 billion annually, but he believes that no price is too high to pay for posterity. His determination to fight militancy with education is instructive.

Time will fail us to mention all that this man has done for Nigeria's 21st state. Suffice it to say that the road network in Akwa Ibom State has received complete transformation under his leadership - currently 168 urban roads are under construction. In the same vein, an international airport with maintenance facilities will hopefully commence operations this year. A one-stop hospitality complex, the Tropicana Entertainment Centre, one of its kind in our continent, with a mini-Disney, galleria, shopping mall, international convention centre, 16 storey five-star hotel complex and a cinema hall among others is being constructed in Uyo.

His administration is also building a digitalized modern library and four new general hospitals. The Independent Power Plant (IPP) at Ikot Abasi (a project initiated by the past administration) has reached over 100 percent completion level of the first phase of the project, courtesy of his administrative prowess. It is designed to provide the state and other neighbouring states with uninterrupted electric power.

In a word, no sector of the economy has escaped his government's patriotic attention. But the constraints of time limit us to these few.

ACCOLADES, AWARDS AND HONOURS

Chief Akpabio has countless feathers to his cap. He is the recipient of over 30 chieftaincy titles from all over Nigeria. These include the **Uko Akwa Ibom** (awarded to him by the Akwa Ibom State Council of Chiefs), **Utuenikang Ibibio, Iberedem Ibibio, Nta Nta Offiong Annang, Atta of Eket** and the **Nta Nta Oro**, to mention a few.

Like a city set on a hill, his genius and patriotism has received acknowledgement from far and near. He holds the highest national honor of the Republic of Niger, "**Gold Humanitarian Services Award**," which was personally conferred on him by Niger Republic's Ambassador to Nigeria, His Excellency, Alhaji Moussa Ibrahim. The ambassador also informed him of the acknowledgement of his development strides by the Forum of Ambassadors in Nigeria.

He has been awarded the Doctor of Public Administration (Honoraris Causa) of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; the Doctor of Law (Honoraris Causa) of the University of Uyo; Fellowship by several institutions of learning and professional bodies; Man of the Year 2009 by Daily Independent Newspapers; an Emerging Tiger by ThisDay Newspapers. He has also been honoured by the National Daily with the award of "**2008 Most Outstanding Governor in Nigeria (South South)**."

The newspaper said the award was in appreciation of his developmental strides and described the free education program as unprecedented in the region. His Excellency also bagged the “**Nehemiah Award**” of the African Church. The Church described the massive infrastructural development of Akwa Ibom State as “unequaled in the country.” He was earlier honoured as the “**Youth Ambassador of Nigeria**” by the National Youth Council of Nigeria. Other recent awards include: “**Governor of the Year South South,**” City People Magazine; “**Best Governor Infrastructure 2009,**” Encomium Magazine; “**Best Governor South South,**” Encomium Magazine; “**Excellency Recognition Award As Best Governor South South**” Global Excellence Magazine.

Prior to his emergence as Governor, the Africa Independent Television/Raypower FM in the South South Region honoured him with the “**Excellence in Governance Award**” in 2005. These, however, are just a few of his many honors.

FAMILY

A Christian of the Catholic Faith, His Excellency is happily married to the beautiful and amiable Mrs Ekaette Unoma Akpabio and the marriage is blessed with four beautiful daughters and a son. He and his wife share a great passion for the underprivileged and for service to the community.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and gentleman, His Excellency, Governor Godswill Obot Akpabio’s sojourn through life appears to have been pre-ordained and conditioned for leadership and impact. His life is like an emerging radiance and we have only caught a glimpse of his potential. He enjoys the collective confidence of all Akwa Ibom people who believe that his emergence as Governor was the Will of God to use him and manifest His many promises in the Land of Promise.

