

## SIX YEARS IN OFFICE: THE JOURNEY SO FAR

### *... Ministry of Information, Tourism and Public Utilities; Obinna Nshirim*

It is difficult to measure the achievements of Ministry of Information because it is more of a social service, it is not measured in terms of contract awards or infrastructures. I came to improve what was on ground; for example Government Printing Press was not functional before now, but to the glory of God it has been revamped, refurbished and brought back to life. It is back to action, working effectively and efficient. We sank a borehole because there was none when we came into office, all the toilets were dirty and stinking, since we sank a borehole everywhere is now clean, today there is a functional water system.

I furnished the conference room, I can say I have the best Conference Room. As information Commissioner; I have to present a good image of the governor, through strategic enlightenment and Information dissemination.

On Tourism; we have refurbished, renovated and worked hard to upgrade a lot of things in the tourism sector. We have hosted International Hospitality and Tourism related programs. We are not relenting in our effort for total transformation of the sector because tourism calls for regular improvement and it brings development. On Imo carnival, the year 2016 was an improvement on the previous year, Imo carnival is still very young, we just started and we are working round the clock for improvement. What we are doing now is catch up, our carnival is not as old as Calabar Carnival but very soon we shall get there.

On Public Utilities; we concession our water scheme and the concessionaire is doing well, what stopped him was the urban renewal program, once the governor is through with his urban renewal program he will complete what he started, all the damaged pipes will be properly fixed. Still on Public Utilities, Power supply which has assumed epileptic dimension, we have taken strategic steps to liaise with Electricity Distribution Companies. Immediately our NDDC Commissioner is sworn in, he will continue from where we stopped. The estimated meter is what we are currently working on to ensure that Imo people get prepaid meter. We have discussed with them to make sure that our people get the prepaid meter and use power as they want.

As an Information Commissioner; I have gone round and met almost all the media houses in the state; including the faith based newspapers. The essence of my familiarization visit is to seek partnership and support. I urged them to commend us on the areas where we performed very well and constructively criticize us where we got it wrong. On the course of going round to seek partnership of media houses; they told us they were not informed about the progress of government programs. Since the beginning of this regime I am the first Information Commissioner to visit media houses on familiarization tour.

The Ministry has revived the newsletter practice. Also the introduction of SDC is another good thing that has happened to Imo State, it helps to directly carry activities of government to rural areas. SDC has drastically reduced the burden of LGA chairmen.

In the journey so far, rumour mongering is my greatest challenge, as Information Commissioner, I have observed that Imo State is a fertile ground for rumour mongering, it has done more harm than good but we are working round the clock to correct every wrong impression created by rumour peddlers.

***...Ministry of Health, Women Affairs and Social Development; Ngozi Njoku***

After the re-election of Imo State Governor, Owelle Anayo Rochas Okorochoa in 2015 general elections and from the time I came onboard as the Honourable Commissioner for Health, Women Affairs and Social Development, we have pursued the programs and policies of Imo State Governor with passion. We did our best to control Lassa fever. We recorded only one victim and the victim survived it, simply; because of our proactive nature and the maximum support our ministry receives from the governor.

The governor has paid much attention to the health needs of the people for example the establishment of Primary Health Care Development Agency, which is seen as a criteria for receiving funds and other materials from International donor agencies and a platform for collaboration.

In the journey so far; Ministry of Health, Women Affairs and Social Development has made some of the major achievements. For instance; the establishment of Imo Emergency Response Centre. Whenever one is at danger you dial the number 08012... Somebody will respond and come to your rescue. The centre has helped a lot of people in distress. We have a training arm, where people are adequately trained on safety tips, ethics and other significant aspect of emergency response. We want a lot of Imo people to know how to help those in distress. We have established Owerri Eye Centre, it has successfully `carried out many cataract operations.

Our ministry has organized a lot of medical missions and supplied topical drugs to assist those with health challenges. We have given maximum support to many organization that embarked on medical missions in the state. During medical missions; doctors in the ministry have always been assigned to assist in many ways.

Improvements of the Primary Health Care Centers and Health Workers at the Local Government levels were some of the good works the Rescue Mission Governor carried through our ministry, by so doing some of the ugly things of the past are no longer there.

Another major breakthrough is the financial empowerment of ten women from each of the 305 INEC ward through the ministry of Health, Women Affairs and Social Development. In this empowerment exercise, a hundred thousand naira (N100,000) was given to each of them and 3050 women benefited from the exercise by so doing poverty is reduced.

The Ministry has tried to protect the child right. Recently; we swung into action and successfully rescued a 14 year old girl who was forced into marriage.

Imo State Governor, His Excellency Owelle Anayo Rochas Okorochoa is desirous of quality health care system. Some of the 27 brand new General Hospitals he built has been taken over. For example Nigerian Army has taken

over the Obinze General Hospital, Navy has taken over that of Owerri North and Airforce has taken over that of Ngor-Okpala. Ikeduru was also taken over. It is interesting to note that Ikeduru General Hospital is functioning with American Standard. The benefits are enormous as it will help to bring security, create more employment opportunities and boost the economy of our dear state.

What Governor Okorocha has done by constructing 27 brand New General Hospital is to provide enabling environment for growth and development of the health sector. The state now has a lot of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and other health professionals who are interested in the health sector. He has provided support to them to become part of the revolution in the sector, soon Imo State will become the hub of health sector.

Recently; Imo State was nominated to be the hub for the distribution of health commodities, the state will now serve other states in the Southeast region, because there is security, the environment is friendly and we have shown commitment to global funds.

Health-At-Your-Doorstep is one of the first initiatives of the Rescue Mission Administration of His Excellency Owele Anayo Rochas Okorocha. It has made meaningful impact in the lives of many Imo indigenes particularly; the rural dwellers. Sometimes, people become sick because of condition of things, they don't have access to adequate medical attention. With the procurement of ambulance there is emergency response and people are getting the required medical attention they desire and deserved. With the help of Health-At-Your-Doorstep program of Imo State Governor people are now able to access care services and a lot of lives have been saved.

Departments and Agencies under the Ministry of Health, Women Affairs and Social Development, it is exciting to note that under my leadership in the ministry; the Health Management Board which was almost scrapped before I came on board is today bubbling, the level of performance is now very impressive. It is now a parastatal one can boast of and the reason is that we are able to queue into the vision of His Excellency to establish and implement some reports. One of such is the POS mode of payment, we re-orientate some of the people to begin to take their job serious. My inputs have reduced corruption. We have tried to involve communities in the activities of the General Hospitals. A good example is that of Ogwa General Hospital, where the people joined the Hospital Management Board to renovate the Hospital and build Doctors' quarters. Today, as we discuss the achievements of the governor, that place is lively and active. For the people, there is now access to quality health care delivery. Owele has made clarion call for people that want to run their General Hospitals to indicate interest. The call has witnessed a lot of positive responses, people have indicated interest, there are ideals and interactions. People are coming from abroad to be part of what is happening in Imo State health sector.

Today in the health sector, Free Medical Mission has become a phenomenon because we have provided the platform. No time comes without any free medical mission in Imo State, they come with quality drugs and they connect

with whatsoever they need. They also collaborate with our own doctors from the general hospitals and do surgery for our people.

There are eloquent testimonies that so many initiatives of Owelle have yielded fruitful result in the health sector. In addition; we should love our state because is a new Imo and a new Ministry of Health, Women Affairs and Social Development. As a commissioner incharge of this ministry, we have decided not to relent or stop in driving the vision of our amiable governor until total success is achieved.

***...Ministry of Commissioner for Commerce and Industry; Chidi Ibe***

As you all know the Rescue Mission Regime is six years old now, this is exactly 6 years of sleepless night, reformation and transformation of Imo State. The Governor, Owelle Anayo Rochas Okorochoa means well for Imo State. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is a key ministry. The story not the same from where we met the Ministry in 2011. Before now our markets were lagging behind as they were nothing to write home about, but now market development has taken the centre stage. We have developed a lot of our markets. In terms of our market, if you look at what we have done with our markets, you can attest that Imo State is taking the lead in market development. Our market development system is second to none. Market development is very important to the governor and the system. Rescue Mission Regime through the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has developed most of our markets.

Another significant project we have carried out is the classification of our markets, we have the classified markets like; the Orlu International Market, Timber Market Owerri, Naze Building Material Market, Relief Market, World Bank Market in New Owerri, Okigwe Cattle Market and Malaysian Market all these are classified as first class markets. Very soon the government will de-roof all the markets with green long span that is Imo colour. We have gone into aggressive job creation in line with the job! job!! job!!! policy of the governor. In job creation, we have revamped and privatized some of our government owned Industries like the Resin Paint now taken over by Sky Run. Production of electrical and electronic are in progress at the factory premises in Aboh Mbaise. We have privatized the Owerri Ebeiri Paper Packaging Industry, soon detergent soaps will be produced from there. These privatized government firms have offered employment opportunities to many Imo indigenes. We have tried to change the face of the state through people oriented programs and policies. What we have now is new Imo. We are proud to be part of this history marking progressive moment. We are not myopic, we have allowed Imo people to cross-examine what we have now in Imo State.

On Imo Business Directory; the Governor gave us approval; the process is on-going, researchers are doing their works to get all of them on one page. There must be a compass business outfits in the state, there must be an identification. What we are, is quite different from what is obtainable in the

past. Before now, you will see someone with one brief case walking up and down claiming he is a business man without any identifiable address. With the system, Governor Okorocha has established a total departure from the old pattern, although we are not fully there but you will agree with me that we are not where we used to be. Any sensitive observer will agree with me that right from the establishment of Imo State, there has not been a major central union for all the market traders in the state, recently Owelle Okorocha gave us approval to conduct election, today there is President General for all the market executives in the state. As I speak, one wing of this ministry has been given to them as a temporary site, soon they will pack in. The Ministry has started digitalization of all our markets, new markets have been built and the state governor has given us approval for establishment of Timber and Allied Market Afor Oru in Ahiazu Mbaise. There is now an established congress system, we are building a unified market system. In terms of Industries aspect of this ministry, we have artisans village; there is an Industrial Cluster in Imo State, the place has been acquired, cleared and properly designed with essential facilities like; water, police post, good road network, any doubting Thomas can go there and see things for confirmations. The quietness and friendly nature of Imo state has made the state the choice destination of investors.

Still on industries, we have so many moribund industries but one good thing is that Imo State has a governor that always think about the masses. It is not to re-purchase a totally sold out factory, like the Resin Paint Industries Mbaise, Owelle Okorocha re-purchased it with an interest paid on it and gave it back to the masses, same is applicable in Paper Packaging Industry Owerri Ebeiri in Orlu LGA, we have gone to Clay Products in Ezinachi, soon it will be taken over by Chinese firm, they are seriously mobilizing. There are more moribund industries receiving attention and various investors are willing to activate it with their resources.

On industrial land allocated to some industrialists who people sale out using it for the right purpose, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has established a checkmate mechanism, there is a period of time given to every allotted plot, if it is not developed by the industrialist, it will be revoked, there must be a time frame for which you establish your firm or you forfeit the land. 1988 was the last time we had bus directory, now we are giving them time to showcase their products with their identifiable addresses.

On achievements we will appreciate the Egbeada Market when we move Ekeukwu Owerri, before now we don't have tyre markets, the governor has approved Tyre Dealers Market. Orié Amaraku Market will soon be upgraded. Go to Industrial Cluster you will see the presence of Small and Medium Scale Industries.

Government agencies under my Ministry has done well like the Okigwe Cattle Market, the Cooperative Society is one effective organ of this government doing well. One philosophy why we are doing what we are doing is to provide job opportunities for Imo indigenes.

***...Ministry of Agriculture, Petroleum and Environment and Natural Resources; Udo Mbu Agoha***

Imo State Governor Owelle Okorocha took agriculture as number one. Some of the things we have done are fantastic. If you talk about Agriculture you know is the first profession in the world. When I assumed office, I met a situation where there are no proper records, I started holding regular meetings with Head of Departments to enable us project agric programs of the governor and queue into the programs and policies. We have an agenda to address the issue of food security, we say for us to address the issues of food security, we need to start an enlightenment program because for you to educate somebody, you need to re-orientate that person- that was the first step we took. Our sensitization campaign has yielded positive results, a lot of people now know agric is the main thing and people have started taking agric serious. The enlightenment we carried were in phases. First, we started by getting the youths and our women to know about agric programs and policies. The next step we took was to bring it to our social life though our party where we belong. The Ministry has done well in enlightenment programs and in doing that we have raised the consciousness of the people, they now understand why we must go back to agriculture. It could be recalled that we launched palm for palm and youth in agriculture. In the palm for palm program each local government was given N20 Million for palm plantation, now a lot of communities have palm plantation. Even though the palm for palm program was abused by some communities we are looking into the situation, soon the appropriate action will be taken against them.

We moved for partnership for example on Anchor Borrowers, Bank of Agriculture (BOA), National Root Research Institute, Umudike and Imo Poly all these organizations - have their laboratories where they carry checks on our products. The ministry has improved on cassava, we have the yellow cassava, we have improved the old crops, we are not very mouthy about it, we have carried out a lot of programs, experiments and enlightenment. When we talk about Federal Government programs like FADAMA and have queued into FADAMA III extension, we are doing a lot for anchor borrowers, we have established rice farms in Imo and we have gotten over 50,000 hectares of land where rice will be planted. The Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources have made frantic efforts to procure three Rice Milling Machines, each of the three senatorial zones will get one.

When we talk about our programs, it may not look physical like; some of the services we rendered or secured; we came and the restiveness of oil producing were drastically minimized, people now go to oil producing areas of Imo State, do their business and go home without molestation. We have taken some of the repentant militants for training. The ministry has done some kind of regulation of activities of oil marketers and holds regular meetings with landlords of oil bearing areas of the state. It is on record that the state government has sited industrial Park in Ohaji- Egbema LGA, it will offer over 5,000 jobs, there is University of Petroleum sited there. We are making oil

companies to live up to expectation. Concerning the environment we have tried to enlighten the people, today we carry out regular sanitation exercise. After our clean up exercise with few hours, all the refuse will be cleared from our streets. It is also on record that we have tackled erosion in Urualla, Ideato South and Mbaise. In Owerri West and Owerri Municipal, the Nekede Road Utamiri; a lot has been done.

The ministry is trying to enlighten people on carbon monoxide and we have educated the masses on greenhouse program, we have educated the people on the need to plant flowers, if you cut one tree you plant three, because they help us in wind control .

The state governor has dived into environmental problems with big financial and strategically he proffered solution, for example the Orlu/Ideato South Road where erosion nearly cut Ideato South off. The Ministry of Agric is not only in production of food, we are also into empowering farmers, we have done a lot to enable them get involved in agric and agro based businesses. The Rescue Mission Regime of Governor Okorocha is entrusted in the development of the poor.

On agencies and other government departments under the ministry, ADP has done well - it is anchoring the rice, they are doing well, a lot of people will be involved but there are laid down rules if you meet up, based on Central Bank of Nigeria and Bank of Agriculture regulations.

Another good example is the Nekede Zoo, a lot of animals have been introduced, Hyena, Gazelle and Fishpond has been built. Anyone who is observant will notice that Nekede zoo has improved, that is why people troop in there for site seeing. The problem we have with Nekede zoo is that government in the past told lies but now the difference is clear, that is why it has recorded improved patronage. If not people won't be visiting the zoo in large numbers.

The progress we have made in controlling or regulating the activities of dredgers cannot be neglected, before we took charge, their activities were uncoordinated. Today in Imo State; for you to be a dredger, you must have an environmentalist attached to you so that you don't dredge near road or house. The Ministry is much interested in the health and life of the people any time they go out of any of the regulated or stipulated areas we stop them.

On views about major concern; my major concern in this ministry is to keep the records straight, we have done a lot for farmers in this state. The ministry has record of all government farms and we have survey plans so as to avoid encroachment, we have partnered with Agip for cassava farming at Emekuku, they helped us to revive our laboratories. The Ministry of Agriculture, Environment, Petroleum and Natural Resources is trying to shift from oil to agric, it may also interest you to know a lot of clearing has been done at Songhai farms, we have cleared the area for fish and others, the agenda will soon become a reality .