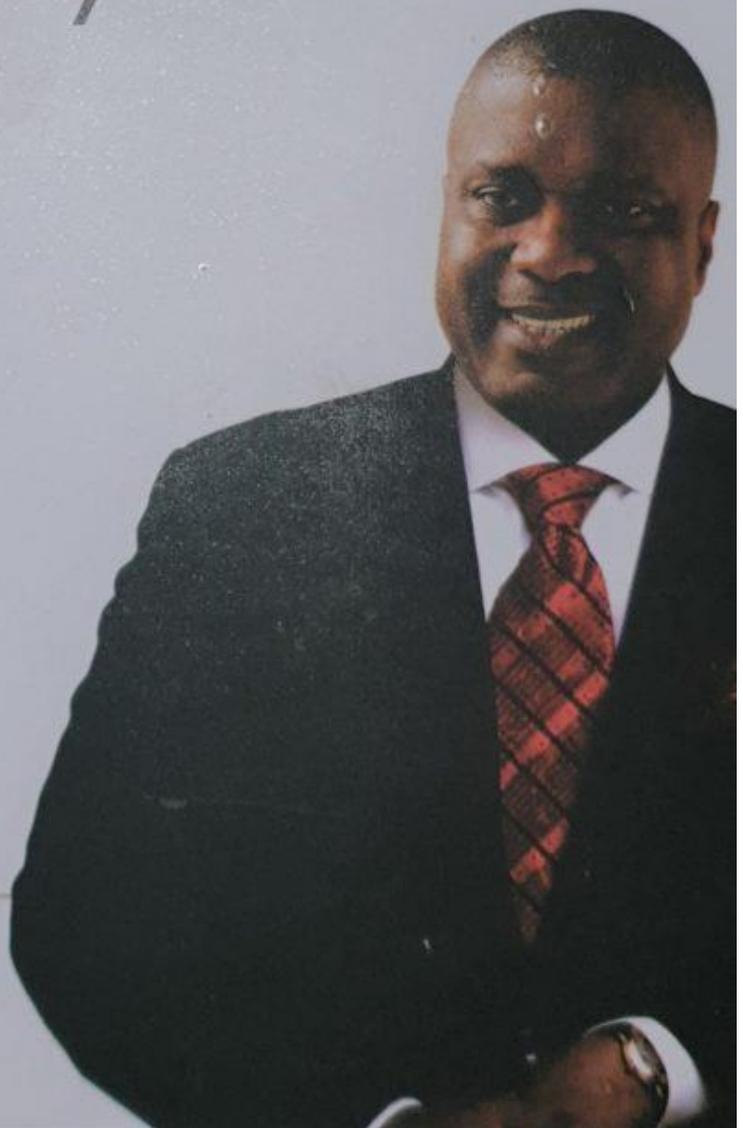


The **New** **Vision** for our Collective Prosperity



Obong Nsima Ekere
APC Governorship Candidate
For Akwa Ibom State



THE NEW VISION FOR OUR COLLECTIVE PROSPERITY - #5PillarsOfChange

A Manifesto by Obong Nsima Ekere

APC Governorship Candidate, Akwa Ibom State

The Solemn Assembly which flagged off our APC's Governorship and State Assemblies Campaign yesterday marked the beginning of our countdown to a New Dawn in Akwa Ibom State. After three and half years of failed promises, stunted growth and stranded development, Akwa Ibom is about to restart its long walk to greatness. The ambitious development roadmap of our state, designed by the architect of modern day Akwa Ibom, His Excellency, Arc (Obong) Victor Attah, and built upon by his successor HE Senator, Godswill Akpabio, has been derailed. It is time to get our State back on track.

Since May 29, 2015, we have witnessed the slow deterioration of our physical, economic and social infrastructure. In spite of our position as the highest producer of oil and gas, with abundant natural, mineral, agricultural and aquaculture resources, Akwa Ibom posts very high levels of poverty and joblessness. One in two Akwa Ibom person of working age has no job! We are the State with the second highest unemployment rate in Nigeria. According to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 1.8 million of the 3.3 million economically active population of Akwa Ibom State is unemployed. That means, more than half of our working population is out of work.

Education is no longer a passport to a better life as many of our well trained and skilled people roam the streets unable to find decent work to earn a living. Poverty, joblessness and hopelessness have triggered a wave of violence, restiveness and insecurity across the State.

In Education, the State's performance in the West Africa School Certificate Examination (WASCE) dropped from No.14 in 2015 to No.17 in 2018, reflecting the impact of poor funding, poor learning environment, poor teacher-student ratio, and lack of the right motivation for teachers. Our budget for education has been consistently below the UNESCO recommended minimum of 26 percent. At 1.6 percent for 2018 and the same level maintained for 2019, we are grossly underfunding the future of our children and grandchildren.

Infant mortality rate in the State is one of the highest in the Country today with 69 deaths per thousand. Our aged ones have not retired well because they are often owed their gratuities and pension. We cannot continue like this.

Every four years, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria offers us an opportunity to reshape our future by choosing the right political party and candidates to lead, define and direct our growth and prosperity. Since 1999, Akwa Ibom State has placed its faith and trust in a party, whose faulty leadership recruitment process, especially since 2015 have impoverished us and translated into the sad state of affairs that we experience today.

Moving Akwa Ibom away from today's pains requires a full embrace of APC's promise of prosperity and change. As the party's Governorship candidate in the March 2019 elections, my call to serve is founded on the need to offer Akwa Ibom State a new vision for our collective prosperity; one that

affords our people a State in which their best dreams are realized and the expectations met; a State rich in opportunities and the resources to exploit them; a State where every citizen will have an inalienable right to a decent living.

I want to serve as your Governor because the good and hardworking people of Akwa Ibom deserve better than they are getting from the current administration. Akwa Ibom deserves the best in Education, Health, Infrastructure, Rural Development, Jobs, Wealth Creation, Security and much more. Our children deserve the right foundation, training and environment to become global champions. Our young ones deserve transformational opportunities to launch unto greatness.

Throughout history, Akwa Ibom has always been a State of big ideas and big dreams. This is the State of Brigadier Udoakagha Jacob Esuene's Champion Breweries, Mercantile Bank, Manilla Insurance, Investment Trust Company. This is the State of Dr. Clement Isong's University of Cross River State (now University of Uyo), Sunshine Batteries, Qua Steel Mill and Quality Ceramics; of Obong Victor Attah's Ring Roads, Akwa Ibom State University of Technology, Ibom Power, L' Meridien Ibom Hotel and Ibom International Airport, which his successor, Chief Godswill Akpabio completed and put to use for the benefit of the State. This is the State of Godswill Akpabio's Sports stadium, Specialist hospital, a befitting Government House Complex, the e-library, Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, and world-class Infrastructure.

We want to think big and dream big again. We will overhaul the education sector, recreate the economy, expand infrastructure, revive health services and build a society where the poor is well protected. In all of this, my great Party and I will be sincere with and accountable to the Akwa Ibom people. My administration will have zero tolerance for corruption and we will manage your resources prudently, transparently and efficiently.

Our policies and programmes will aim to create jobs and opportunities, promote private enterprises who will build industries and businesses that transcend the boundaries of our State and Country. On the short term, we will focus on reflatting the economy. In addition to our direct job creation initiatives, we shall institute and enforce explicit local content requirements in all Government projects and programmes. Overall, our policies and programmes should create 400,000 direct and indirect jobs every year.

THE NEW VISION

The strategic focus of my administration will be to build a better tomorrow filled with opportunities, unity and hope for all Akwa Ibom people. Our policies and programmes will be motivated by the collective aspirations of our people for a rich, prosperous and safe State founded on social justice and equality for all. The new vision for our collective prosperity is anchored on five thematic areas. We call them the ***Five Pillars of Change***. These are:

1. Economic Prosperity.
2. Infrastructure and Rural Development.
3. Education, Health and Social Protection.
4. Security.
5. Governance and Institutional Reforms.

PILLAR ONE: ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

My topmost priority will be to address the twin challenges of mass unemployment and poverty with massive investment in public works by rebuilding public facilities and expanding the State's stock of hard infrastructure. Also, we will adopt and implement APC's very successful conditional cash transfer schemes, empower the youths with training and funding to function as Transformative Entrepreneurs and launch a number of other initiatives to drive growth and create opportunities for all. Every investment must be employment sensitive.

For quick impact within the first 100 - 180 days in office, my administration will:

- Embark on massive public works to reflate the economy, create jobs and put money in the pocket of artisans, suppliers, and contractors.
- Flag off conditional cash transfers of N5,000 to the extreme poor, N5,000 to orphans, N100,000 per delivery for multiple birth mothers and N5,000 for the physically challenged, in addition to their participation in a skill acquisition programme.
- Empowerment training and funding for transformative entrepreneurs
- Roll out the Graduate Farmers Scheme and other agricultural programmes
- Address all outstanding pensions, gratuities, Local Government workers' salaries, primary school teacher's entitlements and allowances.
- Domesticate key Federal Government economic programmes like the MSME Clinic, the Bank of Industry sponsored GEEP project, Anchor Borrowers Programme, and NIRSAL.

On a longer term, my Administration will launch the following programmes and policy actions:

- Launch a N20 billion fund to raise a critical mass of transformative entrepreneurs (TEs) who will use creativity and innovation to grow the private sector and create wealth. About 6,000 TEs will be produced and empowered every year (24,000 in four years) to stimulate the economy and create no less than 120,000 jobs.
- Restructure and recapitalise AKICORP with N50 billion and reposition it to leverage up to N500 billion of private sector funds to promote and attract investments in oil and gas, agriculture, health, tourism, aviation, manufacturing, and Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) into the State.
- Create an Enterprise Development Fund, EDF and seed it with N5 billion annually to provide collateral-free, single digit loans to SMEs.
- Undertake a number of initiatives in agriculture to create jobs, engage our young people and promote our drive towards self-sufficiency in food production. Our initiatives will include:

- Establishment of Commodities Trading Cooperatives (CTC) to promote and manage trades in export commodities like palm produce, rubber, cassava value chain, rice, and aquaculture.
 - Launch a Graduate Farmers Scheme and promote the participation of 500 youths from each of the 31 Local Government Areas or 15,500 per annum in farming and as extension agents.
 - Set up three model Songhai Farms in the State
 - Launch Community Farming Initiatives (CFIs) under which we will have the following:
 - Community Fishing Development Initiatives
 - Community Food Crop Production Initiatives and Community Cash Crop Development Initiative.
 - Massive oil palm production through large-scale replanting of high-yielding seeds and distribution of short duration cultivars to replace and eventually phase out low yielding ones.
 - Aim to make Akwa Ibom one of the top rice growing States in Nigeria.
- **TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:** We will State to harness its tourism potential to attract domestic, foreign visitors and investors. The State's extensive coastline will be developed for its tourism potential and all existing hospitality infrastructure such as the Ibom Hotel, the Four Points by Sheraton, the Tropicana Entertainment Complex, and the Ibom Unity Park will be put to optimal use. As part of our tourism development programme, we will launch an aggressive programme to promote our Akwa Ibom Cuisines across Nigeria and the world like the Chinese, Indians, and Mexicans have done.

PILLAR TWO: INFRASTRUCTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

An assessment of all ongoing and abandoned State Government projects will be conducted to determine the extent of government investment in the sector, identify projects that have been abandoned with the aim of completing all ongoing and abandoned projects. New projects award under my administration will be complementary to existing projects to ensure the integration of major towns, villages and local government headquarters to Uyo through our ONE Akwa Ibom initiative, an ambitious programme to link all local government headquarters by dualized motorways.

For quick impact in the first 100 -180 days in office, my administration will

- Initiate an audit of on-going key infrastructure projects to determine their respective status
- Resume work on the Uyo- Ikot Ekpene Road
- Start the process of putting the Four Points by Sheraton to use
- Resume work on Ibom Tropicana Entertainment Complex
- Commence work on the Third Ring Road, Uyo.
- Commence the review and implementation of the Ibom Science Park project

On the longer term, particular attention will be paid to the following Infrastructure projects;

- Collaborate with the Federal Government on the proposed construction and dualization of the Abak – Ekparakwa - Ette and Ekparakwa-Ukanafun-Iwukem-Agbor Hill Trunk A Roads.
- Collaborate with the Federal Government on the proposed construction of the Ikot Ekpene - Aba Road.
- Proceed with the immediate commencement of work on the Third Ring Road in Uyo.
- Fast track the Urban renewal of two towns in each Senatorial District
- Open the access road to the Ibom Deep Seaport.
- Renew the Port City of Oron to boost its status as a historic centre of learning, commercial and cultural excellence.
- The eight local government areas of Ukanafun, Ini, Ika, Oruk Anam, Mkpata Enin, Ibesikpo Asutan, Ibiono and Ikono will be declared Special Development Areas that require special infrastructure interventions.

The Ibom Deep Seaport:

My government will support the delivery of the project and further engage the private sector with similar projects to ensure they are actualized.

The Ibom Science and Technology Park:

My vision is to review and complete this project and make it a major technology hub with focus on ICT - based businesses, business process outsourcing, technology innovation, coding, and STEAM activities. We will deepen the collaboration (which I midwived during my time at the NDDC) with Microsoft and Google to provide affordable and cheap broadband connectivity for the State.

The Power Sector:

My goal for the power sector is to achieve:

- 70 percent grid connection
- Strategic interventions in transmission and distribution Infrastructure to ensure state wide uninterrupted power supply. .
- Deploy alternative and renewable energy sources to communities that are off-grid to Power-Up Akwa Ibom.
- Strengthen the capacity of the Rural Electrification Agency.

Victor Attah International Airport:

The State will partner the Federal Government to complete and operationalize the Ibom Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility. Similarly, work will commence on the Cargo Terminal along with the establishment of the Victor Attah Airport Industrial City to support light manufacturing. We will explore the possibility of acquiring equity stake in an airline with a strong brand name and reputational capital.

Rural Development:

Some of the initiatives to be implemented in the 31 LGAs under our comprehensive **Rural Transformation Initiative** include:

- The completion of a comprehensive rural electrification programme to achieve at least 50 percent coverage of grid connection.
- Develop with subsidized power **Centres for Non-Farm**activities such as welding, tailoring, hair dressing, etc. open up rural roads to assist farmers in the evacuation of farm products and development of non-farm rural activities;
- the adoption of a policy to tar two (2) rural roads linking communities to their LGA headquarters;
- the development of mini water schemes, in partnership with local government councils, through the comprehensive mapping of the state to determine areas of needs and locations;

PILLAR THREE: EDUCATION, HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

EDUCATION:

Akwa Ibom State was renowned for the quality of its schools, and could boast of having the best teachers. It is a matter for deep regret, that from this glorious past, we have moved down from 14th position in 2015 to 17th in 2018 in the WAEC ranking and to a point where our public education system is in complete shambles. The entire foundation school system requires a complete overall.

Within the first 100 – 180 days, we will:

- Declare a state of emergency in the education sector and convene a summit of stakeholders and experts to discuss and adopt the way forward for the sector.
- Increase support for our students in tertiary institutions by raising student bursary from N5,000 to N25,000 per session
- Institute an annual award for the overall best-performing secondary school in the State in WASCE/NECO exams
- Institute an annual award for the best-performing secondary school in the sciences in the state in WASCE/NECO

The new school system of our dream must reflect our ambition to raise global leaders of tomorrow in public administration, science and technology. If our children must be great, and their days glorious, we must build the foundation for their future greatness today. Present school curriculum will be reviewed to reflect 21st century realities.

We will computerize the teaching and learning processes in our schools and tweak our educational curriculum to favor the skills and competencies demanded by the modern world supports our ambition to raise world leaders.

We are totally committed to a dramatic increase in funding education from the current 1.6 percent of the State budget to a progressive increment towards meeting the UNESCO target of 25 percent by 2023.

A special intervention fund of N30 billion will be considered for the upgrade of libraries, laboratories, sport facilities, construction of new school blocks, and generally improve the learning environment for our children throughout the State.

A programme to decongest overpopulated schools by building new ones in the same localities will be implemented within two years of my assumption of office. A committee of experts will be raised to help government work through the new way of educating the Akwa Ibom child.

HEALTH

The cornerstone of our administration's health policy is Health with Hope; a strategy to reverse the indicative negative health indices of the State, restore hope in our people and offer a system that makes deliberate efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of our people.

Two major considerations will drive our administration's BHI strategy in health care delivery:

- BHI will ensure better access to cost effective, quality health care, provided through primary and secondary health care facilities in the State; and
- BHI will ensure a substantial and sustained investment of our resources to establish and develop state-of-the-art tertiary health care facilities that meet international standards of quality health care. This will facilitate new jobs for our people in the health sector, reverse medical tourism and will generate revenue for the State which we will reinvest to continually improve health care delivery.

Some of our BHI strategy will include:

- institute a comprehensive health policy titled **Better Health + Care Initiative (BHI)**
- renovate / build and equip them with modern facilities and trained manpower 10 secondary health care centres in the 10 Federal Constituencies
- supplement general hospitals with cottage hospitals and equip them with functional facilities and relevant technology;
- renovate, modernize and adequately staff the State's existing 424 primary health care centres to ensure access and availability of primary health care;
- provide accelerated training of all categories of medical personnel to alleviate the existing shortages;
- establish the **Ibom Medical City** as a flagship project using existing facilities at the Ibom Specialist Hospital to provide tertiary medical services to our people and to serve as a regional centre of medical excellence.
- partner with Local Government Councils to establish a rural arm of BHI, titled Better Rural Health+Care Initiative (BrHI), which will be a preventive health care service on malaria, diabetes and blood pressure control, immunization and vaccination, as well as ante and post-natal care. The lives of our people matter.
- provide a new ambulance scheme (**BHI+Ambulance**) to handle medical emergencies. BHI+Ambulance will begin with 15 ambulance services: five (5) in Uyo metropolis and one each

for the 10 Federal Constituencies. Within the first year we would have established one in each local government, attached to the local government headquarters.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Our government will:

- establish the **State Health Insurance Scheme (SHIS)**, to adequately address issues pertaining to the availability and accessibility of quality health care in the State;
- provide free and comprehensive medical care to children below five years of age, and the elderly who are 65 years of age and above;
- establish nursing homes in each of the Senatorial districts for the elderly who lack family care;
- design social protection policy to cover the most vulnerable among our people, including people living with disability, the aged, poor widows, orphans, etc;
- provide a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme which will cover the very poor among our people who will be identified by the *State Social Protection Policy* as follows:
 - N5,000.00 to the extremely poor
 - Poor multiple-birth mothers to receive (one-off) N100,000.00
 - Orphans to receive N5,000 through foster parents
 - Poor handicapped persons to receive N5,000, in addition to skill training

GENDER, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN

We will domesticate the National Gender Policy including meeting the 35% target of women and youth participation in governance through affirmative action; mainstream gender equality concerns into all sectors of the economy both in the public and private sector; ensure women are given the political support/entitlement needed for substantial participation in political and economic processes and put in place, programmes to reduce maternal and child mortality rates in the State.

We will enforce the Child's Rights Act in Akwa Ibom State and expand the Federal Government free nutritional meals for children in all public primary schools.

PILLAR FOUR: SECURITY

Immediate implementation and disbursement of funds for the proposed unemployment and poverty reduction programmes to address the fundamental causes of insecurity.

In our first 100 – 180 days in Office, we will convene a Security Council meeting on the conflict of the border communities. Decisions reached at the meeting would be implemented immediately, also we will;

- Resettle Internally Displaced Persons in their homes
- Provide security patrol vehicles per local government
- Conduct an assessment with the aim of rehabilitating infrastructure and community assets destroyed as a result of the conflicts.

PILLAR FIVE: GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

There is no doubt that both governance deficit and institutional weakness cut across the public and private sectors of the State. When such lapses become glaring, the State cannot be attractive for any type of investment, development and progress can also be effectively undermined.

Some of the steps to be taken by our government to confront these lapses include the following:

- Restore financial autonomy to local governments
 - Adopt zero-based budgeting in place of envelope style budgeting
 - Zero tolerance for corruption and impunity.
 - Reforms of regulatory institutions will be undertaken in order to remove outdated laws and replace them with development-friendly ones.
 - Law enforcement Agencies will be strengthened to enhance efficiency in their operations.
 - Deliberate strategies will be adopted to improve the business competitiveness ranking of Akwa Ibom State. On the World Bank ranking of Ease of Doing Business in Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State was missing on the list of five States that made the cut.
 - An Executive Bill will be introduced in the State House of Assembly to pass the application of Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) into law.
 - An Executive Bill will be sent to the State House of Assembly to institutionalize continuity in development planning beyond a political regime.
 - Reposition and ensure that the civil servants will receive their entitlement when due. This is consistent with the place of the Civil Service as the engine room of government.
- Training programmes, promotion and other development issues in the interest of Civil Servants will receive the due attention of government.

CONCLUSION

Our Five-point ONE Akwa Ibom agenda is both a covenant and a pledge, made before you this day, and before God Almighty, to redress the sad reality of our developmental challenge and set us all on the path of our collective prosperity.

We live in changing times. The best of yesterday may be grossly inadequate for tomorrow. These times require creative, versatile and transformational leadership, not a transactional one; an innovative thinker to lead the charge into a new phase of growth and prosperity. I am the man you can trust to bring 21st century strategies to address the 21st century challenges that confront our people and State.

The 2019 general election is all about you: It is about the 1.8 million young Akwa Ibom men and women without jobs and the opportunity to earn a decent living. It is about the civil servants and pensioners who have been denied their legitimate entitlements over the past three and half years. It is about communities whose roads have been degraded and they can no longer access their home with ease. It is about handouts on the eve of elections, about teachers, disrespected, despised and denied the reward and recognitions they deserve.

It is about misrule and wrong priorities, it is about arrogance of leadership and democratic intolerance. It is about transparency in governance, about grand lies and deceit. It is about local governments' councils, the chairmen, councilors and executives who are forced monthly to sign off their legitimate Federal Allocations so that the Government at the State can spend it on everything except the people and the local governments that own the resource. It is about starving the people and the systems for three years to stockpile the financial armoury to subdue them at election time.

I am stepping into the ring to fight for you, build bridges of hope and opportunities, to unite Akwa Ibom behind a common vision of greatness. I am stepping in to bring real peace and healing to our brothers and sisters in Ika, Etim Ekpo and Ukanafun.

In the past decade, I have served this State in various capacities and I have a track record of working on the side of the people. At my current position as Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, Akwa Ibom has remained uppermost in my heart even as I serve the region of nine states.

When I am elected governor, I will give my whole-hearted devotion to the call and responsibilities of office everyday of the four years that your mandate and the tenure allow. My administration will be fully dedicated to the welfare of our people, and will be accountable to only God and the good people of Akwa Ibom State. I will operate an interactive and all-inclusive administration.

As your Governor, I will be your voice and your eyes. I will work and fight for you. I will defend your best interest. I promise to make a positive difference in the lives of our people and with your support I will not fail.

I appeal to all Akwa Ibom people to vote for me. *Your thumb print is the key to the new Akwa Ibom of our dream.* You have within you the voice to speak a new dawn into being for our people. For your Vote is your Voice!

God bless the All Progressives Congress!

God bless Akwa Ibom State!!

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria!!!