Women's Role in the Socio-Economic and Political Development of Agudama-Epie Community Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, 1985 To 2018

By

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Abstract

The involvements of women in community development and as well as in nation-building are an ineluctable right as well as inescapable reality for holistic and comprehensive socio-economic development and political advancement in contemporary state polity. Women are naturally imbued with salient and sterling leadership qualities and as well they are known to be resilient family and society builders, despite that their masculine counterpart have refuse to see them as the principal initiators of changes that will improve the lives many in most societies of the developing world. In recent time in the history of Agudama-Epie community in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, Nigeria, few women have been entrusted with the leading role to manage human and material resources and have proved that, given adequate backing, they can perform creditably. Arising from the astounding success of women experience who worked closely with men and concentrate on men's interests to succeed in a male-dominated political society like that of Agudama-Epie community. The paper discusses the roles of women of Agudama-Epie community one side, and the origin of female chieftaincy stool in Agudama-Epie community on the other hand, and women's participation in the socio-economic and development in Agudama-Epie community. The finding of this paper is that the

notion that women are the "weaker sex" and as such of no impact is wrong because history has shown that women of Agudama-Epie community have worked hard to arrive at this point in the 21st century and that they are capable to gradually rise to positions of power at the local government and state levels if the educated ones will join the trail.

Keyword or Phrase: Agudama-Epie, Women, Epie-Atissa, Community, Socio-Economic and Political, Development, Chieftaincy, Feminism, and Masculine Counterpart.

Introduction

At all levels of society women are known to be resilient family and society builders. This natural imbued sterling, salient, and exceptional qualities possessed by women had prompted them to be engaged in nation-building. These uncommon qualities have given women an ineluctable right as well as inescapable reality for a holistic and comprehensive involvement in the socio-economic and political advancement in community and clan polity (Perdita, 1979: 73, 79).

It is pertinent to state that a decade before the close of the twentieth century we began witnessing the long awaited desire of female persons pushing their way to the corridors of power, to be vocal about their needs and as well to execute their dreams, an aged long dream of contributing their quota to community and clan development (Emily, 2014: 158).

The common emphasis to all society regarding women's contributions to their societies was as a result of the famous United Nations sponsored Women's Conference held in Beijing in 1995. That report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regarding Human Development which focused on women in politics, obviously revealed the undeniable influence of women to community, local, regional and national development. Although before the famous universal conference on women in 1995 at Beijing, awareness about the relevance and irrefutable role of

women actually began, gaining momentum in the late 1980s (Staudt, 2008: 156-157).

In spite of the Western feminist attack on androcentrism, riding on the crest of the new wave of women's studies in the 1960s and 1970s, yet the conference of 1995 serves as an eye-opener to all women becoming a launch-pad into the twenty-first century where women leadership have spread through all sectors of society (Amadiume, 1987: 89-90).

It is on record that most African women who happens to be wife's of prominent African Heads of States, Presidents, and Prime Ministers such as; Sylvia Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings of Ghana, Winnie Mandela of South Africa, Marie-Olive Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Vera Chiluba of Zambia, and Zineb Yahya Jammeh of Gambia, Vivian Wade Abdoulaye of Senegal, Chantal Compaore of Burkina Faso, Adelcia Barreto Pires of Cape Verde, and Turai Umaru Yar Adua of Nigeria, Penehupifo Pohamba of Namibia, and Mathato Sarah Mosili of Lesotho, whose efforts and contributions have been acknowledged outside the State House. Those efforts and contributions have improved the lives of their people via some social institutions, charity organizations for the poor and needy and as well as legal services for widows. Following, their track records most of these African First Ladies were instrumental in women's movement, women's empowerment on economic and social fronts, supporting of women's struggles against all odds through sharing of ideas, initiating entrepreneurial programmes and empowering visionary ideas that have to do with improving the lives of vulnerable women in their respective society. A classic example was that of Mrs. Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings's high profile campaigns of 31st December Women's Movement in Ghana which gave women a stronger political voice and as well their right over their husband's estates whether their husband's left a will or not. Equally, important was Mrs. Sylvia Bongo Ondimba's visionary idea on five areas: social, health, youth, women and culture (Mbakwe, 2011: 20-21).

Like Mrs. Nana Konadu Rawlings, Dr Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Mrs. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, and Mrs Sylvia Bongo Ondimba, so were late Chief Mrs. Ayebapere Magnus, late Chief Mrs. Helen Bonuwo Japas, Chief Mrs. Sumosume Ronald Etete, and Chief Mrs. Rejoice Pedro Princewill all of Agudama-Epie in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Given this background, this research intends to examine the growing self-confidence in women in the area of women's empowerment initiative, active participation in economic development, and improved socio-economic, and political development of women. Employing the theoretical framework of Feminist Theory, this work aims at comprehending whether or not women generally should still be regarded as inferior considering their immense socio-economic and political impacts on their society. To ascertain whether or not women's ascent to power and their positive role in communities that regard women as inferior demonstrates that gender is not the only consideration. This is what engages the concern of this paper.

Theoretical Framework

Considering the cultural interdependence of network of relations in our contemporary world, the basis for affirmative action and the struggle to achieve equal rights for women in communities in Nigeria is linked to the feminist theory. The basic assumptions of feminist theory provide the framework for discussing the arguments against the hidden idea of a universal truth about gender in the understanding of power relations in society. Culturally the traumatic experience during and after colonization further marginalized Nigeria's women in their capitalist-oriented societies distressed, with economic dependence. These days, the call for equal value for women and men and affirmative action challenges the paradigm of an impacted socially constructed gendered processes determined, in every society that from the structure of community or state power to the allocation of political and economic resources are determine by what is masculine or feminine. There are undoubtedly, good reasons for women's

advocacy knowing too well that several policies have ignored women, efforts to include women in the existing framework have proved abortive in several societies in Africa and as well in Nigeria. Hence, feminists have argued that failure to adequately explain the role of gendered social norms and the inability to produce gender-equitable outcome thus, believed that the defining feature of feminism is that women and men are equally valuable. As Balaam and Bradford (2011: 119-120) notes, "policies of any nation that does not protect, give women fair representation, and prevent women from fulfilling their gendered obligations and as well ignores potential effects of women and other vulnerable groups are bad policies."

It is on the basis of this, feminist theory posit that women matters in every society in as much as gender-differentiated policy impacts matter as well. Therefore, the roles assigned to men and women, gendered resources and obligations, equal representation in the labour force, and equal opportunity for maneuvering in decision making. This is because these gender-influenced shape both activities of national and local markets and affect the distribution of power and resources in any society.

Thus, the essence of feminist theory is change, concentration on inequality, poverty, and gender relations. The challenge against traditional approaches to development, perceptions of women, accepted views of women's roles in relation to economic development, and women's empowerment, their active participation in economic development of their society, and the improvement of socio-economic and political conditions of women and their society are their focus (United Nations, 1995: 12-13).

The Socio-Economic and Political setting of Agudama-Epie

Agudama-Epie community like every other community's in Epie clan whose people speak of a common ancestry from (Bini) Benin Kingdom. Record has it that the sixteen communities making up Epie clan migrated through the Isoko country, crossing the River Niger into Engenni river and thereafter moved to their present settlements in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, Nigeria (Sorgwe, 2000: 13-15).

These Epie towns namely; Igbogene, Yenegwe, Akenfa, Agudama, Akenpai (Ovulemene), Edepie, and Etegwe, Okutukutu, Opolo, Biogbolo, Yenizuegene, and Kpansia, Yenizuepie, Okaka, Azikoro, Ekeki, and Amarata have in common a high level socio-economic and political cohesion with each other. Despite that each of this town is traditionally autonomous yet they co-operate with one another based on a shared cultural and ethnic identity.

Evidence at our disposal indicates that Agudama-Epie community from the period of effective British colonial subjugation in 1904 to when Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon's military administration created twelve states in Nigeria in 1967, Agudama-Epie community had remained part of the Eastern Region. Thus, from when the Epie-Atissa territory became firmly integrated into the Brass District of Warri Province and thereafter as part of Owerri Province in the colonial era the people of Agudama-Epie were into extensive farming, fishing, hunting, and cultivation and production of palm oil and kernels. Acknowledged universally, environment remains man's life support system in which its structure is what man's life and future are built. It is for this reason scholars have pointed to the fact that Epie-Atissa territory dictates the peoples activities since the land is relatively higher and more fertile than most of the land area in the Eastern and Central Niger Delta. It is obvious from this fact that the economic prosperity of Agudama-Epie and every other communities of Epie-Atissa clan is as a result of the abundant products of plantain, wild economic mango trees and fruits locally known as *Ogbein* Ogbono, water yams, cassava, cocoyam, sugarcane, and vegetables (Awajiokinor and Ozo-mekuri, 2013: 59-60).

However, fishing, weaving of mates and baskets, snail hunting, and farming which are an important occupations of both women and men of the community but the industries that were exclusively for men are the canoe carving and palm produce industries. In the pre-European epoch, colonial, and even after 1963 when practical colonial rule ended in Nigeria with the attainment of a Republican status, Agudama-Epie community like any other communities of the Central and Western Delta favoured a

predominantly gerontocratic political culture. A political culture that was perceived by a group of educated elite to be out dated and whose view and intention were to place Agudama-Epie community on a model pace of contemporary society. Nevertheless, the move made by this group of educated elite in Agudama-Epie was not easy to come by, but afterward yielded the peaceable fruit of their desire. It was this move that ushered in a new era of an enlightened leadership in Agudama-Epie with His Royal Highness Chief Cornelius Walson as the new paramount chief of Agudama-Epie in 1979. The move was politically not farfetched as the Military Government of General Olusegun Obasanjo on the 12th of September 1978 proclaimed in a public broadcast to return the country Nigeria to a democratic state on the 1st of October 1979. To keep to that promise and pledge made earlier by General Murtala Mohammed, General Obasanjo appointed Chief Micheal Ani as the political umpire to begin the process of registering political parties (Adamolekun, 1986: 121; Bathelome, 2018).

Given, the fact that most scholars points to the roles women as closely, linked to their status as, denied of good education, commanding very limited economic resources, and the inequality which exist between them and their masculine counterparts. These hierarchical positions of women in the socio-economic and political setting of most communities in Nigeria were largely shaped by colonialism, religious precepts and the negative cultural norms (Francis, 1999: 230-231; Payne and Nassar, 2008: 165). In accordance with the views of other scholars, Sorgwe (2000: 54) highlight the effect of colonial economy on the Epie-Atissa communities. To him the mono-palm produced economy that was encouraged by the colonial authority was a policy aimed at satisfying the British imperial needs. Following the economic system of colonial arrangement of harvesting and the production of oil-palm and kernels as cash crop earnings from a male dominated society like Epie-Atissa, this invariably dictate the dependency nature of the people of Agudama-Epie on the European sources of supply for manufactured goods such as textiles, corned-beef, pork, and liquor.

As it has been observed, the economy of the people of Agudama-Epie were operated within the traditional framework of peasant agriculture with little or no foreign capital, labour or entrepreneurship. Thus, the colonial economic policy that was aimed at making her subjects basically a consumer of British industrial products went a long way to ensure that palm produce remain Agudama-Epie people's chief support economy during and after colonial times (Sorgwe, 1999: 222). However, for a society like Agudama-Epie community that was dominated by the masculine gender who depend on the revenue derived from palm produce for subsistence thus, to face the challenge of an economy sustained by domestic production of palm produce on an intensive scale at the expense of some productive sectors of the economy, squarely engaged every member of the family. As the business of palm produce became the revenue of Agudama-Epie economy as well as Epie clan the economic activity precipitated what became described as "consumer economy". Under the colonial economy the situation of women were unfavourable as they were made to depend on their husband in assisting them to sell the produce, while their husbands cared for the home. On the other hand the cultural effect of the colonial economy on Agudama-Epie women was due to the intensive labour which the palm-oil economy required. Thus, the men saw the need of not educating their female children rather engaging them and their mothers in the palm produce business of the community.

Origin of Female Leadership in Agudama-Epie

Before that special publication on Human Development Report regarding gender under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which the United Nations, sponsored the world-famous Women Conference in Beijing in 1995. The consciousness about the relevance and undeniable role of women across the African continent gained momentum in the late 1980s (Kathleen, 2008: 156; Emily, 2014: 159).

In reminiscing the previous efforts of women in Africa, Nigeria, and as well in Epie-Atissa clan towards female leadership, struggle for equal rights

with men, women's movement against inequality in society, and organized women protest against imperialists unconstitutional imposition of taxation on the female gender in Nigerian societies. To adequately put record straight, it is pertinent to state that women in Africa, Nigeria, and Epie-Atissa clan specifically have caught the wind of their rights and relevance to the development of their respective society. Looking, down memory lane, it is obvious that the ever-green, courageous act of defiance, and tremor of violent agitation of the Aba women's revolt of December 9 1929. In similitude to that valiant band of the Aba women who chanted war songs and toke the battle right to the quarters of the colonial official agents and representatives. The Epie women as well reacted in protest against the negative attitude of the colonial agents regarding the British colonial enterprise in February 1958 after twenty-nine years of the first fatal riot in Nigeria in 1929 (Johnson, 2012: 18; Sorgwe, 2000: 68).

These historical militant mass of the entire women-hood across the old South-Eastern Provinces and the Brass District of Warri Province respectively and the activities of outstanding Africa's women in the late twentieth century who championed the cause of women's rights, social welfare for market women, whose inspiration drove women to participate in the political circle that is largely dominated by their masculine counterpart. Women such as Empress Taitu Betul of Ethiopia, Chief Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria, Kudjoe Hannah Esi Badu of Ghana, and Dr. Doria Shafik of Egypt. All of these women were known for their determined campaign for women's rights, socio-political move for the right of women in their respective nation's polity, and their initiatives towards women's attainment for equal rights with their masculine counterparts (Raph et al., 1991: 381,648,689,728).

This valiant heroine acts, and the heart inspiring struggle for equal rights with men and as well the exclusion of women in the policy drive of governance in Agudama-Epie community even after the post-civil war era. All of these served as a beacon of inspiration in the socio-economic and political evolution of female chieftaincy stool in Agudama-Epie in 1985.

One major factor which serves as an eye-opener to some group of outstanding or privileged women who in the recent history of Agudama-Epie championed the cause for Agudama-Epie's women efforts towards female leadership and the struggle for equal rights with men in the community was the carry-over of the colonial economy with its emphasis on money. The system generated what became an incipient maintenance culture. A culture which took the form of preservation of containers of kerosene tins, rice bags, liquor bottles, and empty salt and cement bags. These containers and bags were considered by the people as valuable items because they had ready markets for the garri traders and buyers from Igbo, Warri, Engenni, Joinkrama, and Abonnema a town close to the Atlantic coast to buy the salt and rice bags to store food stuffs for market purposes (Edward and Willie, 2013: 100-101).

These women Mrs. Victoria Ofuru Kanus, Mrs. Oko Alfred, Mrs. Emilia Walson, Mrs. Ayebakuro Ofien, Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus, Mrs. Clara Asogene, Mrs. Mary Joe, Mrs. Aniekunku Evans, and Mrs. Seiyefa Miete foresaw the need and opportunity to establish a market for small-scale trading centre in Agudama-Epie. Having seen the development and benefits accruing to women of Igbogene community in the north, thus these women convened in the house of Mrs. Victoria Kanus. After they have assembled together for a common interest of Agudama-Epie women one Mrs. Love Orwell Ogun was urgently summoned to act as a scribe as deliberation was ongoing. After along and careful deliberations on who to be appointed as the first female chief of Agudama-Epie community and the structural arrangement of the executive and legislative body or council of the government, Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus was chosen as the first female chief of Agudama-Epie community in November 1985 (Love, 2018).

Women's Participation in the Socio-Economic and Political Development of Agudama-Epie

Chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus after been appointed as the first female chief of Agudama-Epie in November 1985, these women Mrs. Victoria

Ofuru Kanus, Mrs. Oko Alfred, Mrs. Emilia Walson, Mrs. Ayebakuro Ofien, Mrs. Clara Asogene, Mrs Mary Joe, Mrs. Aniekunku Evans and Mrs. Seiyefa Miete, worked closely with chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus purposely to ensure women's participation in the economic and political decision-making positions and development of Agudama-Epie community. Having understood the traditional concept of participation pyramid graphed in line to illustrate how the patriarch's have strongly monopolized the pinnacle of the pyramid in the community. These women had to establish a more modern form of parliamentary government, fuse the executive and council of advisory assembly/legislative arm in the form of a chief executive called Her Royal Majesty. This position of Her Royal Majesty is always appointed and rises to executive leadership as a result of the support of other arms of government in the women circle such as the advisory council, women youth council, and legislative council made up of elderly women and wives of former paramount rulers of the community. The concentration of power on this traditional parliamentary system thus makes the decision-making process potentially more efficient and responsive to the people of the community. This is because the ineffectiveness of any female government could lead to dethronement.

Chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus having been sworn-in as the first female chief of Agudama-Epie community in November 1985, she and her council of advisory/legislative assembly worked coordinately with His Royal Highness chief Cornelius Walson the paramount ruler of Agudama-Epie community who came into office in 1979. To be very much relevant in a male dominated political society and contribute effectively to community and national development, chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus and her team had to yearn for access to financial resources such as market. The aim was to engage more women in the political and economic life of the community Agudama-Epie. Thus, the establishment of Agudama-Epie market was achieved through the struggle of the women in 1987 (Love, 2018).

Following the establishment of a market centre in Agudama-Epie community after Igbogene-Epie market in Epie-Atissa clan, the women

became actively involved in plantation, cocoyam, water-yam, and fishing farming, including weaving of mates, snail hunting and preservation of bush mango in other to have an occupation that will better their lives, train their children rather than depending on their husbands. After twenty-three years from 1985 to 2008 when chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus ruled the women of Agudama-Epie community the popularity and prestige the commercial activities brought to the community enhanced chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus and her successors, chief Mrs. Sumosume Ronald Etete, and chief Mrs. Rejoice Pedro Princewill's political and economic positions in their respective capacity. This is because the market became a convergence meeting point for women from neighbouring communities of Epie-Atissa clan, women from Engenni, Okarki and traders from far distance communities to inter-relate and interact. Over time this commercial activities exposes Agudama-Epie women to the dynamics associated with inter-group relations as women and their families began to move to the area to form an urban market. Like what Olaoba (2000: 17) had rightly observed, the movement of women into cities to form urban markets was as a result of the sole operation of the farm that has become difficult. For him the operative model of rural-urban markets across ethnic groups is because the traditional society is a precursory to contemporary urban market.

The nature of the market is so planned in such a way that beside, fostering inter-group relations among various communities it was purposely to generate fund for the women of Agudama-Epie. Through the funds generated from the market and defaulters of the market laws by Agudama-Epie women, Chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus's government was able to lay the foundation of the first block town hall building in Agudama-Epie in 1991 after purchasing the land from Biogbolo compound in Agudama-Epie community (Sumosume, 2018).

Achievements and Challenges of Ayebapre Magnus, Sumosume Ronald Etete, and Rejoice Pedro Princewill

The awareness on women to rise and run for top administrative and management office like that of female paramount ruler in a socio-economic and political environment dominated by men has been gaining crescendo in recent times. Despite that the Nigerian society had created the chasm between men and women resulting to the marginalization of women even up to date, feminists cry for gender equity and women's empowerment is subtly and steadily raising women's consciousness above the force of patriarch that has heretofore submerged women to low self-esteem, making them complacent and indifference to leadership roles, especially in socio-economic and political development.

Chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus's historic attainment as the first female paramount leader of Agudama-Epie women in 1985, waste no minutes of her time, spring into action instituting a traditional parliamentary system of government. This traditional governing institution is made up of the executive, the council of legislative assembly and the female youth council. The laws made by the council of legislative assembly were enforced by the executive arm and at the same time the council of legislative assembly and the executive arm act as arbitrators between two parties over land disputes. Settlements of land disputes between men and among families, marital disagreement between couples were as well resolved by these arms of government. While the women youth council oversees the weekly running of the market, collection of development levy on every market day, weekly sanitation and monitoring of the community environ, and clearing and maintenance of Agudama-Epie creek the basis of the people's ethnic identity and transportation of farm products.

The government of Chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus was so very effective and pronounced that no other authority was able to overrule or change the laws which the council of legislative assembly has made. For instance in the area of law and order, Ayebapre's government was keen to establish a civil force made up of the women youth council who were granted the legal

authority for law enforcement and maintaining public order in the community. Her policy on law and order was less equivocal as it showed a greater emphasis on the establishment of a strong and formidable community. She was very successful due to her cooperative partnership with His Royal Highness Cornelius Walson. Whereas, her economic policy was centered on the control of the market since it was a key means of controlling the income generated from levies collected from traders and defaulters of market rules. This was a necessary prelude to the laying of the foundation of the first block town hall in 1991 and the empowerment of Agudama-Epie women in entrepreneurial business rather than depending on their husbands.

The incident of 1998 which claimed the lives of eight young promising youths of Agudama-Epie community during the electioneering process when the men of Agudama-Epie wanted to elect a new paramount ruler of the community. Being the first election to be organized in the community since its inception to elect a paramount ruler the shock of that incident halted the election process, thus created a vacuum in the stool of a paramount ruler in Agudama-Epie community for three years from 1998 to the year 2000. During this period Chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus's government oversees the developmental progress of Agudama-Epie community before Chief Wisdom Frankly the caretaker organizing committee chairman of the 1998 community election assumed the office of a paramount ruler of the community in the year 2000. The stability of the community, encouragement of women to be involved in entrepreneurial activities, and the mass mobilization of Agudama-Epie women for the February and March 1999 general election which brought in the first Executive Governor of Bayelsa State, Chief Diepreye Solomon Peter Alamieyeseigha and both sons of Epie clan, Chief Paulker Emmanuel and Mr. Bob Ozaka as members of the pioneer Executive Council as Commissioner of Lands and Housing and Heads of Service respectively. In addition, the Local Government Council election of 1991 which brought in Mr. Diekivie Okulovie Obhoo under the political plate form of National

Republican Convention (NRC) in January 1991 the women of Agudama-Epie played a supportive role to that regard as well (Yakie, 2010: 133,141).

Before Chief Mrs. Sumosume Ronald Etete was officially sworn-in as the second female traditional leader of Agudama-Epie community in February 27th 2010 there was a transitional Female Government led by Chief Mrs. Bonuwu Helen Japas who administered the affairs of the women of the community for about one year and six months from September 2008 to February 2010. Chief Mrs. Sumosume Ronald Etete consolidated on the achievements of her predecessor in the area regarding the completion of the first block town hall, fencing of the building, and proposed a new lay-out for a modern market to be built across the Agudama-Epie creek. Her government was able to lay the foundation of fifty-six lock-up stores complex to completion. She as well spearheaded the initiative of a joint effort in the construction of the bridge across the creek for development of the community and re-location of the market. Like her predecessor Chief Mrs. Sumosume Ronald Etete tried to preserve the central role of Agudama-Epie women over the marketing system since the bulk of wholesale and retail distribution of food is exclusively handled by women of the community. The collection of development levies on every Wednesdays and the levied imposed on those accessing the bridge by crossing their building materials were all sources of revenue for development of the community (Sumosume, 2018).

In January 2015, Chief Mrs. Sumosume Ronald Etete's administration came to an end and Chief Mrs. Rejoice Pedro Princewill succeeded Chief Mrs. Sumosume Ronald Etete in March 2015. Recently, under the administration of both His Royal Highness Chief Frankly Wisdom and Chief Mrs. Rejoice Pedro Princwill the Nigerian-European Union Cooperation under the auspices of Niger Delta Support Programme: Micro Project Component (NDSP4). Twenty open market stores and one civic centre complex project construction was awarded to a local contracting firm Greenfield Integrated System Nigeria Limited on the 19th day of June, 2017. According to one of the Representatives of Supervisor's send by the

Contracting Authority/Supervisor from the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, Abuja who were in-charge of Programme Implementation and Management Unit (PIMU) from Imo State by name Obiora Obiakor John; "These projects were part of the approved contracts assigned for the nine Niger Delta States of Nigeria, thus it for the development and progress of the community. The moment it is commissioned it becomes the property Agudama-Epie community." (Obiakor, 2018).

The challenge both leaders including Chief Mrs. Rejoice Pedro Princewill had experienced or is experiencing has being the involvement of the men of the community in the affairs of the women. The instigation of some group of women against the leadership of the women group for their selfish interests has been the root issue in the instability in the women administration. Two basic incidents that was very much pronounce which nearly placed the community off balance was the decision of the state government to re-locate Bayelsa State College of Arts and Science Agudama-Epie, the first higher institution established in Agudama-Epie, Bayelsa State by the Chief D.S.P Alamieyeseigha government to Okpoma in Nembe Island as Bayelsa State College of Education, replacing it with the Nigerian Law School. The women of the community when they decided to protest against the move members of the council of chiefs after agreeing with the state government of Chief Timipre Sylver send police to assault the women that year 2010. The second incident was the encroachment and forceful possession of Agudama-Epie farm lands at Obogbeli bush were Agudama-Epie community shares boundary with Okarki community in Rivers State. A set of dreaded young boys of Akenfa-Epie community began in 2011, claiming and selling off lands belonging to Agudama-Epie community. This criminal act resulted in the murder of two illustrious sons of Agudama-Epie community on the 22nd day of November, 2013 and 19th day of February, 2016 at Obogbeli bush in Agudama-Epie community.

The actions of these boys were a serious threat to the women of the community since Akenfa-Epie is a neighbouring community with

Agudama-Epie community. The women of Agudama-Epie community were all afraid of been raped and killed during farming, hence after thorough investigation the women of Agudama-Epie community could act knowing too well that some of husbands and sons were partners with the boys Akenfa-Epie community (Celestin, 2018).

Conclusion

Whereupon it has been proven in this study that all inclusive government is in the best public interest, like the gainsaying goes women make an appreciable workforce. As it has been observed, by several scholars that women's participation in community governance and even democratic process would increase the likelihood that a society's policies would better reflect the needs of all its indigenes and non-indigenes in the community. In addition, 2005 report of the United Nations Millennium Project notes that when women are well represented on any level of governing bodies the overall quality of governance tends to rise and levels of corruption sink. Historical records reveals that in comparison, women tend to show more zero tolerance to corruption than men, and this fact translates well in community, state, and national leadership.

The resourcefulness in practical matters which women express in conducting home and family affairs is a well-spoken testimony that given a cooperative hand to join freely in community governance and political leadership, women have got worthwhile and tested experience to draw from. The track records of scores of these women Chief Mrs. Ayebapre Magnus, Chief Mrs. Sumosume Ronald Etete, and Chief Mrs. Rejoice Pedro Princewill have held Agudama-Epie community fascinated by their type of excellent leadership they have offered in service to the people of Agudama-Epie and the foreigners. This is a challenge to many other women in Agudama-Epie and neighbouring communities of Epie-Atissa clan who are leaders in the educational, management, economic, and social sectors. Therefore, the onus rests on both clans of Epie-Atissa as a larger society to encourage and engage the full participation, contribution, and support for

women in state and national development generally and in leadership especially.

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