

THE EVOLUTION OF COMMERCE IN ELEME

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The Evolution of Commerce in Eleme
2. Commerce, the root cause of communal crisis between Eleme and neighboring coasted community
3. The False Notion: Eleme people are not good in Business.
4. Road to Entrepreneurship Development in Eleme
5. Chronicles of Eleme Entrepreneurs.
6. TOP 20 ENTREPRENEURS IN ELEME.
7. Biggest setbacks to Commerce Development in Eleme.
8. Social Entrepreneurship: A tool for charging lives in Eleme.
9. Special Entrepreneurship Development vehicle in Eleme.
10. History impact prospect and challenges of Eleme Channel of Commerce

CHAPTER 1

THE EVOLUTION OF COMMERCE IN ELEME

The evolution of commerce in Eleme can be classified into two eras:

Pre-Colonial Masters Era (Traditional Era):

- Traditional trade practices
- Bartering and local exchange systems
- Community-based economies
- Limited external trade influences
- Agricultural production and subsistence farming

Post-Colonial Masters Era (Corporate Era):

- Western-style capitalism and corporate structures
- Global trade and market integration
- Industrialization and technological advancements
- Increased external influences and investments
- Corporate businesses (Indorama, Onne Port, Port Harcourt Refinery)

Factors driving evolution of commerce in Eleme include:

- Environmental changes,
- Science and innovation and
- Human activities (including colonialism and its impacts in Eleme)
- Local cultural and social dynamics in Eleme

This framework helps understand the impact of colonialism on Eleme's local economy and its current commercial landscape. Commerce, business, and entrepreneurship in Eleme are as old as the history of the Eleme people themselves. The people of Eleme are not lazy; they are hardworking, and this hardworking nature contributed greatly to their strength, health, and long

lifespan. All agricultural activities practices in Eleme includes: tilling the soil, cutting grass, digging holes for yams, and cassava. All the listed activities were done manually through intense physical labour. These tasks served as a form of daily exercise. They engaged actively in farming because there was no machinery for mechanized agriculture at the time. As a result, the people of Eleme enjoyed a long life. Before the arrival of colonial masters, who later introduced white-collar jobs, the average lifespan in Eleme was between 90 and 100 years. Untimely death was rare, and when it occurred, it was considered a taboo.

Eleme agriculture involved crop farming, local poultry, animal husbandry, and fishing. Fishing made up only about 5% of Eleme's agricultural activity because only the coastal communities: Onne, Alesa, Aleto, and Akpajo engaged in it. These four communities shared river boundaries with Okrika, which made the river accessible for fishing. However, only a few people ventured into fishing due to limited swimming skills, lack of proper fishing equipment, and threats arising from communal crises with neighbouring coastal communities. As a result, most coastal Eleme people abandoned fishing and focused on cassava, vegetables, and yam cultivation. Other communities such as Ogale, Agbonchia, Ebubu, Aleto, and Eteo, which had small streams or lakes, also participated in fishing on a part-time basis. Cassava and yam were the predominant agricultural products in Eleme. Cassava was processed into garri, fufu, tapioca, and sliced dried chips (obaa ojakpo). Early Eleme cassava producers did not process starch, even though starch production carries the highest commercial value. Commerce begins with the availability of products; after production comes marketing.

Modes of Exchange in Early Eleme

Contrary to some assumptions, trade by barter was not the first mode of exchange in Eleme. The earliest system was borrowing of lacking items based on brotherly love. Families that lacked anything simply approached other families to request it, promising to replace it later. Trust was very strong, and people were committed to keeping their word. The major weakness of this system was that external factors sometimes prevented borrowers from repaying what they owed. Trade by barter became the second mode of exchange, introduced during the early colonial era. It soon became the main exchange system. For example, a family with cassava could exchange it for vegetables, fish, or livestock. This solved the problem of borrowers failing to repay because barter required tangible value for tangible value. The global challenge of barter was measuring value. Since the value of different items could not be accurately compared, currency was introduced as the standard. In the confusion over value, some people even exchanged their sons for guns or land during the slave trade era. Transactions that have no moral justification but occurred in those times.

Commerce Activities in Eleme and Nigeria's Currency Pre-Colonial Era

Trade was based on barter and commodity money such as cowries, manilas, beads, and salt. Cowries were widely accepted across Nigerian societies including Eleme communities.

Colonial Era (1912–1959): British West African Pound

The British introduced the West African Currency Board (WACB) in 1912, issuing the British West African pound.

Nigerian Pound (1959–1973)

After independence, the Central Bank of Nigeria (established in 1958) introduced the Nigerian pound in 1959.

Naira and Kobo (1973–Present)

The naira was introduced in 1973, at a rate of 2 naira to 1 pound. Nigeria later introduced new denominations and, in 2021, launched the digital e Naira.

CHAPTER 2

COMMERCE, THE ROOT CAUSE OF COMMUNAL CRISIS BETWEEN ELEME AND OUR NEIGHBOURING COASTAL COMMUNITY

Eleme people are peace-loving and hospitable. Their neighbours include Tai, Oyigbo, Elemenwo, and Okrika. While Eleme has enjoyed peaceful relationships with most neighbours, the Eleme–Okrika land dispute has persisted for decades and has resulted in significant loss of life.

The matter went as far as the Supreme Court.

In SC.23/80 (1981), the Supreme Court ruled that:

Eleme holds the ultimate title (ownership) to the disputed land. Okrika retains possessory rights to areas where they had settled. Despite this ruling, tensions continued. A government white paper released in 2000 under Governor Peter Odili reaffirmed Eleme's ownership but permitted Okrika communities to remain under certain conditions. Nevertheless, disputes over encroachment and boundary lines continue to this day.

How the Dispute Started

The origin of the crisis can be traced back to Eleme's kindness and openness in fostering business-friendly relationships. Eleme people were rich in crops but lacked fish. Okrika people, being riverine, were skilled fishermen. During the era of trade by barter, both communities met at the Eleme riverbank to exchange goods. This trading point, a part of Eleme land served the two communities peacefully for over 300 years. During rainy seasons, fishermen, who often arrived earlier than the Eleme farmers, requested permission to build temporary shelters while they waited. Eleme people granted this request in good faith. One temporary shelter led to another, until fishermen began to spend nights there. Over time, these temporary shelters turned into permanent structures, and families began raising children there. Children born there grew up believing the land was naturally theirs. What began as a friendly trading convenience gradually transformed into a permanent fishing settlement on Eleme land, eventually becoming the root of one of Nigeria's longest communal disputes. Eleme's peaceful trade relations, however, continued uninterrupted with Elemenwo, Oyigbo, and Ogoni communities.

CHAPTER 3

THE FALSE NOTION: ELEME PEOPLE ARE NOT GOOD IN BUSINESS

The discovery of Africa by Europeans began in the 15th century with Portuguese explorers like Diogo Cão. They established trade relationships with local kingdoms, altering traditional trading networks and impacting local economies. Christopher Columbus's voyages to the Americas occurred around the same time, further expanding European influence. The European presence created new economic opportunities, but also disrupted local systems, affecting indigenous trade and commerce with a quest for the white man's job.

Eleme, in specific, Nigeria Port Authority NPA Onne Wharf established in 1954, including the construction of Port Harcourt refinery which was built in 1965 with 35,000 barrels per day capacity, was the biggest shift of the Eleme people from the dominant farming practices. The shift arising

from the intensive quest for high paid jobs which doesn't require much energy or labour like farming jobs, hence farming and trading activities started experiencing decline.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AT NCHIETA ELEME ELEME MAIN MARKET

My late father Chief Dada Nwolu Obele was a politician and he was privileged to be allocated one store at the front row of Eleme market. My father gave me the store and used it for computer business centre in Eleme market from 1999 to 2003. The establishment of computer business was a big business before the entrance of the Internet with smartphones. I had the opportunity of working closely with the Eleme leadership. Then I saw the market statistics to be about 900 persons operating various categories of business in the market. As at then, in the 900 persons, Eleme had only 60 with only 7 men in the 60. Meanwhile all the 900 stores in the market belongs to Eleme that eventually gave out all to lease. The predominant tribe in the Eleme market was the Igbo with minority Akwa Ibom, Hausa, Yoruba etc. My four years of operating in the market as a young boy in my twenties were an eye-opener and entrepreneurial learning curve for me. I discovered four attitudes of the Eleme people doing business in the market.

FOUR ATTITUDES OF ELEME PEOPLE DOING BUSINESS IN THE MARKET

First is lack of passion and commitment: It was when stealing became serious at the market and market leadership engaged the service of a private security firm to secure the market. The security firm came up with rules including official market closing time to be 6:00pm in the evening and resumption time to be 7:00am in the morning. Everyone is made to vacate the market by 6pm and you can't gain entrance until 7am in the morning. I was able to discover that the Igbos operating in the market usually arrived 6:30am which was thirty minutes before the market resumption time, while Eleme people arrived to open stores around 9am or 10am. Most times the shops won't open for days, due to attention to farming, they will tell you they went to farm. In the same market where we lack passion, was the man the market a prosperous Igbo man wrote on his store Eleme marama meaning Eleme is good. Second was multiple sources of income: The Eleme person operating in the market can make money from farming, spouse, relatives or any hustle within the multinational companies in Eleme. Not like the Igbo man that left his home town for the primary purpose of trading. Third is zero or Low bills: The average Eleme man residing within Eleme doesn't pay rent since he/she is staying in a family apartment. Unlike Igbo man that is paying rent, his passion must be doubled to meet up bills. Consciousness of pending bills triggers the desire to double the hustle. Fourth is fear for risk-taking: It was when the marketing agents of Ngegwe micro-finance were hunting for accounts at Eleme market with an offer for soft trading loans. Coincidentally the Managing Director of Ngegwe micro finance bank then was Late Chief Emmanuel Obele who was retired bursar from Rivers State University. Having a bank in your community with a father from Eleme as the branch manager, I was thinking that those on the front list for requesting the loan should be Eleme people, rather 98% were Igbos. In my conversations with Eleme people, majority said debt is a forbidden and the bank might seize their properties if they fail to pay. They told that they prefer to engage in local meeting contributions to collect when it is their turn rather than collecting loans from a bank. Therefore, the notion that oku Eleme rewalare ochira meaning Eleme people don't know business is wrong as some persons in Eleme have performed excellently in oil and gas business, in logistics and supplies, in trading, in hospitality, in medical, in education, in ministry etc.

CHAPTER 4 **ROAD TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN ELEME**

Entrepreneurship is the process of designing, launching, and running a new business or enterprise, typically involving innovation, risk-taking, and creativity. It involves identifying opportunities, mobilizing resources, and managing risks to create value and generate profits. Entrepreneurship is relevant as it drives economic growth, creates jobs, and fosters innovation, contributing to the overall development of a community or nation. By promoting entrepreneurship, individuals can improve their standard of living and contribute to community development. The population of Eleme Local Government Area in Rivers State, Nigeria is approximately 190,194 people, according to the 2006 census. However, projections suggest that the population has grown to around 273,500 people as of 2022.

Here is a breakdown of Eleme's population demographics:

Gender Distribution:

Males: 98,345

Females: 91,849

Age Distribution:

0-14 years: 69,434

15-64 years: 115,323

65+ years: 5,437

Eleme is a significant local government area in Rivers State, with a diverse economy driven by industries such as oil refining, fertilizer production, petrochemical, oil service companies and agriculture. Interestingly, the population of Eleme is significantly larger than the number of companies operating in the area, highlighting a potential opportunity for entrepreneurship and economic growth. Eleme is home to approximately 250 companies, with a diverse range of industries both big and small, including Port Harcourt Refinery, Indorama Petrochemical, Daawo Ebubu and Intel Oil service Onne. It's practically impossible for these companies to employ all the youths of Eleme, making entrepreneurship development a vital solution to bridge this gap. By creating their own businesses, young people can create jobs not only for themselves but also for others, contributing to the overall economic development of the area. Without entrepreneurship, there's a risk of increased unemployment, which can lead to higher crime rates, given the thin line between unemployment and crime.

CONCEPT OF GRANDNOPLMENT

In 2017, Dr. Joseph Obele introduced the concept of "GRANDNOPLOMENT" as a call to action for youths to rethink their approach to employment, following his passion and intensive research in Entrepreneurship. The term means "graduation no employment," highlighting the harsh reality of unemployment faced by many graduates, particularly in Nigeria. With thousands of graduates entering the job market yearly, Dr. Obele advocates for a shift towards entrepreneurship, urging youths to adopt the slogan "GRANDNOPLOMENT" and take charge of their own employment.

Nigeria's unemployment rate is a pressing concern, forecasted to be around 4.84% in 2025, with approximately 3.90 million people unemployed. This issue is further complicated by the country's rapidly growing population and the annual influx of graduates into the job market.

The State of Education in Nigeria

Universities: There are over 270 universities in Nigeria, with 264 licensed universities as of 2025, including federal, state, and private institutions. Polytechnics: Nigeria has around 190 accredited polytechnics, offering National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programs.

Colleges of Education: There are 205 accredited colleges of education, consisting of 27 federal, 82 private, and 54 state colleges.

The Challenge of Unemployment

Nigeria produces around 600,000 graduates annually, exacerbating the unemployment issue. The job market is saturated, and many graduates lack required skills, highlighting the need for innovative solutions. With thousands of graduates entering the job market yearly, the need for innovative solutions is clear. Dr. Joseph Obele's concept of "GRANDNOPLOMENT" highlights the harsh reality faced by many Nigerian graduates, emphasizing the importance of entrepreneurship and self-employment.

BENEFITS OF ADOPTING GRANDNOPLOMENT IN ELEME

1. Shifts mindset from job-seeking to job creation
2. Encourages proactive approach to career development and financial stability

DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ELEME: A PATH TO PROSPERITY

To develop entrepreneurship in Eleme, the following strategies can be implemented:

1. Establish Eleme Entrepreneurship Board: The Eleme Council of Chiefs and Eleme Local Government Council should collaborate to set up the Eleme Entrepreneurship Board. This board will focus on training and empowering entrepreneurs in Eleme, providing them with the necessary skills and resources to succeed.

2. Dedicated Budget for Entrepreneurship Development: The Eleme Local Government Council and companies operating in Eleme should allocate a special budget to support entrepreneurship development. This fund can be used to provide financial assistance, mentorship, and other resources to entrepreneurs.

3. Soft or Zero-Interest Loans: Entrepreneurs of Eleme origin should have access to soft or zero-interest loans, enabling them to secure funding for their businesses without being burdened by high interest rates.

4. Regular Training and Capacity Building: Consistent training programs should be organized for entrepreneurs operating in Eleme, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to grow their businesses.

5. Secure Environment for Investment: Ensuring the safety and security of all clans in Eleme will attract investors from outside, creating opportunities for economic growth and development.

6. Tax Relief: The government should offer tax relief to entrepreneurs in Eleme, reducing the financial burden and allowing them to reinvest their profits in their businesses.

BENEFITS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN ELEME

1. Job Creation: Entrepreneurship development will lead to the creation of jobs, reducing unemployment and improving the standard of living in Eleme.

2. Innovation and Creativity: Entrepreneurship fosters innovation and creativity, leading to new products, services, and solutions that benefit the community.

3. Reduced Crime and Insecurity: By providing opportunities for economic empowerment, entrepreneurship development can help reduce crime and insecurity in Eleme.

4. Improved Social Life: Entrepreneurship development will contribute to improved social life in Eleme, with more people contributing to the local economy and community.

5. Infrastructural Development: The growth of businesses in Eleme will lead to infrastructural development, including better roads, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions.

1. CHALLENGES FACING ENTREPRENEURS IN ELEME

- 1. Access to Finance:** Limited access to capital and funding is a major challenge facing entrepreneurs in Eleme, making it difficult to start and grow businesses.
- 2. Poor Infrastructure:** Inadequate infrastructure, including power supply, transportation, and communication networks, hinders business operations and increases costs.
- 3. Bureaucratic Red Tape:** Complex and lengthy regulatory processes, corruption, and red tape discourage entrepreneurship and hinder business growth.
- 4. Excess and Multiple Taxation:** Entrepreneurs in Eleme are often subjected to excessive and multiple taxation, increasing their financial burden and reducing their competitiveness.
- 5. Security Concerns:** Insecurity, including theft, vandalism, and terrorism, poses a significant challenge to entrepreneurs, affecting business operations and investment.
- 6. Limited Market Access:** Entrepreneurs in Eleme often struggle to access markets, both locally and internationally, limiting their customer base and revenue growth.

CHAPTER 5 CHRONICLES OF ELEME ENTREPRENEURS (CO-CONTRIBUTOR/RESEARCHER – MR. GIDEON SALOKA)

A Retrospect of Pioneering Entrepreneurs from 1900 to 1970

The Chronicles of Eleme Entrepreneurs is a record book of the pioneering minds who shaped the community's economic landscape from 1900 to 1980. This retrospect highlights the challenges, successes, and failures of Eleme's past entrepreneurs, serving as a learning curve for future generations. Over time, young people began to expect job opportunities mainly from multinational companies such as Dumez, which constructed the East–West Road in the 1970s; Agravocar, builders of the Onne Port; and firms like JGC and DBN, which handled the construction of the Port Harcourt Refinery. Others include NPA, NAFCON, INTELS Services, PHRC, EPCL, Indorama/IPMAN (PPMC Depot), Daewoo, Shell, RCC, Julius Berger, and MCC. Industrialization and colonization, while capable of creating jobs, can also weaken the values of self-reliance and independence. The strong entrepreneurial culture seen in Aba, Abia State, can be attributed to the absence of overwhelming multinational presence there. This raises an important question: before these numerous companies arrived in Eleme, how were our youths sustaining themselves and building their future? This session highlights the entrepreneurial history of Eleme before the rise of multinational companies, showcasing the men and women who built thriving farms, workshops, trading outfits, hotels, and craft-based businesses. It contrasts their self-reliance with the present-day dependence on multinational jobs, reflecting how industrial migration reshaped local attitudes toward work. These early entrepreneurs: farmers, traders, craftsmen, hoteliers, transporters, welders, entertainers, and more: created jobs, trained others, and sustained their families through determination and skill. Their motivations ranged from passion, necessity, mentorship, and exposure to other cultures, while common challenges included finance, debtors, and theft. Despite limitations, they built estates, trained children, introduced new industries, and laid the foundation for Eleme's economic identity. These chronicles, drawn from firsthand accounts and oral history, remind us of a period when ingenuity and hard work defined success in Eleme.

In the heart of Rivers State, Nigeria, Eleme stands out as a hub of innovation and entrepreneurship. This thriving community is home to classical entrepreneurs who drove change and addressed social issues. From education to healthcare, oil and gas to hospitality, these entrepreneurs created a positive impact in various sectors. Research reveals that their basic challenges while their investment could not stand till date includes lack of information, lack of

innovation, further training, lack of empowerment and support. Globally, some companies or businesses are over 1000 years and still functional till date: examples include Kongō Gumi (1,400+ years) and Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan (1,300+ years), while Nigerian examples include Moshood Kasim Textile Mills (80+ years) and UAC of Nigeria Plc (140+ years), showcasing enduring business legacies. Unfortunately, unlike these examples, none of the businesses founded by Eleme's pioneering entrepreneurs have survived to date, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for growth in the region.

Recommendations for Businesses to Outlive Owners in Eleme:

1. **Establish a Strong Corporate Governance Structure:** Define clear roles, responsibilities, and succession plans to ensure continuity.
2. **Build a Robust Business Model:** Develop a scalable and adaptable model that can withstand market fluctuations.
3. **Invest in Talent Development:** Nurture and retain skilled employees to ensure knowledge transfer and leadership continuity.
4. **Diversify and Innovate:** Expand product/services and stay ahead of industry trends to maintain competitiveness.
5. **Foster Strong Stakeholder Relationships:** Build trust with customers, suppliers, and partners to ensure long-term support.
6. **Identify and Develop an Intentional Successor: Appoint** a capable and committed leader to take over the business, ensuring a smooth transition and continued growth.

These entrepreneurs' journeys offer valuable lessons for aspiring entrepreneurs, showcasing resilience, innovation, and determination in the face of challenges. They are:

ELEME ENTREPRENEURS OF 1900 - 1970
LATE CHIEF L. O. LORD KENYA
(1902)

Late Chief L.O Lord Kenya loves singing. He is from Njuru Community in Eteo Eleme.

COCOA FARMING AND PALM PLANTATION

Chief Kenya was a famous cocoa farmer and a great business man in the line of palm plantation. He had a staff strength of 10 persons as at early 1930. His mentor was Chief Williams Chithey. He was able to build a house and train his children with his business.

Source: Obende Sunday Lord Kenya (Million)

LATE CHIEF (HON) SILVERNUS NGBE
(1914 - 1996)

Late Chief (Hon) Silvemus Ngbe hails from Ogoloma Akpajo, Eleme.

TRADING (PROVISION STORE, CEMENT AND CLOTHING)

Chief Ngbe was a famous trader with three different businesses. He had a staff strength of 3 persons as at early 1945. His motivation to go into business came as a result of his good intentions of wanting to train his children to greater height He was able to build a house and train his children with his business.

Source: Chief (Dr.) Sunday Nwolu Ngbe,

LATE CHIEF DENNIS ONU
(1909 - 1990)

Late Chief Dennis Onu is proudly from Onne, Eleme, Rivers State.

CRAFTMANSHIP AND WOOD CARVING

Chief Denis was a good wood carver in his time. He had a staff strength of 3 persons. His motivation came as a result of his love for art work.

His challenge in business was debtors and much artistical work

Source: Chief (Dr.) Oburijima Osaronu

LATE ENGR. (CHIEF) JIKE JIKE WAI JP
(1943 - 2003)

Late Engr. (Chief) Jike Jike Wai is from Agbonchia, Eleme, Rivers State.

WELDING AND FABRICATION

Chief Jike was a good and trusted welder in his time. He had a staff strength of 10 persons. He was motivated by the success of his friends and he made a great decision to be successful as well.

Source: Engr. Nyimeate Jike Wai

LATE EMERE JOSHUA CHU AKEN (LELEWA)
(1954 - 2011)

Late Emere Joshua Chu Aken is from Alode, Eleme, Rivers State.

HOTEL AND ENTERTAINMENT

Chief Joshua was a good entertainer in Eleme. He had a staff strength of 15 - 20 persons.

Chief Joshua noticed that outside Lagos there was no studio in Eleme and he decided to establish one in Eleme that was his motivation

Source: Mrs. Comfort Ejii Oneyeoma (Younger Sister)

LATE CHIEF EBENEZER KOLAH MIMI JP
(2000)

Late Chief Ebenezer Kolah Mimi loves reading, writing, sport and hails from Ebubu, Eleme, Rivers State.

CIVIL SERVANT (TEACHER)/AGRICULTURE

Chief Ebenezer was a good teacher in his time. He had a staff strength of 11 persons.

Source: Elder Ebenezer Chu Mimi

LATE CHIEF MAXWELL OMIMOR OBELE EPIE
(1905-1966)

Late Chief Maxwell Omimu Obele Epie is from Alesa, Eleme, Rivers State. His hobby was reading

REAL ESTATE

Chief Maxwell was a good entertainer in Eleme. He had a staff strength of 15 - 20 persons.

After building his personal house behind the present Fidelity Bank along Alesa road, the construction firm that built Port Harcourt refining company lease it. He let go his comfort as entrepreneur. He gave out his building to the white men.

Source: Chief Mbadee Maxwell Eppie

LATE CHIEF TITUS MGBERE POULTRY FARMER/HOTEL

Chief Titus is from Alesa Eleme. He is owner of Apolo guest house at Port Harcourt and the first branch by Eleme express.

He operated the biggest poultry farm in rivers state between the year 1980-1990. The poultry was situated on his vast land opposite refinery gate. He employed over 500 persons. He was selling eggs, feeds and chicken. He was a famous mac in Eleme and indeed a great entrepreneur per excellence.

LATE CHIEF BENSON NWAFOR DIBIAH
(1906 - 1991)

Late Chief Benson Nwafor Dibiah hails from Alesa Eleme and he loves songs.

PALM OIL PRODUCTION

Chief Benson palm oil was the best at Aba Abia State in his time and he had a total staff strength of 10 persons. He saw what was obtainable in other places and was not in Eleme and decided to bring it forward that was his motivation. He achieved in the early 1950 but building a story building

Source: Mr. Samuel Dibiah

LATE CHIEF DENNIS WUWU OBE
(Died 2004)

Late Chief Dennis Wuwu Obe is proudly from Alesa Eleme and he loves craftwork.

WELDER

Chief Denis was good at what he does and had a total staff strength of 12 persons. He diverted his school funds and learnt welding which he did not regret He achieved a lot and trained his children to their academic zenith.

Source: Mr. Roselyn Obe

LATE CHIEF COLOMBUS OKAZU (JP)
(Born 1946)

Late Chief Colombus Okazu (JP) is proudly from Ebusu Eleme and he loves helping people.

FARMER (YAM)

Chief Colombus had a very large yam barn with a total staff strength of 50 persons.

"If others can do it, then I can do better" this was his motivation.

He built estates, and trained all his children. This was his greatest achievement.

Source: Mrs. Gloria Okazu

LATE MADAM VICTORIA OLUCHANYA KAMALU
(1918 - 1986)

Late Madam Victoria Oluchanya Kamalu hails from Alode and she loves being social.

FOOD ITEMS AND FARM PRODUCE

Madam Victoria had a very productive and growing shop for food items.

Her challenge was debtors. She was a famous entrepreneur

Source: Rev. Canon. Dr. Abraham Olungwe

LATE CHIEF OBO OSARO NOGFA (O.O)

(1937-2009)

Late Chief Obo Osaro Ngofa hails from Aleto

HOTEL

The first hotel in Eleme was Mutaba Hotel at Aleto and MJO Hotel Ogale, although both hotels wasn't owned by Eleme Men. The first Eleme Man to Operate or established a hotel business was chief Ngofa. The name was Bolingo Hotel, staff strength was about 10 persons. He was famous in writing and social affairs.

Source: Researchers

LATE CHIEF NELSON OLAKAMITIA OSARO

(1993-1999)

Late Chief Nelson Olakamitia Osaro is proudly from Aleto - Eleme, Rivers State and he loves football so much.

PHARMACY

Chief Nelson a reliable pharmacist with original drugs and had a total staff strength of 5 persons. Due to the absent of medical orientation, he developed passion to save lives.

Source: Elder Arc. Osaro Francis

LATE HRH EMERE MICAH NGELALE

(1924 -1980)

Late HRH Emere Micah Ngelale is proudly from Ekporo clan of Eleme, Rivers State and he loves reading a lot.

FISHING AND FARMING

HRH Emere Micah was a great farmer and fisherman in his time and had a large scale capacity in his business with a total staff strength of 20 persons. Finance was a major challenge to his business but he strived and succeeded in training all his children.

Source: Chief Clement Ngelale

LATE ENGR. FRANK BORO KEKE JIKE (BORO KELE)

(1927-1987)

Late Engr. Frank Boro Keke Jike is from Alesa - Eleme, Rivers State and he loves research and going to concerts so much.

TRANSPORTER/FARMER/WELDER ETC

Engr. Frank had a big workshop for his business and had a total staff strength of 40 persons in numerous places during different jobs for him. He owned the biggest mechanic workshop in Rivers State. His aim was to make ends meet and empower people which he did.

Source: Mr. Obari Boro, Mr. Boro Godwin Amebe, Engr. Aazon .A. Boro

LATE ELDER ANDREW NYIEMEOWI OBE

(1872-1952)

Late Elder Andrew Nyiemeowi Obe is proudly from Ekporo Eleme and he loves fishing.

FARMING AND FISHING

Elder Andrew was good at what he does and had a total staff strength of 5 persons. He had passion for what he does and developed more on it to make a living from there. His major challenge was theft, in his farm land and his fishing net.

Source: Emere Samuel .S. Obe

LATE WUWU GBAA

(1940-2002)

Late Wuwu Gbaa is from Alesa Eleme.

HUNTING/ZOO

Wuwu Gbaa was good hunter and was assisted by his children. He owned the only zoo in Eleme as at 1980. It is his zoo that all the pupils and tourist usually visit. Although it wasn't commercialized, but he was deriving joy when families and visitors came to take a laze of the animals in his zoo. He saw and wanted to try which he did and was successful.

He was a man of peace, a teacher.

Source: Mr. Emmanuel Ogboe

LATE DICKSON KOIDA OLUKA

(Died 1988)

Late Dickson Koida Oluka is from Agbonchia - Eleme

BAKERY

Chief Dennis bakery was the best in his time and had a total staff strength of 20 persons. He has a unique brand of bread produced with palm wine (mi-eleme)

He was a sales boy with an Igbo man and he learnt from him and decided to open his which he succeeded in his line of business.

He achieved a lot, bought lands, build houses, trained his children etc.

Source: Chief Oluka. W. Kodia

LATE MR. ISAAC OSAROEKE OS A ROM BA

(1913-1963)

Late Mr. Isaac Osaroeke Osaromba is proudly from Alode - Eleme and he loves craftwork.

PALM KERNEL TRADING

Chief Dennis was good at what he does and had a total staff strength of 14 persons.

His challenge in his business was mostly transportation of his product being palm kernel. He was a famous trader.

He achieved a lot and trained his children.

Source: Rev. Engr. L. N. Nwafor

LATE CHIEF EZEKEIL GOMBA NWOLU

(1937-1999)

Late Chief Ezekiel Gomba Nwolu is proudly from Ogale Eleme and he loves football a lot.

ELECTRICIAN AND FARMER

Chief Denis was progressive in his business and had a total staff strength of 10 persons. He trained his children and some other persons from his business.

Source: Comr. Olai Gomba Nwolu



**LATE CHIEF OLUKA MIMI JOSEPH AMADI
(Died 1997)**

Late Chief Oluka Nmimi Joseph Amadi hails from Aleto Eleme and he loves driving.

TRANSPORTATION (AMADI & SONS)

Chief Oluka was good at what he does.

He diverted his school funds and learnt welding which he did not regret

As a soldier he came home bought a bus and started using it for transportation, and made great profit from it.

He has buildings here and there from his transportation business

Source: Mrs. Edina Yeye Amadi

**LATE CHIEF DR. ALALE NGETOO (AJAX)
(1947-2017)**

Late Chief Ajax is proudly from Alode - Eleme and he loves singing.

ENTERTAINMENT

Chief Ajax was good at what he does, he was into local music and had a total staff strength of 20-25 persons. He released series of albums and it was selling at Aba, Port Harcourt, Eleme and Bori as at 1975-1990 He made ends meet from that source that was his achievement.

**LATE CHIEF SALOKA OLUKA NWAJI
(1903-1983)**

Late Chief Saloka Oluka Nwaji is proudly from Alode Eleme and he loves craftwork.

ANIMAL REARING/TRADING

Chief Oluka was good at what he does and had a total staff strength of 25 persons.

He wanted to be the best among his equals and that was his motivation.

Source: Mrs. Blessing Odema Saloka



LATE ALFRED NWOSU NGESIA
(1945-2014)

Late Alfred Nwosu Ngesia is proudly from Akpajo Eleme and he loves football very much.

SERVICES BUSINESS

Mr. Alfred was good at what he does and had a total staff strength of 15 persons. He loves helping people. He was a great business man with innovative skills His major challenge was finance.

Source: Okaka Nwosu

LATE HRH CHIEF AMOS KATTEY AKARAOLU
(1902-1984)

Late HRH Chief Amos Kattey Akaraolu proudly from Alode – Eleme loved reading newspaper and he was a successful trader.

PALM KERNEL MERCHANT/SUPERMARKET

Chief Amos was doing well in his business and had a total staff strength of 7 persons. His motivation was drawn from Igbo traders and he also succeeded He trained his children from his business.

Source: Sir, Gbute Kattey (JP)

LATE CHIEF DANIEL CHINWI OSAROLUKA
(1905-1985)

Late Chief Daniel Chinwi Osaroluka hails from Akpajo Eleme and he loves working hard in his line of business

PALM KERNEL/FARMING

He was notable for his palm kernel trading. Chief Daniel was good at what he does and was greatly supported by his family members.

He achieved a lot, built houses, helped people at lot and most importantly trained his children.

Source: Chief Adolphus Osarochinwi

MADAM OSILA EJOR OLAKA
(1930 - 2003)

Madam Osila hails from Alesa Eleme and she loves telling stories

SNUFF (TOBACCO)

She was the major dealer of snuff in Nchia community as at her time. The consumption of snuff was very high and hers was the best. She had over 200 buyers per day with staff strength of 3 persons.

Source - Mrs. Jane Oluka

MADAM MARY CHUWAYA LALEOKA NGEI DIBIAH
(1922 - 2002)

Madam Mary is proudly from Alesa - Eleme, she loves telling stories and she was into Palm kernel oil production. Her business was located in Alesa - Eleme her hometown. She was good in her field and produced at least 20 litres of palm kernel oil every day. Her family contributed to her zeal for business, which helped in motivating her.

CHAPTER 6

TOP 20 ENTREPRENEURS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ELEME AS AT 2020.

There is a common saying that "Eleme people are not good in business," but this narrative has changed. Today, many sons and daughters of Eleme are making remarkable strides in various business sectors. This survey of Eleme's Top 20 Entrepreneurs highlights individuals who own or operate private companies with an estimated direct and indirect staff strength of 100 persons or more. Eleme, a vibrant community in Rivers State, Nigeria, continues to nurture visionary and classical entrepreneurs who are driving meaningful change. From education and healthcare to oil and gas, hospitality, agriculture, logistics, and more, these innovators are addressing key social and economic challenges while shaping the future of the community. In this list, entrepreneurs are ranked not by wealth, but by staff strength, a key indicator of business growth, job creation, and organizational impact. Below are some of the standout entrepreneurs in Eleme who are contributing significantly to the area's development and leaving a lasting mark on the community.

| S/No | Names | Community | Total Staff Strength | Name of Company | Nature of Business |
|------|------------------------|-----------|----------------------|------------------|---|
| 1. | Chief Apollos Chu | Ogale | 3000 | Anasemi | Oil and Gas |
| 2. | Hon Marcus Nle Ejii | Eteo | 600 | Oak Haven | Hotel & Transportation |
| 3. | Senator Olaka Nwogu | Alesa | 500 | Landmark | Hotel & General Contracts |
| 4. | Hon Onorwi Ngofa | Aleto | 400 | Aachuss | Transportation/ General Contracts |
| 5. | Hon Shai Olu | Onne | 350 | Omari | Production & General Contracts |
| 6. | Prince Sunny Nkpe | Alesa | 350 | Wesham | Oil and Gas sector/Contracts |
| 7. | Prince Omema Osaronu | Onne | 300 | Jimaco | General Contracts |
| 8. | Com. Jerry Ojiogo | Alesa | 200 | Jerry Ltd | Hotel & Engineering |
| 9. | Engr. Efor Francis Obe | Alode | 200 | F.O Digital | Civil Engineering |
| 10. | Dr. Sunny Obele | Agbonchia | 170 | Sonabel | Hospital & General Contracts |
| 11. | Engr. Philip Obelley | Alesa | 170 | Clenphil | Engineering/ General Fabrication |
| 12. | Hon Fineman Onungwe | Akpajo | 130 | Zivannah | Transportation/ General contracts |
| 13. | Chief Gomba Okanje | Aleto | 121 | ED John | Agriculture/ General Contracts |
| 14. | Prince Awalanta Ejire | Agbonchia | 120 | Awalanta | General Contracts/Brewery distribution |
| 15. | Chief Bajor Onungwe | Alesa | 117 | Eppie Enterprise | Electrical/Contracts |
| 16. | Dr. Obele Joseph | Alesa | 115 | Sky Linkers | Oil and Gas |
| 17. | Mrs. Rosemary Ngelale | Ekporo | 107 | Ranjenny's | Educational/ General Contracts |
| 18. | Precious Alale Dibiah | Onne | 103 | Eke Eta | General Contracts/Marine |
| 19. | Chief Efor .N. Efor | Onne | 102 | Manderecom | Estate/ General Contracts |
| 20. | Engr. Pius Nyimeone | Ebubu | 101 | Pona | Engineering/Fabrication |

CHAPTER 7

THE BIGGEST SETBACK TO COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT IN ELEME

Business and commerce activities was at it's peak in Eleme until the year 1987 at late Sunday Abbey at Cana Street Alesa Eleme when a radio amplifier got missing in the compound occupied with many strangers. The youths in the area decided to embark on house to house search for the

missing amplifier before it was found hidden in the foam of one of the tenant by name Mr. Friday Ochumofu. Mr. Ochumofu opened his foam and kept the stolen amplifier in between the foam on his bed. The angry youths beat him mercilessly and then took him to the palace of the acting chief of Alesa by name Late Chief Dick Obelley. The council of Chiefs gave a ruling as the custom of Eleme demands, that whoever is found guilty of stealing should be stripe naked, made to walk naked around the community and finally sat on short plantain at the town square for all members of the community see the thief.

The naked parading of Friday Ochumofu on that fateful day was on Sunday. Meanwhile his immediate was a Naval officer at Onne Naval college. There was no communication gachets as at then, however he got to know through oral communication from his family member or a friend. He then mobilised a full truck load of navy officers in a navy blue colour open up truck, over 50 Naval officers fully armed to storm Alesa community. They arrived through the refinery junction with the objective of rescuing the naked Friday Ochumofu from the angry youths performing the culture as it is required for a thief. They started shooting sporadically towards his residential apartment and the town square in search of him and everyone in the community was on the run, Meanwhile some angry youths were throwing stones at the fully armed Naval officers when they eventually saw Friday Ochumofu and rescued him to their van. After rescuing him, the Naval officers were resisted by the angry youths by blocking all the axis route from the community and throwing stones on them, the navy officers in view of forcing themselves out of the community became aggressive and started shooting towards the angry youths. Unfortunately the bullet hit a 50 years Mrs Grace Nguluka who was standing at the front of her husband's compound and she died immediately in the pool of blood. The news of her death spark youth restiveness following the fact that her husband Chief Nguluka Amasi was the chief land priest of the community and a man loved by the community. At that point, the Naval officers have left the community and the anger grew to unbearable degree. The youths in an helpless situation stormed the growing Eleme market for day light general looting. The looting items comprises bags of food items, electrical items, electronics, cottons, machines, clothes, plastic items etc. The looting emptied the market after which the market was set ablaze.

It is important to note all the items looted belongs to strangers operating in the Eleme market. It was painful how the traders stood helpless to watch the day looting and seeing their shops on fire after the looting. Most worrisome is the fact Mr Friday Ochumofu or his younger brother the Naval officer never owned any business or shop in the Eleme market. The news of the looting and intentional setting the market ablaze made headline news on all the traditional media channels as at then. The news was a serious threat to new investors in Eleme even as most affected persons relocated outside Eleme to start life all over. That incidence requires the people of Eleme to appeal to living and dead victims of that 1987 market looting. It was the biggest setback to commerce development in Eleme.

THE SECOND BIGGEST SETBACK TO COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT IN ELEME

The Eleme cultism war in 2018 to 2021 between Mba Boy from Ebubu, Lord Ben from Alesa, Papa from Aleto and many others was a significant setback to commerce development in Eleme. The violent clash between the cult groups led to a wave of fear and insecurity, driving away investors and traders from the area. Mba Boy was eventually gunned down by security operatives in a joint operation at a hotel in Owerri, Imo State, along with some of his commanders The cult war disrupted economic activities, led to the closure of businesses, and caused a decline in Eleme economic growth. The insecurity and instability made it challenging for locals to conduct business,

and the area's reputation was tarnished. The cult crisis involved several kidnappings, murders, and other violent crimes, including the killing of Reverend Lawrence Eleru at his church in Ebubu. The cult war was a painful reminder of the devastating impact of cultism on communities and economies. The aftermath of the incident led to a decline in economic activities, and the area struggled to recover from the impact of the cult war. It highlighted the need for peaceful resolution of conflicts and the importance of promoting a culture of peace and tolerance. Cultism in Nigeria is often linked to poverty, inequality, and the influence of politicians who use cult groups for their own gain. To combat this, the government and law enforcement agencies are working to strengthen security and address the root causes of cultism. Investment naturally flows to places where the environment is conducive, much like a bee and honey relationship. A conducive business environment is like a magnet, attracting investments and opportunities to Eleme. In Eleme, creating a favorable business climate can draw in investors, just like bees flock to honey. By fostering a supportive ecosystem, Eleme can become a hub for entrepreneurship and growth. A business-friendly environment can turn Eleme into a thriving economic center, benefiting locals and investors alike. With the right conditions and strong counseling, Eleme can empower entrepreneurs to make informed decisions and navigate challenges, ultimately sweetening the deal and reaping the rewards of investment and development. As a community, we need to stand together against cultism, kidnapping, and other criminal activities. These actions harm our people, ruin lives, and damage our reputation. Instead, let's focus on building a brighter future for ourselves and our loved ones. Let's choose a path of positivity, respect, and kindness. We can achieve greatness when we work together and support each other. Say no to violence and yes to a better life.

CHAPTER 8

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: TOOLS FOR CHANGING LIVES IN ELEME

Social entrepreneurship is not profit driven, but with passion for social change and making impact, giving back to the society, often focuses on helping vulnerable groups like the less privileged, orphans, elderly, sick, poor, widows, and homeless in Eleme. These groups face unique challenges, and social entrepreneurs develop innovative solutions to address their needs, promote inclusion, and create positive change.

Ways to help social Entrepreneurs in Eleme:

1. Donating resources or services
2. Sharing skills or expertise
3. Raising awareness about social issues
4. Advocating for policy changes
5. Supporting social entrepreneurship initiatives
6. Offering scholarships for education
7. Providing access to free medical care or drugs
8. Donating food items and clothes
9. Building or donating houses for the homeless
10. Utilizing tools like crowdfunding, social media, and technology to amplify impact

Challenges of social entrepreneurs in Eleme:

1. Limited funding
2. Difficulty in scaling impact
3. Limited access to networks and resources
4. Balancing financial sustainability with social impact

5. Measuring and evaluating social impact
6. Lack of support from government, corporations, and community leaders

Five recommendations for consolidating social entrepreneurship in Eleme:

1. Develop sustainable business models
2. Build partnerships with stakeholders
3. Leverage technology to increase reach and efficiency
4. Focus on measurable outcomes and impact
5. Foster a community of practice and collaboration among social entrepreneurs
6. Elites, companies, organisations, community groups, leaders, and chiefs should consistently visit and support social entrepreneurship centres in Eleme, to amplify impact and create lasting change.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVES AND CENTRES IN ELEME

1. POOR OF LOVE CRUCIFIED MISSIONARY, ALETO ELEME

The Poor of Love Crucified Ministry, also known as the Poor Sisters of Jesus Crucified and the Sorrowful Mother, was founded by Father Alphonsus Maria C.P. on June 21, 1924, in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Inspired by the suffering of Lithuanian immigrants in the U.S., he envisioned women serving the poor and spreading hope through Christ and Mary.

The Aleto branch of the ministry, founded by Rev. Sister Chika Maria Okpala in 2001, is located at No. 15 East–West Road, Aleto-Farm Road, Eleme. The orphanage, completed in 2005, has a two-story building with a 75-child capacity, offices, and a conference hall. It is managed by the founder alongside five junior sisters, with male staff handling security, maintenance, and transport. Operations rely entirely on donations from individuals, government, and other supporters.

Impact:

The orphanage provides free services to the poorest, restores hope, reduces crime among parentless children, and trains them for a better future. Residents include orphans, the needy, abandoned, and destitute. Sponsors include government officials, individual donors, and corporate partners.

2. DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY, ELEME

Founded on March 16, 1974, the St. Louis Community of the Daughters of Charity in Eleme is a Roman Catholic missionary organization. Established by Saint Vincent de Paul and St. Louis de Marillac, it operates on 16 plots near Nehia General Hospital, Ogale Eleme. The provincial superior is Sr. Gloria Aniebonam DC.

Mission & Activities:

The Daughters of Charity serve the homeless, orphans, destitute, and abandoned, focusing on evangelization, development, and personal formation. Their apostolate includes visiting the sick and elderly, counseling, rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, and pastoral ministry. Guided by the motto "Charitas Christi Urget Nos" (The charity of Jesus crucified urges us), they display Christ's love through practical and spiritual service.

Impact:

The organization has contributed significantly to Eleme's social and economic growth by providing:

- Shelter for the vulnerable

- Education (e.g., Ascension High School)
- Healthcare and nursing
- Support for women, children, and the elderly
- Pastoral care, retreats, and spiritual guidance

CHAPTER 9

SPECIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT VEHICLE: YOUTH BUSINESS SCHOOL (YBS) IN ELEME

ABOUT YBS

YBS is officially registered by CAC as "YOUTH BUSINESS INNOVATIVE CLASS" with Registration number RC1568234. It's a free Entrepreneurship Development center for young entrepreneurs, with optional certification from Ken Saro Wiwa Polytechnic Bori for a fee. Leadership: The visioner and Managing Director of YBS is Dr. Joseph Obele from Alesa Eleme, driven by his passion for youth development.

OBJECTIVES OF YBS

YBS focuses on Business Growth and Expansion. The vision is to teach, coach, and share info to boost business growth. Over the past nine years, YBS has trained over 25,000 persons who are now employers of labor. Breakdown of trainees: 20% indigenes of Eleme, 30% from other parts of Rivers State, and 50% from other Nigerian states - despite Eleme undermining the numerous adverts and publicities. Trainees have covered areas like ICT, Engineering, Technical, fashion, beauty, catering, Mechanical, Business skills, Agricultural, marketing, agro-processing, industrial chemical production, etc. Training centre is the 16 modern classrooms blocks donated by the King of Eleme, HRM Emere Philip Obele, at Aleto Model Secondary School. YBS is officially registered and recognised by the Rivers State Ministry of Youth Development as an Entrepreneurship development vehicle. They're partnering with groups like Rivers State Ministry of Youth Development for Behavioral Modification Training.

LEADERSHIP QUOTES

"The youths you abandoned to build infrastructure will eventually destroy all the infrastructure in the future, but the youths you build today, will eventually build all the infrastructure you couldn't build while you were building the youths" (Obele, 2016)

"A nation that is not building industries will eventually build prison facilities" (Obele, 2017)

POTENTIALS OF YBS

1. Empowering youth with skills to start their own businesses
2. Reducing unemployment rates in Eleme and surrounding areas
3. Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in various industries
4. Providing practical training and hands-on experience
5. Creating a network of successful entrepreneurs and business leaders

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adoption of YBS by Eleme chiefs, companies, and government as a special entrepreneurship development vehicle for Eleme.
2. Support and sponsorship of YBS to enhance its growth and impact.
3. Establishment of a permanent site to make it a monotechnic, offering OND and HND in Entrepreneurship in Eleme.

4. Designation of YBS as the sole monotechnic in Niger Delta, located in Eleme, specializing in entrepreneurship development.