

POLITICIANS AND CONSTITUENCY PROJECTS IN NIGERIA A CASE STUDY OF NSUKKA/IGBO-EZE SOUTH

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Abstract

Majority of politicians are seen or regarded as looters of our economy and the brain behind Nigerians woes as it concerns the dwindling of our economy. It is believed that just a few are in the right track to bring the dividends of democratic governance to their various constituencies. Some corrupt politicians see it as an avenue to embezzle public funds thereby making the constituents underdeveloped and impoverish them the more. Though this is also an avenue where the constituents use to either recall, or vote against their representatives. It also serves as a score card. The representative of Nsukka/Igbo-Eze South in the hallow chamber, has been there for his people as his constituency project is felt from all the constituents. One of the unique features of our democratic journey is the concept of constituency projects; the aim is to spread development to all the nooks and crannies of the country, through the intervention of the people's representatives in the national House of Assembly. It has been noticed during the "ENDSARS" that some selfish representatives be it Rep member or the senator do stock what is meant to empower their constituents as part of Federal Government's efforts to alleviate poverty. The Independence Corrupt Practice and other related offences Commission (ICPC) should sit up to punish all the corrupt members so that it will serve as a deterrent to others. The researcher adopted the use of phenomenological method in this work.

Keywords: Politicians, Representative, Projects, Constituency, Nsukka/Igbo-Eze South.

Introduction

Nigeria government operates bi-cameral legislative system which consists of two houses; the senate and the House of Representatives. The house of senate comprises a total number of 109 senators while the house of representatives amounts to 360 members. According to Udefuna et al Tunji (2013), the concept of the constituency projects was first introduced during the early administration of former President Obasanjo in 1999" p.647. This was in line with the demands of their constituents in order to bring development to the grass root. Another reason behind constituency projects is to empower rural dwellers in order to alleviate poverty within the constituents. Though a good number of greedy politicians see it as an avenue to enrich themselves or to hoard the commodities to campaign for next election.

Hon. Dr. Pat Asadu is a household name not only in Nsukka/Igboeze-South, Enugu North, but Enugu State in general. He is the man representing Nsukka/Igbo-Eze South in the hallow chamber since 2007 till this 9th Assembly. His constituency projects and empowerments are seen many places within and outside his constituents and majority of people have felt his

impact as a good representative and yearning for his higher position in order to enjoy more dividend of his government. His good works are speaking for him as he is dedicated and ever ready to do more for the good of the poor masses.

On December 2019, Governor Ugwuanyi of Enugu State inaugurated a 200-seater e-library furnished and donated to the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, UNN, by the member representing Nsukka/Igbo-Eze South Federal Constituency, Dr. Pat Asadu (Vanguard, 2019). Governor Ugwuanyi commends Asadu for the initiative aimed at improving the standard of education in the University. This is the first of its kind of a Faculty in the University having such and this has reduced the suffering of the students clustering the library in order to write their exams. It is a welcomed development not only to the students but to the administration. On 20th December 2020, Hon. Pat Asadu distributed 10 Toyota Sienna Car, over 300 motorcycles, electricity generator sets, assorted wrapper materials, branded exercise books to his constituents. This is in line to empower rural dwellers in order to alleviate poverty. According to Asogwa in Okafor, (2020), "poverty is an abject state of being in which an individual is incapable of utilizing resources around him to improve himself economically, socially, politically or otherwise" (2020) p.19. With these kinds of empowerments, individuals can stand on their own to make both ends meet. They can establish mini businesses which can help them depend on their own instead of depending on someone.

However, according to Dr. Kigbu the team leader doctors on move Africa, Asadu's free medical outreach which comprises major and minor surgeries, eye treatment, dentistry, general surgeries among others, adding that the outreach dispense drugs and carry out HIV, Prostrate cancer diseases, high blood pressure HBP tests, which is done twice a year are not restricted to only his constituents but to all and sundry. He explained that the constituents have benefitted tremendously for the past seven years, saying that in each outreach about 6000 patients receive free medical attention while over 159 patients were operated on different surgery ranging from hernia, goiter, fibroid and glaucoma. This particular one is most valued as it brings back lives to many poor people who could not afford hospital bills. Many even store sickness in them pending when Asadu will conduct his routine free medical outreach. In the same vein, the seasoned law maker has built new health centre like; Eketé Model Hospital, Ovoko, Unadu, and Nru etc. He has rehabilitated and have been supplying drugs to UNTH Obukpa annex, and Ovoko. During Covid-19 pandemic, he gave out palliative to his constituents.

Nsukka zone in general lacks good drinking water which Asadu has been fixing. He has drilled many boreholes at St Peter Anglican Church, Agu Amagu, Umugbabe, all in Ovoko and Ugwu sister ins Obukpa etc. Work is ongoing at Akpa Edem. There are some new drilled solar boreholes at Orié Igbo-Eze Market, Nkwo Ibagwa market, Achara village hall, Nsukka etc. He is installing solar energy to some boreholes at Agu Amaja Ovoko, and Eketé Development Centre etc.

Moreover, in the area of education, he has built brand new school blocks at Boys' Secondary School, Ovoko, Community Primary school, Ovoko Ajuona, Township School II Ibagwa-Aka, Otakara Primary School, Ibagwa-Aka, Community Primary School, Leja, Community Primary School, Eha-Alumona, Joint Primary School, Edem Ani, Itchi Township School III etc. He also

supplied sports equipment and furniture and to huge number of primary and secondary schools. He single handedly rehabilitated the National Open University Centre at Opi (Kaineme, 2019). Hon Dr. Pat funded the rehabilitation of the dilapidated structures, spending tens of millions of his hard earned money in the process (Ezugwu, 2017). He has offered full and free scholarships to selected indigent students up to tertiary education, both within and outside the country. He personally constructed a one kilometer road at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, a Catholic University and the first Catholic University in Africa. The road was named after him. He was later awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree, Biochemistry (Honors Causa), in the same University. He also played a vital role to Federal College of Dental Technology and Therapy, Enugu which they conferred him another honorary doctorate degree on community development (Honors causa), that earned him that ubiquitous title of Rt. Hon. Dr. Dr. Pat Asadu.

There cannot be effective development in any given area without electricity as many businesses cannot move on effectively without light. Even in our different homes, we cannot be comfortable with light. Any community, town or city without light is in darkness and the people of that area cannot progress effectively. Hon Pat Asadu have brought succor to many villages and towns as he supplied many transformers to people of Eke Ovoko, Agu Amaja Ovoko, Ekoyi Iheaka, etc. Many streets and major roads within his constituency are littered with straight lights which enables many to move about freely even in the night. A good examples are behind Zik's flats, Beach junction Nsukka, Obollo road, Nsukka, round Nsukka main market, Ibagwa-Aka town, Ovoko Uno and Agu respectively, Itchi, etc. It scares miscreants aware thereby helping the security agencies to checkmate the activities of criminal in the night within the zone.

In the area of human capital development, he has empowered many youths with federal jobs, of which my humble self is a major benefactor. Some of the little people that I can lay my finger at that have benefitted from him are as follows;

1. Dr. Asogwa Emmanuel = Lecturer Religion and Cultural Studies, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, he gave me brand new motorcycle and car etc.
2. Chinedu Ugwuanyi = Nsukka Prison Service.
3. Agbo Maxwell = Nsukka Prison Service.
4. Dr. Ugwu Chinyere = Lecturer UNN.
5. Onyeka Ugwuanyi = Lecturer UNEC
6. Halilu Sule = UNN Staff.
7. Christian Ezeah = UNN Staff
8. Ugwu Romanus = Civil Defence, Orji River
9. Fabian Ozioko = NAFDAC Awka
10. Agada Esomchi = Federal Road Safety, Imo Command
11. Onah Pauline N, = Federal Character Commission Enugu
12. Ugwu Ezekiel E, = Water resources, Abuja.
13. Eze Emeka = National Planning Commission, Abuja.
14. Ezea Chinedu = Nigeria Waterways, Imo State
15. Urama Fidelis = Nigeria Civil Defence
16. Odo Onyeka = NAFDAC, Imo State

17. Ugwu Evans = NPA
18. Amoke Udoka (Mrs) = NPA
19. Odo Ekene = Lecturer, UNN
20. Ugwu Ada = NISRAL

In skill acquisition, he has trained and empowered more than 40,000 youths, women and men in various skills.

On July 2015, Asadu sent 100 youths of his constituents to the Federal Institute of Industrial Research Oshodi (FIRO) who were trained as farmers as part of empowerment programme (Nzomiwu, 2019). The empowerment has been a continuous process as another one took place on December 2019 where Asadu trained 200 women, youths on agriculture value chains (Ikem, 2019). In December 2018, about 200 youths from his constituents were sent to Federal College of fisheries and Marine Technology, Lagos to be trained in Fisheries and were also given some funds to start up the business. Also in December 2020, he embarked on strategic and massive empowerment programme which about 2,000 people of his constituents were trained in the areas of fish farming and piggery (Chimerue, 2020). As at February 3 and 4, 2022, many groups were being trained respectively at Adada house, and Computer lab at University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Some were trained on modern business while others were trained on how to operate computer.

Furthermore, on road construction within the constituency, he has been up and doing. On December 2020, governor Ugwuanyi of Enugu state, commissioned some road projects which included the Agbamere Road in Eha Alumona, Nsukka Local Government Area; the Inland Road Phase 1 of Ibagwa-Aka at Igbo-Eze South Council Area, Umugbabe Ovoko Ohagu, Uhunowere road project, also in Igbo-Eze South Local Government Area. A foundation stone was laid for the construction of Nru Road in Nsukka Local Government Area (Vanguard, 2020). In February, 2020, he gave ₦100M intervention fund for the construction of Lejja road linking Obino (<https://journalist101.com/2020/02/27/hon-pat-asadu-n100m-constituency-lejja-road-project-gov-ugwuanyi-legacy-administration/>). Other roads completed are: Nguru road, Edem road, Eke Ovoko road, Obimo road etc. There are some ongoing road projects which include; Uhunowere/Iheakpu-Awka; Iheaka/Ovoko Agu; Ovoko/Igbo-Ano hospital Orba; Itchi/Nkalagu Obukpa etc.

The Effects of Good Representation to the Constituents

A central issue in the quest for Nigeria's greatness is leadership selection. Many years ago, the great Philosopher, Plato, argued that "as a just and healthy person is governed by knowledge and reason, a just society must be under the control of society's most cultivated and best informed minds, its lovers of wisdom. Hon. Dr. Pat Asadu, member representing Nsukka/Igbo-Eze South, Federal Constituency, Chairman House of Representatives Committee on Waterways is a good representative per excellent. He has made his constituents feel the impact/presence of governance of federal government. There is an adage that says, life is wealth, Asadu has reinvigorated his constituents through routine free medical outreach. He has brought life to many especially the poor rural dwellers. The free medical outreach is done to achieve a healthy constituency. There are minor health issues that people are not paying attention to, but with medical check-up like this, they check their vitals, their blood pressure, their cholesterol level and their blood sugar level; it can detect certain things in the

offing and then they are able to address those issues so that they do not escalate to death. That is basically the objective of the free medical outreach (Olukoya, 2021). The medical outreach conducts major and minor surgeries, eye treatment, dentistry, general surgeries among others. Drugs are being dispensed and carryout HIV, Prostrate cancer disease, high blood pressure (HBP) test etc. some major surgeries like fibroid which cost about ₦1million, while insulector ₦3million among others, all these cannot be funded by one person alone more especially the less privileged in the constituents (<https://newscentering.com>). The recent free medical outreach done last year 2021; about 7,000 patient benefited and 150 patients were operated on different surgery ranging from hernia, goiter, fibroid and glaucoma, all these cost a lot of money and the funds are saved and used for business or to solve other problems. The lives saved during this period cannot be quantified. About fifty thousand lives has been saved during and after the medical outreach.

Furthermore, there have been numerous empowerment programme within the constituency which have helped the less privileged to move forward in the society. There has been training of men and women in modern fish farming, piggery and poultry and mechanized farming. The beneficiaries were given start up funds to forge ahead to sustain their livelihood. In some time, 2018/2019, the rep member relived parents from his constituents by picking the bills for the text books for the 1,000 students in core subjects of English language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Information Technology (ICT) and more so, he paid their WAEC/NECO fees (Nzomiwu, 2018). This was a big relieve from parents as many find it very difficult to register their child/wards, even some unfortunate one at times failed to register because of lack of funds. This has led to many drop out from school and thereby denied the children right to acquire education. Through through Pat Asadu foundation, many have benefited by traveling abroad and even many have gained scholarship into the university.

In the area of road connectivity, the multiplier effect of the road network is immense as agrarian communities benefited within the constituency are already basking in the euphoral of having good road network. One significant thing about these road projects is that they have been unattended to for several decades, thus making the inhabitants literary alienated from government and development. The absence of motorable road networks in these areas have also made life unbearable to the inhabitants as their main source of living, which is farming, cannot thrive in the absence of good road networks (Jonalist101.com). The farmers are known for the production of pepper (Ose Nsukka), garden egg, yam, cocoyam, banana, plantain, cassava, palm oil/kernel, etc. They are not only farmers but also business tycoons. Good roads easy transportation and the consumption of goods and services, in addition to playing a crucial role in good production and distribution (Jucoby, 2000). Good road leads to more development and thereby attract more investors in the communities. The condition of the road before now has been a death trap, a lot of accident normally occurred that leads to death or other minor injuries but with the good road, it has reduced accidents.

The Role of the Church

From Nigerian's setting, politics cannot be distance from the church, as both inter marry each other. There is no politician that did not come out from one church or the other, unless the politician falls down from heaven. There is a great role of the church in delivering the constituency projects to the constituents. When church is mentioned, it is not a particular denomination but All Christian Practical Prayer Band (ACPPB) played a vital role followed

by Anglican Church, Catholics, Pentecostal even the Muslim etc. some Christians and widows pray and fast for the rep member as a Christian and a believer on the cross, he has believed in the bible and try to help the poor. He has demonstrated courage in repositioning values in terms with Christian teachings. It was the implementation of being a Christian that he received Grassroots man of the year award during the leadership scorecard lecture and award night in 2019. It was during the award night that Hon. Pat Asadu made these “songs of Solomon”,

“If I die helping the widows, if I die feeding the orphans, if I die clothing the poor, if I die consoling the prisoners, some of them who did nothing, I died a good death.

If I die empowering the youths, who because of Zik’s great work were able to access tertiary education but have no chance to get into the economic structure, especially in Nsukka which has been left behind by other parts of Enugu State, I died a good death.

There are great roles of the church in delivering the constituency projects to the constituents as some corrupt politician divert them, or keep them in stock to be used during next campaign. To God be the glory that ICPC at times do the needful by tracking the bad ones down. It is God’s will that good politicians should receive communal facilities like, portable water, electricity, access road, security, caring for the poor and the needy etc, that cannot be accessed through individual efforts. A good Christian in politician must be in charge to make sure the dividend of democracy is delivered to the grassroots. The impact of good governance is no more felt as the time of the old as good Christians are shying away from politics claiming to be a dirty game. The church is called to build a just and equitable society, a society that cares for all its citizens, especially for those that are weak and marginalized; a democratic society that respects our constitution, the rule of law that guards against misuse of power (Okunoye 2012). The Christians should partake in politics to make it clean and for the good of mankind. According to Obuchukwu, (2021) if the church and Christians were actively involved in the affairs of the public and political governance, a lot of ills will be connected than they are ordinarily in Nigeria of nowadays (p.47). The church should not only pray for good governance alone but participated in the day to day politics but to correct the abnormalities created by the corrupt politicians. With this recent political dispensation and quest for 2023 general election, the Anglican clergy disgraced the incoming deputy governor and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), rejected money given to them as cola. According to (Odu, 2022), the Nsukka Anglican Diocese rejected ₦2,000,000 “kola” money given to them by the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP) in Enugu State, that it was against the principles of the church. This singular act is a welcome development towards actualizing good government. Other churches should borrow a leaf from them not only actualizing good government but to restore sanity in the society.

Conclusion

House of representative serves as a link between federal government and the constituents while the constituency projects are seen as dividend of democracy to the masses. The constituents of Nsukka/Igbo-Eze South have felt the presence of federal government projects attracted by their son, Hon. Dr. Pat Asadu. This is as a result of good representation cum an

ambassador of a good Christian. There has not been any part of the constituency that have not benefitted in one way or the other. Hon Dr. Pat Asadu is an Iroko tree where the birds come to either eat or have rest. If you have not benefitted from his numerous empowerment, road, federal jobs, or his numerous medical outreach which has treated over fifty thousand patients, etc.

As a high power member of House of Representative, he has attracted a lot of projects.

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