A full-page portrait of Alice Ukoko, a smiling woman with her hair styled in braids topped with a large, dark green, shiny fabric headwrap. She is wearing a white, off-the-shoulder, lace-trimmed top and a dark green wrap with gold and purple floral patterns. The background is a warm, brownish-gold gradient with a faint, larger-scale portrait of her face.

Profiling Alice Ukoko

HR. Hon. (on)
Graduate Member IPM (Nigeria)
Founder/Director
Women of Nigeria International
Ambassador for Peace

Dedication

Profiling Alice Ukoko is dedicated to:

The Almighty God for His Divine protection and constant Direction.

My children who suffered untold financial inconveniences as a result of my devotion to humanity and Nigeria.

My granddaughter whose arrival in 2005 stir in me an urgent desire to see the result of my efforts to create a peaceful world for my future generations which she represents.

The British Government that gave me an opportunity to develop my potentials through formal education and hence the person that I continue to aspire to.

Foreword

“Profiling Alice Ukoko” was first published as an insight to my work in 2004 following popular demand. One thousand copies were distributed free during 2004 to Nigerians in Nigeria and in the Diaspora. This opportunity for many proved very valuable as I listened to some associates, youth leaders in Nigeria talk about my work as if they were with me from the start. This is to me an indicator of the value the documentation of my work has in informing others.

As at 2004, I was not sure of the usefulness of “Profiling Alice Ukoko” as a means of informing Nigerians of my devotion to working for a peaceful; sustainable socio-economic and political progress of Nigeria my country of origin.

But given the response I got from those who benefited from the first edition, I am more confident today as I revise and update Nigerians and those who are interested in the development of Nigeria, of my continuing devotion to Nigeria’s future. Nigeria is an important country in the Continent of Africa and the global world.

As a British Nigerian citizen, I am actively aware of the need for Nigeria my country of origin to progress and become a “developed” Nation like Britain, the country where I became the person that I have become.

I am sure that Nigerians will be better informed of my devotion by reading “Profiling Alice Ukoko” in 2005. This edition has been revised to include more in-depth information in some areas whilst including new information from my work during the last twelve months.

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'Profiling Alice Ukoko' is NOT an autobiography. Its purpose is to provide an insight into a life devoted to the service of others. I am convinced that my service to others is the purpose for which I was created.

Although I have spent my entire life serving others in one form or another, "profiling Alice Ukoko" will concentrate on my work since 1994 following the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election and the subsequent imprisonment of the late chief M.K.O. Abiola when Nigerians abroad embarked on a 'struggle' to return Nigeria to civil rule.

My involvement in the struggle against military/civil dictatorship and the lack of respect for the basic rights of Nigerians started with the establishment of Chief Gani Fawehinmi's "National Conscience" (NC) in 1994.

In September 1994, I founded Women Of Nigeria International, as the NC UK was moving too slowly in raising the awareness of the International community to the atrocities that was being committed against Nigerians under the military regime. I was aware that without civilian collaborators, the military would not be able to sustain political power, but I felt that by ending military rule the behaviour of civil politicians would be more favourable to Nigeria and her peoples.

Thus, by the time the members of '**NADECO Abroad**' arrived in the UK for refuge, I was already working on the ground under **Women Of Nigeria International (WONI)** now a charity registered in the UK for the welfare of Nigerian in Nigeria and in the UK including the empowerment of women. I met with Professor Akinyemi, Chief John Oyegun, Gen. Akinriande, Rev. Obada, Alhaji Bola Tinubu (Governor of Lagos State (1999 to date) Chief Ralph Uwechie (now Ambassador for Conflict Resolution at the Presidency Abuja) and notable others.

In my campaign to end military rule in Nigeria; the release of political detainees and defence of the rights of Nigerians as members of the human race was my main focus. I initiated different strategies. I worked round the clock appealing to the international community to assist the masses of Nigeria who are under the strangled hold of regimes and Governments over which they have no control.

Becoming a registered charity in the UK meant that I could no longer use **WONI** for political and human

rights campaigns. I therefore launched "Democratic Alliance of Women of Nigeria" at the 33rd Summit of the now defunct Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) that took place in Harare Zimbabwe June **1997**.

As the list of political detainees grew, my anxiety and dedication to the people of Nigeria deepened. Ken Saro Wiwa and the Ogoni eight were executed. Alhaji Yar'Adua died in mysterious circumstance in prison. Then in August 1997 Fela died. The news of Fela' death was conveyed to me by the Ghanaian High Commissioner to Zimbabwe during my visit to him as I lobbying the international community there for support for "my cause". I felt abandoned by the one man who through his music drew the attention of the world to the evil regimes/Governments that held the people hostage. Most especially, I felt hopeless, as without Fela's music, the masses of Nigeria may never be able to redeem themselves for themselves and their generations to come. I was highly inspired by Fela's crusade for Nigeria using music.

To my mind, Fela Anikulapo Kuti is not just a music icon, but Nigeria's hero and should be remembered for the contribution he made to the struggle for Nigeria's liberation and Not the symbol of HIV/Aids for which he is popularly associated.

I have problem accepting the established belief that Fela died of the HIV/Aids virus. I am convinced that the "HIV/Aids' theory" was adopted by the Nigerian Authorities that killed Fela, in the same way that the South Africa Apartheid Government that killed my mentor Steve Biko claimed he died following his hunger strike. Fela's many women were his wives not his prostitutes. That many of the women are still alive today in 2005 confirms my belief.

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was in prison along with many others, I was desperate to end the pain my fellow Nigerians especially the women and children who were held in place of husbands and fathers experienced by their ordeal. The now President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria sent appeals from prison to people on the outside. Most of these appeals were addressed to NADECO abroad, but his appeals had great impact on me, in response, I intensified my efforts to free my fellow Nigerians from undeserved detention in their own country.

I campaigned tirelessly to inform the international community of the burden that military/civilian

regime imposed on the people of Nigeria. I was burdened by the growing abuse of the rights of Nigerians. I asked myself constantly why my country of origin should continue to represent the “sore” of the world. Why can’t my people understand the need to respect their fellow Nigerians? Why is it so difficult for some Nigerians to understand that their behaviour reflects on Nigeria?

Given the power of my commitment and activities, some Nigerians in the UK laughed at me as I went about distributing campaign leaflets on London Buses and Underground stations. To many, “Nigeria is not worth dying for” Why am I so devoted to the service of Nigeria while others concentrated on their personal life as if all is well? I asked myself frequently. Why me? I am a great believer of making history for my country, my children and my generations to come.

My Birth

I was born at ‘Full Moon’ on a certain day in 1948, I was told that the day I was born, it rained and the sun shone at the same time. My birth was not registered thus the actual day of my birth was a subject of speculation and determination based on social event around the time. I am the sixth child of my parents who are now both deceased.

Giving the circumstances of my conception and birth, I was not expected to survive. But I did.

My father is Chief Joseph Igbeyi Ukoko of Ezede Quarters in Uzereland in Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State.

My mother is Madam Christiana Ogbereyalagha Ukoko from Eka family of Enebeli Street; Ekiugbo in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State.

My Childhood:

I started my primary education at Ekiugbo in Ughelli North Local Government Area where I lived with my maternal grandmother. During my stay with my grandmother there was an incident that I carried through my childhood to date.

While my grandmother attended a community meeting one night, fire started in the room where she

laid me to sleep. The fire, which was started by a sheet of “rubber” hung to dry over a fire in the room where I slept, spread through the whole house. Unfortunately, my grandmother did not immediately remember that I was in the house. My cousins sleeping in other parts of the house were rescued. The memory of the incident of that night is still fresh in my memory. I do not remember what woke me. I still visualize myself standing behind the bedroom door with my “wrapper” wrapped over me as I watched the roof and the entire building burning down around me. Looking back now, it was as if I was enclosed in a “cooling cocoon” as I do not remember feeling the heat of that destructive fire. As the people watched the house burn to the ground, my grandmother must have suddenly remembered me. I do not remember how I was gotten out of the burnt down house but I remember myself crying outside after the incident.

I was later dispatched to live with my most senior brother and his wife at a very young age to give me the opportunity to do well in life according to my mother’s reasoning. I attended Convent School in Warri in the present Delta State I where I completed my primary education in 1960.

I did not have the benefit of secondary education in Nigeria as my brother and his wife felt that being a female child, giving me the opportunity of obtaining secondary education would amount to a waste of money as I was going to be pregnant half way through the course.

At the age of 22, I had the opportunity to travel to the United Kingdom to work and study as my brother promised me. On arrival however, I found that I had to fight to free myself from domestic chores and pursue my dreams. I succeeded I went into nurse training at Cuckfield Hospital in West Sussex for two years. It was during my nurse training that I met the man I later married and with whom I had my five children.

My Married Life

My married life was a continuation of my childhood of slavery. Unfortunately, I divorce after 20 years of physical and mental abuse. I stayed in the marriage for as long as I could to satisfy the African culture of “**enduring for the sake of the children**” The decision to finally leave was forced on me when my husband

married another woman. To the man, he married a second wife thus, presenting me a challenge of being one of his two wives. Divorcing him became my way of showing to my children that polygamy must not be tolerated. This to me is my contribution to the modernization of a system that has outlived its usefulness. I believe in the sanctity of the “family life” as it provides security to the children who then become the beacon of future generations. I do not believe that any woman can happily share their husbands although, I am aware that this practice still goes on, but then, how secure are the members of those families, most of whom are forced to share the most important and “personal” aspects of their lives?

I believe in the sanctity of marriage and its role in stabilizing society, with my failed marriage, I felt I had to do all within my power to provide a stable family life for my children. I had to devote my time to my children’s “children-hood” that demanded the full attention of one parent minimum. I stayed in the UK to support my children through the British system of education as a single parent.



My Education

I combined marriage, child bearing and nurturing with obtaining formal education and qualifications. Through opportunity for adult education in the UK, I acquired formal education and gained the following qualifications:

- I attended Westminster College in South West London where I obtained City & Guilds certificate in fashion Design in 1975.
- In 1977, I attended Vauxhall College for Further Education and obtained five GCE subjects including English Language at Ordinary level.
- In 1979 I obtained Economic and British Governmental Aspects at GCE Advanced Level.
- In 1981 I obtained a Higher National Diploma (HND) in Business Studies with emphasis on Personnel Management from South West London College.

I returned to Nigeria in 1981

In 1981 I returned to Nigeria with my three children where I did my Youth Service before joining the staff of the defunct College of Education Abraka now Delta State University Abraka.

During my service at the College of Education that became a Campus of Bendel State University, I worked in different capacities including Personnel Department, Students Affairs and Academic Office but left Abraka in 1987 as the Campus Public Relations Officer.

During my six years in Nigeria, I had my two youngest children and pursued a graduate programme of the Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria.

- I am a Graduate Member of the Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria.

While supporting my children with their educational pursuit, I enrolled into Holborn Law Tutors in 1989 where I embark on a University of London Law Degree as an external student (part time).

- In July 1991, I obtained a second class Law Degree with Honours.

My Aborted return to Nigeria in 1993

In October 1993, I decided to return to Nigeria to attend Law School and to resettle the three youngest of my five children into the educational system in Nigeria. That was not to be, there was no viable educational system to absorb my children. My children were therefore unable to settle into the

“harsh” system of education that has to offer. Four months later in 1994, I returned with my children to the UK. The Military/ Civil regime of the late General Sani Abacha aborted the civil rule of which my children’s father was a member of the Delta State House of Assembly.

My Mother’s Demise

Four months after our return to the UK, my mother died and I had to return to Nigeria for the burial. As I returned to the UK on the 28th April 1994 amidst fuel shortage, it struck me that I had not just lost my mother, but that I was also losing “my Nation”. For the first time in my life, I became aware of the need for me to defend the integrity of my country Nigeria.

My Mother’s Memorial

I do not know how I survived the night of my mother’s burial ceremony. Although there were so many people around, I felt very much alone I missed my children who were not with me. I was not sure how I was going to go on living without my mother’s support I thought at the time.

During the memorial service that followed, I had a spiritual encounter. The “Divine” directed me to pledge a “borehole” for the Anglican Church Ekiugbo in my mother’s memory. My response was that I could not afford to donate a borehole to the Church I offered to pledge fifty percent of the cost. This was rejected and was told I was to pay the total cost of the borehole. In the end, I pledged to donate a borehole to the church in memory of my mother. This triggered off a big celebration amongst the members present.

The borehole was commissioned in Feb. 1995. Reports have it that the membership of the church has increased significantly since then as a result of that donation. It was a day of dancing for the people of Ekiugbo



My Concerns for Nigeria

I feel that Nigerians should be able to live in safety in their own country without the fear of being killed by their fellow Nigerians. Why are Nigerians hungry amidst plenty? Why after many years of political independence are Nigerians unable to have “a say” in the nature of government they want and have the ability to change a government they consider to have failed them? I am aware that there is no democracy in the world that is perfect, but I am convinced that given the chance to develop, Nigeria’s democracy would work itself “pure” The freedom to choose who governs one gives human beings the sense of self-worth and responsibility for the kind of world they live in. The inability of my people to exercise their basic rights of electing their leaders is a major source of pain for me as a person who enjoys such freedoms in a foreign land. The level of corruption in Nigeria is a direct result of the inability of the Nigerian people to elect their leaders and hold them accountable for the quality of government they deliver.

Every aspect of Nigeria’s life is a subject of concern that continues to grow and beg urgent solution if Nigeria is to develop and gain her position in a rapidly changing world.

In 1994 my work focused on the campaign for the release of political detainees, an end to the abuse of women and children I spent all my time attending meetings convened for the way out of the brutal military/civilian dictatorship in Nigeria.

I supported Nigeria's Journalists taking refuge in Western region of Africa. Journalist like Moshood Fayemiwo who was the publisher of Razor Magazine published in Lagos during 1995 and 1996, Bunmi Aborishade who continued to publish in the "Independent Newspaper" in Ghana, Chido Onumah who published "Ghana Insight" and others. I am aware that several attempts were made by the then Nigerian Authority to have these "men of honour" captured and returned to Nigeria. In deed, Moshood Fayemiwo after escaping from detention in 1995 was recaptured in Cotounu in the Republic of Benin. Moshood was taken back to Nigeria unconscious and held in chains in the Military prison in Ikeja. The Administration of General Abdulsalami Abubakar who took over after the demise of General Sani Abacha eventually released Moshood in 1998.

I traveled to Republic of Benin and on to Ghana by Road from Nigeria to meet my people Moshood Fayemiwo, his family, Bunmi Aborishade in 1998. This was the first time I had face-to-face meeting with the people I spent over one year supporting during the dark ages of Nigeria's history. Unfortunately I was heart broken when I arrived in Ghana to be told that Professor A.O. Banjo and his wife Ngozika Iwueze Banjo had left Ghana for Uganda.

I was informed that after living on the Streets of Ghana like tramps for over a year as they constantly tried to escape re-capture by the Nigerian Authority who frequently requested their re-capture, the professor decided to escape from Ghana into Uganda. I am still anxious to meet this great couple that traded his medical practice in the USA for the liberation of Nigeria and her people. They lost everything but escaped with their lives. The stories they both told me about their betrayal, imprisonment in the Republic of Benin and their ordeal to stay alive left me hollow and desperate to change things in Nigeria.

The Phd Physician and Professor of Anatomy informed me during our constant telephone discussions that as a Professor of Anatomy he could embalm bodies to preserve them forever. What a loss to Nigeria. I am longing for the time when Nigeria would recognize those who are making a positive history for Nigeria.

The many journalists and few others who campaigned for the return of Nigeria to civil rule

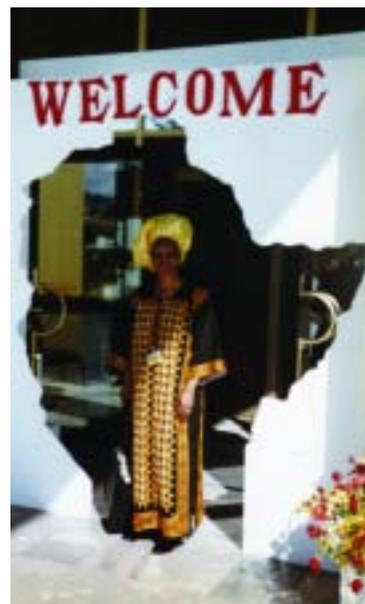
albeit only in theoretical terms for now, are still in self exile across the world as without recognition and assistance by the Nigerian Government, many will never be able to return and be part of the building of the country for which they have made personal sacrifice.

I spent all my time writing letters to world Governments begging for their assistance in ending military/civil dictatorship in Nigeria. I visited foreign Embassies to seek assistance for helpless Nigerians.

In June **1997**, I attended the 33rd Summit of the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) now defunct in Harare, Zimbabwe to lobby Heads of African Governments on behalf of the masses of Nigeria.

On the 4th June **1997**, I addressed the Press Conference addressed by Mrs. Ruth Perry of Liberia along with women MPs of the Zimbabwean Government. My address was an appeal on behalf of grass root women of Nigeria who had begun to travel all over the world in search for means of supporting their families they left behind in Nigeria. Many of who are engaging in unconventional practices. The appeal was received with "shock" as two days earlier Mrs M. Abacha had informed the AOU Summit that all was well in Nigeria. I told the Conference that all that "glitter" in Nigeria is not gold. I told them that their big sisters in Nigeria needed their assistance in ending the life of misery that is being forced upon them by their own governments. Messages of solidarity and support were sent to their sisters in Nigeria. The Law-makers accepted that the "oppressor" could not be "the messiah".

I remained in Zimbabwe after the Summit for four weeks to lobby foreign Governments through their Embassies in Harare. It was during this time that I heard a call to go to ROME. The time was 2.25 pm (June 1997) as I was walking to the office of the Archbishop with my appeal that I heard the call "**Alice! Go to ROME**" "**Alice! Go to ROME**" I looked around



me and realized that I had received instruction from God. I knew I could not keep this **“Message”** to myself not minding whether I was believed or not. I informed my host of the instruction I received. She became “silent.” She later told me that the Mozambiquean Peace Treaty was signed in Rome.

Dr E.T. Sakupwanya who was my tutor on “freedom struggles” and my host in Zimbabwe advised me to inform the Roman Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice in Zimbabwe. I had already made an appointment to meet with the then Director of the Commission Mr Mike T.H. Auret who is now a member of the Zimbabwean Parliament. On meeting with the Director, he asked me if I was a Roman Catholic. I said no. He then suggested that he presents the Rome Mission to the Conference of Bishops that was scheduled to meet in August 1997. I was greatly encouraged. I wrote a letter of appeal to the Bishops that I passed through the Director of the Commission for Peace and Justice in Zimbabwe.

While in Zimbabwe I had the opportunity of being interviewed by Zimbabwe National Television on my mission to the OAU and the campaign that followed. That explosive interview was aired on “A.M. Zimbabwe” in June 1997.

After four weeks of my intended seven weeks stay in Zimbabwe I suddenly had the urge to return to London as a matter of urgency. I told my host that I needed to cut short my work and to return to London. I assured my host that I had enjoyed my stay but that I needed to return to London urgently although I had no idea why. I regard my stay in Zimbabwe as a period in political wilderness. I was taught the act of “effective lobbying” by Dr. ET Sakupwanya and Professor David Dhliwayo.



Nigeria’s Suspension from the Commonwealth

Within days of receiving the urge I was back in London. To my amazement, on my arrival in London I was told that the British Foreign and Commonwealth office was anxious to meet with me. I learnt that there had been a panic within the Commonwealth office as its efforts to make contact with me had failed.

The reason was that in a few days from the date of my arrival back in London, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration was meeting in London to consider Nigeria’s suspension from the Commonwealth of Nations and they needed me to make an oral representation on behalf of the masses of Nigeria. Also to make representation were NADECO Abroad and representative of MOSOP for the Ogonis.

Thus, on the 11th July 1997, I led a delegation to make an oral representation to the Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) on behalf of the people of Nigeria. The meeting was held in the Commonwealth Secretariat in London at a time when Nigeria’s Chief Emeka Anyaoku was the Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations.



My Mission To ROME

Although I made an appeal to the Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conference holding in August 1997 before leaving Zimbabwe, I continued to explore other possibilities. I told everyone about the “Divine Call” to go to ROME. It was in the process of telling everyone that I learnt that the Roman Catholic Papal: Pope John Paul the second was scheduled to visit Nigeria in March 1998. I was excited.

Then one day in November 1997 I mentioned my call to Mrs Anne Oyeghe in London who told me that one Bishop Joseph Egarega was in London from Nigeria on his way to Rome. She assured me that the Bishop might be able to assist me to Rome. I called Bishop Egarega who was willing to help me. He asked me if I would be able to travel with him on the Tuesday that was only three days away. I told him I would not be able to travel with him but that I will follow him to Rome on Saturday (11.11.1997). The Bishop gave me the address and telephone number of where he would be staying in Rome as Piazza Villa, 42 Carbegena; St. Patrick's and asked me to telephone him on my arrival to Rome. I was excited by the prospect of going to Rome.



On my arrival in Rome I telephoned the Bishop who then said I should meet him at the address. On my arrival at the address, I was told that a Reverend Father whose name I did not take had been asked to get a hotel accommodation for me. I was worried, as I did not have any money. I only had £100 with me which was to last me throughout my four days mission to Rome.

However, I kept my worries to myself at that stage. The Rev. Father took me to an expensive hotel in the Vatican City. I could not curtail my anxiety I told him that I did not have money. He then took me to a hostel where I spent my first night in Rome.

I looked forward to attending mass at the Vatican City's St Peter's Square. Unfortunately, when the Bishop came to the hostel the next day (Sunday 12.11.97), he arrived with another Bishop from Delta State (Isoko) and the Rev. Father who secured accommodation for me the first night. To my

frustration, the Bishop who invited me to Rome told me that if I cared for my life, I should take myself back to London. He said that he did not have time for the "democracy" that I was after. He went on to say that "even the Pope's so-called visit to Nigeria was not certain as the Pope's health was still not good".

It all happened so quickly that I barely had time to absorb the impact of the situation I was in. "My mission to Rome" was being aborted and I, abandoned in the Vatican City. I did not have money and I did not speak the language.

I managed to explain the fact that my return flight back to London had been booked for the Tuesday. The Bishop said that the Airline would be happy to receive me on the Sunday instead. I could not believe what was happening. Before I could say any more, the three men of God abandoned me in the Vatican City they left me as quickly as they arrived.

Thereafter I tried to pay for the accommodation and found someone who spoke English I went back to the Airport to try if I could return to London. My return flight had been booked for Tuesday that date could not be changed unless I was ready to buy another ticket and make another booking. This was not possible. I started to look around for Nigerians who could help to accommodate me in Rome. Obviously, this was not possible. I told the Airport staff about my problem he advised me to contact the Nigerian Embassy. This was not an option so I asked for alternative. I was told to go to a place called "Via Massala" an area for tourists.

On my arrival to the area, the first person I stopped to ask direction stole my purse from my handbag. I was then advised to report the incident to the Police. I did but there was nothing that they can do. Fortunately the only £100 I had was not in the purse. Thus, at "Via Massala" I secured a room for the three days in Rome at the cost of the equivalent of £100 the entire money I had with me. I had to pay but that meant I could not eat throughout my stay in Rome.

Fortunately before leaving for Rome, I had a strong urge to put my appeal to the Pope in writing. I did not argue I did as I was instructed, I wrote a letter to the Pope stating my reason for turning to him which was to solicit his support for the people of Nigeria especially to call for the release of political detainees. This was at a time when according to reports, there were over 70,000 political detainees across Nigeria

according to the Tell Magazine and a significant number of which were women and children held in place of their husbands or fathers.

While in Rome I ran into a man who took me to the Post Office and paid for a stamp that carried my appeal to the Pope by post.

During the three days I spent in Rome waiting to return to London without food, I thought about my experience with the men of God. The more I thought about my experience, the more I became resolved to defend the people of Nigeria and their dignity as the family of God who could not rely on these three men of God who said they did not believe in democracy in Nigeria.

I received a letter from the Vatican City expressing the Pope's willingness to intervene in the Nigerian situation. The letter also conveyed the Pope's blessing for me.

In March 1998, the Roman Catholic Papal was in Nigeria where he called on the late Gen. Abacha to release political detainees. Whether the late dictator would have heeded the Pope's call was not certain as the event of the 8th June 1998 closed that chapter.

Political detainees were released thereafter including Chief Olusegun Obasanjo the current President of Nigeria.

It is my desire to meet the Bishop Joseph Egarega to give him the opportunity to reconsider his failings in November 1997. I was shocked when I had the rear opportunity to travel in the same vehicle from Warri to Abuja in 2003. A copy of "profiling Alice Ukoko" 2004 edition was sent to the Bishop Egarega through his brother seven years after my encounter with him.

The Demise of Pope John Paul II

The Roman Catholic Papal following his response to my appeal in 1998 created in me a great sense of respect for him Thus his death on 2.04.05 was a major blow regardless of his age and the knowledge that he needed the internal rest. I began to wonder if the Nigerian President would realize that Pope John Paul II was instrumental to his release from prison and hence the position he now finds himself. That he is alive today is due to intervention of the now deceased Pope John Paul the 2nd.

I was greatly relieved by the knowledge that Mr President (Chief Obasanjo) attended the funeral. I am glad that the Nigerian President was in Rome on account of Pope John Paul II, like I was in November 1997 although on different missions.

I was in Nigeria on the 8th June 1998

In May 1998, I felt the urge to return to Nigeria, the Africans I was working with expressed fear for my safety in Nigeria. I assured them that I would be safe as I insisted I needed to return to Nigeria. I therefore left for Nigeria at end of May 1998. At midnight on Sunday June 7th I was woken by the Spirit to get up and pray.

I was tired so I resisted but by the third time however, I forced myself to get up and I began to pray and sang Praises to God and asked that God should save my country Nigeria. When I became tired I returned to bed. At that point, I was not sure what the problem was though I thought that I was facing personal problem.

I was still feeling sad within my spirit when by 2pm on the 8th June 1998 I heard the news of the demise of the Late General Sani Abacha during the night the time of death coincided with the time that the Spirit woke me to pray. "Strange but true" I wonder sometimes about some of the things I experience that continues to propel my work till today.

In 1995, I met with Chief Gani Fawehinmi to discuss June 12 1993 and the National Conscience. This meeting was to me an honour.

I met with Alhaja Mogaji a very prominent woman in Nigeria's affairs and leader of Lagos' Balogun market. Also present at the meeting were the Executive body of the market as seen below.

Considering the negative impact of the annulment of the June 12 1993 Presidential election, I had an even greater honour of meeting with General Ibrahim B. Babangida (rtd) on 9th February 2005. Amongst the issues I raised with him was the annulment of this historic election that would have laid the foundation of Nigeria's democracy after many years of military rule. Whether Nigeria is able to recover from this tragedy remains to be seen.

I informed him of my contribution to the struggle against that action of his that has contributed to the “rut” that is now Nigeria’s democracy. I am however mindful of the fact that although the General now “retired” has been credited with that “single” and far reaching decision, he certainly did not take the decision without advise from other Nigerians (civilians) who may have claimed to be representing sections of our population. I am saying that there are too many Nigerians who roam the corridor of Nigeria’s Power claiming to know what is best for the silent majority.



Although a Pan Africanist my concern is for the liberation of Africa, through my work for Nigeria I am convinced that Africa will become free. This desire for a “free Africa” and Nigeria in particular heighten my concern for the plight of the people of the Niger Delta, the region of my origin.



That the Niger Delta is the oil bed of Nigeria and also the hot bed that continues to boil over is an open secret. Thus, as a crusader for a progressive Nigeria I have spent a considerable amount of my time campaigning to raise awareness of the plight of the unfortunate people of the Niger Delta whose oil wealth has been converted to a curse. I have therefore done a lot of work in the region.

Between 1998 and 2002, I met with prominent Nigerian women in Nigeria at different times to discuss the way forward for Nigeria. During my meeting with the late Alhaji Isiwat Mummuni who was the owner of Alade Market and representatives of all markets in Lagos State, the women leaders raised many issues that they stressed and requested I must raise on their behalf and that of their families. The promise I made to my late friend and sister and all the representatives of grass root women and their families in Lagos and throughout the country continue to challenge and motivate me in my encounter both in Nigeria and the international community.

The National Restoration Alliance

During one of my journeys to Nigeria in July 1998, I met with Chief Edet J. Amana together we explored the political situation in Nigeria and the way forward. This chance meeting led to me having to travel to Uyo in Akwa Ibom State where the Chief promoted the formation of what would have been the first political party for the people of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The National Restoration Alliance was a “brain-child” of that meeting. I worked round the clock with Dr Olise from Kwale to prepare the aims and objectives of the National Restoration Alliance.



Before the launch of the political association in Port Harcourt on Saturday 16th August 1998, I had a strange dream. I dreamt that during the launch event some people pulled out daggers and people began to run, as people were being killed. As the people ran for their lives, a large object containing green liquid fell from heaven. As the object fell, anyone touched by the liquid died. As the chaos intensified, a man was carried in a crane from heaven, the man

came down in front of me, looked into my eyes with anger in His eyes and handed me a small white object. I looked at the object and asked him what it was for He informed me that the object was the cause of the chaos. Immediately I heard that I threw the object to the tarred road and broke it and immediately, the chaos stopped.

I was greatly troubled by this dream and told my colleague (Dr Olise) with whom I had worked so hard for the formation of the National Restoration Alliance. He was stunned he opened his brief case and produced a dagger but assured me that he did not have the intention of using it during the launch ceremony. He said that he bought it when the “defunct UNCP” (one of the five defunct political parties that said the late Gen. Sani Abacha was the only one who could govern Nigeria) had her Convention in Jos to defend himself.

I ensured that Chief Edet Amana knew about this dream and the dagger episode before the launch event began on 16th August 1998. I also informed Senator Fred Brume about it and we prayed against blood bath in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the National Restoration Alliance was aborted before it had the opportunity of providing a political platform for the people of the Niger Delta. I was able to influence the formation of the Alliance but was unable to save the Association. I often wonder if Chief Edet Amana some times regret the event that led to the death of the NRA.

Over the last twelve years, I have found myself sharing my time between providing support for the Nigerian community in the United Kingdom and working with grass root population in Nigeria.

Women Of Nigeria International (WONI)

In the UK Women Of Nigeria International (WONI) became a registered charity with the mission of integrating the Nigerian community into wider UK community to reduce isolation, poverty and provide cultural mediation for equal opportunity for Nigerians in the UK. Thus, I provide legal advice to Nigerians on immigration and welfare laws. I support Nigerian women and children in distress in the UK; I provide individual advocacy and counseling with cultural understanding; we provide cultural mediation for equal opportunity in the UK.

WONI is a registered charity in the UK for the welfare of Nigerian in Nigeria and in the UK.

I wrote and directed the African Maiden, a drama on female circumcision. This drama came to stage in the UK in 2000 and since then, female circumcision has been made a subject of child abuse in the UK leading to the passing of the Female Circumcision Act of 2003.

As Nigerians continue to escape into the United Kingdom, they bring with them the Nigerian culture and in some cases the negative attitude that conflict with the British culture. Supporting Nigerian families to better support their children for the development of Nigeria in the future is very tedious especially without the resources to do so.

This conflict is leading to a large number of Nigerian children having problems in schools as some parents lack the understanding to work positively with British systems. My contribution here is working with WONI to mediate the “cultural gap” and hence reducing the rate of school exclusion and hence academic standard amongst children and young adults of Nigerian origin. My high standard of legal education has helped me to serve Nigeria well albeit without remuneration.

I have supported Nigerians on various issues and problems. I sometimes take vulnerable members to my home. Nigerians who are destitute particularly children and young adults until an alternative arrangement is made.

I have appealed to the Nigeria High Commission on many occasions for assistance that never came. My constant feeling of disappointment and frustration with the Nigerian High Commission for failing to provide support to Women Of Nigeria International on whose shoulder the welfare of Nigerians lay was raised with His Excellency Dr. Christopher Kolade the Nigerian High Commissioner to the UK.



I am aware that my show of frustration may continue to beg resolution between His Excellency and myself. I feel very strongly that some support from the High Commission and indeed the Nigerian Government would enable WONI to better support the Nigerian community in London. What is important here is that my quest for support is for the good of Nigerians abroad and by no means personal.

I was a victim of armed robbery in Lagos

For the first time I felt reluctant to embark on a journey to Nigeria, as I boarded the plane at London Heathrow I called my son telling him how unhappy I felt. Strangely I raised the issue of “security” at the Hotel the night I arrived still feeling saddened by my entry into Nigeria.

At 2a.m. on 2nd December 2000, the hotel I stayed in Lagos was raided by armed robbers as I was leaving for the Delta that day, I had packed and locked my suitcase. To wait “my turn” to be raided, I dressed up and unlocked my suitcase. The armed gang of nine went from room to room raiding the guests and inflicting injuries as they went along.

When they got to my room they broke the lock and forced themselves inside where they met me sitting waiting for them. One of them came forward and dealt a heavy blow to my head, while the others followed armed with guns, swords and other weapons.

Partly due to the blow to my head I became very angry with them, I rebuked them for embarking on their lowest level life. I told them that I had spent seven years of my life in their service and for me to receive the kind of treatment I was getting was unfair.

One of them asked me what I had been doing for them he asked me if this was human right campaigning? I told him that I campaign for better life and better jobs for them I told them that I condemned their way of life that meant them covering their faces in “rags” destroying Nigeria’s fabric.

The armed gang took all my valuables including my passport and my return ticket to the UK. As I continued to reprimand them for what they were doing, one of them threatened to kill me if I did not shut up. One ordered me to lie with my face down

on the ground but I responded by telling him that if I have lived my life to the point when I took orders from people like him then I know that my life was finished.

The armed gang spent about twenty minutes in my hotel room searching through my luggage, stripping the furniture. When they eventually left with every thing, I felt numb as if life has been taken away from me. They left in the manner they arrived. I observed that one of them was a young woman this broke my heart even more. The armed gang left me with nothing.

The armed raid continued in the neighbourhood, as I heard doors breaking I felt saddened even more. How can armed gangs operate for such a long time in my beloved country without hindrance and no one daring to challenge them?

I therefore spent my two weeks stay in Nigeria securing a passport with which to return to my children in England. This was a very difficult task. The passport Authority in Abuja cooperated when they learnt of my work for Nigeria and the purpose of my entry into Nigeria. A new passport was issued within a few days of my application for which I will continue to be grateful.

My Civic Award in London

In recognition of my devotion to the Nigerian community, I received a Civic Award from the Worshipful the Mayor of Southwark, Councillor Hilary Wines in 2001. I understand that I am the only Nigerian that has so far received that award for which I am greatly encouraged.



I have contributed to the building of a positive image for Nigeria in the UK over the years. I have worked on a voluntary basis without financial support drawing only on private funds to support my children. In the cause of my devotion to the Nigerian community in the UK I continue to give my all to the service of others.

I receive invites from members of the British Government for different events. To celebrate International Women's Week in 2002 I was invited by the Right Honourable Harriet Harman MP QC the Solicitor General, an event that held at Porculis House of the House of Commons. She is a great source of encouragement and empowerment for me as I spend my time supporting Nigerians in London. The Rt. Hon. Harriet Harman MP, QC visits WONI's office for constant up date of my work with Nigerians.



On 4th July 2002 I was invited to lunch in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh to mark the Jubilee year at Ardington Palace in Croydon. This event gave me the opportunity to discuss the plight of grass root women of Nigeria with Her Majesty. I treasure with pride this wonderful opportunity.



I was a victim of brutal force by Nigeria's Security Forces

In July 2002 I had an urge to go to Nigeria to start work geared towards building stronger communities in the Delta. I therefore left for Nigeria on 25th July 2002 not quite sure where to start.

I felt an urgency to get to the Delta I therefore did not stop over in Lagos. On my way to Warri I encountered difficulties, in fact I did not have sufficient money to pay for the carriage of luggage and me to Warri. This difficulty brought into my work Mr Henry Arikowa. Henry asked me how much I needed to make up the fare, I told him five hundred Naira (N500). Henry gave me the money and in return I gave him my address in Warri.

Henry visited me in Warri as promised during the discussion that followed I discovered that Henry is an environmental rights campaigner and a community leader in Warri. I asked him to take me on a tour of his community. For the first time I took clothing items which made up my second luggage back to Nigeria. I packed the clothing with no one in mind.

During Henry's visit, I told him that my luggage was in fact clothing including jumpers and cardigans. Henry was amazed and told me that some members of his community had requested him to get them jumpers and cardigans matching the items I had carried with me from the UK.

What a coincidence of fate

Henry took me on tour to meet members of his community and to experience the environmental conditions the people are living in. I was shocked to find out that people live in those conditions.

Then on August 8th 2002 a few days after my tour of the area, Henry called me and informed me that the women were out on a peaceful protest of the Oil Companies. I was anxious to meet the women and asked Henry to please pick me up.

With Henry I went to the office of the manager of programmes of Delta Broadcasting Service Mr Eric James. Mr James told me that the television station had covered the protest and we then left to Chevron/Taxaco Gate.

At Chevron I met the women I had met during my tour of their community some days ago. The women's leadership handed to me their communiqué stating their grievance with the Government and the Oil Multinational Companies.

The women also informed me that some of the women at Shell's gate had been injured and were refusing to go home. I therefore asked Henry to take me to Shell Gate with the aim of appealing to the injured women to go home. This was how I suffered brutality at the hands of Nigeria's Security Forces, a country to which I have devoted my life.

The women on August 8th 2002 experienced brutal treatment that is unimaginable in a civilized world. I was there and was a victim, so I saw what happened on that day. These are women who have watched their oil wealth looted with impunity. The means of their livelihood has been destroyed through irresponsible oil exploration. According to the discussion I had with women just before "terror" struck, the women waited at Shell gate and Chevron gate for the management of the Oil Multinational Companies to dialogue with them. It broke my heart to watch such brutality against women waiting helplessly to speak with oil giants with whom they were no "match" in any way. As I nursed my wounds from horse - whip for the tree weeks that followed the sad events, it dawned on me that the people of the Niger Delta are a "captured" people who need the attention and support of the international community.



Grass root women leadership Initiative

My work with grass root women Delta state women are mobilized for political and socio-economic empowerment for a sustainable future for Nigeria and her people. The only way for Nigeria to grow politically and socio-economically is for Nigerians to work purposefully for the good of the country instead of for personal gain and "death" to the vulnerable members of our society. It is to realize this aim that I initiated the Niger Delta Women grass root movement. The people are living in conditions not fit for animals in civilized countries. For instance

the photos following is life in Delta State and Edo State respectively. How can “peace reign” when the resources of the people are being carted away to faraway Banks leaving the people to live in squalor conditions like these?



As I recovered from my wounds my thoughts stayed with the grass root women who have now become my fellow victims of the brutality of August 8. 2002. I knew that I needed to do all within my power to inform the international community that all that glitter in Nigeria is certainly not gold

There was immediate response from the world. A researcher at the Nigerian desk of Amnesty International (UK Section) arrived in Nigeria in October of 2002 to investigate the incident. The New York Times visited the Delta to investigate. Ms Ibiba DonPedro the 2003 CNN African Journalist won her Award for her work on the problems of the people of the Niger Delta. I congratulate Miss DonPedro for her courage and subsequent award.

I stayed with the women to lay the foundation for the grass root women leadership initiative for three months. During this time, the first Niger Delta grass root women Conference was held in Ughelli in Delta

State on 20th September 2002. The Conference was chaired by Senator (Chief) (Mrs) Stella Omu. The Conference provided a platform for the women to express themselves and their worries for the first time and to discuss the way forward.



The first meeting with Shell after 46 years of oil exploration in the Delta History was made

Niger Delta women continued their struggle to get Shell (SPDC) to accept liability for the brutality they suffered from the hands of Nigeria's Security Forces and for them to pay compensation and hospital bills. Shell Nigeria refused to cooperate and to find ways of working peacefully with the grass root women. This stance by Shell, led the women to issue an ultimatum of thirty days urging Shell Nigeria to pay hospital bills and compensate them or, face a stand off with them. They threatened to shut down all flow stations in the Region until the Oil giants recognized their rights as stakeholders and to address the injustice of over 46 years of irresponsible oil exploration in the region.

I was worried and anxious to do all within my power to prevent a repeat of August 8. 2002. As I had started to talk with Shell International on the issue in London, I intensified my effort. I faxed the women's press release around the world for support for the women. Immediately, the International Executive of the Women International League for Peace and Freedom meeting in New Zealand responded by adopting the women's struggle and issued a response to Shell International informing them that they are

aware of the women's struggle for justice and that they are watching events.

Shell International were aware that I had to return to Nigeria to dissuade the women from carrying out the planned action as it was clear that Shell was not going to comply with the women's demand. However, Shell International said they would be prepared to facilitate a meeting between the women and the Management of SPDC as a way forward. I succeeded in preventing the women from their action.

On 29th March 2003 Shell Nigeria met for the first time with grass root women in Warri Delta State. Unfortunately the meeting failed to achieve the desired outcome as SPDC maintained that the women were to blame for what happened to us on that day. Once again, the women lost to the oil giant operating with impunity in the Niger Delta. This is heart breaking for me as I continue to hope for the day when a responsible government will be enthroned in Nigeria who will be able to call the Oil Multinationals to order and restore dignity to my people.

Following this stand off with Shell Nigeria, I was hesitant to accept the invitation to participate in the SPDC's 2004 Stakeholders' workshop they held in Warri in February 2004. But with persuasion I attended. I felt that by attending the Workshop I was adopting the stance being maintained against my people particularly, the environmental degradation and the brutal force under which the people are held while the oil giants exploits my people's wealth. I was however pleased that I was there as it increased my awareness of how Shell Nigeria does business in my land.

I feel very strongly that Government should take responsibility for the way the oil companies are doing business in Nigeria, as it is the responsibility of Government to protect the citizens of the country including the people of the Niger Delta. I have seen and felt the suffering of my people of the region particularly the children, most of who go to bed every night with little food in their stomach. When I visited Ugborodo (Escravus) in February 2005 following the stand off between the people and Chevron/Texaco I saw suffering, the memory of which will go down with me into my grave. With me on the facts finding journey as a way of breaking down ethnic barriers were WONI's coordinators for Rivers State and Enugu State.

I was also accompanied on this mission to see things for myself by a Nigerian journalist who has great interest in and extent of the abuse of the rights of the people of the Niger Delta, and Americans who came to see things for themselves following effective campaigning against the destruction of the region by the Oil Multinational Companies operating in the area. **SEEING IS ALWAYS BELIEVING.**



During my tour of the area I saw two of our children in water heavily polluted by crude oil, trying to catch fishes for their dinner that day. I screamed to the shock of those around me.



Children fishing in heavily polluted water with crude oil in the Delta



What do you make of the two children in the photo being what I saw on Thursday 24th February 2005?

I work with grass root women and youths giving them "HOPE" by my determination to carrying on the struggle for change. I meet all the time with the women and children of the Niger Delta, River State and other parts of the country so I know. Through my work the women and the youths are breaking down barriers erected by political and community warlords to divide and destroy the Delta region for selfish reasons. Nigeria's children need a change of heart and systems of Government today. It is for their sake I must continue to find a way forward for Nigeria.

Nigeria's tomorrow must be built today so that Nigeria's greatness can be realised by the special grace of the Almighty God (Allah). The building of tomorrow today is the driving force behind the child protection and developmental efforts of the civilised world of which Nigeria is a part.

The British Prime Minister Launched the London Challenge

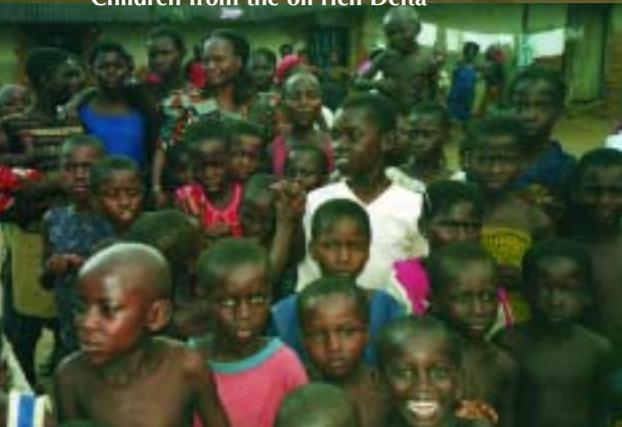
On 13th November 2003 the British Prime Minister led the launch of the "London Challenge" which is the Government's drive to transform secondary schools and create a "world class" educational system in London.



Children from the oil rich Delta

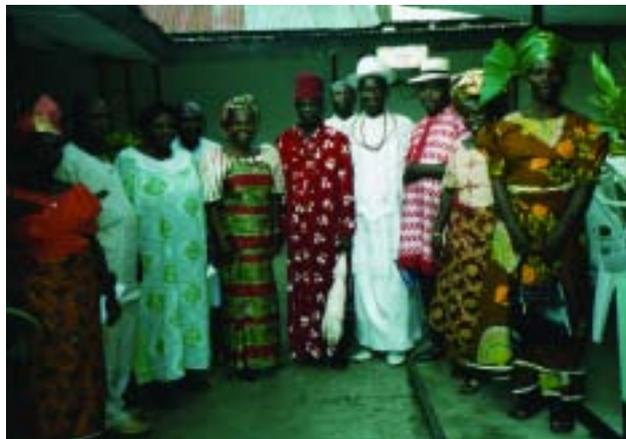


I was present at the launch event as a member of the Governing Board of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Secondary School a specialist Language College in South East London. Britain's tomorrow is being built today for Nigeria to emulate. Nigeria must endeavour to build her tomorrow today instead of



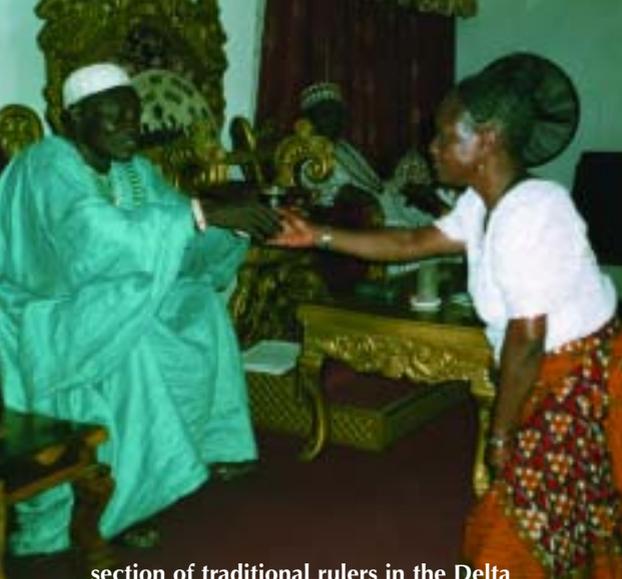
condemning the children to a life on the street and "hawking on dangerous Streets". Unfortunately, although I began my campaign eleven years ago, I am yet to get those in political power in Nigeria to hear and adopt my "school of thought". The grass root woman has a major role to play in the restoration of dignity, justice, peace and sustainable development in Nigeria. They need to be empowered to improve the quality of the contribution they are making.

I am grateful to His Royal Highness Carson Agidah the traditional ruler of Ahoada for sponsoring my visit to grass root women of Rivers State in May 2003. The Rivers State chapter of Women Of Nigeria International is growing very strong thanks to Mrs Idowu.



I have been able to establish effective working relationship with traditional rulers in the Delta. For this I am very grateful to our Royal fathers who are equally anxious to see a prosperous Nigeria. The Ovie of Uzereland is always proud of me. He shows this whenever I am privileged to meet with him.





section of traditional rulers in the Delta



It was with great honour and pride that I recently acted as the mail person between the British Prime Minister Tony Blair and His Royal Majesty Dr. Oghenovo-Ekwe II (JP)



Ovie of Iyede Kingdom. The Royal father considered it appropriate to communicate his concerns for Nigeria and his subject with the British Prime Minister recently. This is a great achievement and effort being the first time that a British Prime Minister has engaged in dialogue with an African Royalty.

The discussion that transpired between the head of the British Government and the Ovie of Iyede Kingdom was a subject of a Press Release when the Ovie addressed the youths and others in his Palace on the 26th February 2005. I had the rare honour of being present as the guest of His Royal Majesty. A welcomed development as the British Prime Minister spear heads the Commission for Africa's liberation.

During February 2005, I had the honour of meeting with the Executive Body of Federation of Niger Delta Youths (FONDY).



The Body is an umbrella organisation for seven Movements within the Niger Delta, including: Niger Delta Youth Movement; Youth wing of the South-South People's Conference; Youth Presidents of Urhobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Isoko and Ndokwa (all the ethnic youth organizations are adequately represented). The Body also represent Youth Chairmen and Secretaries of the 92 Oil Producing Communities, SPDC-West; New Era Forum, Delta State; National Association of Delta State Students (NADESSTU) and National Association of Military pensioners (NAMP)

I believe that the FONDY works with Christians in Political and Women Awake. It was indeed a great honour to be asked to be the Matron of such wonderful and all embracing Organization whose overall aim is the enthronement of justice, peace, and sustainable socio-economic and political development of the region. Executive and members have the assurance that I am doing everything within my power to work with them in any capacity to attain sustainable political and socio-economic development of Nigeria. For a united Nigeria, my challenge is to ensure that the FONDY's efforts are linked with National Youths Association for a greater impact and recognition.



My arrest as I campaign against proliferation of Small arms in Nigeria

As the killings in the Delta carried on unabated coupled with the proliferation of small arms presumed used for the 2003 elections, the Executive Committee members of the Women Of Nigeria International traveled to Nigeria in May to lead Niger Delta grass root women to appeal to Mr President in Abuja to come to the rescue of the mothers to end the killings, rid the region of small arms and install justice, peace in the Delta. Our letter for approval made to the then Inspector General of Police (Chief Tafa Balogun) for the peaceful action was denied and so the women were effectively denied their opportunity to exercise their democratic rights to peaceful protest against their plight, especially the difficult task of rearing Nigeria's future generation at gun point. I hate to say I said so, but current events around security and the alleged criminal activities of Chief Tafa Balogun have proven me right in my concerns for security in the country.

However, we took our protest to London where we delivered letters expressing our concerns about the problems and dangers in the Delta to Mr President and the **British Prime Minister Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street in London.**



Cross section of Executive Body of FONDY



Although the peaceful demonstration for peace in the Delta did not hold in Abuja as planned, I was arrested on May, 2003 “claiming that plans to cause trouble in Delta State was uncovered”. I was however released after interrogation. I told the Director of State Security at the time that proliferation of small arms in the State and Nigeria as a whole is true, and no matter what Security Forces want the country and the International community to believe, the problem will continue to hinder Nigeria’s ability to progress.



Two years on, I am saddened to know that my concerns are well founded.

During our work in Abuja we had the privilege of meeting with Alhaji M.D. Yusufu the only Nigerian who had the courage to challenge the late dictator Gen. Sani Abacha to the Presidency of Nigeria. We had the opportunity of presenting our case against the stoning of Amina Lawal under Sharia Law.



I visited the Holy Land

I traveled to Jerusalem to participate in a Rally for peace in the Middle East in December 2003 organized by the Inter-religious Federation for World. Although I was concerned for peace in the Middle East upper most in my mind was the urge for me to go to the birthplace of Jesus Christ. I was anxious for confirmation that my work and commitment is in fact God’s Mission for me.



The highlight of the visit for me happened on the 23rd December as we visited Mount of Zion and the “Upper Room” where Jesus Christ had the Last Supper with His disciples had the visitation of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. During our visit, as everyone prayed, I prayed for confirmation from God. I asked that if my work is God’s mission for me, I need Him to anoint me afresh and spontaneously I turned to a Nigerian pastor and asked him to pray with me. The man of God took my hands and began to pray while a Nigerian woman prayed standing behind me. Within two minutes of prayers, I felt me carried by a force I can only is God’s Spirit, and laid me gently on the floor of the Upper Room. As I lay on the floor, every member of the visiting team turned their attention to me and prayed, I felt people touching my hands and feet but I was unable to move.

After a while, some men carried me from the floor and sat me on a nearby stool to recover the pastor who prayed with me and a female member of the group held me. The visitation of the Spirit was so overwhelming that another Nigerian woman received it while others felt fulfilled by the

experience. I am greatly encouraged by this experience and have no doubt in my mind that I am working for the Almighty God (Allah).

I was also privileged to visit the place of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus Christ. I was also overwhelmed by the realization of His suffering and betrayal. I was greatly comforted as I am well aware that the people for whom I continue to sacrifice my self-comfort and financial rewards are always reluctant to acknowledge my contribution to their personal comfort and achievements. Sometimes I feel persecuted instead of being appreciated. The lack of appreciation of my outstanding service means nothing to me anymore.

In 2003 following my effective campaign to put the plight of the people of the Niger Delta on the international agenda, members of Amnesty International world wide sent Christmas Cards to grass root women of the Niger Delta in all, over two thousand cards Christmas cards arrived at WONI's office in London. The cards came with solidarity messages in recognition of the plight of the women and their families. Even children sent good will messages.

I personally took these cards to Nigeria for distribution. As a people who are experiencing poverty of great intensity the women would have appreciated financial support not cards.



I have traveled round the world in the course of my work. I have contributed to radio programmes speaking on different aspect of Nigerians and they way we live both in the UK and in Nigeria.

The subject for radio and television discussions include whether Nigerians eat protected species of monkeys to international trafficking.



In recognition of my contribution to the welfare of Nigerians in London and in Nigeria, I have received several awards and I am invited to events of importance. On the 11th October 2004, I was a guest at 10 Downing Street at the reception to celebrate Africa Diaspora hosted by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his wife Cherie Blair. This event was to celebrate the Commission for Africa to which the British Prime Minister is committed. In particular, I was chosen among five Africans to have a face-to-face discussion and personal photographs with the Prime Minister and his wife. This gave me the opportunity to inform the British Government of my crusade to install true democracy in Nigeria in as the only means of empowering the masses to make their valuable contribution to the progress of Nigeria and hence Africa. This way, I assured the Prime Minister Nigeria would take her rightful place in Africa and world affairs. Right now the situation is the stories of corrupt enrichment of self while the suffering masses struggles to escape from death and poverty by any means. There is an urgent need for change in Nigeria, and for the British Prime working with the rest of the International community to succeed the problem of Nigeria must be addressed positively.

I dream that Nigeria the country of my birth would redeem herself in my lifetime. I am aware that for this to happen Nigeria must embark on the "Politics of Change" without which the country will continue to nose- dive into self destruction where Nigerians will continue to mirror bad image at home and abroad.



The system of governance in Nigeria

Nigeria is pursuing "Individual Power" system of Government, which from all indications appear to be nurturing corruption and "breeding terror", a tragedy that has been multiplied across most Nigerian States and beyond its borders. Nigeria secured a reputation and title of one of the most corrupt countries of the world although she is one of the richest countries of the world. This state of affairs is a sure indication that change is needed urgently if Nigeria is to contribute to Africa's socio-economic and political development as being sought by the

international community through Prime Minister Tony Blair's Commission for Africa.

To desire a progressive system of government is not enough to obtain and sustain such a system. In the case of Nigeria especially, to claim to be a "democracy" in an environment of tyranny where the people are actively prevented from effectively choosing their leaders will not help enthrone the desired democratic government, which is capable of sustaining itself.

Nigerian Governments need to encourage a democratic environment that will enable the masses to express their desire to be Free. For:

"Freedom is the expression of the creativity in life. It is neither an inherent right nor a hard-won value. It is law of being lacking which there would be no evolution, no progress and no civilization. Only primal chaos set in permanence."

Norman W. Manly

According to Michael Manly,

"In post-colonial phase of developing country, only Political Movements devoted to the Politics of change have relevance"

The British Prime Minister in 1997 when he first embarked on reforming the British Labour Party said that:

"Any Political Party that does not change will die"

Years later (2005), the Conservative Party is talking about reform (change) without which the Party would be kept out of Political power in Britain forever.

As a responsible citizen of Britain and Nigeria, I feel duty bound to make an honest contribution to the welfare of my country. I am a beneficiary of Britain's developed system of Government and I am a witness to the constantly changing way that Britain is preparing for her future. I desperately want Nigeria the country of my birth to emulate the British so that the richness of the country will benefit all Nigerians alike.



The world is global and as such, Nigerian Governments must understand that the mismanagement of Nigeria's resources and hence the impoverishment of the citizens will trigger off, the worse in Nigerians for the world to see and experience. In other words, Nigerians are a product of their Governments.

Nigeria and Nigerians contributed immensely to the dismantlement of apartheid in South Africa, why is there apartheid in Nigeria in the 21st Century?

In pursuance of the "Nigeria" of my dream I have worked hard over the years to influence change while I do all within my power to support the most vulnerable of my community. For example in 2003 my support for Salamatu Harford took me to Funtua in Katsina State in an effort to locate her family; her two daughters and grand daughters from who she was separated for twenty seven years. I failed to find her relatives. Unfortunately, Salamatu died in 2003 but my consolation is the knowledge that she died a "Free" woman.

I was nominated as an eminent personality in Urhobo as a result of my contribution to the Urhobo Nation. The Urhobo National is made up of twenty two Kingdoms (Clans) which have a population of about three million in the Delta State of Nigeria. Being a "who is who" in Urhobo is a high honour for me for which I am grateful to the entire Nation.

I received a Nigerian Achievers Award for my service to the Nigerian community in London. Representing a great honour and recognition of my devotion to Nigeria's progress.

I was awarded the Ambassador for Peace in London. Being recognized as an Ambassador for Peace for me is highly relevant to the role I continue to play in the life of my Nation.



When Alice first set up WONI in 1994, she had her fears like most of us embarking on a business venture, whether it is charitable or otherwise.

But Alice persevered and through her work at grassroots level she was catapulted to becoming a

household name in a whole range of circles in the Southwark Borough where she is based.

So great is her individual success and the dedication of her small team of seven, she is regularly invited to high profile conferences as guest speaker on a variety of issues that effect both men and women alike, from development, to the pragmatism involved in creating a stronger social fabric.

And these seminars do not just take place in the UK, but at European Parliamentary powerhouses, such as Brussels, Geneva and Bonn. Of course, many African countries also welcome Ms Ukoko with open arms and are coming around to seeing her message as progress rather than a threat.

The one thing Ms Ukoko is missing is funding and that's where the African times and our readers come in. From small acorns great oaks grow – this is the embodiment of Alice's work.

From the core (grassroots) she has proved you can take an issue all the way to the top. She is just one example that it REALLY is time for women's voices to be heard"

**Culled from African Times,
Monday, March 24 2003**

COMMENTS ABOUT ALICE UKOKO

Captioned: "Alice Ukoko is an inspiration to all Africans"

Quote: "Alice Ukoko is an example to us all regardless of what community we belong to, as her message is universal.

From a tough upbringing, she has always maximised on the positives and learned to get around and negotiate the more negative factors that life has a habit of throwing at us.

Extract from Selected Email Messages

Subject: I met a saint

"Dear Alice

It was a very profound experience to share a coach seat with you. I am sure Heavenly Father has a purpose behind these 'chance' meeting so I hope we will keep in contact.... May God protect you always and your Mission.

Sincerely yours

Tim Huish (Germany) (dated 27.12.2003)

Subject: You are the Messiah!

"Dear Mamma

.... Completely buy your idea and ambition particularly as it affects the women in Delta State. I am grateful to God for planting these noble ideas in your heart. I know you are the messiah the Delta women have been waiting for".

Yours sincerely

Bee Onos (Delta State, Nigeria) (dated 27.09.03)

".., I will encourage you to participate in the UHS. Your presence and very articulate participation at the London Conference, was a refreshing and challenging phenomenon that is needed in Urhobo society. You are bringing with you the type of skills and knowledge that, I am sure will help to emancipate not only Urhobo women, but women of Nigeria and Africa. This is a vital aspect of our development for without our women enjoying the gains of democracy, we (the menfolk) cannot be free".

God bless

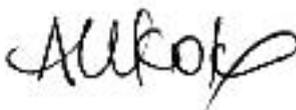
Cheers

O. Igbo Natufe (Canada) (dated 02.12.2003)

I have over the years had the honour of meeting very important people in the cause of my work. It is necessary to share some of these privileges and opportunities in "Profiling Alice Ukoko"

Profiling Alice Ukoko is not an autobiography it is a "small window" into my work in the last twelve years. Just bringing together some aspect of my work for Nigeria to learn about overwhelms me.

It is my prayer that the Almighty God (Allah) makes the way for me to fulfil my Mission for the people of my country, my Continent and to humanity. No one lives forever.



ALICE UKOKO

June 2005

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My children are my future generation/s I have therefore invested a significant part of my life to ensuring that they are given an opportunity to have a better start in a world that is changing rapidly and full of challenges. The fact that Britain gave me the opportunity to access formal education and hence the person that I have become assured me that as a single parent, Britain and the British educational system would give my children the opportunity they need to do better than I ever had the chance to.

It is my prayer and hope that Nigeria will one day realise the importance of mass education as the only vehicle for sustainable development. Nigeria has the resources to build her future today by providing for her children equally and hence preparing them for the rapidly changing and challenging world.