

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NJURU COMMUNITY THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development involves meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). One of the most effective tools for achieving sustainable development is entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship creates jobs, reduces poverty, stimulates innovation, promotes self-reliance, and enhances community development (Schumpeter, 1934; Drucker, 1985). For Njuru Community and other communities in Eleme Kingdom, entrepreneurship offers a practical pathway to human capital development, economic empowerment, and sustainable growth.

WHY ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

The world's population continues to grow rapidly, currently exceeding 8 billion people and projected to reach about 8.5 billion by 2030 and 9.7 billion by 2050 (United Nations, 2024). As population increases, the demand for jobs, education, healthcare, housing, food, and other essential services also rises. However, job creation has not matched population growth, resulting in increasing unemployment and underemployment globally. This imbalance strengthens the argument for entrepreneurship as a sustainable solution to economic challenges (ILO, 2023). Also to consider is University Graduates, Nigerian Tertiary Institutions, and Population Growth Nigeria has experienced significant expansion in higher education, with over 250 universities and more than 150 polytechnics producing large numbers of graduates annually (NUC, 2025; NBTE, 2025). Despite this growth in educational output, available employment opportunities remain insufficient, leading to graduate unemployment and underemployment. This reality makes entrepreneurship education essential in preparing graduates to become job creators rather than job seekers.

THE GAP IS HUGE

Hence on 16th February 2012, former President Goodluck Jonathan directed that entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory in Nigerian tertiary institutions during the 11th Convocation Ceremony of the University of Lagos. The policy aimed to equip students with practical skills for self-reliance, job creation, and national development. It remains a key framework for addressing unemployment in Nigeria.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Human capital development refers to the process of improving the knowledge, skills, health, and productivity of people in order to enhance economic growth and development.

It focuses on education, training, innovation, and capacity building.

A strong human capital base increases productivity and national competitiveness.

It reduces unemployment by equipping individuals with employable and entrepreneurial skills.

It promotes innovation, creativity, and technological advancement.

It enhances income levels and reduces poverty in society.

According to Prof. Sunday S. E. Ezeani in 2012 human capital development through education and entrepreneurship equips individuals with the necessary skills to become productive members of society, thereby reducing unemployment and improving community welfare. Similarly, Prof. Pat

Utomi, a Nigerian economist and management expert, argues that sustainable community growth depends on investing in people through education, leadership development, and entrepreneurial capacity building, rather than relying solely on natural resources or government employment (Utomi, 2003).

These perspectives reinforce the view that communities such as Njuru can only achieve sustainable development when deliberate investment is made in skills acquisition, entrepreneurship education, and human capacity building. Ultimately, human capital development is the foundation of sustainable national development. The Singapore Example (Human Capital Development Model) Singapore is widely regarded as a model of human capital-driven development under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew (Prime Minister, 1959–1990). After independence in 1965, Singapore had no natural resources but invested heavily in education and skills development. Lee Kuan Yew's government prioritized technical education. The education system was restructured throughout the 1960s–1980s to match industrial needs. Continuous workforce training and re-skilling programs were strengthened in the 1980s–1990s. Foreign investors were attracted due to skilled, English-speaking workforce. Emphasis was placed on entrepreneurship, science, engineering, and technology under national development plans. Public service efficiency improved through consistent capacity building policies. By the 2000s, Singapore had become a global hub for finance, trade, and innovation. The Singapore case shows that leadership-driven human capital investment and ENTREPRENEURSHIP produces rapid national transformation.

The China Example (Human Capital Development Model)

China experienced major human capital transformation under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping (Paramount Leader, 1978–1989). Beginning from the 1978 economic reforms, China shifted focus toward education and modernization. Deng Xiaoping emphasized ENTREPRENEURSHIP, science and technology as key drivers of national development. Massive expansion of education and vocational training took place in the 1980s–2000s. Millions of workers were trained to support industrialization and manufacturing growth. The government invested heavily in research, universities, and technical institutions. Special Economic Zones introduced in 1980 (e.g., Shenzhen) created skilled employment opportunities. Continuous re-skilling of labour supported China's export-led industrial economy. By the 2010s, China had become one of the world's largest economies. The China case shows that long-term leadership commitment to human capital drives national prosperity.

EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND IN ATTESTATION THAT ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT STARTED IN AGBONCHIA

A controversial school of thought holds strongly that Makani and Nke were born as twin at Gokana at the time before the abolishment of killing of twin by Mary Slessor the Scottish missionary. The controversial story has it that Makani and Nke were born as twin by their Cameroonian mother who married a Gokana man. Then the rumour of the new born twin got to the know of the brave ritual team responsible for executing the killing of twins, then their mother inlaw escaped with Makani the eldest to Cameron on exile. The brave ritual team believed Nke wasn't a twin since they didn't find any other child whom was taken away to Cameron. After 36 years, Makani migrated from Cameron through the River boundary to find in himself in a forest at Agbonchia in the present location of Oluka Onungwe dynasty. The today Oluka Onungwe location was the first settlement of Makani. Makani on Agbonchia land was living with fear of being caught arising from his twin story, which was a taboo. Hence, when ever people became aware of his settlement, he moves towards another direction. At a time he was noticed, so Makani move to lived in a tree opening called okwaa which was the controversial big tree that was cut down few years ago at Nchi Eta Nchia. The tree at Nchi Eta was the second dwelling place of Makani. Makani dwelling with fear wasn't comfortable under

the big tree at Nchi Eta then he moved to his third settlement which was Ejia at Olu Egor where he stayed for long time before untold story brought about his twin brother and him in the forest. Who are you he asked the stranger in the forest, I'm from Gokana, I was born as a twin, but my second was taken to Cameron to escape for his life, otherwise they would have killed both of us I'm that your brother that was taken to Cameron Makani told Nke in the forest. It was a moment of reunion as both of them started staying together at Ejia which is Alu Egor. Nke was a great farmer and hunter, I suggest the quest for hunting made him meet his twin brother in the lonely forest, while Makani was a great tradomedical person who made herbs for medications. They finally settled near Ogbere Oka Opee in Agbonchia near the Osaro Nke cassava and sugar cane location It is worth noting that tradomedical operations, farming and hunting are all activities of informal Entrepreneurship. It is correct to say the founding father's of Agbonchia and Eleme extension are entrepreneurs although informal. While they were staying together for a long time with fear of being of being Caught, they saw a female fish trader of Igbo origin going to Nchi Ngor which is present day Oyigbo. Makani approached the young lady trader with a proposal to marry her and she accepted. It is important to acknowledged again that an Entrepreneur being Makani married the Igbo trader who is also a trader was a point of business consolidation Alone in the bush, they never begged for food as the core characteristics of Entrepreneurship is dedication, risk taking, smart thinking, proactive etc.

A successful or innovative

Entrepreneur doesn't need a white collar job.

Their business empire and medical service grew to gain awareness from residents of Oyigbo and Oku be Ajour until they started asking them who are you people? In the process of giving geographical description to themselves, they said, we are Alema-mi, (which means this place favour's me) In the process arising from language barriers, the stranger whom were their business partner tried pronouncing Alema-mi, so they called it Eleme. After establishing empirically that the fore father's of Agbonchia were great in Entrepreneurship, one will now say it is unfortunate that the entrepreneurial fire has gone cold in our generation. Makani begot children from his wife and they worshipped Egor Okulu. Makani became the first king and made his twin brother one Nkporun (second in command). While Makani shrine was Egor Okulu, Nke shrine was Oken Osila (first daughter river) which was a dedicated lake for only first daughters in Eleme. Although the name of Oken Osila was later changed to Emu Okoun (which means chicken river) because smart chickens usually escaped during the process of ritual at Oken Osila, so those chicken grew in large number at the river side and always found drinking water at the lake, so they started calling it Emu Okoun instead of Oken Osila. Makani family grew large to the extend he needed to allocate space for his children, so he told his first son to stay at his Etoe Akara farm location, so he called that area Alutoo...which is the present day Aleto. Likewise he allocated his yam farm location to his second son and called it Alu esae which is the present day Alesa.

CHRONICLES OF ELEME ENTREPRENEURS

A Retrospective of Pioneering Entrepreneurs in Eleme (1900–1970) The Chronicles of Eleme Entrepreneurs documents the lives and contributions of pioneering men and women who shaped the economic landscape of Eleme between 1900 and 1980. It provides valuable insights into their achievements, challenges, failures, and successes, serving as a learning resource for present and future generations. Before the emergence of multinational corporations and large-scale industrial establishments in Eleme, the people relied heavily on agriculture, trade, craftsmanship, transportation, hospitality, entertainment, and other indigenous enterprises for their livelihoods. These early entrepreneurs demonstrated remarkable resilience, innovation, and self-reliance in building sustainable businesses that supported their families and communities. With the arrival of

major companies such as Dumez, which constructed the East–West Road; Adravocar, involved in the development of Onne Port; JGC and DBN, contractors for the Port Harcourt Refinery; as well as organizations such as NPA, Telewodu, NAFCON, INTELS, PHRC, EPCL, Indorama, Daewoo, Shell, RCC, Julius Berger, and MCC, employment opportunities expanded significantly. However, this industrial transformation gradually shifted attention away from farming and informal entrepreneurship towards dependence on paid employment. This development raises an important question: before the arrival of these multinational corporations, how did Eleme youths sustain themselves, build wealth, and support their families? The answer lies in the remarkable stories of Eleme's pioneering entrepreneurs. These men and women established thriving farms, trading ventures, workshops, transportation businesses, hotels, entertainment outfits, and craft-based enterprises. Through hard work, determination, and vision, they created jobs, trained apprentices, supported families, and contributed significantly to community development. Their motivations varied. Some were driven by passion, others by necessity, mentorship, exposure to new ideas, or the desire to provide a better future for their children.

Despite facing challenges such as inadequate finance, poor infrastructure, debtors, theft, and limited access to training, they persevered and achieved notable success. Many built houses and estates, trained their children to high educational standards, empowered others through apprenticeship, and introduced new business ventures into Eleme society. Their contributions laid the foundation for the economic identity of Eleme and demonstrated the value of enterprise as a tool for community transformation. Research further reveals that many of these businesses eventually disappeared due to factors such as inadequate succession planning, lack of innovation, poor documentation, limited access to information, insufficient training, and weak institutional support. Across the world, some businesses have survived for centuries. Examples include Kongō Gumi of Japan, which operated for over 1,400 years, and Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan, which has remained in operation for more than 1,300 years. In Nigeria, notable examples include UAC of Nigeria Plc and other long-standing indigenous enterprises. Unfortunately, none of the businesses established by Eleme's pioneering entrepreneurs have survived into the present generation in their original form.

This reality presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

It calls for deliberate efforts to build enterprises that can outlive their founders and remain sustainable across generations. Recommendations for Building Enduring Businesses in Eleme

1. Develop comprehensive succession plans for leadership continuity.
2. Build scalable and adaptable business models capable of responding to changing market conditions.
3. Invest in employee development and knowledge transfer.
4. Promote innovation, diversification, and continuous improvement.
5. Encourage family and stakeholder participation in business continuity planning.
6. Leverage technology and modern management practices.
7. Intentionally identify and mentor future leaders who can sustain the vision of the founder.

ELEME ENTREPRENEURS OF 1900–1970

1. PAPA SUNDAY JIKE.

He was a great entrepreneur from Agbonchia whom speciality was palm kernel. He trained all his children with his dedication to his palm kernel business.

2. OBELE OSARO EDEE

He a passionate Entrepreneur who sold different quality of wrappers at Nchia market.

3. DORA OBELE.

Dora was an Entrepreneur who sold fishes in large quantities.

4. JIJI NKANI NGWE

He was a herdsman who trade was dealing on cows. The entire Eleme rivers people were always coming to Agbonchia to buy cow from Jiji Nkani.

5. AGBA ALAKA NWOGU

Agba was a conglomerate who deals on wrappers and cows.

6. LATE ELDER ANDREW NYIEMEOWI OBE (1872–1952)

Community: Ekporo, Eleme, Rivers State Business Sector: Farming and Fishing

Late Elder Andrew Nyiemeowi Obe was one of the earliest known entrepreneurs in Eleme. A passionate fisherman and farmer, he built a livelihood around agriculture and fishing, employing about five persons in his ventures. His success was driven by his passion for the occupation and his determination to improve upon his skills. Despite challenges such as theft of farm produce and fishing nets, he remained committed to his work and earned a respectable living.

Staff Strength: 5 persons

Major Challenge: Theft of farm produce and fishing equipment

7. LATE CHIEF L. O. LORD KENYA (1902)

Community: Njuru, Eteo, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Cocoa Farming and Palm Plantation

Late Chief L. O. Lord Kenya was a renowned entrepreneur who excelled in cocoa farming and palm plantation business. Apart from his business activities, he was known for his love of music and singing. Under the mentorship of Chief Williams Chithey, he developed one of the most successful agricultural enterprises of his era. By the early 1930s, he employed about ten workers on his farms. His business enabled him to build a house and provide quality education for his children.

Staff Strength: 10 persons

Mentor: Chief Williams Chithey

Major Achievement: Built a house and trained his children through proceeds from farming.

8. LATE HRH CHIEF AMOS KATTEY AKARAOLU (1902–1984)

Community: Alode, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Palm Kernel Merchant and Supermarket Business

Late HRH Chief Amos Kattey Akaraolu was a successful trader and businessman who specialized in palm kernel trading and retail merchandising. He enjoyed reading newspapers and keeping abreast of developments around him. Inspired by the success of Igbo traders, he ventured into commerce and built a thriving enterprise that employed seven workers. Through dedication and hard work, he successfully trained his children and established himself as one of the notable traders of his generation.

Staff Strength: 7 persons

Motivation: Inspired by successful Igbo traders

Major Achievement: Successfully trained his children through business proceeds

9. LATE CHIEF MAXWELL OMIMOR OBELE EPIE (1905–1966)

Community: Alesa, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Real Estate

Late Chief Maxwell Omimor Obele Epie was a visionary entrepreneur and property investor. He loved reading and was widely respected within his community. After constructing his residence behind the present Fidelity Bank along Alesa Road, the construction company working on the Port Harcourt Refinery leased the property. This business decision transformed his building into an income-generating asset and positioned him among the early real estate entrepreneurs in Eleme.

Major Achievement: Leasing of residential property to expatriate construction workers

10. LATE CHIEF DANIEL CHINWI OSAROLUKA (1905–1985)

Community: Akpajo, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Palm Kernel Trading and Farming

Late Chief Daniel Chinwi Osaroluka was a hardworking entrepreneur who distinguished himself in palm kernel trading and agriculture. He was known for his commitment to excellence and strong work ethic. Supported by his family, he built a successful business that enabled him to acquire properties, assist members of his community, and provide quality education for his children.

Major Achievement: Property acquisition, community support, and family advancement

11. LATE CHIEF BENSON NWAFOR DIBIAH (1906–1991)

Community: Alesa, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Palm Oil Production

Late Chief Benson Nwafor Dibiah was a respected palm oil producer whose products gained popularity beyond Eleme, particularly in Aba, Abia State. A lover of music and songs, he was motivated by the desire to introduce successful business ideas he observed elsewhere into Eleme. He employed about ten workers and achieved remarkable success, including the construction of a storey building in the early 1950s.

Staff Strength: 10 persons

Major Achievement: Construction of a storey building in the early 1950s

12. LATE CHIEF (HON.) SILVERNUS NGBE (1914–1996)

Community: Ogoloma, Akpajo, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Provision Store, Cement, and Clothing Trade

Late Chief (Hon.) Silvernus Ngbe was a successful trader who operated three different business ventures simultaneously. He employed about three workers and was motivated by the desire to provide a better future for his children. His businesses flourished and enabled him to build a house and train his children to higher levels of education and achievement.

Staff Strength: 3 persons

Motivation: Desire to provide quality education and opportunities for his children

Major Achievement: House ownership and successful family upbringing

13. LATE MR. ISAAC OSAROEKE OSAROMBA (1913–1963)

Community: Alode, Eleme, Rivers State
Business Sector: Palm Kernel Trading

Late Mr. Isaac Osaroeke Osaromba was a renowned palm kernel merchant who built a successful trading enterprise despite transportation challenges. A lover of craftwork, he employed about fourteen workers and became one of the notable traders of his time. His business enabled him to support his family and provide opportunities for his children.

Staff Strength: 14 persons
Major Challenge: Transportation difficulties
Major Achievement: Successful family support and business growth

14. LATE MADAM VICTORIA OLUCHANYA KAMALU (1918–1986)

Community: Alode, Eleme, Rivers State
Business Sector: Food Items and Farm Produce

Late Madam Victoria Oluchanya Kamalu was one of the notable female entrepreneurs of her generation. She operated a thriving food and farm produce business and was known for her sociable nature. Despite the challenge of debtors, she maintained a productive and growing enterprise that earned her recognition throughout the community.

16. MADAM MARY CHUWAYA LALEOKA NGEI DIBIAH (1922–2002)

Community: Alesa, Eleme, Rivers State
Business Sector: Palm Kernel Oil Production

Madam Mary Chuwaya Laleoka Ngei Dibiah was a successful entrepreneur in palm kernel oil production. She was widely respected for her dedication and consistency in business. Operating from Alesa, she produced approximately twenty litres of palm kernel oil daily. Family support and encouragement played a significant role in motivating her entrepreneurial pursuits.

Production Capacity: About 20 litres daily
Motivation: Strong family support and encouragement

17. LATE CHIEF DENNIS ONU (1909–1990)

Community: Onne, Eleme, Rivers State
Business Sector: Craftsmanship and Wood Carving

Late Chief Dennis Onu was a highly skilled wood carver whose artistic works earned him recognition across Eleme and beyond. His passion for art inspired him to venture into wood carving as a profession. He employed about three workers and became known for producing quality carvings and handcrafted works. Although he faced challenges from debtors and the demanding nature of artistic production, he remained committed to his craft and left behind a legacy of creativity and excellence.

Staff Strength: 3 persons
Motivation: Passion for artwork and craftsmanship

18. LATE HRH EMERE MICAH NGELALE (1924–1980)

Community: Ekporo Clan, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Fishing and Farming

Late HRH Emere Micah Ngelale was a respected traditional ruler and entrepreneur who combined fishing and farming on a large scale. He was known for his love of reading and commitment to community development. His business operations employed about twenty workers and contributed significantly to local food production. Despite financial constraints, he successfully trained all his children and maintained a thriving enterprise.

Staff Strength: 20 persons

Major

Major Achievement: Training and educating his children through proceeds from farming and fishing

19. LATE ENGR. FRANK BORO KEKE JIKE (1927–1987)

Community: Alesa, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Transportation, Welding, Farming, and Mechanical Services

Late Engr. Frank Boro Keke Jike, popularly known as "Boro Kele," was one of the most versatile entrepreneurs in Eleme. He had interests in transportation, welding, farming, and mechanical engineering services. A lover of research and social events, he established one of the largest mechanical workshops in Rivers State during his time. Across his various enterprises, he employed approximately forty workers. His primary objective was to earn a living while empowering others through employment and skills development. Through hard work and determination, he became one of the most influential entrepreneurs of his generation.

Staff Strength: Approximately 40 persons

Major Achievement: Ownership of one of the largest mechanical workshops in Rivers State

Motivation: Economic empowerment and community development

19. MADAM OSILA EJOR OLAKA (1930–2003)

Community: Alesa, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Snuff (Tobacco) Trade

Madam Osila EJOR Olaka was a prominent trader and one of the leading dealers in snuff products within the Nchia area of Eleme. She was known for her storytelling skills and warm relationship with customers.

At a time when snuff consumption was widespread, her products were regarded as some of the best available. She attended to more than 200 buyers daily and employed three workers to support her operations.

Staff Strength: 3 persons

Customer Base: Over 200 buyers daily

Major Achievement: Dominated the snuff market within the Nchia area

20. LATE CHIEF OBO OSARO NGOFA (1937–2009)

Community: Aletto, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Hospitality (Hotel Business)

Late Chief Obo Osaro Ngofa was a pioneer in the hospitality industry in Eleme. Before the emergence of indigenous hotel ownership, hotels such as Mutaba Hotel and MJO Hotel existed in the area but were not owned by Eleme people. Chief Ngofa became the first known Eleme entrepreneur to establish and operate a hotel business. His establishment, Bolingo Hotel, employed approximately ten workers and became a notable hospitality centre within the community. Apart from business, he was known for his interest in writing and social affairs.

Staff Strength: 10 persons

Major Achievement: First known indigenous Eleme hotel proprietor

21. LATE CHIEF EZEKIEL GOMBA NWOLU (1937–1999)

Community: Ogale, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Electrical Services and Farming

Late Chief Ezekiel Gomba Nwolu was a skilled electrician and farmer who successfully combined technical expertise with agricultural production.

A football enthusiast, he employed about ten workers and used his business proceeds to train his children and mentor other young people. His commitment to hard work and empowerment made him a respected entrepreneur in the community.

Staff Strength: 10 persons

Major Achievement: Training of children and empowerment of apprentices.

22. LATE WUWU GBAA (1940–2002)

Community: Alesa, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Hunting and Wildlife Conservation

Late Wuwu Gbaa was a renowned hunter and wildlife enthusiast. Supported by his children, he established what was regarded as the only zoo in Eleme during the 1980s.

Although the zoo was not operated as a commercial venture, it attracted pupils, families, tourists, and visitors who came to observe the animals. His passion for wildlife conservation and education made the zoo a unique attraction in the community.

A teacher and peace-loving individual, he derived satisfaction from sharing his collection of animals with others.

Major Achievement: Establishment of the only known zoo in Eleme during the period

Motivation: Curiosity, passion, and innovation

23. LATE ENGR. (CHIEF) JIKE JIKE WAI, JP (1943–2003)

Community: Agbonchia, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Welding and Fabrication

Late Engr. (Chief) Jike Jike Wai was a respected welder and fabrication expert whose services were widely sought after.

He employed approximately ten workers and built a reputation for quality workmanship? and reliability. Inspired by the achievements of his friends, he resolved to pursue excellence in business and eventually became one of the notable craftsmen in Eleme.

Staff Strength: 10 persons

Motivation: Inspiration from successful friends and a desire to excel

Major Achievement: Establishment of a reputable welding and fabrication enterprise

24. LATE ALFRED NWOSU NGESIA (1945–2014)

Community: Akpajo, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Service Business

Late Alfred Nwosu Ngesia was a successful entrepreneur who built a reputable service-oriented enterprise. He was known for his passion for football and his commitment to helping people.

His innovative approach to business enabled him to employ about fifteen workers. Despite challenges associated with inadequate finance, he remained dedicated to serving the community and supporting those around him.

Staff Strength: 15 persons

Major Challenge: Inadequate finance

Major Strength: Innovation and community service

25. LATE CHIEF DR. ALALE NGETOO (AJAX) (1947–2017)

Community: Alode, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Entertainment and Music

Late Chief Dr. Alale Ngetoo, popularly known as Ajax, was one of Eleme's most celebrated musicians and entertainers. A gifted singer, he built a successful career in local music and entertainment.

He employed between twenty and twenty-five persons and released several music albums that enjoyed widespread patronage in Aba, Port Harcourt, Eleme, and Bori between 1975 and 1990.

His success in the entertainment industry demonstrated that music could serve as a viable source of livelihood and community influence.

Staff Strength: 20–25 persons

Major Achievement: Production and distribution of successful music albums across Rivers State and beyond

26. LATE CHIEF TITUS MGBERE

Community: Alesa, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Poultry Farming and Hospitality

Late Chief Titus Mgbere was one of the most outstanding entrepreneurs in Eleme. He owned Apollo Guest House in Port Harcourt and established a branch along the Eleme Expressway.

Beyond hospitality, he operated what was regarded as the largest poultry farm in Rivers State between 1980 and 1990. The poultry farm was located on a vast expanse of land opposite the Refinery Gate in Eleme.

His enterprise employed over 500 workers and specialized in the production and sale of eggs, poultry feeds, and chickens. His achievements positioned him as one of the foremost agricultural entrepreneurs in the region.

Staff Strength: Over 500 persons

Major Achievement: Ownership of one of the largest poultry farms in Rivers State

Business Products: Eggs, poultry feeds, and chickens

27. LATE CHIEF COLOMBUS OKAZU (JP) (Born 1946)

Community: Ebubu, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Yam Farming

Late Chief Colombus Okazu (JP) was a renowned farmer who specialized in large-scale yam cultivation. Known for his generosity and willingness to assist others, he became one of the most successful yam farmers in Eleme.

He maintained a large yam barn and employed approximately fifty workers. His philosophy was simple: "If others can do it, then I can do better." This mindset motivated him to pursue excellence in agriculture.

Through farming, he built estates and successfully trained all his children, achievements he considered his greatest legacy.

Staff Strength: 50 persons

Motivation: Desire to excel and achieve greater success

Major Achievement: Construction of estates and training of children

28. LATE EMERE JOSHUA CHU AKEN (LELEWA) (1954–2011)

Community: Alode, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Hotel and Entertainment

Late Emere Joshua Chu Aken, popularly known as Lelewa, was a respected entrepreneur in the hospitality and entertainment industry.

Recognizing the absence of recording studio facilities in Eleme outside Lagos and other major cities, he established one of the area's pioneering entertainment facilities. This innovation contributed significantly to the growth of local music and entertainment.

His business employed between fifteen and twenty workers and earned him recognition as one of Eleme's notable entertainment entrepreneurs.

Staff Strength: 15–20 persons

Motivation: Desire to establish entertainment and recording facilities in Eleme

Major Achievement: Promotion of local entertainment and creative talent

29. LATE CHIEF NELSON OLAKAMITIA OSARO

Community: Aletu, Eleme, Rivers State
Business Sector: Pharmacy

Late Chief Nelson Olakamitia Osaro was a respected pharmacist who dedicated his career to improving healthcare delivery within Eleme.

Motivated by the need to save lives and improve access to quality healthcare services, he established a pharmacy business that supplied genuine and reliable drugs to members of the community.

His enterprise employed about five workers and contributed significantly to public health awareness and healthcare accessibility.

Staff Strength: 5 persons
Motivation: Passion for healthcare and saving lives
Major Achievement: Provision of genuine pharmaceutical products to the community

30. LATE CHIEF DENNIS WUWU OBE (Died 2004)

Community: Alesa, Eleme, Rivers State
Business Sector: Welding

Late Chief Dennis Wuwu Obe was a highly respected welder and craftsman who built a successful career through technical expertise and determination.

In pursuit of his dream, he redirected his educational funds towards learning welding, a decision he never regretted. His workshop employed about twelve workers and became a centre for skills acquisition and empowerment.

His business achievements enabled him to educate his children to the highest levels and provide a stable future for his family.

Staff Strength: 12 persons
Motivation: Passion for technical skills and craftsmanship
Major Achievement: Training of children and establishment of a successful welding enterprise

31. LATE DICKSON KOIDA OLUKA (Died 1988)

Community: Agbonchia, Eleme, Rivers State
Business Sector: Bakery

Late Dickson Koida Oluka was one of the most successful bakers of his time. His bakery became widely known for producing high-quality bread, including a distinctive brand made with palm wine (Mi-Eleme).

Before establishing his bakery, he worked as a sales assistant for an Igbo businessman, from whom he acquired valuable entrepreneurial experience. Inspired by what he learned, he started his own bakery business and achieved remarkable success.

His enterprise employed about twenty workers and enabled him to acquire landed properties, build houses, and educate his children.

Staff Strength: 20 persons

Major Achievement: Establishment of a successful bakery brand and acquisition of valuable assets
Sour.

32. LATE CHIEF OLUKA MIMI JOSEPH AMADI (Died 1997)

Community: Aleto, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Transportation (Amadi & Sons)

Late Chief Oluka Mimi Joseph Amadi was a successful transportation entrepreneur and businessman.

After serving as a soldier, he returned home and invested in the purchase of a commercial bus, which marked the beginning of his transportation enterprise. Through dedication and prudent management, he expanded the business and generated substantial profits.

The success of his transportation company enabled him to acquire numerous properties and support his family.

Major Achievement: Development of a successful transportation business and acquisition of multiple properties

33. LATE CHIEF SALOKA OLUKA NWAJI (1903–1983)

Community: Alode, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Animal Rearing and Trading

Late Chief Saloka Oluka Nwaji was a respected entrepreneur engaged in livestock rearing and trading. He was known for his industrious nature and passion for business.

He employed about twenty-five workers and built a thriving enterprise that served the needs of the community. His desire to excel among his peers inspired him to pursue business success with determination.

Staff Strength: 25 persons

Motivation: Desire to distinguish himself through excellence and achievement

Major Achievement: Establishment of a successful livestock and trading enterprise

35. LATE CHIEF EBENEZER KOLAH MIMI, JP

Community: Ebubu, Eleme, Rivers State

Business Sector: Education and Agriculture

Late Chief Ebenezer Kolah Mimi was an educator, farmer, and community leader. He loved reading, writing, and sports, and devoted his life to teaching and agricultural development.

As a teacher, he contributed immensely to human capital development within Eleme while simultaneously engaging in farming activities. His enterprises employed about eleven workers and supported the welfare of his family and community.

His dedication to education and agriculture earned him respect as one of Eleme's most influential community builders.

Staff Strength: 11 persons

Major Achievement: Contributions to education and agricultural development

ENTREPRENEURIAL LESSONS FROM ELEME'S PIONEERING ENTREPRENEURS

The stories of Eleme's pioneering entrepreneurs reveal a generation of men and women who built sustainable livelihoods with limited resources but abundant determination.

Their experiences provide valuable lessons for present and future generations.

1. Entrepreneurship Thrives on Vision

Many of the entrepreneurs identified opportunities where others saw limitations. Whether in farming, transportation, entertainment, hospitality, or trading, they demonstrated the ability to identify needs and create value.

2. Passion Drives Success

A common feature among these entrepreneurs was passion for their chosen professions. Their love for farming, trading, craftsmanship, entertainment, and other ventures sustained them through difficult times.

3. Hard Work Remains Indispensable

The achievements recorded by these pioneers were not accidental. Their success was built on discipline, commitment, perseverance, and sacrifice.

4. Skills Acquisition Creates Wealth

Several entrepreneurs began their careers by learning a trade or skill from mentors, friends, or employers. Their experiences underscore the importance of vocational education and practical skills acquisition.

5. Entrepreneurship Creates Employment

Many of the businesses documented in this study employed workers ranging from three to over five hundred persons. These enterprises contributed significantly to local economic development and job creation.

6. Family Support Matters

Family members often played important roles in the growth and sustainability of these businesses through labour, encouragement, and succession support.

7. Innovation Encourages Growth

Entrepreneurs who introduced new products, services, or business ideas were often more successful and influential in their communities.

8. Financial Challenges Can Be Overcome

Although access to finance remained a major challenge, many entrepreneurs succeeded through prudent management, persistence, and reinvestment of profits.

9. Businesses Must Be Institutionalized

One major finding from this research is that most of the businesses did not survive beyond their founders. This highlights the need for proper documentation, succession planning, and institutional structures.

10. Entrepreneurship is a Tool for Community Development

The pioneers documented in this chapter not only generated income for themselves but also empowered others, trained apprentices, built houses, educated children, and contributed to the social and economic development of Eleme.

THE DEPARTURE OF ELEME FROM FARMING TO WHITE COLLAR JOB.

The people of Eleme are not lazy; they are hardworking, and this hardworking nature contributed greatly to their strength, health, and long lifespan.

All agricultural activities practices in Eleme includes: tilling the soil, cutting grass, digging holes for yams, and cassava. All the listed activities were done manually through intense physical labour.

These tasks served as a form of daily exercise.

They engaged actively in farming because there was no machinery for mechanized agriculture at the time. As a result, the people of Eleme enjoyed a long life. Before the arrival of colonial masters, who later introduced white-collar jobs, the average lifespan in Eleme was between 90 and 100 years. Untimely death was rare, and when it occurred, it was considered a taboo.

Eleme agriculture involved crop farming, local poultry, animal husbandry, and fishing.

Fishing made up only about 5% of Eleme's agricultural activity because only the coastal communities: Onne, Alesa, Aleto, and Akpajo engaged in it.

These four communities shared river boundaries with Okrika, which made the river accessible for fishing.

However, only a few people ventured into fishing due to limited swimming skills, lack of proper fishing equipment, and threats arising from communal crises with neighbouring coastal communities.

As a result, most coastal Eleme people abandoned fishing and focused on cassava, vegetables, and yam cultivation.

Other communities such as Ogale, Agbonchia, Ebubu, Aleto, and Eteo, which had small streams or lakes, also participated in fishing on a part-time basis.

Cassava and yam were the predominant agricultural products in Eleme. Cassava was processed into garri, fufu, tapioca, and sliced dried chips (obaa ojakpo). Early Eleme cassava producers did not process starch, even though starch production carries the highest commercial value. Commerce begins with the availability of products; after production comes marketing.

THE FALSE NOTION: ELEME PEOPLE ARE NOT GOOD IN BUSINESS

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

Eleme, in specific, Nigeria Port Authority NPA Onne Wharf established in 1954, including the construction of Port Harcourt refinery which was built in 1965 with 35,000 barrels per day capacity, was the biggest shift of the Eleme people from the dominant farming practices. The shift arising from the intensive quest for high paid jobs which doesn't require much energy or labour like farming jobs, hence farming and trading activities started experiencing decline.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AT NCHIETA ELEME ELEME MAIN MARKET

My late father Chief Dada Nwolu Obele was a politician and he was privileged to be allocated one store at the front row of Eleme market. My father gave me the store and used it for computer business centre in Eleme market from 1999 to 2003. The establishment of computer business was a big business before the entrance of the Internet with smartphones. I had the opportunity of working closely with the Eleme leadership. Then I saw the market statistics to be about 900 persons operating various categories of business in the market. As at then, in the 900 persons, Eleme had only 60 with only 7 men in the 60. Meanwhile all the 900 stores in the market belongs to Eleme that eventually gave out all to lease.

The predominant tribe in the Eleme market was the Igbo with minority Akwa Ibom, Hausa, Yoruba etc. My four years of operating in the market as a young boy in my twenties were an eye-opener and entrepreneurial learning curve for me. I discovered four attitudes of the Eleme people doing business in the market.

FOUR ATTITUDES OF ELEME PEOPLE DOING BUSINESS IN THE MARKET

First is lack of passion and commitment: It was when stealing became serious at the market and market leadership engaged the service of a private security firm to secure the market. The security firm came up with rules including official market closing time to be 6:00pm in the evening and resumption time to be 7:00am in the morning. Everyone is made to vacate the market by 6pm and

you can't gain entrance until 7am in the morning. I was able to discover that the Igbos operating in the market usually arrived 6:30am which was thirty minutes before the market resumption time, while Eleme people arrived to open stores around 9am or 10am. Most times the shops won't open for days, due to attention to farming, they will tell you they went to farm. In the same market where we lack passion, was the man the market a prosperous Igbo man wrote on his store Eleme marama meaning Eleme is good.

Second was multiple sources of income: The Eleme person operating in the market can make money from farming, spouse, relatives or any hustle within the multinational companies in Eleme. Not like the Igbo man that left his home town for the primary purpose of trading.

Third is zero or Low bills: The average Eleme man residing within Eleme doesn't pay rent since he/she is staying in a family apartment. Unlike Igbo man that is paying rent, his passion must be doubled to meet up bills.

Consciousness of pending bills triggers the desire to double the hustle.

Fourth is fear for risk-taking: It was when the marketing agents of Ngegwe micro-finance were hunting for accounts at Eleme market with an offer for soft trading loans. Coincidentally the Managing Director of Ngegwe micro finance bank then was Late Chief Emmanuel Obele who was retired bursar from Rivers State University.

Having a bank in your community with a father from Eleme as the branch manager, I was thinking that those on the front list for requesting the loan should be Eleme people, rather 98% were Igbos.

In my conversations with Eleme people, majority said debt is a forbidden and the bank might seize their properties if they fail to pay. They told that they prefer to engage in local meeting contributions to collect when it is their turn rather than collecting loans from a bank.

Therefore, the notion that oku Eleme rewalare ochira meaning Eleme people don't know business is wrong as some persons in Eleme have performed excellently in oil and gas business, in logistics and supplies, in trading, in hospitality, in medical, in education, in ministry etc.

ROAD TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN ELEME

Entrepreneurship is the process of designing, launching, and running a new business or enterprise, typically involving innovation, risk-taking, and creativity. It involves identifying opportunities, mobilizing resources, and managing risks to create value and generate profits. Entrepreneurship is relevant as it drives economic growth, creates jobs, and fosters innovation, contributing to the overall development of a community or nation. By promoting entrepreneurship, individuals can improve their standard of living and contribute to community development.

The population of Eleme Local Government Area in Rivers State, Nigeria is approximately 190,194 people, according to the 2006 census.

Eleme is a significant local government area in Rivers State, with a diverse economy driven by industries such as oil refining, fertilizer production, petrochemical, oil service companies and agriculture.

Interestingly, the population of Eleme is significantly larger than the number of companies operating in the area, highlighting a potential opportunity for entrepreneurship and economic growth.

Eleme is home to approximately 250 companies, with a diverse range of industries both big and small, including Port Harcourt Refinery, Indorama Petrochemical, Daawo Egbu and Intel Oil service Onne

It's practically impossible for these companies to employ all the youths of Eleme, making entrepreneurship development a vital solution to bridge this gap. By creating their own businesses, young people can create jobs not only for themselves but also for others, contributing to the overall economic development of the area. Without entrepreneurship, there's a risk of increased unemployment, which can lead to higher crime rates, given the thin line between unemployment and crime.

GRANDNOPLIMENT

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

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

The State of Education in Nigeria

Universities: There are over 270 universities in Nigeria, with 264 licensed universities as of 2025, including federal, state, and private institutions.

Polytechnics: Nigeria has around 190 accredited polytechnics, offering National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programs.

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

The Challenge of Unemployment

Nigeria produces around 600,000 graduates annually, exacerbating the unemployment issue. The job market is saturated, and many graduates lack required skills, highlighting the need for innovative solutions.

With thousands of graduates entering the job market yearly, the need for innovative solutions is clear. Dr. Joseph Obele's concept of "GRANDNOPLIMENT" highlights the harsh reality faced by many Nigerian graduates, emphasizing the importance of entrepreneurship and self-employment.

BENEFITS OF ADOPTING GRANDNOPLIMENT IN ELEME

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

DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NJURU (ELEME): A PATH TO PROSPERITY

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

1. Establish Njuru (Eleme) Entrepreneurship Board: The Eleme Council of Chiefs and Eleme Local Government Council should collaborate to set up the Eleme Entrepreneurship Board. This board will focus on training and empowering entrepreneurs in Eleme, providing them with the necessary skills and resources to succeed.
2. Dedicated Budget for Entrepreneurship Development: The Eleme Local Government Council and companies operating in Eleme should allocate a special budget to support entrepreneurship development. This fund can be used to provide financial assistance, mentorship, and other resources to entrepreneurs.
3. Soft or Zero-Interest Loans: Entrepreneurs of Eleme origin should have access to soft or zero-interest loans, enabling them to secure funding for their businesses without being burdened by high interest rates.
4. Regular Training and Capacity Building: Consistent training programs should be organized for entrepreneurs operating in Eleme, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to grow their businesses.
5. Secure Environment for Investment: Ensuring the safety and security of all clans in Eleme will attract investors from outside, creating opportunities for economic growth and development.
6. Tax Relief: The government should offer tax relief to entrepreneurs in Eleme, reducing the financial burden and allowing them to reinvest their profits in their businesses.

BENEFITS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN NJURU (ELEME)

1. Job Creation: Entrepreneurship development will lead to the creation of jobs, reducing unemployment and improving the standard of living in Eleme.
2. Innovation and Creativity: Entrepreneurship fosters innovation and creativity, leading to new products, services, and solutions that benefit the community.
3. Reduced Crime and Insecurity: By providing opportunities for economic empowerment, entrepreneurship development can help reduce crime and insecurity in Eleme.
4. Improved Social Life: Entrepreneurship development will contribute to improved social life in Eleme, with more people contributing to the local economy and community.
5. Infrastructural Development: The growth of businesses in Eleme will lead to infrastructural development, including better roads, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions.

CHALLENGES FACING ENTREPRENEURS IN ELEME

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

6. Limited Market Access: Entrepreneurs in Eleme often struggle to access markets, both locally and internationally, limiting their customer base and revenue growth.

Recommendations for Businesses to Outlive Owners in Eleme:

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

Paid Employment and Self-Employment

Paid employment refers to working for an organization in exchange for salary or wages. While it offers stability, it is limited by job availability.

Self-employment involves creating and managing one's own business. It promotes independence, innovation, and wealth creation.

In developing economies, self-employment is a more sustainable path for reducing unemployment and promoting economic growth.

Entrepreneurship & Skill Acquisition

Entrepreneurship and skill acquisition are closely linked. Skill acquisition refers to the development of practical abilities, while entrepreneurship applies those skills to create businesses and generate income.

Without skills, entrepreneurship is weak; without entrepreneurship, skills may remain unused. Both are essential for sustainable development.

Reasons Why Youths Dislike Engaging in Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship

- a. Lack of immediate financial rewards.
- b. Poor awareness of opportunities.
- c. Fear of failure.
- d. Lack of startup capital.
- e. Preference for white-collar jobs.
- f. Weak mentorship structures.
- g. Economic instability.
- h. Peer pressure.
- i. Limited access to training centres.
- j. Low patience for business growth.

Strategies to Change Youth Mindset Toward Entrepreneurship

- a. Entrepreneurship education at all levels.
- b. Awareness campaigns.

- c. Establishment of skills acquisition centres.
- d. Provision of financial support.
- e. Mentorship programmes.
- f. Government and private sector collaboration.
- g. Integration into youth development policies.
- h. Promotion of success stories.
- i. Practical training emphasis.
- j. Entrepreneurship competitions.

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CRIME

1. "Unemployment is the breeding ground of insecurity in any society."
2. "Where jobs are absent, crime becomes a substitute opportunity for many youths."
3. "Poverty is not just lack of money; it is lack of productive engagement."
4. "Hunger is the loudest voice of unemployment in every struggling community."
5. "An idle youth is a potential risk to peace and stability in society."
6. "Entrepreneurship is the bridge between poverty and prosperity."
7. "When people are productively engaged, insecurity naturally declines."
8. "A jobless society is a restless society."
9. "Hunger does not only weaken the body; it weakens morality and judgement."
10. "Skills acquisition is the most sustainable weapon against unemployment and poverty."
11. High unemployment often leads to frustration, increasing insecurity, restiveness, and social instability.
12. Lack of income increases poverty, which may push some individuals into crime for survival.
13. Unemployment and lack of income directly result in hunger and poor living conditions

In Conclusion

The development of Njuru Community depends on effective utilization of human capital through entrepreneurship. With rising global population and increasing graduate unemployment, entrepreneurship remains a critical solution for sustainable development. Before the arrival of multinational companies, entrepreneurship was the engine of economic survival in Eleme." Every successful entrepreneur begins by identifying a need and providing a solution." Skills acquired today become the foundation of tomorrow's prosperity. Entrepreneurship transforms ideas into opportunities and opportunities into development." A business that creates jobs contributes directly to community development. Innovation distinguishes successful entrepreneurs from ordinary traders

Entrepreneurial success requires vision, discipline, and persistence.

The future belongs to those who create opportunities rather than wait for them.

Entrepreneurship is not merely a means of livelihood; it is a pathway to community transformation.

Businesses that outlive their founders become legacies for future generations

Future entrepreneurs must learn from these experiences and build enterprises capable of surviving beyond their founders.

The chronicles of Eleme entrepreneurs therefore serve not only as a historical record but also as a source of inspiration and guidance for contemporary entrepreneurs, policymakers, researchers, and youths seeking pathways to economic empowerment and sustainable development.

As Njuru Community continues to evolve in the twenty-first century, the stories of these pioneering entrepreneurs remind us that true development is built on creativity, enterprise, hard work, and the courage to transform opportunities into lasting legacies.

Communities that embrace entrepreneurship will achieve economic independence, job creation, and long-term prosperity.

THANK YOU

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