



NIGERIA'S CENTENARY:

100 YEARS OF

AKWA IBOM WOMEN'S IMPRINT IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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Chapter 5



Akwa Ibom Women: Contribution to Entertainment

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Introduction

Entertainment is a basic ingredient of life. Its absence could affect all spheres of human endeavour. It plays a pivotal role in society as a stress and tension diffuser, and gives 'thought, voice and sight' to a society's culture and shared values through the creative genius of the artistes and writers, and the unique ways in which they capture and document their perspectives on a society's culture (Nweke Jnr, 2013). It is seen as "something affording pleasure, diversion, or amusement" (Thesaurus Dictionary, 2014, online), through either a performance of music or drama/acting. These two media form part of Akwa Ibom State's cultural heritage. They had been and are still vital tools of entertainment. Practitioners of the old functioned in various capacities as master musicians, orators, actors/actresses, and so on. Their role in cultural development and advancement in the traditional society helped to shape the social and moral lives of the people (the cultural owners) and their activities. They regarded music and theatrical arts/acts/films as valuable instruments of culture that served humanity's socio-cultural essence. Film is a medium of

expression and an instrument of image projection. It is a vehicle of ideas and a tool for communication with the power to influence the mind. Drama on the other hand, mirrors the society and activates a considerable amount of attitudinal changes.

From the pre-independence era, there had existed musical and theatrical practices which were carried out, exclusively, through performances of songs, instrumentation, and drama. The method of dissemination of these musical cultures were through oral tradition, where members watched or observed, imitated, and participated fully in such performances. Recognized groups functioned in the local settings with their leaders ensuring that their musical/theatrical cultures served the functions for which they were meant. For the women, the entity now called Akwa Ibom State had very flourishing musical groups such as *Ebre*, *Ndok Ufok Ebe*, *Mboppo*, *Nkerebe*, *Nsa Ebok*, *Asian Nkaniban*, etc., which contributed immensely to the musical and social development of their members and others in the communities. Some were formed to act as catalyst for curbing societal ills and menace. An interview with Obong Anwan Paulina Sandy (Oral Communication, February 12, 2014), one of the music practitioners at the time reveals that these groups not only helped to provide entertainment and socialize her members, but also provided the workforce for bush clearing, farmland weeding, houses build. They also reached out to members who could not cater for their families, promoted love amongst members, and encouraged respect for the elderly women and others.

The *Ebre* and *Mboppo* ceremonial music, according to Akpabot (1975) are the only two surviving types of women's social control music that existed prior to the advent of Christianity in Akwa Ibom State and that other women

societies were labeled pagan by the missionaries. It must be noted that *Mboppo* ceremony was an off-shoot of *Ebre*. Akpabot stated further that these two groups encouraged and promoted chastity, placing and publicizing the virginity of the girl admitted into it in very good standing with the community. The *Ebre* society placed great value on virginity and morality virtues for females generally. Thieves were regarded as outlaws and were not qualified to be admitted into the group. Akpabot reveals that the *Ebre* society was a means of exerting social control among the women of the community and exposing thieves and women of easy virtue to ridicule. On this, Antia (2005) wrote:

The fear of being ridiculed, mimicked, or sung in songs by musicians induced people to put up nothing but the best in order to earn praises instead of rebukes or condemnation...and to avoid social stigma and its woeful and unpleasant consequences (p. 176).

Sadly, the musical involvements of these groups and their women leaders in the traditional communities in the state from the onset up to the current dispensation had not been documented. It is not that the women who were practical musicians in these communities were not recognized in their own right or did not contribute to the development and propagation of the musical cultures and the society, but no one thought it fit to place them on the global music scene. The era of War Against Indiscipline (WAI) in Nigeria focused on injecting sanity into the lives of the people in the nation. Some vital virtues were to be imbibed and exhibited by indigenes. This effort were what the traditional musicians both male and female had promoted through songs to reform the citizens of their traditional communities long before government introduced WAI. A deviant was regarded as an abnormal

individual who brought shame and dishonor to his immediate family and the community as a whole.

In the traditional societies, drama was integrated into music and dance to serve social control purposes. For this reason, no female/male stood out as an actress/actor in the then South Eastern State now Akwa Ibom. Every one was expected to take part in one or more musical/ dance activity(ies).

However, from the 1960s onward, Akwa Ibom State, witnessed changes and music dynamism. Female musicians ventured into popular music and made outstanding contributions to the development of the State's and nation's musical culture. This era brought into limelight female entertainers such as Onyeka Owendu, the late Evi-Edna Ogholi, Nelly Uchendu, Ligadu Sisters, Ese Agesse and their Akwa Ibom State counterparts such as the late Lady Afi Usua, Martha Ulaeto, Basseyy Ogunsanyo, the late Lady Christiana Essien Igbokwe; gospel artistes like Aity Dennis Inyang, Princess Esther Edoho, Princess Uduak Akpan, Pat Akpabio, Anne Inyang, Ethel Odungide, and others. The 1960s could be regarded as the man's era in terms of drama and acting. The 1970s saw women playing secondary acting roles. The creation of cultural centres began to give a boost to musical and dramatic performances. Beyond this came an era when an Akwa Ibom daughter, late Lady Christiana Essien-Igbokwe featured as an actress in Radio/Television drama series. Also, women featured in *Efe Mbre*, an epic Ibibio/Efik drama in core Cross River/Akwa Ibom.

Prior to Nollywood, Nigerians were exposed to watching Soap Operas like 'Checkmate', 'Ripples', 'Mirror in the Sun', 'Cock Crow at Dawn', 'Behind the Cloud', etc., and some Nigerian women featured prominently in these Soap Operas.

Though Hubert Ogunde founded the first theatrical company in Nigeria in 1945, stage plays are now relegated to the background as people prefer to watch movies in the comfort of their homes due to the increasing rate of insecurity in the country. Women like Joke Silva, Liz Benson, Amaka Igwe and others were all part of this early beginnings.

With the dawn of Nollywood in Kenneth Nnebue's 'Living in Bondage', the stage was set for Nigerian women to actively feature and participate in the creation of home movies. This ushered in a blooming period of female actresses, script writers, movie producers, and directors. Notable among them are Amaka Igwe, Genevieve Nnaji, Rita Dominic, Omotola Jalade, Monalisa Chinda, Mercy Johnson Osioma, Uche Jumbo, Tonto Dikeh, Kate Henshaw Nuttal, Stella Damascus, Patience Ozorkwo, Rita Edochie, Clarion Chukwurah, Bernedette Obi, and others. Some Akwa Ibom women have made the state and nation proud in this regard, namely Liz Benson, Obot Etuk, Ini Edo, Nse Ikpe Etim, Emem Isong, Ini Ikpe, Itorobong Etim, Eno Ekwere, Maggie Umanah, Obey Etuk, Idy Imeh, Magdalene Okon, Dorothy Essien, Becky Odungide, Belinda Efah, Love Etebom, MariaTherese Rogers, Ini Ikpe Etim, Obongawan Benette, Uduak Oguamanam, and others.

Little or no information is available as regards women entertainers of Akwa Ibom extraction from the pre-colonial/independence and post-independence eras. However, technology has been able to provide some scanty but useful information on contemporary musicians and actors/actresses indigenous to the state. This chapter, therefore, highlights on some of these musicians/actresses who have made vital contributions to Akwa Ibom State and national development. The authors embarked on a rigorous search for information on

these entertainers, as they are called, through oral interviews, e-mails, and other means that were deemed necessary.

Women's Impact-Innovations, Distinctions, and Contributions:

Late Christiana Essien Igbokwe MFR 1960 - 2011 (Nigeria's Lady of Songs)

Late Christiana Uduak Essien-Igbokwe also known as Nigeria's Lady of Songs was born to Mr. and Mrs. Essien on 11th November, 1960 in Okat, Onna Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Her maiden name was Christiana Uduak Essien. She lost her mother at the age of 12 and her father in 2005. She was married to Mr. Igbokwe who hails from Anambra State. She was a musician and an actress.

She attended St. John's Lutheran Primary School Okat in Onna Local Government Area where she obtained her First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC). While growing up she lived in Aba, Abia State with her late mother's friend, who encouraged her singing career and bought her a fairly used cassette player to record her songs. She also obtained her G.C. E in a Secondary School in Aba, Abia State.

Late Christy Essien Igbokwe began her singing career in secondary school. She sang at various clubs in Aba, Abia State such as Mazi Ukonu's Club and Unikoko. She also veered into acting and featured on the Nigerian Television Authority (N.T.A.) Channel 6, Aba programme called 'Now Sound' and later joined the cast of the 'The New Masquerade' in 1976. Her memorable role as Akpenor, the wife of the cantankerous character, Jegede Sokoya, brought her to limelight. The commencement of her professional career in music dates back to 1977 when she released her debut album called 'Freedom'. However, 1981 was a milestone in her musical career as she

released her hit album, 'Ever Liked My Person'. She featured in two Nollywood films; 'Flesh and Blood' and 'Scars of Womanhood'. She contributed immensely to the development and growth of the music industry in Nigeria by participating in the founding of the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN). She also mentored younger musicians; for instance, in 2009, she hosted a musical concert: "Inspire Africa Benefit Concert" a musical show of old and new breed musicians where her son, Kaka, featured alongside the MTN Musical festival.

Significant Achievements

Christiana Essien-Igbokwe made significant achievements in life and on the music industry in Nigeria:

- She put Nigeria's name on the world music map with her evergreen "Seun Rere" track
- She is credited as having initiated the first meeting that brought about the founding of the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN) in 1981 and served as its first National Treasurer between 1996 and 1999.
- She was the first female PMAN president.
- She composed and performed a song that would be known as Akwa Ibom State anthem: "*Akwa Ibom Mmi* (My Akwa Ibom)" in 1987, its year of creation.
- She was the Chairperson and Managing Director of Soul Train entertainment limited.
- She featured in State, National and International events at various times.
- She spoke many Nigerian languages. Christy was fluent in Yoruba, English, Igbo and Ibibio and sang a lot of her songs in the western Nigerian language (Yoruba) and

drew heavily on their culture and the tradition of the people.

- Christy was at the forefront of propagated issues affecting women and children as depicted in the films she participated in which addressed issues of child abuse and female circumcision.
- Her passion for the less-privileged children led to the establishment of a Non-Governmental Organisation – the Essential Child Care Foundation involved in child welfare needs and rights.
- She also contributed immensely to nation building: peace and tolerance as moral uprightness, remained constant themes of her songs.
- She had 11 albums to her credit. These are:
 - Freedom (1977)
 - Patience (1978)
 - Time Waits For No One (1978)
 - One Understanding (1979)
 - Give Me A Chance (1980)
 - Ever Liked My Person? (1981)
 - It's Time (1982)
 - Taking My Time (1986)
 - Hear The Call (1990)
 - Mysteries Of Life (1992)
 - All Of A Sudden (2011)

Awards and Honours

The following awards and honours are credited to her:

- International Special Achievement Award in Mexico (1983)
- Nigerian Lady of Songs Award which she received (1984)
- Africa Music Mother Award (1984)
- World Song Festival Award, Los Angeles

- Queen of Music International Award from the Association of Theatre Arts Practitioners in Lagos (1996).

Late Chief Lady Mary Afi Usuah (MON) 1941-2013

Late Chief Lady Mary Afi Usuah was a renowned music and theater interpreter, an international artiste, performer, singer, producer, and an adjudicator in State, National and International events. She was born on April 26, 1941 and a native of Eyeyekip in Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Her parents were Late Chief John Usuah, a former Headmaster of Saint Marks Primary School in the area and Mrs. Elizabeth Iquo Usuah (nee Obioesio Okung-Inyang). Her mother was from a family of singers, poets and drummers and she herself was a singer while the father came from a family of poets, his famous aunt and community poet/philosopher being 'Ekarikong'.

She began her primary education at St. Mary's primary school, Ekpene Ukim and proceeded to the West African Peoples' Institute (WAPI) in Calabar, Cross River State. Due to her excellent performance at the Secondary school level and her musical talent, she was granted a scholarship to study music and theatre interpretation at the World famous Santa Cecilia Conservatorio, an Academy of music in Italy where she specialized in Didactic music and interpretations of Theatre. In addition, she also acquired a Postgraduate certificate in Literature in Pertro Majiella Conservatory, Naples, Italy. Mary also equipped herself academically as an administrator as she went through the Cross River State Civil Service Management courses.

Owing to her creativity and versatility, Chief Lady Mary Afi Usuah was employed immediately after her graduation in big

theaters in Rome where she was involved in Opera productions. She also starred as the lead character in some of such productions. Mary also organized private groups to represent Nigeria at Cantagiro World festival in Italy. She had toured Europe and South America working with great theatre personalities and institutions of Arts, Culture and Tourism. As a result of the exploits and growing fame of Mary on the international scene, the Cross River State Government requested her to return home to serve in the Ministry of Information and Culture as a performer and administrator in the Arts Council. On assumption of duties in the Arts Council, she was appointed into the planning committee of the National Festival of the Arts in 1974 where she won prizes. Lady Mary Afi Usuah also staged various Television shows such as "The Mary Afi Usuah show", starred and performed on other TV shows such as "Stars of the Tube", "Bala Milla show", "AM Empress" etc.

Significant Achievements

As an international artiste, Mary had worked with World greatest Arts and Literary ambassadors such as Georgio Albertazzi, Anna Proclaimmer, Italian theatre director Georgio Strehler, African Mother of Songs- Miriam Makeba, Iconic American singing star- Aretha Franklin, The Dome of Jazz- Duke Ellington, Literary giants and Nobel Laureates like Prof. Wole Soyinka of Nigeria and Chilean author and former ambassador to Britain – Prof. Pablo Neruda, among others.

In her entire career, she had served at various times as a planning committee member, mobilizer and performer at State, National and International functions both at home and in various continents of the World. She also made her impact felt

in the planning of the National Festival of Arts; grooming of the Cross River State contingent to FESTAC '77; promotion and development of Arts and Cultural events nationally and internationally such as the All Africa Games, Algiers '78, OAU Summit-Nigeria, COJA 2003, ICASSA 2006; and as an adjudicator – NAFEST 2006, Cross River State Carnival.

Mary also recorded four songs to her credit. These are;

- “Ima-Mma Uyem” (1974), Her First Album
- “Ekpe Ikpe Eno Mi” (1974)
- “Afia Mma” (1974)
- African Woman (1976)

Awards, Honours and Prizes

In recognition of Mary's commitment to the promotion of Arts Culture and Tourism not only in Nigeria but also in other countries of the World, she was honoured with several prizes and awards, among them are the following:

- Italian Premio Trevi of Best Folk Performer.
- Best Artist Award by the Pablo Neruda Theatre Company in the Platinum Category.
- Star of the Tube Award by NTA.
- Akwa Ibom State PMAN Award.
- Life Member, Red Cross Society, Cross Rivers State Branch.
- Three First prizes in National Festival of Arts, 1974 in Music and Interpretation.
- Platinum Icon Award by Reconciliation Network International.
- “Ekung Eyo – Eyo Ekio” of Urue Offong/Oruko, Oron Nation.
- “Mokofa” (Obongawan) of Efut.
- Ambassador for Peace.

- Member of the Order of the Niger (MON).

Mary was a humble person. Her life philosophy was "Service with Humility" and this was highly visible in all her life endeavours. She believed in love, peace and conflict resolution and hated friction and quarrels as disclosed by Dr. Bassey Ogunsanya (one of her trainee, a close friend and someone whom she met while in Rome, who performed with her during her numerous outings). In a personal interview, Dr Ogunsanya mentioned that "The Lady" had some trainees, was a devoted mother who loved and cared for her children. She is survived by two biological children, two young wards, four grand children and a great-grandchild. Her favourite food was "Ekpang Nkukwo" a meal she requested for as her last delicacy before she died.

Ini Edo- Ehingwina

Iniobong Edo Ekim popularly called Ini Edo is a Nollywood actress. She hails from Onna Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. She is the second child out of four children, three girls and one boy. Born on April 19, 1982, Iniobong attended Adiaha Obong Nursery school, Eket and later Cornelia Cornelly College, Uyo where she obtained her SSCE. She moved on to acquire a diploma in Theatre Arts at the University of Uyo and later completed her Bachelor's Degree programme at the University of Calabar where she studied English. Her mother was a teacher while her father was a church elder; thus, she had a very strict upbringing. In 2008, she got married to Philip Ehingwina a business man from Edo State but based in the United States of America.

Her acting career started in 2000 after a producer discovered her talent at an audition. Ini Edo is a prolific and talented actress who came to limelight with the film 'Worlds

Apart' in 2004. From then on, she became a household name in the Nollywood industry. She became a producer in 2010, co-produced with Emem Isong and starred in the films 'Memories of my Heart' and 'I'll take my chances'. She is a 'Nobel hair' brand ambassador, a 'Glo' ambassador and 'Face of Chivita'. She was appointed United Nations Habitat Youth Envoy in 2011.

Apart from her acting career, she participates in charitable trusts and assists the less privileged in the society. According to her, "My work with the children of the dustbin estate aims at creating an enabling environment and a center for education for them. As a United Nations Envoy for Habitat, we aim at improving and rehabilitating the slums".

Significant Achievements

As one of the most prolific Nollywood actresses, she has featured in more than 100 films from 2004 till date. Some of them are:

- Legacy (2004)
- Indecent Girls (2004)
- Love Crime (2004)
- Eye of the gods (2004)
- Stronghold (2005)
- Tears of Nancy (2005)
- Last Picnic (2005)
- Emotional Blackmail (2005)
- Mfina Ibagha (2006)
- Games Men play (2006)
- Secret Fantasy (2006)
- Ghetto Queen (2007)
- Political Control (2007)

- Power of Beauty (2007)
- Reloaded (2008)
- Native Son (2009)
- Blind Kingdom (2009)
- I'll Take my Chances (2012)
- Udemé Mmi (2013)

Her philosophy in life is 'Impossible is nothing'. Her role models are her mother and her grand-mother.

Awards, Honours and Prizes

Her awards and recognitions include:

- City People best actress
- Tinapa Awards for best supporting actress
- Best indigenous actress
- African women most outstanding actress.

Emem Isong

Emem Isong, a playwright and producer, was born in Ndiya in Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State on the 5th of November, 1969. She attended the Federal Government Girls' College, Calabar where she obtained the SSCE certificate. In 1987, she was admitted to read Theatre Arts at the University of Calabar, Calabar and graduated in 1990 with the Bachelors of Arts Degree in Theatre Arts.

She later worked with a bank briefly between 1992 and 1994. Due to her love for the Arts, she left the banking sector and plunged into the film industry where she engages herself as a screen play writer and a producer. Her fans love her because it is always difficult to predict what happens in her movies. She is renowned for working and performing highly

thrilling and suspense-filled movies. She was motivated by the debut of the home video 'Living in bondage' in 2003. She started 'Theatre Images' where she worked as an independent producer and writer. Her work consisted of writing and producing films for film marketers; organizing auditions and scouting for talents; changing contents for television stations and attending film festivals locally and internationally to network and discover new markets. Her work 'Emotional Crack' in 2004 brought her limelight and enabled her to attend festivals outside the country, particularly the African Film Festival in New York.

Significant Achievements

In 2009, she established the Royal Arts Academy where students are taught the rudiments of acting and elocution. The Academy also provides a platform for writing and editing screen plays, working closely with Directors and Film crews to understand their requirements; organizing and facilitating the casting of actors for all the roles in a film; negotiating fees and contracts for the actors, and collaborating with Iroko TV, Africa Magic to make high quality films.

She has written and produced many work of arts among which are the following:

- Breaking point
- A minute to Midnight
- Untouchable
- Rumours
- Hit and Run
- Emotional Crack
- Promise me Forever
- Emotional Decision
- Games Women Play

- Games Men Play
- Behind closed Doors
- Unfinished Business
- A piece of Flesh
- Traumatized
- Fatal Imagination
- Sweet Tomorrow
- Sweet Revenge
- Reloaded
- Guilty Pleasures
- Broken Silence
- Bursting Out
- I'll Take my Chances
- Weekend Get away
- Lagos Cougars
- Mrs. Somebody
- Forgetting June
- Visa Lottery
- Lonely Hearts
- Inheritance

Her indigenous movies include:

- Mfina Ibagha
- Ekaete
- Kokomma
- Udeme Mmi
- Edikan
- Uyai

She is a member of the Association of Movie Producers (AMP). Her philosophy of life is 'Live and Lets Live'. Her role models

include Nelson Mandela, Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry. She would love to be remembered for her creativity and hard work.

Awards, Honours and Prizes

She has won numerous awards. They include the following:

- Best producer, City Peoples Award (2008)
- Best producer, Zaffa Award, London
- AMA Award 2010
- GIMA Award
- PAMSA Awards
- ELOY Awards

Liz Benson-Ameye

Elizabeth Benson, better known as Liz Benson, a veteran iconoclastic Nollywood actress hails from Nsit Ubium in Akwa Ibom State. Born in 1966, she is the second child in a family of four. She attended the Edgerly Memorial College, Calabar and later the Havana State University, Georgia where she studied Dramatic Arts. She was formerly a widow with three children, but in 2009 she got married to Bishop Great Ameye from Warri, Delta State.

She ventured into the movie industry in 1993 with the TV Soap opera "Fortunes". In 1994, she starred in the mind-bursting home video "Glamour Girls". Following this, she stormed the industry with another classic, and mind-blowing film, "True Confession". Her ability to interpret roles made her one of the most respected actresses in the industry, thus she became a screen goddess and a role model for young actresses. She was off the screen for about six years or more to work with her husband in God's vineyard. Recently, she staged a comeback when she and Stephanie Linus did some work that

bordered on women's health. She believes that if she could help humanity, she would have contributed her quota in life.

Significant Achievements

Her creative prowess could be seen in such movies as the following:

- Glamour Girls (1994)
- True Confession (1995)
- Witches (1998)
- Scores to Settle (1998)
- Mutanda (2002)
- Last Warning (2002)
- Worlds Apart (2004)
- Inheritance (2004)
- Women in Power (2005)
- Crazy Passion (2005)
- Day of Atonement (2005)
- Political Control (2006)
- Toko Taya (2007)
- Living Funeral (2013)
- Dry (2013)

Awards, Honours and Prizes

Her diligence at work brought her wealth of experience to bear on her performances. She has acted as a mother, grandmother, lover, wife, school girl, witch, widow etc. In these movies her interpretation of these roles was so perfect that she was seen as the undisputed Queen of Nollywood.

Aity Dennis-Inyang

Aity Itohowo Dennis-Inyang (Nee Itohowo Sekerema Amiang) is one of Nigeria's Gospel artistes who has made a name and has contributed immensely to the growth and development of music in the country. She was born on 13th July 1965 as the first child in a musical family of 16 (6 boys and 10 girls) in Ikot Idem Udo in Oruk Anam Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Her father, Sekerema Ukpe Amiang, was a Grade II teacher and choirmaster, and her mother (Comfort Asuquo Ekpenyong), was a trained nurse and good singer.

Aity attended Primary School, Ituk Mbang and Primary School, Enwe Street, Uyo from 1971 to 1976 where she obtained her First School Leaving Certificate. She proceeded to Secondary School, Ikot Ataku, Eket in 1976 where she joined the school choir and completed in 1981 with the General Certificate in Education 'O' Level. She read French at University of Calabar, Calabar in 1981 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) Degree, Second Class Upper Division in 1985. While still pursuing her Bachelor's degree, she obtained a Diploma in French language from the L'Universite de Grenoble 111 in France between 1983 and 1984. Between 1993 and 1995, she obtained her Master of Arts (M.A.) in Mass Communication (Radio/Television) from the University of Uyo. She has worked as a French and English teacher in Taraba and Akwa Ibom States. She worked as a television producer (AKBC); proof reader, Complete Football Newspaper and Success Digest Magazines, Lagos; Client Service Executive, SO & U/Saatchi & Saatchi, Lagos; Music Director and Associate Presiding Pastor, Sure Word Assembly International.

Aity Inyang started singing from childhood. She joined the choir in Lutheran Church, Ituk Mbang, Uyo at the age of 8 while in primary 3. She enjoyed doing home concerts with her parents

and siblings after school hours, and during holidays. While at the University of Calabar, she was a member of the Students Christian Movement choir and later, a member of Revival Valley Ministries Choir after graduation. That was when the inspiration to write songs began in full swing. As a singer and song writer, she has mentored and trained several solo artistes, bands, dance groups, and choirs, some of which are Queen Favour, Besidone, Pita, Oghekervwe and Eddy. Aity has a Music Foundation which excels in Music Workshops and draws participants from Victory Tabernacle choir, Uyo; Winners Chapel Choir, Eket; Victory Tabernacle Choir, Lagos; Footsteps Dance Group, Lagos; The Tribe of Judah, Sure Word Assembly. Aity is a global figure as far as musical performance is concerned. She has had several performance outings nationally and internationally, some with co-artistes.

Significant Achievements

- Founded the *Aity Music Foundation* to empower and mentor young artistes to excel in music;
- Recorded *This is our Land* for the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Information to fight kidnapping and other social vices, and engender a sense of patriotism in every Akwa Ibomite;
- Wrote and performed *One Nation*- the theme song for the Nigeria-Israeli Centre for Peace;
- Recorded and performed *Wind of Hope*, the theme song for the biography of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan;
- Encouraged socio-cultural harmony among Nigerian ethnic groups by teaching Northern youths to perform dances and songs in Ibibio in their school concerts during her NYSC year in Taraba State;

- Recorded – *Had I Known* – sound tracks and theme songs for *Another Hope*, movie and television talk show highlighting the vices of abortion, pre marital sex and the plight of the Nigerian widow;
- Recorded and performed *You Can Make It Too*, the anthem of Success Digest magazine and awards, aimed at promoting business innovation and entrepreneurship in Nigeria;
- Facilitated several women and youth conferences/seminars to empower them for great achievements;
- Provided broadcast content for *700 Club* (Christian Broadcasting Network);
- Wrote and produced *We are Champions* as well as yearly theme songs for The Megalife Centre;
- She has written over 2000 publishable songs.

Her Works/Albums

- She released 9 Albums namely:
- *My Hiding Place* (1995)
- *There is a Difference* (1997)
- *Rejoice* (2000)
- *He Loves Me* (2004)
- *Amazed and Barasuene* (2007)
- *Unstoppable* (2011)
- *Love Beats* (2013)
- *Not Alone* (2013)

Awards, Honours and Prizes

She has earned the following awards and prizes:

- Merit Award by Akwa Ibom State Government for the promotion of Culture and Tourism - 2007

- Ministry of Women Affairs/Reconciliation Network Award of Honour - 2007
- Niger Delta Leadership Award - 2010
- Cultural Music Ambassador - African Culture and Tourism Award - 2013
- Outstanding Gospel Artiste of the Year - 2009.
- Mboho Mkparawa Ibibio Award for Professionalism in Arts - 2011
- Best Akwa Ibom Gospel Artiste of the Year - 2008
- Isolo Peace Ambassador - 2010
- Cedars Youth Role Model Award - 2013
- Youth and Gender Network Award - 2010
- NYSC Merit Award - 1986
- Akwa Ibom Clergy Forum Excellence Award for Outstanding Gospel Music - 2008

Aity Dennis-Inyang's philosophy in life is that with God as one's help, and hard work, one can be whatever one envisions to be in life, no matter the background. Her role-models/ mentors/ influences/ motivators include her mother, Dr. Dennis Inyang (Her husband), Dr. Sylvanus Ukafia of Insight Bible Church, Uyo, Prof. Dora Akunyili, Cece Winas, and Mary Slessor. She is passionate, simple, and friendly. She is married with one daughter.

Effect of Impact on National Development

Akwa Ibom women in the entertainment industry have contributed significantly to national development. The impact on national development is indicated below:

- Through their works, they help to foster national unity as people from different ethnic backgrounds come together to

produce good music and films that offer entertainment to the world. Their works help in promoting Nigerian cultural values which are needed for achieving meaningful development in the areas of food, clothing, music, languages etc. For example, Emem Isong's movie 'Ekaette' laundered the image of the Akwa Ibom housemaid saga.

- Most works are grafted upon cultural values like honesty, hard work, unity, love, education, commitment, etc.;
- Their works enjoy a wide audience in the nation and the Diaspora and provide maximum entertainment. They also serve to equip the youth with laudable skills for self reliance through training;
- Producers and musicians like Emem Isong and Aity Dennis-Inyang and their counterparts provide employment to youths who otherwise would be roaming the streets;
- Their works bridge the gap between the people at home and immigrants;

The negative impacts include the fact that;

- Nigerian women are depicted as whores, weak, coldhearted, vengeful, vicious, diabolical, materialistic, and sex objects;
- The youths imitate lean and malnourished semi-nude/nude actresses who show off as models;
- Shameful and discouraging news about actresses eg. Divorce, husband- snatching, prostitution, etc have negative influence on the youths;
- The use of drugs and firearms by actresses has

Conclusion

In view of the numerous contributions of women in Nigeria as a whole and Akwa Ibom women in particular in the entertainment industry, we posit that the centenary celebration of Nigeria cannot be complete without special reference to the roles of Akwa Ibom women in the entertainment industry. However, efforts should be made to curb the negative impact that current entertainment practices may have on the Nigerian society by ensuring that the following steps are taken:

- Female actors should turn down roles which denigrate them;
- Script writers and producers should exclude negative images and texts which tend to down-grade womanhood;
- Women should be actively involved in the conceptualization of these scripts in order to determine the content;
- Women should feature in films that provide solution to security, economic and political challenges rather than promote prostitution and cultism.

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