

Onicha Town Hall Meeting

Saturday, March 6, 2021, 4.10pm – 7:22pm

1. Registration – 254; Total Attendance – 148¹

Opening prayer – Rev Fr Martin Onukwuba, 4:10 pm.

2. BACKGROUND – HENRY ONUKWUBA

This was the fifth town hall meeting and the first of the year. The previous ones were held on April 19, June 20, August 22 and November 15, all in 2020. The town hall meetings were now to be organised by the Onicha Conference Committee.

3. AGBOGIDI'S OPENING REMARKS

- Town hall meetings will now be Issue-specific.
- Four issues:
 - I. Transition from OCCRT to OnAF;
 - II. Trans-Nkisi Land
 - III. Communication; and
 - IV. Community Vigilante Service

I. Transition from OCCRT (Onicha COVID-19 Community Response Team) to ONAF (Onicha Advancement Foundation)

- The Onicha Community response to the COVID-19 pandemic kicked off in April 2020 with the provision of palliatives and protective items to indigent Onicha people.
- Intervention moved from the short-term palliative response to the longer-term economic empowerment measures, with the establishment of the economic empowerment and wealth creation workgroup in July 2020 by Agbogidi.
- Their excellent report led to the establishment of three business entities: Onicha Leadership and Entrepreneurship Centre (OLEC), Ado Business Incubation Centre (ABIC), Microfinance Institution Bank/MSME, under the umbrella of Onicha Advancement Foundation (ONAF).
- OLEC and ABIC have just been registered by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC); so also, ONAF Heritage as the holding business body.
- There are two Enablers of these economic intervention, the Value Orientation and the Health and Well-being Workgroups.

¹ This takes into consideration all attendees in total, though many were in and out at different times. From the poll conducted, a third of the attendees tuned in from the US, and about a quarter from the UK. Onicha was however poorly represented.

II. Trans-Nkisi Land

- All the Trans Nkisi land plus some of the surrounding lands – in today’s Nkwelle -Ezunaka - belong to Onicha people. They were acquired by Jim Nwobodo around 1980 when he was the governor of the old Anambra State.
- Agbogidi on assumption of the throne initiated a plan for Onicha to reclaim the land. A committee of Ndi Diokpa was formed.
- Unfortunately, a dispute arose among the clans and the land was eventually lost to other interests, including the government.
- A formal request by Agbogidi to Governor, Chief Willie Obiano for the release of some of the land to the Onicha people both for residency and for public social amenities, such as a cemetery and a park, just returned a negative response according to Agbogidi.
- Legal actions are being considered.

III. Communication

- The perception or impression that there is a disconnect between Obi-in-Council and the rest of Onicha people, or that the *ndi ichie* do not communicate with anybody, is completely false.
- This is the 21st century, it is no longer the era of command and control. The 21st C demands more participation of everybody in the governance of the community.
- We have had to redefine Onicha in a global/virtual sense, comprising both the physical homeland and the Diaspora. This has been made possible by electronic technology such as we are communicating by zoom on this townhall meeting.
- “If you want to manage change and transformation (as we are doing now), you must consult intensively and communicate actively through every channel and through every platform. This consultation must involve the entire community, and you must build consensus.” - Agbogidi
- **Current Communication Strategy:**
 - A. Traditional/Analog:**
 - Monthly meeting of the Obi-in-Council - *Ndi ichie* are obliged to debrief their kindred groups following these meetings at their respective *Nzuko Umunna*.
 - Regular meetings with the constituent groups – Otu Odu, Agablanze, ndi diokpa, *Ogbo so achi ani* etc.
 - The Ofala address which is our own State of the Union address.
 - Use of the town crier method (*ima agogo*) when important issues come up.
 - Circulars and notices from Ime Obi are disseminated through the constituent groups
 - A rolling diary of activities, covering six weeks, and updated every week.
 - B Modern/Digital:**
 - The Onicha website. www.imeobionitsha.org

- Facebook, Twitter, and many WhatsApp accounts. The main WhatsApp platform (Osha Covid Mobilization) has representatives of every constituent group and society, including the churches.
- Workshops and conferences. Three international conferences held so far since Agbogidi's ascension to the throne.

Despite all of these, there are deliberate distortion of facts about Onicha by those who are not on the side of the efforts to move forward, amplified by the social media.

IV. Security

- Four levels of security in Onicha today:
 - I. The Nigerian Police
 - II. The new community police system – Onicha youths successfully trained in Port Harcourt; there is currently a request for land for their station.
 - III. State vigilante system - We have 25 members guarding the Inland Town, they are based at Ime Obi. A station is being built for them at Okwueze Umuezeoroli.
 - IV. The local Onicha community vigilante service: over 90 members already trained; more will be trained. They will be deployed on a village-by-village basis, these are mostly hitherto jobless or partially employed youths.
- Call for financial support for this latest security initiative; there is an ongoing fundraising campaign for that.

4. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES FROM LAST TOWN HALL MEETING - Nweze Francis Anatogu

- The key points from the last town hall meeting held on November 15, 2020 last year. included the *EndSARS* protest, support for the youths, development of the South Eastern Region, the legal status of ONAF and the value orientation initiative, among others.

5. REPORTS FROM VARIOUS GROUPS: OUR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT JOURNEY

I. Ado Business Incubation Centre (ABIC) - Charles Emembolu.

- ABIC is incorporated and ready to start business. The ABIC office at Ime Obi Onicha is under construction, but for now it will operate from Iba Ajie Asika donated by Ojinnaka Obi Asika. Two administrative volunteers have been engaged.
- ABIC has so far organised three main events namely:
 - i. Community Awareness Programme – October 2020
 - ii. Hosted the ABIC Startup Hangout – November 2020
 - iii. Hosted the ABIC Office Hours – November 2020
- Plans for 2021 include passing out of the first cohort of incubatees, commencing the TeachAKid2Code programme and hosting the first ABIC Demo Day
- Ongoing efforts at partnerships and grants.

II. **Onicha Leadership and Entrepreneurial Centre (OLEC)** - Prof Ike Ikeme

- OLEC Is an Enterprise Development Institute (EDI) for the training of Onicha youths and women in the broad area of leadership, entrepreneurship, and craftsmanship
- **Categories of trainees include:** Fresh graduates (men and ladies), Unemployed and underemployed graduates, University and Secondary school students - remedial and long vacation programmes - secondary school leavers and dropouts, artisans, and blue-collar jobbers (master craftsman programme) and women-specific interventions. These include mentoring and counselling.
- OLEC is made up of:
 - OLEC (the training centre)
 - Women Empowerment Council (WEC)
 - Cooperative Society
 - Master craftsmen
- Six-week leadership and entrepreneurship training held in Nov/Dec 2020; next run planned after Easter, 2021.
- Six new cooperative societies registered, to add to the existing seven, and one mega cooperative society, the Onicha Ado N'Idu MCS.
- The loan sum of N65 million granted by the Anambra State Small Business Association (ASBA), guaranteed by Agbogidi.
- WEC aims to support women and their families to connect, develop and grow. WEC also aims to develop a Women Resource Centre to strengthen women's access to economic, business, and professional development.
- The International Women's Day (March 8) to be celebrated in Onicha on March 9 & 11.
- *Report presented by Henry Onukwuba on behalf of Prof. Ike Ikeme.*

III. **Microfinance Institution** - Nnamdi Anammah.

- The registered Onicha-Ado N'Idu MCS will function as a micro finance institution (MFI).
- ASBA has committed to an additional N35 million if more cooperatives are formed
- Document to guide the OLEC trainees to form cooperatives is ready.
- Onicha Credit Committee (OCC) formed and operational, designed for healthy credit administration
- Ongoing review of the feasibility of a digital bank in Onicha
- Ongoing partnership talks with Bank of Industry (BOI), Rockefeller Foundation, Fate Foundation etc.

IV. **Value Reorientation** - Nn'emeka Maduegbuna

- Three main aims
 - To interrogate the ethical, moral and professional values of ndi Onicha, in the context of *ife eji abu Onicha erika*
 - Foster adoption and support of wealth creation, entrepreneurship, and long-term capital development initiatives

- Encourage Onicha youths to embrace diversification of professional interests to include entrepreneurship and technology-enabled professions
- The primary target are the youths. But the Onicha Constituent groups and other individual Onicha people would form the secondary targets. Ongoing logo competition for the various ONAF entities among the youths is part of this involvement
- Action plans
 - Involvement of family groups and communal societies/organisations in the reorientation initiative
 - Institution of community reward schemes for excellence in entrepreneurship
 - Reorientation of age grades to include personal and society developmental activities in their programmes.
- A baseline study to be carried out to ascertain the perception and views of the target audience to the intended shifts and the proposed ideas to bring about the change.

6. Health and Wellbeing Matters – Dr Udoka Imagie

- The Health and Wellbeing Work Group is positioned to provide guidelines for health and general wellbeing of Onicha community.
- Discussions ongoing with the Anambra State Health Insurance Agency (ASHIA) on the modalities of enrollment of Onicha people to, and benefits therefrom, of the State’s medical insurance scheme
- The Well Being Ambassadors are effective in making sure that COVID-19 protocol is observed during mass activities like funerals and traditional marriages in Onicha community.
- Discussions with Mr. Ibegbu, the Onicha North Waste Management contractor on ways to improve sanitation in Onicha community
- *Report presented by Kpari Rita Okolonji on behalf of Dr Udoka Imagie.*

Questions and Comments

- A total of 30 questions and comments were received, 12 in advance and 18 during the meeting. There were other comments pasted on the chat room.
- The questions and comments bothered on security, communication, the Diopka system, solar street lighting of Onicha, environmental sanitation, land issues, territorial integrity of Onicha, recognition of deserving Onicha people, the ABIC initiatives, the Cooperative societies, value orientation, education strategy, mental health, youth empowerment, involvement of everybody both at home and in diaspora in the journey, etc.
- This section of the meeting lasted for 1 hour 17 minutes

Closing Prayer

- This was said by Rev Sr Sr Nnachebe Chiotu. The meeting ended at 7:22pm

APPENDIX: Some of the Comments/Commendations received:

- **Amaechi Nnamdi Chukwurah:** “I must confess that I am blown away by the progressive-mindedness of the Onicha people. This is the first time I am keying into any of these meetings and now I will never miss anyone”
- **Rev Sr. Nnachebe Chiotu:** “This is mind blowing. We need to involve everyone. I have people that needed to know about this, I have already started texting them while this meeting was going on... This is wonderful. I am a healthcare person. I have already told the (Health and Wellbeing) group that I am interested in contributing my quota. I want Onicha to be safe and clean.
- **Achike Oranye:** My prayer for you Agbogidi and all those that are involved in this laudable task is that God Almighty will protect all your households and continue to give you the strength to lift up Onicha. I want to volunteer to be part of the health committee, to contribute towards the mental health of our youths.
- **Amechi Chinedu Nkemakonam:**The entire ikporo Ogbe structure when properly harnessed will remain the key enabler for the women empowerment programme.
- **Emmanuel Osemeka:** *Talking about Security, it has been observed that Onicha LG solar streetlight installation to forestall criminality and improve visibility at night has tactically isolated Isiokwe Road from the police post down to new cemetery junction. Agbogidi kindly help prevail on Agha Mba and his team to do same for Isiokwe as that axis is pretty dark at night especially in front of Anyaegbunam Primary school.*
- **Chinwe Ndiwe:***Awareness Programmes is highly recommended, to let people know what is happening. Dalu Olu Agbogidi for such an amazing forum. Great Job!*
- **Anthony Ikwuazom:** *I thank the Igwe for addressing the issue of diokpaship but I never requested for the abolishment of Diokpa, but requested that children of men who died before their fathers should have the opportunity of being a Diokpa in the future if the opportunity arises and not been barred from becoming Diokpa because their grandparents died before their fathers.*
- **Lady Patricia Okechukwu:***I am volunteering for the solar system project for Onicha villages.*
- **Gloria Chukwudebe:** *Agbogidi Dalu! May you continue to live long!*
- **Agba Oriogu Jide Ebo:** *Very informative Town Hall*
- **Gloria Chukwudebe:** *The initiatives are brilliant!!*
- **Rosemary Nnamdi-Okagbue:** *well done Agbogidi for the great job you are doing.*

Signed

Nwachukwu Egbunike
Secretary
Onicha Conference Committee

Henry Onukwuba
Chairman
Onicha Conference Committee