



February
13, 2014

**A POSITION PAPER SUBMITTED
TO THE ABIA STATE
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON
NIGERIA NATIONAL
CONFERENCE, ABA SOUTH BY
THE NGWA NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION, USA (NNAUSA).**

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NNAUSA



The Abia State Technical Committee on the National Conference
Aba South Senatorial Zone

Through the Chairperson: Elder Paul C. Ananaba, SAN.

Dear Sir,

We wish to thank you for inviting us to attend and present a position paper at the National Conference holding at Aba on this 13th day of February, 2014. We appreciate the Committee's favorable disposition as evidenced by your invitation to the Ngwa National Association, USA (hereinafter referred to as NNAUSA) the umbrella organization of Ngwas in the US and North America. We are hopeful that our position as submitted herewith will help our beloved state (Abia) and country (Nigeria) in finding lasting solutions to the numerous challenges that has continued to impact us as Ngwas, Abians, and Nigerians.

The Ngwa people of Abia State, Nigeria have suffered and endured several issues and set-backs due to the current structure of our government. Many of these issues are long-standing, and it is important that they are not negated during the Committee's deliberations and actions.

Once again, we thank you for inviting us to participate in this important conference and we hope our contribution will become part of the recommendations that the Committee will be forwarding to the Federal Government for actions.

Sincerely,

Boniface O Eguzouwa.

Boniface O. Eguzouwa, M.S.W.
President/CEO

Kingsley U Chigbu - .

Kingsley U. Chigbu
General Secretary



The Ngwa National Association, USA (NNAUSA) being the umbrella organization of Ngwa people in the US and North America and cognizant that Local Governments from Ngwa/Ukwa extraction namely, Aba North, Aba South, Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa South, Obingwa, Osioma, Ugwunagbo, Ukwa East, and Ukwa West, constitute 50.1% (N=1,450,945) of the total population of Abia State (N = 2,845,380, National Bureau of Statistics, 2011), do hereby submit our position on 10 key policy areas for consideration by the Committee on the Abia State Technical Committee on the National Conference, Aba South Senatorial Zone hereafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

- Creation and Restructuring of Local Governments
- Aba State Creation
- States Leadership and National Representation
- Revocation of Unfavorable Laws and Practices
- Boundaries and Restoration of Old Territories
- Urban and Rural Infrastructure; Economic Concerns
- Federal Presence
- Structuring a Cross-National Responsible Leadership
- Resource Allocation
- Diaspora Considerations

Creation & Restructuring of Local Governments

Creation

- a) We assert that the population and structural disposition of the Ngwa/Ukwa people of Abia State comprising 9 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and totaling 50.1% of the entire Abia State population, compared with the remaining LGAs in Abia State (N = 8), warrants



the creation of additional LGAs within the Ngwa/Ukwa areas. NNAUSA hereby recalls that, comparatively, Isiala Ngwa LGA was created the same time Ikwuano Umuahia LGA was created. But as of today, 2 additional LGAs (Umuahia North and Umuahia South) have been created out of the then Ikwuano LGA, making a total of 3 LGAs within the old Ikwuano. However, only 1 additional LGA has been created out of the old Isiala Ngwa LGA till date.

Restructuring

b) Similar to the situation Isiala Ngwa LGA vs Ikwuano Umuahia LGA example as stated in (a) above, we submit that Obingwa LGA should have had an additional LGA created from it (due to its population, among other things) to make both the Uhie and Agalaba divisions have a sense of true equity, and to serve the administrative purposes of these densely populated areas as was done in the old Ikwuano. Till date, this call for equity has not been heeded, despite obvious facts pointing to the need to have such creations effected. NNAUSA recalls that, during the Late Mbakwe's administration as Governor of the old Imo State, Isiala Ngwa had 3 LGAs: There was Ikeala Ngwa comprising Ntigha and Nsulu; there was Isiala Ngwa comprising Ngwaukwu, Umunwaoha, and Nvosi, and there was Etitu Ngwa comprising Umuoba and the Owerrinta axis. We renounce the revocation and realignment of these 3 LGAs carved out from Isiala Ngwa LGA by a military successor to Late Chief Mbakwe. We further demand the reinstatement/creation of these additional LGAs as a way to ensure population-based equity in Abia State Nigeria. We further submit that creation of LGAs should be based on population, across the country.



- c) NNAUSA posits that all LGAs should be independent from their state governments. To this end, we call for
- i) The abrogation of state /LGA joint accounts. We ask that Federal Local Government Boards rather than states be in charge of LGA revenue.
 - ii) The abolition of State Electoral Boards, as it is evident that the current practice that uses State Electoral Boards gives undue advantage to a sitting party during elections, thereby hindering the democratic process.

Municipality Status

- d) NNAUSA recommends that Aba town and other towns of similar character in the country, being the main cities that generate the highest level of income in their respective states, as well as cities with the highest levels of human activity and density be granted MUNICIPAL STATUS rather than LGA. We further submit that the criteria for assigning municipality to a town be based on population and human activity.

Aba State Creation

1. NNAUSA calls for the creation of Aba State from Abia State. The population of the Ngwa/Ukwa people of Abia State as well as their fiscal disposition compared with other states with similar or lesser populations, among other things, evidently supports the need for Aba State. The call for the creation of Aba state has been long standing, and we are calling on the



Federal Government to consider it a high level need at this time, in the interest of equity.

2. NNAUSA submits that movements for the creation of Aba State have been in public view since 1954. It is a cause that has been pursued by many generations. The clamor by the Ngwas for identification as an entity can be traced back to 1915 at the creation of Aba Administrative Division. By 1954, at the Coatsworth Commission, the agitation for Aba State creation came to the fore and has continued to this day. Hence, the Aba State Movement has survived through 1915, 1954, 1980-1983, 1987 to 1988, Cooney Commission, the General Ibrahim Babangida's administration (1990 to 1993), the 1994 National Constitution Conference, the administration of Late General Sani Abacha (in 1995), both House Chambers under President Olusegun Obasanjo administration, and currently, the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, among others.
3. NNAUSA asks that Aba state be carved out of the present Abia's 17 LGAs thereby creating two states: Abia with 8 LGAs and Aba with 9 LGAs from Old Aba Division: Aba North, Aba South, Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa south, Obingwa, Osisioma, Ukwu East, Ukwu West, and Ugwunagbor. A comparative analysis of the 36 states of the Federation will indicate that the proposed Aba State is far ahead of many existing states with regards to population and LGAs.
4. NNAUSA wishes to recall that, on June 16, 1983, 31 years ago, the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gave approval for referendum for the creation of Aba State at the same instance as Adamawa, Enugu, (Wawa), Jigawa, Kogi, and Taraba. All these states were



subsequently created and only Aba state was left out. The referendum could not be conducted because of the military succession which ousted the Shehu Shagari Administration. On this ground, NNAUSA submits that it is unfair and largely incomprehensible why the Nigerian government has continued to deny the legitimate rights of Aba. As recently as the last state creation exercise in Nigeria, Aba was highest ranked in terms of meeting the conditions for state creation. But we have yet to see the Federal Government deliver what is due to Aba. Therefore, NNAUSA considers this conference very important in addressing the injustice meted to the people of Old Aba Division via the non-creation of Aba State till date.

5. The proposed Aba State in its present configuration has a population comparable to Bayelsa, Nasarawa, Cross River, Ekiti, Ebonyi, Yobe, Gombe, and Yobe states. In terms of industries and employment/productivity, the proposed Aba State has Aba Textile Mill, P.Z, Industries LTD., 7-Up Bottling Company, Nigerian Breweries PLC., International Equitable, Lever Brothers LTD., to mention a few. Its financial industry is one of the best in the East. Among other things, the hospitality industry makes Aba one to be reckoned with. Cumulatively, Aba State has all the necessities to become a state.

States Leadership & National Representation

1. We call for a structure to allow for state offices/ leadership including the governorship position to reflect the diversity and spread of states of the Federation. Some state governors (for example, the Executive Governor of Abia State Governor, Chief T. A. Orji) have decried the inequities and deprivation from having state leadership systems that do not allow for equal opportunity and character of such states.



2. We uphold the importance of electing Federal Representatives from respective constituencies of the Federation for the purpose of advancing the interest of such constituencies while serving the national needs. However, we consider it a case of marginalization that Isiala Ngwa South LGA and Isiala Ngwa North LGA are only allowed to produce one Federal Representative at the Federal House. This is notwithstanding that the two LGAs in question constitute 10.1% (N = 288,495) of the entire Abia state population (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011).
3. The same also applies to Obingwa, Osisioma and Ugwunagbo LGAs. These 3 LGAs are being represented by one representative (at the Federal House) despite that the LGAs comprise about 17% (N = 483,689) of the entire Abia state population. We are aware of the effects of these structural imbalances on our people and infrastructures, and we call for an immediate allocation of additional Federal Representatives to these LGAs.

Revocation of Unfavorable Laws and Practices

- 1) NNAUSA recognizes the need to abrogate and/or change the inherited/existing laws that do not reflect the exigencies of times and needs in Abia State, and in Nigeria. The 1916 and 1958 Acts are part of these laws and we call for revocation. These Acts and their likes were codified under a regional government structure. When these laws were promulgated, we had regions, provinces, divisions, districts and county councils, among others. But currently the powers of regional entities have been dissolved.



2) Additionally, Nigeria currently practices a Presidential system of government as opposed to the Parliamentary system of government. Today, we have the Federal, State and Local Governments. Hence, our structure of government has changed. Thus, we are against our government holding onto these laws that do not reflect the current needs of our people, states, and our country. These laws we believe, are hindering our development as a people.

Boundaries and Restoration of Old Territories

- 1) We assert that some actions by previous governments in regards to inter-state boundaries have created more problems than solve them. For example, the Nassir 1976 Boundary Adjustment was established to enhance political and economic growth in Imo State. But due to the wrongful acts of this Body, Imo State lost its oil wells.
- 2) NNAUSA considers it appalling that the Imo River situate at Obigbo was used as a 'natural boundary' notwithstanding that the Asa and Ndoki indigenes are the natural occupants of both sides of the Imo River, and were a part of the Aba division in Abia state with a history that goes back to the (pre)colonial era. The Commission paid no attention to family ties, language and kinship, among other criteria. This historic wrong was done despite that the Ndoki and Asa people never agitated to be 'reallocated' to other entities different from Abia State. We further highlight that it is a pity that Nassir's Boundary Adjustment Commission was biased in its boundary allocation formula. For example, Omuma in the current Rivers state, who reside at the East of the river and spanning about 15 miles from Obigbo, were



dispersed into three states and two geopolitical zones. It is also important to recall that Omuma was in the old Aba division during the (pre)colonial period before they motioned to join the Etche people who resided across the same Imo River in Ahoada Division presently referred to as Rivers State. We recognize that if the Commission had applied the same principle it applied in Imo State at Omuma LGA, the later could have been in Abia State just as Oyigbo LGA is in Rivers state. Cognizant of these structural errors which have wrongfully impacted the Abians in many significant ways, we call for the restoration of the old boundaries for the sake of equity, fairness and national objectivity.

- 3) We further call for the regional system as practiced in Nigeria prior to the civil war of 1967-1970 to be restored.

Urban and Rural Infrastructure; Economic Concerns

Rail Roads, Bridges, Sea Ports & Airlines

- 1) NNAUSA calls on the Federal Government to construct and maintain a rail way system connecting the East and the West.
- 2) We call for the building of a second bridge at River Niger at Onitsha so as to enhance East- West connectivity.
- 3) We also call for the normalization of customs duties and tariff for Lagos port, Calabar port, Port Harcourt/Onne seaports as well as granting landing and ship berthing rights to all interested airlines and shipping companies. We submit that provision of regional infrastructures will enhance the lives and businesses of South-Easterners and surrounding states. We submit that thorough servicing and enhancement of the sea ports be pursued so as to boost commerce and stimulate economic growth in the eastern



- flank of the country, notably in the South –South, South-East, eastern flank of North –Central and North –East regions.
- 4) We are aware that ships coming from the Atlantic Ocean into Nigeria can go directly into River Niger area including Wimpey, Port Harcourt, and Onne deep waters (at the right course) towards Calabar port. Such ships also take the Lagos, Warri or Sapele ports. We therefore call on government to engage in an evidence-based effort to ensure that all these opportunities are utilized for the betterment of not only some part of Nigeria, but the Abians as well. We further submit that the Federal Governments dredges the inland water-ways of River Niger and River Benue in order to enhance our developing economy.
 - 5) We call government to consider dredging the Azumiri Blue River and the Imo River that empty into the Atlantic Ocean at Iwenga Ndoki historic Seaport. We express our disappointment at what appears to be government's abandonment of this seaport despite its historic, commercial and tourist potentials. We call for the immediate dredging of the Blue River and the Imo River.
 - 6) We note that enhancing these rivers and other ports as mentioned herein will decongest Lagos (the only current functioning deep water active port at all times). We recall that in the 1960s and 1970s all the seaports in Nigeria were functioning. We therefore call for their restatement to their best performances.
 - 7) We call for uniform duties and clearing charges to be effected in the seaports, especially since, for example (and particularly), the Lagos seaport and the Port Harcourt seaports are on the same coastal line and within the same Nigeria.
 - 8) The South-Easterners and the South-Southerners constitute the highest air passengers in Nigeria. However, there are only two functional international airports at the zone (Enugu and Port Harcourt). We call for granting of more landing rights through



bilateral internal open air agreements so that additional air carriers will land at these airports.

Federal Presence

It is pitiful that the Ngwas have long been denied Federal presence apart from trivial History Museum, and Federal School of Arts and Science which has been rechristened the National Institute for Nigerian Languages under the titular symbol of University of Nigeria Nsukka. We need the federal Government to recognize the importance of Ndengwa in the geo economic scheme of the country. NNAUSA posits that the Ngwa people deserve a petrochemical plant, a functioning Federal University, a Federal Medical Center, among others, to be cited in the Ngwa land.

- 9) We call for a population-based standard for the citing of Federal Institutions such as universities, centers of excellence, etc. Particularly, we call for the establishment of a Federal University within the Ngwa/Ukwa metropolis.
- 10) We ask for the returning the old structure which allowed schools to be managed by their original owner institutions. History has shown that states are not good overseers of education in the country. Therefore, we believe that schools that belonged to religious organizations *ab initio* should be returned to same institution.
- 11) We call for the establishment of a second police zonal command in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria. All other regions in Nigeria have second police commands except the South Eastern region. We only have zone 9 at the moment. We call for the immediate correction of this situation by the Federal Government.



Structuring a Cross-National Responsible Leadership

- 1) NNAUSA is concerned about the endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria. The Organization is worried that despite the shameful nature of corruption and irresponsibility by some government officials in the country, certain laws have made it impossible to stop or bring the offenders to books. We therefore call for the removal of the immunity clause as contained in Section 308 of the 1999 Constitution through amendment. We believe that this provision is among the 'borrowed' laws/Acts in Nigeria that do not truly reflect the character/needs of the country. Particularly, we call for all Nigerians officials including the President, governors, and all other office holders to (while occupying their respective government offices) are subject to criminal prosecution.
- 2) We believe that allowing government office holders to operate foreign accounts amounts to corruption. We therefore call on the Nigerian government to bar all government office holders in Nigeria from operating foreign accounts either directly or indirectly.

Resource Allocation

- 1) NNAUSA submits that resource allocation should be based on population and human activity. We believe that areas with more population deserve more fiscal considerations compared to areas with lower populations and human activity. For example, Aba as a city with high population density and human activity deserves more fiscal allocation compared to other non-densely populated areas in the state.



Diaspora Considerations

- 1) NNAUSA asserts that it is wrong to bar Nigerian citizens in the diaspora from participating in the Nigerian electoral processes, and other affairs of the country. We believe that Abia citizens or citizens from other states who are outside of Nigeria are not “on the ground” and therefore less deserving of the privileges of participating in their own governance. Just recently, the Senate blocked the opportunity to Diaspora Nigerians to vote in the forthcoming 2015 elections (House Committee on Diaspora Affairs, 2014). We underscore this move by the Senate as unprogressive and wrong. We appeal to the administration to acknowledge Abia and all Nigerian citizens residing abroad as full citizens of the state/Federation with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities pertaining thereto.
- 2) We believe that us being invited to participate in this conference is an indication that the government is in the right direction as far as recognizing the rights of diaspora Nigerians go.

Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important discussion. Please, feel free to contact us with questions, clarifications and/or additional information pertaining to the content of this submission. We wish you a successful conference!

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Notes and References

1. All population data used in this submission are from the 2006 Nigeria Census. We consider the 2006 Census data as appropriate, given that the most-recent data (comprising 2008 – 2010) as published by the National Bureau of Statistics are based on projections.
2. National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria. (2011). Annual Abstract of Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/#!>
3. House Committee on Diaspora Affairs. (2015). Senate rules out voting for Nigerians in Diaspora in 2015 elections. Retrieved from <http://diasporacommittee.com/index.php/media-center/news-and-events/102-senate-rules-out-voting-for-nigerians-in-diaspora-in-2015-elections>