



# The Nigerian Society of Engineers

PORT HARCOURT BRANCH



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website: [www.nseph.org](http://www.nseph.org)

e-mail: [info@nseph.org](mailto:info@nseph.org)

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## Interview with Engr. Gershon Ogbulujia MNSE, on Road Construction

*Engr. Gershon Ogbulujia is a Civil Engineering graduate from the University of Nigeria Nsukka. He is the Manager in charge of Infrastructure, Estate Maintenance and Engineering, NAOC. He is a seasoned civil engineer.*

**E-Newsletter:** *What can you tell us about road construction in the country so far? Nigeria is 50 years now, the roads we have are they supposed to be better than what we have now?*



Engr. Gershon Ogbulujia MNSE

**Engr. Ogbulujia:** For the roads we have, there is room for a lot of improvement. There is need for improvement because when you look at some of the roads being built now, especially in our immediate environment which is the Niger Delta, you will notice that the roads do not tend to last as long as you expect them to last. There are several examples. In Port Harcourt, roads, were constructed and commissioned and in the next two years you will see people doing a complete rework on the roads. So there is a lot to be done in terms of engineering study first, before the roads are built. The roads should be designed, constructed, supervised and ensure that standards and specifications are met. I think these are the reasons why some of the roads are failing. When I was working with the state ministry of works, there were people who follow road projects on the field. You know the case of the Eliozu road (from Air force base to Eliozu); that road was constructed, it was commissioned and now it is been completely rebuilt. The same thing happened with the Peter Odili Road, (from Amadi-Ama to Zoo); it was construct-

ed, it went bad and it was rebuilt. This kind of thing is going on and we are spending money. Money that could be used to do other things we use it to do one thing twice. I think we need to look at it again. The Nigerian Society of Engineers needs to partner with government. Government should on their own part allow the NSE to partner with them to ensure that things are done better so that there will be value for money.

**E-Newsletter:** *What do you think is the cause of road failures?*

**Engr. Ogbulujia:** It is a combination of several factors and the personnel is one of them. You as the engineers you are not allowed to go to the site to supervise the job and things like that, that is one aspect. The other aspect is that you specify materials and then probably the right kind of materials are not used. Let me give one example; in 1989, we were working on Azikwe Road, from Lagos bus stop to the secretariat. We were expanding the road; we had already selected the materials to use on that road, then I was in the ministry of works. I was going to church one Sunday morning; when I passed the road I found out that the colour of the material was different from what we had already agreed so that alone made me to stop at the site. I took my family to church, came back, stood there and ensured that the contractor moved all those materials away because on Sundays they could easily bring in things and move things out if you are not there. If you are not dedicated: one to notice problems; two to really enforce the specifications required for a job

## Rivers State Governor's Meeting with Stakeholders in Government House, Port Harcourt.

On Tuesday 16th August 2011, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, invited professionals in the state to government house for a stakeholders' interactive session with him. The Nigerian Society of Engineers Port Harcourt Branch was led by the chairman Engr. Dr. A. H. Igoni MNSE to Rivers State Government House who raised issues that bothers on engineering in the state.



Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, the Executive Governor of Rivers State addressing stakeholders in government house.



Members of the Nigerian Society of Engineers Port Harcourt Branch during the stakeholder forum with the Governor of Rivers State in Government House, Port Harcourt.

**Engineering Regulation & Monitoring Committee of the Nigerian Society of Engineers, Port Harcourt Branch Activities.**

ERM inspectors of Port Harcourt Zone of the Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN) led by the chief inspector, Engr. Prof. H. I. Hart, FNSE, visited the Rivers State Ministry of Works on Thursday July 14, 2011 as part of the efforts to regulate the practice of engineering in Rivers State. The COREN inspectors met with the Commissioner for Works, management and staff of the ministry who were informed that the visit was to ensure that the establishment which is a major employer of engineering personnel is expected to display the highest level of professional practice in the state.

The committee had earlier visited Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) in Bonny Island, Plantgeria Company Limited, OK Isokariari Limited, Rivers Vegetable Oil Company, Nigerian Ports Authority and Nigerian Engineering Works all in Port Harcourt.

The Committee is embittered about the organizations who failed to respond to several reminders on the return of completed questionnaires and recommends that COREN, Abuja should take necessary actions to deal with such companies to serve as a check to others.

The Committee also recommends that:

1. Companies visited, who performed very poorly would need to be re-visited in six months time to ensure their resolve to improve on the noted areas of weaknesses.
2. Fresh graduates or pupil engineers should be made to pass through design offices especially for Engineering Companies, Ministries and Establishments.
3. Tertiary institutions should renew their emphasis on Supervised Industrial Works Experience Scheme with adequate supervision by SIWES Coordinators and ITF officials.
4. Tertiary institutions should be advised to create separate industrial training offices and to fully empower SIWES Coordinators with resourceful staff and official vehicles for effective supervision and performance.



Rivers State Commissioner for Works Mr. Victor Giadom (left), Engr. Prof. Hart (3rd right), Engr. Ujile (right), during ERM visit to the ministry of works.



On Friday 19th August 2011, the EXCO of NSE PH Branch paid a courtesy visit to the GMD of Total E&P, PH. The EXCO was led by the Chairman Engr. Dr. A. H. Igoni MNSE. Others in the team were Engr. Denis Dania,

Engr. G. Ikenyiri, Engr. B. J. Benibo & Engr. Chief G. Massari FNSE

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there could be issues. This is the kind of thing I am longing to see in the people who supervise projects. When they see a wrong thing, they should stop it because a project supervisor have lots of power, that is what I tell my people here. You have a lot of power; you can stop a project when you are sure that what is being done is wrong. So we need to have people with the ability to stand their ground and say "yes or this is not right and we will not accept it". In the society now, everybody wants to make money. This is the thinking of a lot of people especially the young ones. They see the older people probably they have this, they have that, they drive good cars; and they want to be like them overnight. Some of the older ones have paid their dues. It comes with time. Nobody starts life at the top but this mentality of starting life at the top is the big problem we have now. So people are not committed, they cut corners, they want to connive with contractors to ensure that the contractor saves money and maybe the contractor recognizes them in some way or the other. These are some of the things that are responsible for poor jobs in Nigeria.

**E-Newsletter:** *What advice do you have for the stakeholders, users of the road, contractors and government in terms of road construction?*

**Engr. Ogbulujia:** Ok, for the stakeholders, everybody have a part to play. Let me start from the users. If you are using a road and you find out that something is wrong with the road; even if it is a road under construction, you should have a way of reaching the government and the government should leave that channel open for feedback from the end users. I will give you one example; if you go along the Rumuokuta road to Choba, you will find out that they are making walkways. After the road they are making walkways but this walkways are such that they are not user friendly. If you are taking somebody on a wheelchair, you' will have problem there because it stopped abruptly; it does slop to the level of the ground. So if you have somebody on the wheelchair you will be forced to move the person on the motorway which is not right. You can see that probably, this feedback has gotten to the government because if you check the expansion they are doing at Elekahia road that correction have been made. This is one area the user of the road can help. Then for the government I think the government should try as much as possible to give jobs to those who should actually do these jobs. They should give these jobs to people who have the capacity; the financial capacity and even the technical capacity.

**E-Newsletter:** *Thank you very much sir.*



Engr. Otunte Otuneh & Engr. Gershon Ogbulujia



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