



The Nigerian Society of Engineers

PORT HARCOURT BRANCH



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website: www.nseph.org

e-mail: info@nseph.org

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Happy New Year

An interview with Engr. Mrs. Valeria Agberagba on: Members stay in NSE, Engineering Strategies to reduce project cost and dearth of project supervision by women engineers.

E-Newsletter: *It is a pleasure to have you interviewed. Today we will be discussing on why NSE members do not participate in branch/division activities after registration, strategies to reduce cost on engineering projects and the issues of non-utilization of women engineers for project supervision. Before we proceed, can you briefly tell us about your experience and contribution to the engineering profession?*

Engr. Mrs. Agweragba: My name is Valeria. I work with the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA). I am a Metallurgical and Material Engineering graduate from the Federal University of Science and Technology Akure, 1989. I have been in the FCDA for twenty-one years. I work as the quality control engineer and I am an EXCO member of NSE, past president of the Association of Practicing women engineers in Nigeria.

E-Newsletter: *What contributions have you made these two years of service to NSE?*

Engr. Mrs. Agweragba: I was elected at Abuja and I was posted to the membership board. It is on record that for the past two years there have been a great improvement in the conduct of our corporate membership examination when it comes to compilation of results. Before we came in we had a back-log of results that were not processed, certificates that were not issued now we do not have such. As soon as it is approved by council, you get your results and as soon as the chief examiners send in their results to the headquarters they are processed for the council. For the past two years the work or processing examination result and even the processing of forms for interview have witnessed improvement. Branch chairmen and chief examiners can attest to that. Secondly, I am the chairman of welfare committee and I am sure if you look at the past two welfare programs and the one, at Owerri you can attest to the fact that a lot of new dimension has been brought into the membership board programs. I have been receiving a lot of congratulations on the new system we brought into the welfare program. If you notice, we even gave an award to the branch with the best welfare program.

E-newsletter: *We have observed that even as we get more members into the Society, there are*

challenges in retaining them. A lot of people come in to be registered not for the love of the profession and the society but to obtain the certificate. What is the board doing to make the Society more attractive in order to retain old and new members?

Engr. Mrs. Agweragba: This should be a collective effort from the branches to the head quarters because the headquarters is not in charge of members activities at the grass root. So we need their co-operations in this area. If members get registered in your branch and division, then we should have programs and activities that should attract them to stay. The problem we have right now is retaining members and if we do not have programs that interest them, there is no way they



Engr. Mrs. Valeria Agberagba

will keep coming. But if we have interesting programs at the branch level, professional development seminars, workshops, time for relaxation, networking, these are things people want. They want to improve their professional knowledge; they want to be able to net work to improve their standards in the profession. If the branches and division can get to have programs that would bring people together, that will make them stay. I think we would have solved the problem to a very large extent. But secondly, the headquarters is taking this into consideration that is why we are improving our website now so that people can listen to seminar on the web, we can have e-workshop, so that people can know what is happening in NSE because right now people do not know what the president is doing on their behalf because we do not have a way of disseminating such information as and when due. Right now there is an improvement going on our website and I believe that at the beginning of year 2010 most of these things would have taken off.

E-Newsletter: *Thank you very much madam. Now let's come to the theme of this years' AGM; Engineering Strategies for confronting challenges of global economic meltdown. In terms of*

engineering project execution what measures do you think when taken can cushion the effect of the melt down?

Engr. Mrs. Agweragba: Yes, everybody is feeling it. As you know government said it is not business as usual because of the economic meltdown. Projects are not approved as before. Let me say the way you might inspect your project, you might plan it over a period of time you got to pass through a lot of processes to gain approval for the project to take off and of course when there is limited budgetary allocation some projects may not take off. This affects all federal establishments and FCDA is not left out.

E-Newsletter: *What plan(s) does (do) the FCDA management have at hand to check this effect of global economic meltdown?*

Engr. Mrs. Agweragba: I am not in the very top management level so I wouldn't talk about what management is doing. But one thing I'm sure is that every project that comes out must have enough allocation before it takes off. Once you start any project you can not abandon it. So any project coming out right now must have been well allocated and budgeted and there is an arrangement for continuous payment as and when due, that I know we are doing and of course every engineer is serious for jobs, and we know that we have to reduce expenses in engineering projects. High precision in measurement, dimensions, materials quality and supervision is required. These are some of the measures we are taking to make sure everybody is on ground and all hand is on deck to make sure we don't fail in our duties.

E-Newsletter: *Thank you very much in the supervision of project especially engineers, women are always in the minority. In your establishment and as a member, membership board, in your opinion, what do you think can be done to improve the trend?*

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An interview with Engr. Mrs. Valeria Agberagba on: Members stay in NSE, Engineering Strategies ...

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Engr. Mrs. Agberagba: It is not only in my establishment. It is happening everywhere. Every day, in every establishment, they tend to give women less supervisory positions. In my establishment now, we have only one lady as the Chief Resident Engineer (CRE). I have been in FCDA for about twenty years. Women are competent but there is this reservation that we should be given such responsibility and I want to say that if they give a woman the position of the CRE, I don't think the organization has any regret because we know what the woman can do. If you want to have a job well packaged, well supervised give it to a woman and see how she will handle it. I'm proud to say that the lady we have as the CRE right now has been doing her work efficiently. The NSE I know encourages APWEN. As you know I'm a past president of APWEN and we have always fought for the position of a woman but fortunately or unfortunately, we have not been given any report where a lady is being denied her position. If we have facts then we can fight for anytime. We don't take it for granted. But we haven't had any issues brought before us so until we have such, we cannot say there are ways to tackle it. But we have not stopped preaching "give the woman a chance to prove herself".

E-Newsletter: Thank you. From your experience and exposure what are the constraints you have



Engr. Mrs. Valeria Agberagba & Engr. Dr. Ujile, FNSE

seen and how can we proffer solution; what can you suggest to our reading audience, government concerning the economic meltdown?

Engr. Mrs. Agberagba: Talking about the engineers' one of the greatest problems and challenges we have is that in the government the salary of the engineers is very poor. Give an engineer the enabling environment and you will get the best of him. And I know one of the things that have made Nigerian engineers not to give in their 100% of what he has is the fact that they are not financially empowered. Engineers supervise billions of Naira projects where the politician makes their money and move on while the engineers get peanuts. Like the president would say, "with the project we supervise, Billions of Dol-

lar, we cannot point out an engineer who owns a private aircraft but you can get lawyers, accountants who are owners of private aircraft. This proves the fact that engineers are being used. We know we supervise a lot of capital projects but we have not been given the enabling environment. This is one major challenge we know we have. Be that as it may, we just have to encourage ourselves to put in our best because one day we will be recognized. Talking about economic meltdown everybody believes that it is when a country is passing through some difficulties it looks inwards to want to use their local output in order to minimize cost and save money for other areas. Nigeria has not done that. We will keep calling on government, let's look inwards, challenge your professionals, engineers and see what you can get. An Arab contractor was challenged by their country and today nobody drills in Egypt without coming through Arab contractors. We can do likewise. Nigerian engineers are brilliant and if given the opportunity, will excel than those people. We are still calling on government, "give Nigerian engineers a chance if you really want to fight this economic meltdown then make use of your local content.

E-Newsletter: Thank you very much for the audience you have given us.

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION BOOST UNDERSEA NOISE POLLUTION

The world's oceans are becoming noisier thanks to pollution, with potentially harmful effects for whales, dolphins and other marine life, US scientists said in a study published recently. Low-frequency sound in the ocean is produced by natural phenomena such as rain, waves and marine life, and by human activities such as sonar systems, shipping and construction. The sound is absorbed mainly through the viscosity of the water and the presence of certain dissolved chemicals, said the report published in the science journal Nature. But the concentration of chemicals that absorb sound in the oceans has declined as a result of ocean acidification, in turn caused by rising concentrations of carbon dioxide.

Rising levels of carbon dioxide come from human activity such as shipping, with the number of ships roughly doubling over the past 40 years, the scientists said. This was in turn increasing the acidity of the ocean, shown by a lowering of its pH levels, they said. Using model simulations, the scientists found that increases in acidity could reduce seawater sound absorption by as much as 60 percent by 2100 in high latitude oceans. Concern about the negative effect of the sea's increased acidity had previously been concentrated on the reduced rate of calcification, such as in coral reefs. "However, a less anticipated consequence of ocean acidification is its effect on underwater sound absorption," the authors said. "A decrease in seawater pH lowers sound absorption in the low-frequency range and, as a result, leads to increasing sound transmission."


Future global warming due to an accumulation of greenhouse gases may further decrease the ocean's sound absorption capacity at certain frequencies, the study said. "High levels of low-frequency sound have a number of behavioural and biological effects on marine life," it added. This included tissue damage, mass stranding of mammals such as whales and temporary loss of hearing in dolphins associated with military tests using intense mid-frequency sonar, the report said. Marine species had adapted to varying levels of noise but the consequences of the sea's decreased ability to absorb sound were uncertain and required further research, the scientists said.

Existing Water Pollution Acts and other allied pollution policies, environmental laws should be modified and enforced as to comply with the acidification of oceans.

HAPPY 2010

The E-Newsletter Team of The Nigerian Society of Engineers Port Harcourt Branch, happily wish all our readers an Happy 2010. We pray that God will see you through the year with joy and happiness. We thank you for your comments and contributions in 2009 which will help us to serve you better this 2010. Once again we say thank you and welcome back from the yuletide holidays.

NSE PH E-Newsletter Team

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