

The Royal Message

Ofala 2026

Celebrating 500+ Years of the Onitsha Monarchy

October **16**, 2026

Ezechima Square, Onitsha

#Ofala2026 #igbamboIganiru

Ofala 2026 Theme



igba mbo, iga n'iru
Strive, and Advance | From Resilience to Progress

For over 500 years, Ndi Onicha have shown ***igba mbo*** — resilience.
Through every challenge we endured, adapted, and rose again.
In 2025 we celebrated ***njiko na ntachi*** — Unity and Resilience.
Now in 2026 we move forward to ***iga n'iru*** — deliberate progress.

This is our charge: strive in your craft, advance your community.
Let personal effort build our Kingdom.
Our logo reflects this journey: the swords of authority and continuity, the beads of identity and honour, and the royal proclamation at its centre. It is a heritage that is not static, but in motion — rooted in royalty, built on resilience, moving toward progress.

From resilience we have come. To progress, we now advance.
Ofala 2026. Strive, and Advance.

Introduction

As always, we begin this address with gratitude to God Almighty that we are celebrating my 25th Ofala festival on the throne of Ezechima. We thank Him for bringing us together and pray that the celebrations, and the numerous side events, will be joyous. This is the period of our annual rituals of gratitude to God for blessings received, atonement for our shortcomings, and supplication for sustained peace, harmony, and development in our kingdom.

To all gathered here, we say a hearty and resounding welcome. We do not take your presence for granted. We are aware of your busy schedules and the challenges of travel in the country. Please, relax and enjoy the festival.

The State of the Nation.

In my 2024 Ofala address, I remarked that the previous twelve months were marked by uncertainties following the general elections. I noted that the wellbeing of the polity has declined even more steeply in 2014. Unfortunately, the hardship has further deepened by 2025 thereby throwing more people below the poverty line. I referred to the World Bank development update on Nigeria that stated that some 104 million people had become classified as poor in 2023. The situation was worsened by unending insecurity in most parts of the country. I then called on the Government to make urgent provisions for the poorest in our society.

On Tuesday, 28 July 2026, the leadership of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria paid a courtesy visit to Mr. President and raised the persistent issues of national security and severe economic plight of the majority of our citizens. Unfortunately, some Government officials politicized the visit by claiming that the bishops spoke only for their congregation. The officials asserted that all was well in the country. But truth be told, the issues raised transcend political, religious and ethnic partisanship. Hunger, unemployment, poor and inaccessible medical service, insecurity, and such other inadequate factors of human development are pervading in the country. We plead with Mr. President to give urgent attention to the dire situation on the ground.

The national elections are barely three months away. Expectedly, the attention of the political class has increasingly turned to political positioning, and away from governance. Democratic elections are opportunities for the electorate to select the candidates that would deliver the best governance. It is, therefore, imperative for non-partisan stakeholder groups, including the traditional and religious institutions, town unions, and the civil society organizations, to intensify their advocacy, mobilization and enlightenment for free and fair elections. Also, the political parties must abhor violence and engage in healthy, issues-based campaigns to enable the electorate make the right choices.

Except for the reports of violence and intimidation, the recent off-cycle governorship election in Osun State demonstrated robust campaign, massive turnout by voters, and a reasonable performance by the Independent National Election Commission (INEC). The election has become a marker for the

coming national elections and all eyes are on INEC to deliver free and fair outcomes.

Still on the national elections, I call on the people of the South East States to shake off their historical apathy towards elections. We cannot stay away from elections and turn around to complain of marginalization. In Democracy, all votes count. Therefore, we must come out and vote for our candidates.

Ofala Theme for 2026.

The theme for this year's Ofala is "Igba mbo, Iga n'iru: Strive and Advance. This is sequel to the previous themes.

- In 2023, *"Better. Together. Stronger."* was a call for consolidation on our breakthroughs whilst galvanizing for future challenges.
- In 2024, *"Courage. Perseverance. Self-reliance: Onye kwe, Chi'e ekwe"* was a reflection on the prevailing hardship, and empathy and encouragement to our people to survive the hardship through their attitudes, determination, and actions.
- Last year, *"Njiko na Ntachi: Community Resilience"* reminded us of the importance of resilience aimed at fostering unity and upholding our enduring communal values.

A common thread runs through these themes over the past four years. They reflect the distinct attributes that sustained our founding fathers on their long and arduous migration over decades from the lands of Ado and Idu. Relying on their determination, courage, unity, self-sustenance, resilience, and the visionary leadership of our father, Eze Chima, they overcame all vicissitudes to found our present homeland, described by Mr. R.W. Harding as *"a land built by Nature for herself"*. Each generation has a solemn duty to uphold and hand over our homeland to the next in a more pristine condition.

The last ten year have been very challenging for our country. Thus, it would be delusional for us to place our hope and reliance entirely on the government. Accordingly, these reinforcing themes call on Ndi Onicha to summon those enduring attributes that sustained our ancestors at moments of difficulties in order to survive the prevailing hardship while upholding our dignity as a people. We have no option than to strive and advance. *Onicha ga adi!*

Our Community Development Programmes.

A. Onitsha Advancement Foundation (OnAF).

After five years of existence, there is now a clear need for the Onitsha Advancement Foundation (OnAF) to conduct a broad review of the journey so far. The purpose would be to evolve a fitter organization that will drive our programmes, and processes for greater achievement. Impact evaluation should henceforth be critical in project determination.

The high point for the year was the Ford Foundation sponsored study on Gender Based Violence (GBV) in our community with particular focus on "The Culture of Silence" among the victims. The summary of the study and the way forward on prevention strategies are presented later in this address. The low point was the sustained failure of several beneficiaries of loans from the

Anambra State Small Business Agency (ASBA) to retire those loans. We have placed the defaulters on traditional sanction and will also report them to law enforcement agencies for statutory redress. Below are the highlights on the various work groups of OnAF.

1. The Implementation Team (OnAF - IT)

As part of the OnAF governance structure and process, the Implementation Team (IT) is the subcommittee with the overall responsibility for the consideration of all project proposals from the work groups and sub-committees as well as external parties. Project proposals are evaluated in the context of priority, budget, and contribution to the community's development. Over the past one year, OnAF IT sanctioned the following projects for implementation:

i. Ugbo Azu Uno Continuity (WEPC)
ii. Basic ICT Training for women (WEPC)
iii. One Youth 2 skills, sponsored by State Ministry of Youths (OLEC)
iv. Vocational Training in crocheting, knitting and weaving (OLEC)
v. Continuity for HWB programs: Medical insurance, etc (HWB)
vii. Restaging the Values Reorientation Initiative (VRI)
viii. Gender Based Violence Study, sponsored by Ford Foundation (RC)
ix. Integrating VRI with GBV (both work groups)

OnAF Scholarship Scrutiny and Steers (VR)

Many of the challenges that were identified in my address last still exist. These include the need for more funds to support our projects, the delay in the completion of the East Pavilion training facilities, shortage of local faculty and resource persons, and inadequate employment opportunities or start-up capital for our trainees.

2. Shared Services Resource Centre (OnAF - RC)

The Shared Services Resource Centre (RC) is the operational base for the Onitsha Advancement Foundation (OnAF). The RC provides coordinating activities that encompass administrative, development, and logistic support to the executive board and the various work teams.

I. OnAF work teams were provided with administrative and logistics support to successfully implement the following projects: the Women Empowerment Project Committee (WEPC) Ugbo Azuno micro enterprise training for 112 participants, and its Basic ICT training for Onitsha market women sponsored by Otu Odu Onitsha Europe (OOOE) since 2024; the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) team's collaboration with the Centre for Sight Africa to offer free eye check to some 160 Onitsha indigenes; the Onitsha Leadership and Entrepreneurship Centre (OLEC)/State Ministry of Youth Development commissioned 1 Youth 2 Skills mentorship scheme for 125 Onitsha North Local Government's Heads of Cooperative Societies.

ii. In 2024, a scholarship scheme commenced to support brilliant but indigent Onitsha youths for tertiary education. In 2026, we had the opportunity to partner with the Pan Atlantic University (PAU), Lagos, on its Mastercard Foundation scholarship collaboration scheme. Two candidates, namely, Barbara Egbuji, Strategic Communications, and Victoria Munonyedi, Mass Communications, were successful. OnAF is committed to intensifying its community engagement and scholarship preparatory classes early to support potential candidates. This brings to six the number OnAF Scholarship recipients.

iii. Many indigenes including the elderly, widows and widowers, and people with disabilities benefited from palliatives distribution following the 2025 Ofala festival, and during the Christmas and the New Year festive periods. Among the items distributed were bread, meat, rice, Ankara cloth and school bags. The Walk-in Health Centre and the Life After Stroke Centre at Stroke Action both located at Okwueze Umuezearoli, received 2 wheelchairs each. Donors over the years include the Liliford Foundation and the Stanel Foundation.

iv. For the second year, an Ofala medical, health and wellbeing community outreach preceded the Ofala festival in both Onitsha North and South Local Government Areas. The focus was on raising awareness of different types of cancer, menstrual hygiene, and health checks for non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. Four hundred and five people benefited from the outreach, which was supported by Otu Odu Onitsha Europe, Iyienu Teaching Hospital, Onitsha Health and Wellbeing USA, TAG Foundation UK, Magna Dental Restoration, Red Cross Society and many others. The 2026 Ofala outreach will focus on the awareness of gender-based violence, free eye clinic, dental clinic, health risk assessment and health checks.

3. Onitsha Leadership and Entrepreneurship Centre (OLEC)

Onitsha Leadership and Entrepreneurship Centre (OLEC) was set up to organize training programmes for different categories of youths: tertiary institution graduates, undergraduates, and artisans - master craftsmen. The focus of the training is leadership and entrepreneurship and the aim is to acquaint the participants with the process of establishing and effectively managing an enterprise and/or succeed in their paid employment. On completion, graduates are supported to form or join existing cooperative societies for the purpose of access to financial support. They are also offered mentorship and guidance in their entrepreneurship and career journeys.

One Youth Two Skills Programme: OLEC have over three years partnered with the Anambra State Ministry of Youth Development in its One Youth Two Skills Programme. To date, OLEC EDI has successfully trained 534 youths on leadership, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills under this initiative. Ninety percent of these are Onitsha youths. Plans are on the way for the next edition of the programme, and OLEC will be fully involved.

Electrician Installation and Maintenance Training Programme: The programme was sponsored by the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) during 7 - 11 September 2026. Its purpose was to provide practical electrical installation and maintenance training to both skilled and unskilled members of the Onitsha community, equipping participants with valuable technical skills that can improve their employability, and promoting self-reliance. There were 100 participants of which 83 were Onitsha indigenes. The population included 66 practicing electricians, 34 aspirants, 29 electrical engineering students from tertiary institutions, and only five females. The programme provided starter kits and N100,000 take-of grant to the participants. OLEC will organize an entrepreneurship development programme for the participants and mentors will be appointed for regular advisory visits to the participants as a way to ensure maximum success of this programme.

4. Ado Business Incubation Centre (ABIC).

Overview: The Ado Business Incubation Centre (ABIC), established under the Onitsha Advancement Foundation, helps Ndi Onicha, particularly young people, gain digital skills, build enterprises and access employment opportunities. The past year focused on consolidation: completing a training cycle, strengthening delivery capacity, assessing the proposed Ime Obi hub and planning future programmes.

Activities and Progress During the Period

- ABIC concluded a 12-week Frontend Web Development programme with APTECH. Ten participants, including five Onitsha indigenes, completed the practical training.
- Two OnAF team members completed innovation-hub management training. The Ime Obi Library assessment confirmed useful furniture, computers, an IT suite and a meeting room. Regular programmes will require reliable power and internet, equipment testing, cleaning, sanitation, safety measures and clear operating access.
- Glo's internet connectivity at Ime Obi supports digital training, online learning, mentorship, remote work and business opportunities. Coverage, speed and reliability should improve as activity grows.
- ABIC also proposed a delivery model in which it would lead incubation, digital enterprise and partnerships; the Entrepreneurship Development Institute would lead entrepreneurship learning; and the Onitsha Youth Council would support mobilisation and participant accountability.

Priorities for the Next Phase: The immediate priority is technical and cost assessment, minimum facility remediation, clear partner responsibilities and a funded pilot programme with participant-selection criteria and success measures. Programmes will focus on digital skills, remote work, business digitisation, technology-enabled apprenticeship, entrepreneurship, startups and STEM. Success will be measured by completion, skills application, businesses digitised, employment, internships, income opportunities and enterprise growth.

Conclusion: ABIC remains important to preparing Ndi Onicha for the changing economy. It now needs a functional home, disciplined structure and resources for consistent delivery. This is the enduring spirit of Igba Mbo, Iga N'Iru - Strive and Advance.

5. Microfinance Institution (MFI)

The original vision of the OnAF Economic Empowerment Team's 2022 report was to establish an MFI that will in time develop into a Micro Finance Bank. That vision appeared unattainable in the short term due to excessive cost and regulatory implications. Consideration was given to an alternative of establishing a for-profit investment company. Unfortunately, no further action was taken on the subject. Lately, Oluchukwubuife Professor Ngozi Egbuna has accepted to lead the repositioning of the Work Group's agenda. Oluchukwu retired as a Director of the CBN. She is now Professor of International Finance, Banking, and Trade at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. We are confident that she will bring fresh energy and perspective to the Work Group agenda.

6. Women Empowerment Projects Committee (OLEC - WEPC).

The WEPC is focused on women specific challenges, which it has pursued through the following

programmes:
Basic ICT Training: This is a dedicated ICT training workshop for Onitsha women that is currently funded by Otu Odu UK and Ireland. The women gained the ability to use social media on mobile devices for effective communication and marketing of their wares. Three trainings have been carried out to date and there is plan for a fourth programme. To date, 130 women have been trained. Two WhatsApp platforms were created for the trainees and some have become entrepreneurs with online shops. Two of the trainees have also progressed to pursue further education and learning in ICT.

Ugbo Azu Uno: This is OnAF WEPC's flagship food-security and empowerment initiative, helping Onitsha households turn their little backyard or even veranda space into a steady source of food and extra income. Champions from the first two trainings now have thriving farms in their houses. Four trainings have been carried out to date and a fifth one is in the pipeline. To date 300 people have been trained and approximately 20% have established successful projects. The unsuccessful ones had various reasons ranging from seeds that did not germinate to their not planting the seeds. Programs have been sponsored by OnAF with some support from WEPC members

Angel/Micro Credit Loan Fund Scheme: This program was set up to support our women to becoming financially independent by providing them with loans to expand their businesses. The first set of loans disbursed to 10 women in 2022, varying from 30,000 Naira to 70,000 Naira, have been repaid. There is appetite for fresh loans to further expand their businesses from 35 women who have applied. The next disbursement is planned for late in 2026, sponsored by OnAF.

Coal Fired Stoves: This program is to support vulnerable women and households in Onitsha with improved cooking equipment. The Stoves were provided to OnAF under a Federal Ministry of Science and Technology initiative. Structuring of distribution to Onitsha women is on-going.
IWD 2027 International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. It is celebrated annually on the 8th of March. Since inception in 2022 we have had 3 IWD programs. The next one is planned for 2027

7. Health and Wellbeing (HWB).

The HWB team has remained committed to improving access to adequate and affordable healthcare, strengthening community-based health interventions and addressing critical social and health challenges affecting Ndi Onicha. In the past 5 years, the team has initiated and are currently involved in the following programmes:

OnAF/ ASHIA Health Insurance Programme: Currently more than 700 Ndi Onicha are enrolled in the programme which has been on for 4 years. It provides beneficiaries with adequate and affordable health care. The programme is currently facing the challenge of declining utilization resulting in declining sponsorship. Our immediate priority is to re-energize the awareness campaign to strengthen enrollees' engagement and develop a more sustainable sponsorship model that will enable the programme to continue to grow.

Cancer Awareness Programme: The team has developed a tool kit over 2 years ago for the most common cancers in males and females, namely, prostate cancer, breast cancer and cervical cancer. The tool kit flyers are distributed during our events, and medical outreach programmes. The tool kit intimates the community on the early warning signs thereby enabling early detection, treatment, and improved recovery.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention/Support Programme: Three years ago, the team started the mental health first aid project with emphasis on rehabilitation and support for

affected persons. Unfortunately, the initiative was stepped down due to budgetary constraints. Substance abuse is now growing alarmingly and demands a robust intervention. As a priority, the HWB work group will set up a team to develop a rehabilitation concept and facility for the community. Ime Obi will source the needed funds.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) Prevention Programme: The HWB team has joined the efforts to combat GBV. The team's work in the area of substance abuse has highlighted the intersection between substance abuse and incidents of GBV within the community. For this reason, we are collaborating with the GBV team. This collaboration will result in the development of a more integrated response that addresses not only GBV but also the underlying behavioral and health related risk factors.

Okwueze Umuezearoli Walk-In Health Centre: The support of Obi-in-Council and our Diaspora indigenes has contributed substantially towards making the Centre operational and ready for further development. The vision for the Centre is to become a fully functional, community managed health institution providing adequate and affordable community healthcare services. The Centre hosted a highly successful medical eye outreach partnership with the Centre for Sight Africa. The outreach revealed a significant burden of preventable and treatable eye conditions among the beneficiaries. Out of 160 beneficiaries, 50 were provided with corrective glasses, 68 were given eye drops, 17 cataract cases were recommended for specialist follow-up and possible surgical intervention, and 25 glaucoma cases were identified for monitoring and regular follow-up. The findings clearly demonstrated the importance of continued support for community eye health programmes.

Pre-Ofala Medical Outreach Programme: As usual the HWB team will be part of this year's pre-Ofala medical outreach programme during 11 to 17 October 2026. The outreach will focus on health and community awareness, including, eye screening and provision of free eye glasses, cancer awareness and education, menstrual health and hygiene, community health, and gender-based violence awareness. The team will partner with the OnAF communication team on publicity before, during, and after Ofala to mobilize participation and attract partners and sponsors.

Care for The Elderly: The team is developing an elders' health and feeding programme. This will be designed to improve health and nutrition as well as the social well-being of the elderly members of our community. The proposed program will bring our senior citizens together at the Okwueze Umuezearoli Walk-in Health Centre on a regular basis for health checks, age-appropriate physical activities, nutritional support and social interaction. Funding would be a major constraint but it is hoped to get support from diverse sources.

Overall, distinct progress has been made in some of our programmes whilst others need renewed community engagement, strategic partnership and sustainable funding to unlock their full potentials

8. Stroke Action Nigeria - Life After Stroke Centre (LASC).

Stroke Action Nigeria, based at the Life After Stroke Centre (LASC) in Okwueze Umuezearoli, provides services that help to reduce the incidence, complications and burden of strokes. The organization scaled its services beyond providing prevention, rehabilitation and support services to embark on research activities that improved functional, cognitive, and psychosocial trajectories after stroke for 491 stroke survivors.

A research study funded by Philips Foundation concluded that the LASC interventions are effective

in improving function and quality of life after stroke. This outcome was presented at the World Stroke Congress and published in the International Journal of Stroke. The result attracted collaborations with the World Stroke Organization and OSCAIL (Organized Stroke Care Across Income Levels) to conduct further research to replicate the LASC model across four States in Nigeria, and in Africa. Other research studies include, piloting a stroke rehabilitation iFLEXO App designed for low resource countries, and an action research study mapping the life after stroke journey of stroke survivors in Onitsha. A stroke carers centre, the first in Africa, has also been established in Onitsha. The impact of the life after stroke services and research activities resulted in the organization becoming a global influencer in stroke care. To enable stroke survivors to progress their recovery journey from rehabilitation and support in the LASC, Enyi Chiebunigom Dr. Rita Melifonwu conducted a research study on Social Participation after stroke in Nigerian stroke survivors. Findings from this study highlighted that social participation after stroke is context specific, and that, cultural beliefs influence rehabilitation outcomes. The study provided the first ever definition of social participation in relation to stroke rehabilitation. This study earned Enyi Chiebunigom Dr. Rita Melifonwu a PhD in Health Studies, and the Postgraduate Researcher of the year Award at the London South Bank University.

9. Gender Based Violence (GBV) Research Study

A Ford Foundation grant of $100,000 was received by Agbogidi in July 2025 to conduct a research study on "Breaking the culture of silence among women and girls in Onitsha community as a strategy for the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV)". Implementation of the study was supported by the Onitsha Advancement Foundation.

The research study was conducted in two phases: Phase 1, a participatory action research, and Phase 2, implementation of findings from the research study.

Data were collected from 841 participants during community engagement across all the villages in Onitsha to determine levels of awareness, types and causes of GBV in Onitsha, its effects on women and girls, and barriers to disclosure. Analysis of data highlighted that GBV indeed occurs in Onitsha, not only among women and girls, but also among men and boys. Several sociocultural norms perpetuating GBV in Onitsha were identified, together with reasons why Onitsha indigenes fail to report their GBV experiences. Analysis further highlighted that Onitsha indigenes experience GBV irrespective of marital status, age, gender and level of education. Most GBV took place at home, and the perpetrators are often related to the victims / survivors. The study enabled the achievement of the focus of the research study which is "Breaking the culture of silence" to be achieved. GBV survivors are now having the confidence to report and validate their experiences. A data driven GBV awareness curriculum was developed and is now used to provide training for people that live and work in Onitsha. An Onitsha Gender Based Violence Prevention Strategy has been developed based on the findings and recommendations from the research study. There will be regular monitoring and evaluation of the Onitsha GBV Prevention Strategy implementation to determine whether efforts are made towards achieving zero tolerance for GBV in Onicha.

10. Cooperatives.

On 29th December 2020, I guaranteed an Anambra State Business Agency (ASBA) loan facility of Sixty-Five Million Naira (₦65,000,000.00) to 13 Multipurpose Cooperative Societies (MPCS) at Five Million Naira (₦5,000,000.00) per society, tenable for one year with maturity date of 28 December, 2021. These MPCS consisting of ten people each were established to support Onitsha youths to become economically active and sustainable. As of January 2026, only three of the MPCS's had paid up their loans of five million Naira. At a meeting with the loan defaulters and their sponsors on 17th February 2026, I declared a final warning for the complete repayment of all outstanding amounts within one month, which yielded only ₦5,474,727.00 with an outstanding balance of ₦23,914,846.33 as at 13 August 2026. Accordingly, therefore, on Thursday 17 September, traditional sanction of Iso Aru was imposed on all the defaulters and their sponsors until they fully repay their respective indebtedness.

11. Education - Long Vacation Tutorial Programme (LVT).

The Annual Free Long Vacation Tutorial (LVT) Programme has grown steadily over the years in terms of scope and impact, anchored on building responsible, disciplined, focused, knowledgeable, and enlightened youths. The Programme was introduced in 2007 by the National Association of Onitsha Ado Students (NAOAS). It was aimed at providing a platform for positive engagement of both tertiary and secondary levels students in the community during the long vacation periods, keeping them positively engaged and away from anti-social behavior. It encourages social interaction, and inculcates leadership, discipline, hard work, sound morals and cultural awareness amongst the students and their tutors.

The programme normally runs for four/five week during August and September and subjects taught are in accordance with the Anambra State Ministry of Education Scheme of Work. For 2025/2026 academic session, about 4,000 secondary school children, compared with 3,400 in 2015, participated under the tutorship of 65 selected undergraduate students at Ezechima Primary School (Onitsha North LG) and Pioneer Primary School (Onitsha South L.G.) Funding is provided by Obi-in-Council and supported by well-meaning individuals and organizations, such as the Agbalanze Onitsha Cultural Association, Ikporo Onitsha USA, Onitsha Improvement Union, Onwa Ikobi, Dr. Patrick Okolo and Otu Odu Onicha.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E).

In the past year M & E Team has had only one request for intervention. This was from the Team Lead for The GBV Project. Phase I of the project was exploratory, the purpose of which was to better understand the position of GBV in our community. Phase II used the findings from Phase I to address the problems that exist and turn things around. Phase III would then confirm the Impacts and outcomes of all the work done in Phase II - which of the specific approaches worked best; which ones did not work; how well was it all going; and what more needed to be done.

The GBV Project is doing a pretty thorough job and no Monitoring & Evaluation is necessary at the current stage. However, the donors would want to know at some point, how well this intervention has worked. The feeling is that approximately one year, or maybe six months after implementation, another research could be carried out to check if the level of GBV has changed; whether people's attitudes have changed; whether the silence about it has been broken; whether the number of reported cases has changed and if there have been any convictions. The follow-up study would also confirm what more could be done to alleviate the problem. This would actually be the most important aspect of this project and the research should be robust. It is hoped that Ford Foundation will provide additional funding for this follow-up research, at which point the required input from M & E will be determined.

13. Values Re-Orientation Initiative (VRI)

Last year I spoke about our Values Re-Orientation Initiative. I acknowledged then that despite initial challenges, particularly the reluctance of some key constituent groups, our commitment remained unwavering. I said then: "Our focus remains on ensuring that the essence of this initiative becomes deeply ingrained in the fabric of our community... I urge all members of our

community to embrace this values reorientation and work together towards a brighter future for Onitsha." Today, I return with both a report and a charge.

The Restage — What We Have Done

We launched with energy in 2023, but implementation stalled. The lesson was clear: we cannot impose values from the top; values must be owned from the ground up.

This year, on the instruction of Ime Obi, the VRI Working Group went back to the beginning. On 12th April 2026, the team met with the leadership of six constituent groups — Ikporo Onicha, Onitsha Improvement Union (OIU), Onitsha Youth Council (OYC), Agbalanze, Otu Odu, and Ogbo so Achi Ani — to listen, address concerns, secure commitment and appoint contact persons.

To date, consultations have been completed with Ikporo Onicha, OIU and OYC. The message has been consistent.

Key Insights — The Three Shifts

- Ikporo Onicha: Behaviour must improve and enforcement must be strengthened.
- OIU: Use what we already have. Stop delaying. Act now.
- Our Youth: The hardest truth — without economic opportunity, values messaging will not stick.

The insight from the consultations is clear: we all know the values; the gap is in practice. This is because our people are under economic pressure, enforcement is weak, and we have not moved from talk to action.

Therefore, if we want real change in Onitsha, we must make three fundamental shifts together:

1. Empower our youth economically — opportunity must come before orientation;
2. Enforce our community standards — rules without action breed disrespect; and
3. Lead from our institutions — every group and every family must model the values we preach.

This is no longer just a "values" programme. It is the foundation of our economic empowerment agenda for Onitsha.

The VRI Working Group has distilled recommendations directly from the consultations. Most critical among them are linking values to economic opportunity, and establishing clear ownership, timelines and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

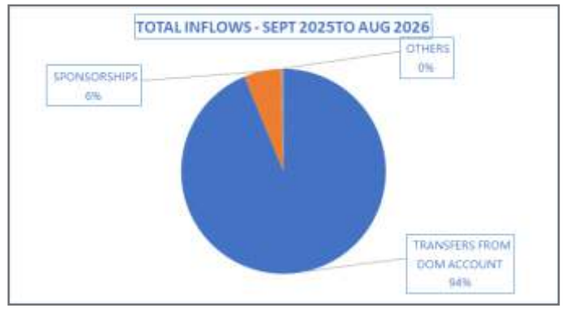
We must conclude the remaining consultations and put in place a final implementation plan before the end of 2026. We will not repeat 2023. This time, we implement together.

Let us reignite this culture of entrepreneurship, collaboration and long-term thinking. For it is only when our values are lived that our prosperity will be lasting.

14. OnAF Financial Summary: September 2025 to August 2026

I. Total inflows for the period stood at N50,824,831, distributed as follows.

DETAILS	₦	%
TRANSFERS FROM DOM ACCOUNT	47,655,600	94%
SPONSORSHIPS	2,974,312	6%
OTHERS	194,919	0%
TOTAL	**50,824,831**	**100%**

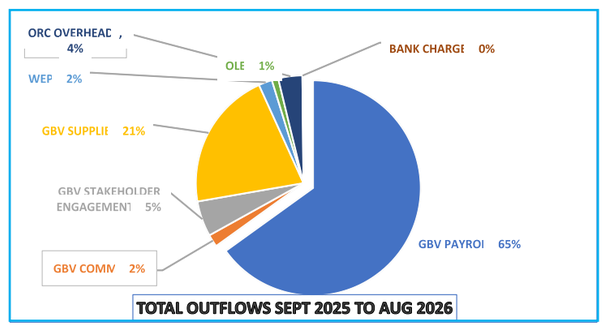


A key development during this period was the receipt of a grant of US$100,000 from the Ford Foundation (FF) to fund a gender-based violence research project (GBV Project). This is a major milestone and evidence of the growing confidence of outside parties in the activities of OnAF. In this regard, we submitted the financial report at 30 June 2026 to the Ford Foundation in line with the grant reporting requirements. The GBV project remains in progress, and the Project Team is in communication with the Ford Foundation office regarding further funding to extend the study.

During the period, we also had sponsorships from individuals and groups, including the Pan African University (PAU), our Women Empowerment Project Committee (WEPC), and some individual contributions. These reflect growing and diverse recognition and confidence in OnAF.

ii. Total payments to date stood at ₦56,607,533, distributed as follows

DETAILS	₦	%
GBV PAYROLL	36,832,404	65%
GBV COMMS	1,061,250	2%
GBV STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENTS	3,012,872	5%
GBV SUPPLIES	11,862,589	21%
WEPC	1,150,000	2%
OLEC	550,000	1%
ORC OVERHEADS	2,045,264	4%
BANK CHARGES	93,154	0%
TOTAL	**56,607,533**	**100%**



Financial prudence continued to undergird the operations and management of OnAF. The GBV project expenditure constituted 93% of the total expenditure during the period. This mirrored the reported 94% of inflows during the period. These payments are essentially transfer from the domiciliary account to fund the research project payments for field research assistants and analysts, as well as supplies, stakeholder engagement, and communications. A collateral benefit of the grant, therefore, is employment and cognate experience for youths, as well as indigenous subject matter experts. This is in line with OnAF objective of lifting our people out of poverty.

The cost of running the Resource Centre at Ime Obi constituted 4% of total spending during the period. Sponsorship funds are ringfenced and fully applied to the sponsored activities.

	₦
SPONSORSHIPS SPEND	1,700,000
SPONSORSHIPS RECEIVED	2,974,312

iii. Going Forward in the Year Ahead: The grant of US100,000 from the Ford Foundation for the GBV Project added much boost to OnAF activities. It also brought to the fore the imperative for a broader sponsorships and funding base to support OnAF activities. This, therefore, is a key task going forward.

B. Other Activities.

1. Community Governance - Obi-in-Council:

No new appointments were made in the past twelve months to the Traditional Council. Rather, emphasis has been on integration and building the expanded council into an effective working team. Sadly, two members, Chief Emmanuel Egbunike, Ajie Ukadiugwu Isagba, and Chief Ambassador Obiora Erokwu, Owelle Osowa Anya, joined their ancestors. Both made distinct contributions to the traditional governance of our community. Other matters relating to Obi-in-Council are as follow:

- The printing errors in the 7th Edition of our Rules and Regulations, which became effective in August 2024, have been corrected and the manuscript returned for re-printing. Persons who purchased the defective version may exchange them for the corrected version free of charge.
- The Ndichie committee on the comprehensive review of the origin, traditional and cultural relevance of, and entitlement for the solemn ritual of Mmuo Avia have not submitted their report. I have charged them to accelerate their research.
- The code of conduct for Obi-in-Council is being substantially reviewed before it is presented to me for endorsement and adoption.
- The Traditional Court of Obi-in-Council continued to hold its weekly sessions to address cases brought to its attention. There is a growing tendency for parties to turn to the Statutory Court during the pendency of matters already in the Traditional Court. Such action, which can potentially cause friction between the two court systems, must cease. Parties should decide up front which jurisdiction they would like to prosecute their matter and persevere fully with their choice.

- I have completed the manuscripts for two books on our community affairs. Volume I, on Traditional Jurisprudence, is a compendium of cases that I personally adjudicated mostly on appeal. Many of the cases have implications on our customs and traditions. Odi Sam Maduegbuna, esq, has written a case-by-case review of the book which will be published as a companion. Volume II, on Traditional Governance deals with matters relating to Obi-in-Council and the constituent groups. Both books will be presented at Ofala 2027 marking my 25th anniversary on the Ukpo Ezechima.

2. Onitsha Improvement Union (OIU)

The centenary anniversary of the Onitsha Improvement Union was celebrate in April 2025 with the theme of"Preserving Tradition While Embracing Modernity: a Centennial Perspective". The celebration was in commemoration of one hundred years of service by the organization that embraces all adult Onitsha indigenes. A year later on 04 April 2025, a general election was held resulting in a smooth transfer of leadership from Sir Chike Ekweogwu to Ezennia Ikechukwu Iwenofu as President General. The new executive committee commenced consultations in earnest with all our constituent groups in Onitsha, followed by a similar exercise by the President General on his visit to several States in the USA during the month of May. Arising from the consultations, the following immediate activities have been scheduled for the year ahead:

- A verifiable data on out of school children for Onitsha indigenous community has been generated and arrangements are in place for the forty-eight identified children at various levels of their education to resume school.
- Onitsha Ado Youth Summit with the theme "Onitsha Ado Youths Quo Vadis: Securing the future today" took place on Friday, 28th August, 2026. The summit was on a hybrid platform so as to connect with Onitsha youths all over the world. The focus of the summit was on entrepreneurship, self-employment, and the need to learn Information Technology as an inevitable tool for self-development.
- A scalable digital registry of unemployed Onitsha youths capturing their demographic data, educational background, and employment needs is being developed. This is particularly important with regard to the youths that have undergone the entrepreneurship and skills acquisition training. The registry will provide Onitsha with reliable data for planning, including the sourcing of funds to empower the youths on self-employment.
- In an effort to boost the voting capacity of Onitsha as a community, an online INEC voter registration of about 1000 persons has been undertaken in both Onitsha Local Government Areas. There will be continuing education to ensure that all registered persons will fulfil their civic and constitutional duties and rights by voting on election day.
- Also, the Chairman of Ogbo-Ogwu market, and the Divisional Police Officer, both at the Onitsha end of the First River Niger Bridge (Head Bridge), were visited on Thursday 20th August, 2026 following a violent confrontation by an alleged trader with the police at the area. The traders were advised to be law abiding, and the police to show restraint and professionalism in their duties. This event highlights the need for the OIU to maintain regular contact with the police and the traders' unions to preemptively avert violent confrontations.

3. Other Constituent Groups:

Council of Ndi Diokpa: There is a growing concern that a distinct number of substantive Diokpas are domiciled outside Onitsha and even abroad thus creating a situation of long-term proxy on Ukpo (Igba Uko). This is in addition to the situations whereby a substantive Diokpa is a non-Ozo

titled person or unwilling to take up his position due to his religious persuasion. We must as a community begin to consider the long-term implications of such realities.

Agbalanze Onicha: The matter of the amendment to the Constitution of the society has lingered since 2018 despite several reminders from Obi-in-Council. A final reminder will be given to the leadership of the society, following which a proclamation will be made in that regard. Also, the escalating costs associated with title taking remains a serious concern as I reiterated at a joint meeting of Agbalanze and Otu Odu members on Wednesday 17 September 2026.

Otu Odu Onicha: As a fallout from the meeting of Obi-in-Council with the Executive Committee of Otu Odu Onicha on Tuesday, 10 June 2025, the President of the society was suspended and the Deputy President became the Acting President with the full authority of the President. The executive committee was charged to review the governance of the society, particularly, the "2017 Constitution", and the disciplinary and the financial management systems. They have made steady progress under a more humane leadership.

Onitsha Youth Council (OYC): As earlier mentioned, on 28 August 2026, the Onitsha Improvement Union sponsored the Onitsha Ado Youth Summit with the theme of "Onitsha Ado Youths Quo Vadis (Securing the Future Today)". Topics addressed at the summit included leadership, entrepreneurship, mentoring, security and the future of Onitsha's Youths. The hybrid platform for the conference made it possible for our youths all over the world to participate.

Ikporo Onicha and the Federated Age Grade Societies: These two organizations had their normal activities in the course of the last twelve months.

4. Engaging with Our Indigenes in Diaspora.

On 29 March, 2026, Chief Okechukwu Areh, Onya Ozoma, Chairman of the Ofala Steering Committee, held a town hall meeting with our indigenes in diaspora, during which he rendered account of the funds raised by the diaspora population toward last year's Ofala. He also briefed the participants on the plans for Ofala 2026. The briefings were well received

The crisis arising from the annual joint convention of Agbalanze Onicha USA and Otu Odu Onicha USA (AOUSA/OOOUSA) in Dallas, TX, last year resulted in separate conventions by both organizations this year. The joint convention had become for several years the flagship celebration that brought together all Umu Onicha in the USA and beyond. The separate conventions went smoothly, but without the verve and warmth associated with the joint event. It is hoped that their differences would be resolved and the joint event resumed soon.

The new President General of the Onitsha Improvement Union, Ezennia Engr. Ikechukwu Iwenofu, paid a working visit to the USA in May 2026 covering the Quad-States of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania, as well as Maryland, Florida, and California. His visit underscores the appreciation of the growing significance and commitment of our indigenes in Diaspora.

On 11 July, 2026 the Onitsha organizations in Great Britain and Ireland, participated for the second year in the annual Igbo Festival of Arts and Culture in London. It was a great opportunity to showcase Onitsha culture and share fellowship with other Igbo communities in the U.K. Also, on 08 August, 2026, Onitsha Ado Europe held a very successful annual convention in London. Obi-in-Council was well represented by Chief Ben Onochie Epundu, Ijagwo, and Chief Anthony Obiesie, Ajako Obi.

On 25 July, 2026, Chief Okechukwu Akpom, Odogwu Eze, and several Onitsha indigenes accompanied me to the bi-annual convention of the North American Chapter of the Old Boys Association of the Government Secondary School, Owerri, my Alma Mater, in Dallas, Tx, USA. On the following day, I met several more of our indigenes at a warm reception at Chief Akpom's residence in Dallas.

On 06 September, we held the 13th Global Town Hall Meeting at which some 177 persons from different cities in Nigeria and abroad participated. Key issues that were discussed included Gender Based Violence, proposed Onitsha Honours Award, restoration of Nkisi and Otumoye water systems, the vault system for interment, youth empowerment in the creative fields, entitlement mentality of Ndi Onicha, need for a scholarship trust fund for tertiary education, and workshop for parents on child upbringing.

5. Security.

Our Vigilante Service has recently become structured under the Anambra Homeland Security Law 2025, which explains the Security structure in Anambra State. According to the law, the name AVG, OCVU or any other type of security outfit within a community ceased to exist and is replaced by Agunechemba. Presently, Ime-Obi Security Vigilante have been issued with new uniform branded as Agunechemba with Identification number specifying their area of operations. Four patrol vehicles are unserviceable and the OIU president has undertaken to get them repaired.

Achievements:

- The surveillance unit revealed that squatters, mostly traders, not terrorists, were occupying some 50 percent of uncompleted buildings within Inland Town area. This illegal occupancy was terminated by a combined team of the police and vigilante group.
- The Vigilante Group tracked down and arrested Ifeanyi Ogbogu, one of the notorious criminals that burgle homes, stores etc. He was handed over to the police along with properties worth millions of naira recovered from him. Also, other terrorist gangs that within Inland Town were arrested and handed over to the police for further investigation.
- Some of the black spot areas, including Omozele Street, Okwueze Okebunabo, Ilochi Axis of Iyiawu Village, Umuikem Road, Arima Lane, Tasia Road from Ojedi junction to Ugwunaobankpa, popularly known as Colombia, MCC/New Cemetery Road, are under constant surveillance.

6. Proposed Vault Burial Alternative to Manage Limited Land Space:

The use of vaults for burial is an acceptable and universal method of interment, especially in environments with limited land space, such as Onitsha. In the circumstance, graves and soak away pits are competing with boreholes with the risk of percolations from these two sources into water boreholes. Between April 2024 and May 2026, about 851 bodies have been buried in Inland Town alone. This practice can no longer be sustained.

Between May and June, 2026, the committee on the Innovative Way of Burials in Onitsha interacted with various constituent groups in Onitsha on the use of vaults as a necessary alternative for burials in the community. The groups accepted the need for the vault system in the context of the shrinking land space in Onitsha and the continuous pollution of portable water. Unfortunately, there is a lingering reluctance to inevitable change. Some members of Agbalanze Society think it demeaning for an Ozo titled person to be buried in the same grave with a woman,

notwithstanding the precedence against the assertion, such as in Muoka family of Odoje Village. A woman complained that there could be spiritual conflicts between the individual "Chi" of persons in a vault. These stereotypes should be viewed in the context of modern understanding of spirituality. The enlightenment campaign will be sustained in the year ahead.

7. Golibe Festival.

Introduction: The past twelve months have been a period of progress and preparation for the 2026 Golibe Festival. The period covered the 2025 Festival, community activities, sponsorship and stakeholder engagement, the production of the Festival Magazine, and preparations for the 2026 edition.

Golibe Festival 2025: The 2025 Golibe Festival was held from 26 to 31 December 2025. It brought together residents, families, young people, businesses and visitors to celebrate the festive season. The Festival featured entertainment, cultural activities and the village carnival, which was an opportunity to showcase their culture, creativity and unity. The lessons from the 2025 festival have been included in the planning for the 2026 edition.

Community Activities: Golibe Festival continued to support activities that benefit the community. In November 2025, the Menstrual Hygiene Awareness Campaign was taken to three secondary schools in Onitsha. Students were educated on menstrual hygiene, sanitary pads were distributed, and about 1,000 awareness flyers were shared. The Festival also continued its youth and STEM-related activities in schools.

Preparation for Golibe Festival 2026: Preparations for the 2026 Festival have focused on sponsorship, fundraising, publicity and better organisation. An MoU was signed between QVT Media and Golibe Festival to support and manage the Festival's corporate sponsorship campaign. Engagements are ongoing with organizations. The Festival is also exploring wider publicity in Lagos, Onitsha and among the Onitsha community in the diaspora. On 26 July 2026, the Board of Golibe Festival Limited inaugurated the 2026 Project Management Team with the aim of improving coordination, making responsibilities clear and identifying problems early.

Golibe Festival Magazine: The 4th edition of the Golibe Festival Magazine has also been completed. The magazine contains highlights of the 2025 Festival, articles, community stories and cultural content. The first 100 copies have been printed and will be launched on 26 December 2026 during the Festival's opening ceremony. More copies will be printed as orders are received.

Conclusion: The past year has been a period of work, learning and preparation for Golibe Festival. The successful 2025 Festival, community activities, review of past challenges, sponsorship efforts and early preparation for 2026 show the continued commitment of all involved to sustain the Golibe Festival's purpose of celebration our culture.

8. Onitsha Millennium Development Foundation (OMDF)

SUMMARY		
	NAIRA	**%**
INFLOWS		
LEVIES	270,600,000.00	93%
FINES	17,698,170.00	6%
INTEREST	3,879,000.44	1%
TOTAL INFLOWS	**292,177,170.44**	**100%**
OUTFLOWS		
BANK CHARGES	10,617.00	3%
WHT ON INTEREST	387,850.02	97%
TOTAL OUTFLOWS	**398,467.02**	**100%**
BALANCE	**291,778,703.42**	



All legal documentation and registration of the Onitsha Millennium Development Foundation have been completed and banking relationships established. Following completion in February 2025, the Fund opened its UBA account, into which all monies previously held in the Ime Obi Administration account are being transferred. All funds beneficial to the Trust Fund are now paid directly to this account.

As at 31st August 2026, total inflows stand at ₦291.78 million - comprising levies of ₦270.6m (93%), fines and penalties of ₦17.28m (6%) and interest of 1% - representing approximately 250 title ceremonies over 24 months. This figure represents the amount paid into the Onitsha account. Of this, ₦191.78 million has been reconciled and transferred to the UBA account managed by the OMDF, while the balance of N100 million is undergoing reconciliation and will be transferred shortly. Investment activities have commenced in safe, secure and liquid money market instruments, and the Foundation has taken decisions to commence development activities.

Going forward, the Foundation will be the sole repository for all community funds, including net Ofala proceeds, currently committed to ongoing capital projects at Ime Obi and Okwu Eze Umuezearoli and Okebunabo. It will also disburse annually for recurrent expenditure - Ime Obi maintenance and administration, vigilante security, and the Onitsha Advancement Foundation (OnAF). To further entrench prudence, transparency and accountability, steps are being taken to appoint External Auditors.

OFALA STEERING COMMITTEE SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR 2025 OFALA ONITSHA	NOTE	2025 NAIRA	2024 NAIRA
RECEIPTS			
US Diaspora		37,576,325	41,004,450
EU/UK Diaspora		6,615,080	100,000
Umuonicha		18,860,000	12,710,008
Health Outreach donations		500,000	1,650,000
Onitsha Constituent Groups		1,655,000	750,000
Corporates in Onitsha		6,620,000	600,000
Total Receipts		**71,826,405**	**56,814,458**
EXPENDITURE			
Event Setup		21,502,100	7,594,000
Security & Protocol		5,580,000	4,130,000
Logistics		7,570,000	3,500,000
Catering		9,356,750	7,376,600
Communications & IT		26,569,350	4,815,000
Health Outreach		1,375,800	3,263,000
Art Exhibition		2,750,000	1,750,000
Lecture Series Exes		0	1,720,000
Youth carnival		5,542,000	0
Sundries		5,074,000	3,700,000
Total Expenditure		**85,320,000**	**37,848,600**
Surplus(Deficit) before sponsorships		**(13,493,595)**	**18,965,858**
Ofala Sponsorship Receipts	3	101,642,000	45,400,000
Surplus		88,148,405	**64,365,858**
Ofala surplus b/f in bank		54,627,858	19,422,179
Appropriations			(29,160,179)
Surpluses c/f in bank	4	**142,776,263**	**54,627,858**

In line with accountability and transparency, Ofala 2025 receipts and payments have been audited by an independent external auditor. The summary above was extracted from the audited financial statements.

Total receipts in 2025 from Ndi Onicha and corporates in Onitsha was ₦71,826,405 compared to ₦56,814,458 in 2024. Sponsorships received in 2025 totaled ₦101,642,000, compared to ₦45,400,000 in 2024. Globacom has remained our major sponsor since 2010 since our partnership started. In 2025, they contributed over 20% of our sponsorships. We are appreciative of their trust in our mutually beneficial partnership over these years.

Total expenditure was ₦85,320,000 compared to ₦37,848,000 in 2024. Surplus for Ofala 2025 was ₦88,148,405, which was added to the 2024 brought-forward surplus of ₦54,627,858 to leave the carried-forward balance of ₦142,776,263.

Appropriations

The surplus from our annual Ofala festival has been the main source of the funds for all our capital development projects since I ascended the throne twenty-four years ago. The current surplus is committed to on-going projects at Ime Obi and Okwu Eze Umuezearoli and Okebunabo, as well as ceremonies in the traditional cycle. Going forward, with the completion of the on-going projects, future surpluses will be transferred to the Millennium Development Trust Fund from where appropriations will be made as needed and justified.

10. Strategic Communications - Telling Our Story

One enduring lesson of the past year is this: if Ime Obi does not tell its story, others will tell it for us - and they will get it wrong. Silence breeds rumour, and rumour breeds distrust.
That is why I directed that Ime Obi must become more deliberate in accounting for its stewardship, articulating its vision and preserving our collective legacy. Ime Obi is more than an administration; it is the custodian of our identity, governance and continuity - linking the Throne, the traditional council our constituent groups and every Onye Onicha at home and in the diaspora. To tell our story is therefore not self-praise; it is accountability - to our people who entrust us with resources, to partners who seek clarity before they invest, and to our youth who must understand what they are inheriting. In recognition of this, we have taken deliberate steps to enhance transparency and communication - from the formal CAC registration and dedicated banking of the Onitsha Millennium Development Fund, to the publication of the OnAF Financial Summary and the Ofala 2025 Audited Financial Statements.

We have also strengthened the vehicles for telling our story.

Ime Obi Media, launched at Ofala 2025 as the official cultural and digital arm of the Palace, has consolidated in its first year as the authoritative window into our heritage. Run by our youths, it has provided archival coverage of Palace programmes, launched Okwu Onicha, Igba Mboa including production of occasional documentaries such as that on Ani Onicha to deepen cultural discourse and spotlight indigenous businesses, and developed commercial services towards self-sufficiency. The next phase will expand audience engagement and heritage documentation post Ofala 2026.

Similarly, we have reactivated the OnAF Communications Alliance (OCA) to ensure OnAF speaks with one voice: "Investing in Onitsha's People, Preserving Onitsha's Legacy." Its mandate is to Unify our brand, Amplify our work across entities, and Activate participation through feedback. Governance without communication is incomplete. We will continue to author our own narrative - truthfully, transparently and proudly.

11. Some Notable Achievements by Ndi Onicha.

Our sons and daughters have continued to make strides in their respective vocations and professions. The following are some of the notable achievements during the past twelve months and beyond:

- On 16 July, 2026 the permanent building and facilities of The Professor Ngozi Egbuna International Centre for Regional Integration and Trade Research at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, in honour of Oluchukwubuife Professor Ngozi Egbuna of Ogboli Olosi/Ogbeozala was declared open by the Pro-Chancellor of the University, Barrister Monsur Olugbenga Kukoyi. Representatives of Obi-in-Council and all Onitsha constituent groups were in attendance.
- Ezedinobi Hon. Eddie Ibuzo of Agadagba, Umuezearoli, was on 18 ,May 2026 appointed Commissioner for Transport by Governor Charles Soludo in his new Executive Council following his re-election for a second term as Governor.

- On 27 September, 2026, Rev. Sister Maria Chiotu of Umu Ifejor, Orezeabo, Umudei, marked thegolden jubilee of her religious profession with a thanksgiving mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Inland Town.
- During the period Very Reverend Father Austin Oburota of Umuasele marked the 40th `anniversary of his priestly ordination.
- Chinyelugo Benjamin Okolo of Umu Orezeobi was appointed Deputy Inspector-General of Police in March 2025 before attaining normal retirement in December 2025.
- On 22 May, 2026 I was appointed as patron of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Advancement Board with the remit to provide advisory support and strategic guidance.
- On 18 June, 2026 United Nigeria Airlines named one of its two new Boeing 737 - 800NG aircrafts after me, and the other after Professor Chinua Achebe
- As Executive Sales Director for Africa and Middle East for Boeing Corporation, Ononenyi Moore Ibekwe, Jr had the overall responsibility for the transactions leading to the purchase and post-delivery training programs, network planning, and local infrastructure support for the two new aircrafts acquired by United Nigeria Airways from Boeing Corporation.

12. My Engagements Outside the Domain.

The following is a summary of my engagements and key events that I was involved with over the past twelve months.

A. On 13 November, 2025, I was the chairman of the lectures marking the 70th birthday anniversary of His Majesty, Obi Professor Epiphany Azinge, Asagba of Asaba, at the Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba.

B. From 17 to 20 July 2026, I paid my annual visit to 94-year old Professor Richard Henderson in Tucson Arizona, accompanied by Chief Jide Ebo, Agba Oriogu, and Barrister Odi Maduegbuna. In addition to our never-ending conversations about Onitsha of yore, we also finalized discussions on his academic documents, photographs, music recordings, and other archival materials that he would donate for repository at Chimedie Museum. We had earlier had the privilege of electronically scanning his and his late wife's academic materials on Onitsha of over several years. We also convinced him to make a visit to Onitsha, the outcome of which is his presence right here at the festival, accompanied by his son, Michael. Professor Henderson and his late wife, Dr. Helen Henderson, carried out ground-breaking socio-anthropological studies of Onitsha kingdom during 1960 -1962, inclusive, and published the seminal book, "The King in Every Man".

C. On 25 July 2026, I was the keynote speaker at the bi-annual reunion of the North American Branch of the Old Boys Association of my Alma Mater, The Government Secondary School, Owerri in Dallas, TX, USA. I spoke on the topic of The Future of Education, highlighting the impact of digital technology, particularly, Artificial Intelligence (AI) on learning the skills and portfolio to better prepare student for universities, jobs, and entrepreneurship. I asked how prepared our school was for this revolution that is now.

D. On 22 September, 2026, I was the Royal Father for the presentation of the 500-page book on the 50 years of Ohanaeze Ndigbo. My extensive interview with the author, Mazi Agbeze Ireke Kalu Onuma, in 2010 is part of the book, for which I also wrote a commendation.

E. On 24 September, 2026 I was the Chairman of the 24th All Nigeria Editors Conference of the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) at Enugu. With a view to the coming national elections, the organizers chose the conference theme as *"The Ballot, The Media, and the Task of Keeping Democracy Alive"*. The sub-theme was *"When lies look Real: Detecting and Debunking AI Disinformation Before, During, and After Election"*. The keynote speaker was His Eminence, Cardinal John Onaiyekan and the speaker was Prof. Farooq Kperogi. There were over 500 media practitioners at the 3-day conference.

F. On 26 September, I was special guest at the coronation of His Majesty, King Charles Douglas MacPepple Jaja, Jeki VI, Amanyanabo of Opobo Kingdom. Earlier, on 23 August, 2026, King Jaja paid a courtesy visit to Ime Obi Onicha to personally invite me to his coronation. He was well received by the Onitsha Traditional Council in commemoration of the long-established cordial relations between our two ancient kingdoms. He is celebrating with us today as our special guest of honour.

G. On 02 September 2026, I special guest at the Igbo Day celebration at the American International School, Lagos, and spoke to the students on the history of Ndigbo. The USA Consul-General was the host of the event.

H. As leader of the South East Council of Traditional Rulers, I presided over the ceremony marking the cessation of the vexatious and long-running issue of the so-called "Eze Ndigbo" outside Ani Igbo. The ceremony took place in Lagos on 03 September 2026. The leaders of the Ndigbo outside Ani Igbo will henceforth be designated as "Onye Ndo Ndi Igbo".

I. I continued to coordinate the meetings of the Joint Body of the South East Council of Traditional Rulers and the Representatives of Igbo Archbishops and Bishops on Peace and Reconciliation (JB), as well play the role of leader of the South East Council of Traditional Rulers (SECTR).

J. My 85th birthday on Monday, 14 May 2026 was different from my usual introspective day of quiet gratitude to God. It started with a sung early morning High Mass by my Metropolitan Archbishop, His Grace Most Reverend Valarian Maduka Okeke. Over the next four months, there were other amazing and humbling events, including, a congratulatory message by H.E. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a reception at Umuahia hosted by H. E. Dr. Alex Otti, Governor of Abia State, a birthday cake by Kenya Airways in-flight to Nairobi, the naming of a United Nigeria Airlines new Boeing 737-800NG aircraft after me, birthday party by the Delborough Hotel, Lagos, a birthday cake by the Old Boys Association of The Government Secondary School, Owerri, in Dallas, TX, USA, and reception by the Onitsha Professional Forum in Lagos. All of these events were accompanied by substantial media coverage. I remain eternally grateful to God and the sponsors for their kind gestures. They made me realise that I have not been walking alone.

13. Summary/Our Focus for the Year Ahead.

God willing, next year will be my 25th year on the throne of our ancestor father, Ezechima. It is amazing how times have gone by swiftly as we struggled to re-engineer and reposition our community. There have been successes as well as failures but our heads remain unbowed as we strive to lift Onitsha to higher levels. The landmark year will thus be an opportunity for retrospection, taking stock of the past, assessing the present and laying plans for the future. It

would also be an opportunity for unalloyed gratitude to Almighty God for enabling us to come so far, and honour to our ancestors who constantly intercede and supplicate to God on our behalf. Active planning will start immediately after this Ofala on a series of events and activities to mark the unique occasion, which would start in May when I ascended the throne and culminate in a grand Ofala in October.

Specific areas for attention in the next twelve months include the following:

- OnAF has been in existence for five years during which several lessons have been learned. A conference to be tagged OnAF@5 will be convened to assess the achievements and failures so far, and chart constructive paths for the next five years or more.
- Following the above OnAF conference will be a scenario building workshop over several days to develop the short, medium, and long-term broad development priorities for the community.
- The number of unemployed youths in our community remains of serious concern, particularly those that have attended OnAF leadership and skills training programmes. We must build on the outcomes of the recent Youths Summit to address this challenge.
- The solution to the alarming rate of substance abuse and drug addiction, as well as other anti-social behavior in the community will be given high priority.
- The GBV project will move into the final and continuous phase, namely, implementation, monitoring and assessment. The GBV and VRI work groups will collaborate in disseminating the messages at all events going forward. Obi-in-Council will give full support to the campaign.
- Continuation of the 2-year programme for major landscaping, tree planting, and general upgrade of Okwueze Umuezearoli and Okebunabo, as well as the Onu Ilo of various villages.
- Completion of the East Pavilion at Ime Obi, including all the facilities for the Youth Development Centre, and full onboarding the newly established Ime Obi facilities management team.
- Engaging in community-wide enlightenment and sensitization programme to facilitate the adoption of the vault system for the interment of our departed.
- As part of a larger project by Ohanaeze Ndigbo, a comprehensive census of our victims of the Nigerian Civil War will be conducted with a view to creating a befitting memorial for them.
- Resume the census of the disabled in the community for the purpose of supporting their special need for personal development.

The energy and commitment of our indigenes within and outside the homeland, including those abroad, are unrivalled. I am very proud that we are all striving together at great sacrifice to our personal circumstances to leave Onitsha better than we inherited it. We have a duty to nurture and grow our youths of today to grow and be ready to inherit the almost 600 years legacy bequeathed by our predecessors. We are in a marathon not a sprint. I, therefore, call on all indigenes, and friends and associates, of our community not to relent in the sustained effort to take Onicha Ado n'Idu to higher levels. (Back to the ofala theme call to greater service, Values Reorientation, Youth ascendancy, Wholesome community, etc)

Gratitude and Appreciation.

As we started, we will end this address with further gratitude to God who makes everything happen. We invoke our ancestors to continue to intercede to God on our behalf for future blessings. To our guests, friends and visitors who joined our festival, we express our utmost gratitude and assure you that we do not take your support for granted. We appreciate in a special way all traditional rulers who are with us on this occasion. We pray for your safe travel back to your destinations.

Globacom Nigeria Limited has been our enduring partners for the Ofala festival for 15 years. We thank the company for believing in us and trust that the mutual benefits that we all derive from the festival will continue to prevail. We also want to use this opportunity to thank International Breweries Plc, which partnered with us for twelve years. We welcome a new partner, Orijiin beer and bitters. To our other numerous supporters, including corporate bodies, individuals, security agencies, media, medical support groups, and many others, we say a big thank you as we look forward to your support in the coming years. We will not forget the substantial support we received this year from our development partners, including the Ford Foundation, Anambra State Ministry of Youth Development, the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI), Pan Atlantic University, Philips Foundation, Anambra State Health Insurance Agency, Centre for Sight Africa, Ajoke Afolabi Foundation, LEAP Africa, and APTECH.

OnAF has continued to demonstrate its worth as our flagship development organization. Except for few members of the Common Services Resource Centre who earn a modest stipend, the NGO operates literally on a pro bono basis with volunteers dispersed in Nigeria and diaspora working in-person and digitally. We thank all of them very much. The Ofala Steering Committee, under Chief Dr. Okey Areh, Onya, has again done an impressive job in elevating the Ofala to a larger scope and visibility in Nigeria and beyond. Finally, I express deepest gratitude to my people of Onicha Ado n'Idu, including Ndichie, all constituent groups, and individuals for their continued trust in, and support for, my leadership. It has been another very challenging twelve months, during which we have continued to sustain the re-invention and re-engineering of our ancient kingdom, and making it fit for the 21st century. Daalu nu rinne.

May God Almighty guide and guard all of us.

Agbogidi.
16 October, 2026.

Notes

THE ONITSHA ADO N'IDU CEREMONIAL CYCLE 2027

S/NO	EVENTS	WEEKDAY	MARKET DAYS	MONTH	DATE
1	**IFEJIOKU**	FRIDAY	OYE	JANUARY	8
2	**IKA AJACHI**	WEDNESDAY	OYE	JUNE	9
3	**ILO AJACHI**	FRIDAY	OYE	JUNE	25
4	**IKA UMUATU**	SUNDAY	OYE	AUGUST	8
5	**UMUATU EZE ONICHA**	MONDAY	OYE	AUGUST	16
6	**UMUATU EZE IDI**	FRIDAY	OYE	AUGUST	20
7	**UMUATU IKPALA**	TUESDAY	OYE	AUGUST	24
8	**UMUATU OSOSO IKPALA ISI**	SATURDAY	OYE	AUGUST	28
9	**UMUATU ONICHA**	WEDNESDAY	OYE	SEPTEMBER	1
10	**IDO ANYU**	SUNDAY	OYE	SEPTEMBER	5
11	**IWAJI IKOLO AWADA**	WEDNESDAY	OYE	SEPTEMBER	29
12	**IWAJI IKPALA AWADA**	THURSDAY	AFOR	SEPTEMBER	30
13	**IWAJI [KOLO EKE**	FRIDAY	NKWO	OCTOBER	1
14	**IWAJI IKPALA EKE**	SATURDAY	EKE	OCTOBER	2
15	**IWAJI IKOLO UBENE; UBULU NA IKEM**	SUNDAY	OYE	OCTOBER	3
16	**IWAJI IKPALA UBENE; UBULU NA IKEM**	MONDAY	AFOR	OCTOBER	4
17	**IGO URAI**	TUESDAY	NKWO	OCTOBER	5
18	**MGBAPU AFA OBODO**	WEDNESDAY	EKE	OCTOBER	6
19	**INYE UKWU N'NLO EZE ONICHA**	WEDNESDAY	EKE	OCTOBER	6
20	**IWAJI (KOLO UGWUNAOBAMKPA/ EKWENSU**	THURSDAY	OYE	OCTOBER	7
21	**IWAJI IKPALA UGWUNAOBAMKPA/ EKWENSU**	FRIDAY	AFOR	OCTOBER	8
22	**OGBALIDO**	SATURDAY	NKWO	OCTOBER	9
23	**INYEPU UKWU N'NLO EZE ONICHA**	SUNDAY	EKE	OCTOBER	10
24	**OFALA TRADITIONAL DAY**	MONDAY	OYE	OCTOBER	11
25	**AZU OFALA TRADITIONAL DAY**	TUESDAY	AFOR	OCTOBER	12
26	**OFALA CEREMONIAL DAY**	FRIDAY	OYE	OCTOBER	15
27	**AZU OFALA CEREMONIAL DAY**	SATURDAY	AFOR	OCTOBER	16
28	**IWAJI IKOLO IKPALA EZE**	SUNDAY	NKWO	OCTOBER	17
29	**IWAJI IKPALA EZE**	MONDAY	EKE	OCTOBER	18
30	**ITO UKPUKPA**	THURSDAY	NKWO	OCTOBER	21
31	**IKELEBEJI IKOLOBIOJI**	TUESDAY	EKE	OCTOBER	26
32	**OSISITE UGWUNAOBAMKPA**	SATURDAY	EKE	OCTOBER	30
33	**OSISITE EZECHIMA**	SUNDAY	OYE	OCTOBER	31
34	**ORURU ANI**	WEDNESDAY	OYE	NOVEMBER	24
35	**OSO EKWULO**	MONDAY	OYE	DECEMBER	6
36	**IGA ONICHA**	TUESDAY	OYE	DECEMBER	14