

# Sandra Chidinma Duru

Sandra Chidinma Duru (born August 16th, 1982 in Shomolu, Lagos State, Nigeria) is a Nigerian entrepreneur and is the founder of the Pre-Adult Affairs Organization of Nigeria and is from the dynamic village of Umunakwa in Ezumoha autonomous community, Isiala Mbano Local Government Area of Imo State. Young, full of ideas, talents and skills, she has succeeded in running this well-recognized Non-Governmental Organization (N.G.O.) in Nigeria for about 9 years now. She has both Bachelors and Masters degrees in Psychology from the Atlantic International University, Hawaii, U.S.A.

Born to Mr. and Mrs. B. C. Duru as the last child of eight other children, she excelled in her primary and secondary education in very under privileged conditions. The conditions were so severe that she attended her primary education on bare foot. A number of the problems she encountered while growing up arose because her family could not comprehend some of the things she did.

They couldn't understand why a 12 year old child was trying to write a book or trying to give advice or trying to work for money. So she was usually beaten by her brothers and parents when her actions weren't within their expectations. While she was working, she spent nights sleeping outside by the entrance of the house because she would not be let in because she returned late from work.

Her family had the notion she spent the time in bad behaviour outside the home before returning home whereas, she had to walk home from work which thus, caused the delay. She is from a home where love and unity exists as a good Christians. Her parents love her so much and she has very good relationships with her older siblings and the rest of the family irrespective of her great achievements and success. She is humble, simple, kind, God fearing, unpredictable and fearless.

Through her hardship, she became strongly determined to live a far better life than anyone could imagine for her. She made a vow to God which was that if He lifted her out of poverty and the misery she lived in without abuse of any sort or further maltreatment, she would work to improve the standard of living of many underprivileged people of society.

These events have built an ambition so strong that in an interview, she stated her intention to become the nation's first female President. As a high school student of Eva Adelaja Girls Secondary Grammar School, Lagos, Sandra initiated a program called Secondary School Students National Education Association (SSSNEA). This association organized numerous workshops, seminars, conferences, debates and study clubs in schools nationwide.

The association transformed into Sanchhy de Youths Organization which engaged actively in issues of puberty, teenage pregnancy, abortion, STDs, teenage/adolescent challenges, counseling and personal hygiene. Even in the face of hardship, she became stronger and resilient through all, yet she's been able to acquire a Bachelor of Science (BSc.) and a Masters of Science (MSc) in Psychology respectively from Atlantic International University (AIU), Hawaii, USA.

By 15 she had concluded her secondary education and joined a Lagos-based Non-Governmental Organization (Action Health Incorporated Youth Center) as a youth staff. While there, she worked as a youth counselor and the participatory video communication officer. She spent a year with Action Health Incorporated and moved to Robin Joseph, another Non-Governmental Organization as a programme officer and research executive on contract. As a staff in Robin Joseph, she was also contracted to Dayspring Foundation, a Non-Governmental Organization involved in the eradication of cultism in Nigeria as the National Youth Coordinator and Youth Counselor.

Within two years after her secondary education, she worked with three Non-Governmental Organizations. However, in a very short time and in the course of her work, she became increasingly concerned about the limited access Nigerian youths have to health information and education about the myriad of ailments affecting them.

She therefore set out to gather and disseminate relevant information and enlightenment that would improve the quality of life of the Nigerian pre-adults. She came to the realization that working out problems with people's affairs and empowerment were only a partial solution to their problems.

Arising from this, she established the Pre-Adult Affairs Organization (P.A.A.O.) in September, 1999 at the age of 17 with the slogan, "Building potentials and providing qualitative care for young people".

The Pre-Adult Affairs Organization is a pioneering non-governmental organization dedicated to identifying, developing and enhancing the required manpower, idea, talent, vision and resources to effectively educate young people and effectively assist in the development of Nigerian youths currently through vocational skill training, award of scholarships, support schemes, family integration services and information, education and communication.

The organization is also dedicated to improving the health, education and general well-being of the young people in Nigeria, by creating awareness and implementing public education ranging from self management and growing up to innovative health care programs.

Miss Duru has produced and presented a radio program on Star 101.5 FM, "Case Study Live" and a TV program on MITV, "Youth Round Table". She has also organized, financed and facilitated a lot of Youth Programs within and outside Lagos State, Nigeria. During her work with Action Health Incorporated, she scripted videos which were based on youth problems and solutions of which are:

- \* One Wrong Move
- \* The Time
- \* Bitter Experience
- \* Challenges "Captain Condom and Lady Abstinence"
- \* Bloody Footprint A documentary on violence against women

\* On The Street

\* Not Smart Enough

She is the Executive Director of Pre-Adult Affairs Organization, Nigeria which she also founded. She is the C.E.O. of Sanchhy Nigeria Limited (a company offering Project Management and Development services, Integrated Maritime services and Consultancy, Manufacturers' Representative, Franchising and Branding) and the C.E.O of Zest Media and Entertainment, Nigeria (of which she is a major shareholder), C.E.O./ M.D. Excellence Cables and Electronics Company. In the course of her pursuit for youth development she has received numerous awards and has succeeded in affecting the lives of a number of young people nationwide in many positive ways.

Among her awards include:

\* COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPIC AWARD, Kaoda 2006. Award was presented by Oba Azeez Adewale Olayeni Dada Aluko, the Onidimu of Idimu Land.

\* AWARD OF EXCELLENCE. Presented in recognition and appreciation of meaningful role to Nigerian Youth, Students Social Activities and Academic Improvement.

\* NATURAL WOMAN by the Sister's circle, Muslim Students Society of Nigeria in recognition of her selfless service and tremendous contributions to pre-adult affairs in Nigeria.

\* TODAY'S LEADER in recognition of selfless efforts towards building and developing lives and diligence, benevolence and positive disposition towards the empowerment of the Girl-Child by Young Girls Foundation, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

\* Awarded by the African Youth Congress, "OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL" in recognition of outstanding service to the entire nation, African continent and to the young people all over the world.

\* THE IRON LADY OF EPITOME by the West African Students Union (WASU) and Dreams Alive in recognition of support to effective education and the youth, her avowed commitment towards the emancipation of Nigeria youths towards the project AAPAO, sustenance of democracy and service to humanity

\* Presented with an Award of Excellence as "OUTSTANDING EDUCATION FRIENDLY PERSONALITY, 2009" at the 3rd Award for Excellence ceremony Organised by the Nigerian Education Times, in recognition of her contribution to Education in Nigeria.

\* Honoured by City Network Entertainment (CNE), UK (Pembroke Road, Erith London), a well known entertainment body, with the "CNE SOCIAL BENEFACTOR AWARD", in recognition of immeasurable provision of qualitative care and support to Late Chief MKO Abiola Memorial Lecture, June 12, 2006 at The Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Lagos.

\* "A LADY OF SUBSTANCE" by Junior Chambers International Nigeria, Osun State College of Technology, Esa-Oke Chapter, in recognition of immeasurable contributions to social activities of Nigerian students and youth development.

\* Presented with a Special Merit Award 2001 as a "DISTINGUISHED PERSONALITY OF ALL TIME" by The Students Union Government, University of Lagos (ULSU) in recognition of tremendous contribution to humanity, students welfare and invaluable care for young people.

\* Presented with a Special Merit Award 2000 as a VIRTUOUS WOMAN by The Students Union Government, University of Lagos (ULSU) in recognition of invaluable support towards building potentials, and care to the young people and student upliftment.

\* Presented as "BORN SERVANT OF THE YOUTHS" by Zest! Magazine, University of Benin, Edo State in recognition of consistent service to the less-privileged, the needy and to the youths in general.

Her participation in events

\* At 18, Miss Duru chaired the symposium and presented a paper on the "Day of the African Child" organized by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development: held in Abuja on the 29th of June, 2000.

\* At 18, Miss Duru participated in the African Leadership Forum, Young Leaders Training Workshop on Functional Democratic Leadership Training held in Otta, Ogun State from the 7th to the 11th of August, 2000 sponsored by USAID/OTI

\* At 18, Miss Duru participated at the Building a culture of peace event. Character, family and Public service Organized by Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace and World Association of NGOs, held on the 4th to 5th December, 2000 at ECOWAS Conference Center, Abuja, Nigeria.

\* Also at 18, Miss Duru participated in the parliamentarian conference on stability, security, development and corporation in Africa (CSSDCA) held in Abuja Sheraton Hotels in September, 2000.

\* Amongst others are that she was also consulted for President Olusegun Obasanjo's Africa Leadership Forum at Otta, Ogun State, has worked as a youth director, Attended the National Farm House Dialogue with Mrs. Joy Egwu, Ayodele Aderinwale, Mary J. Walker, Busola Obasanjo. Within the same year she chaired the committee with Daily Times Nigeria in collaboration with ALF committee on "Nigeria at 40 Project".

\* Participated in the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) Meeting (November 20th to 22nd, 2007) and the Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting (CHOGM) (November 23rd to 26th, 2007) both events took place in Kampala, Uganda.

\* Participated in the Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting [CHOGM] in Kampala, Uganda, and Africa-Americas-Asia Business Summit 2008, March 17-18 2008, Mauritius.

\* Participated in the Africa Investment Forum 2006 (Commonwealth Business Council Meeting) in Johannesburg, South Africa from the 9th to the 11th of October, 2006. Organized by the Commonwealth Business Council, The New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD), The Department and Trade and Industry, Republic of South Africa (dti).

\* Partnered with ECLETIC Network on Eclectic Network Summit: POLICE REFORM, on Wednesday, February 8th -Friday, February 10th, 2006 at the National Institute of Medical Research (NIMS), Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria.

\* Participated as a special guest of honour and speaker in Dinner/Lecture in Memory of Late Chief MKO Abiola, 12th June, 2006 at Sheraton Hotel & Towers, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria.

\* Participated in the National Youth Summit in Abuja, Held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja from February 1st – 3rd, 2001.

\* Participated in the year 2001 “FARM HOUSE DIALOGUE held in Otta, Ogun State, Nigeria and Organized by Africa Leadership Forum.

\* Participated in the Parliamentarian conference on Stability, Security, Development and Corporation in African (CSSDCA); held in Abuja Sheraton Hotels in September 2000.

\* African Leadership Forum Youth Leaders Training workshop on “Functional Democratic Leadership held in Otta, Ogun State from 7th – 11th August 2000.

\* Democratic Leadership Training, Organized by Africa Leadership Forum (ALF) and sponsored by USAID/OTI.

\* Building a Culture of Peace, Character, Family and Public Service, organized by Inter-religious and International Federation for World Peace (Europe) & Association of Non-Government Organizations, held on the 4th – 5th December 2002 at ECOWAS Conference Center , Abuja , Nigeria.

\* Participated in the Nigerian Police 7th Annual Graduation Ceremony of the Police Human Rights Officers Education at Lagos State Police Command, 3rd December, 2009.

\* Participated in the National Education Summits and many other Events that concerns the Nigerian Youth, Students and Women.

#### Skills Acquired/Courses Attended

\* Conflicts, Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Dialogue and Management Training

\* Adolescents Reproductive Health and Rights Management Skills.

\* STDs/HIV-AIDS Counseling Skills.

\* Inter-Personal Communication Skills. Detecting cultists and counseling Skills (Organized and sponsored by Dayspring Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria).

Miss Duru has already worked with various agencies and bodies as Chief Executive Officer and as a Consultant. She has worked as:

\* Once a Consultant to the Police Women Unit (P.W.U.), Police Service Commission, Presidency, Abuja, Nigeria.

\* Consultant, RAHVET INTERNATIONAL

\* Consultant to Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON)

\* Consultant to Shyllon Properties (Nig) Ltd. Real property consultant services & Real Estate Management.

\* Honorary Consultant to AFRICA REFUGEES FOUNDATION, (AREF)

\* Member of the Board of Trustees, YOUNG GIRLS FOUNDATION

Miss Duru has a very interesting philosophy. In her words, Miss Duru stated on a very personal basis,

“I do not believe certificates truly reveal the worth and abilities of a person. I believe in what can be termed, Universal Education and God's wisdom. I believe in developing my potentials naturally instead of investing in what I referred to as, 'mere certificates'. To me, developed knowledge and practice is more powerful, lucrative and beneficial for a nation. I do not believe a paper is capable of determining what one can do and to me, what one can do with his/her initiative is all that matters and that is what makes me who I am.

I believe in my conscience, what I feel and can see with my own eyes as results and as actions. I do not believe in policies and the law of any land because to me, they are sometimes designed to manipulate people and cannot give real justice because the truth can be averted and an innocent soul can therefore be punished for no just cause.

I strongly believe in God, unity, one love and great success.”

With every sense of sincerity she will say, “I don't know what spirit is leading me.” She makes this honest confession because she is sometimes appalled by her successes, since she cannot easily fathom how her abilities and attitude towards success came about and how she is able to pull through enormous challenges that confront her from time to time.

Knowledge and understanding of certain matters that will cost many people years and huge sums of money to acquire has been acquired by her through observation and careful thinking. This and many more has led to a number of tribulations which also led to her detention at the maximum security prison in Kirikiri, Lagos State because she refused to cave into a group of persecutors who considered her too young to own a business of its magnitude at her age, also being unhappy with the fact that she is a lady.

Personal remarks by staff and youth members of the Pre-Adult Affairs Organization have stated that Miss Duru is born to create. She is a genius, highly creative and competitive, imaginative, articulate, focused and highly result and achievement oriented in everything she does. She is obstinate and has no apologies for that. For her, fear and failure never have room for consideration and she constantly demands that of those that work with her.

Miss Sandra Duru has not relented in her efforts to work towards the interest of the pre-adults of Nigeria. Her next major step is extending the reach of her Non-Governmental Organization to other nations worldwide and with all she has accomplished at just 27 years of living, that part of her dream is not far fetched.

Remarks by Dr. Nnamdi Oboli

Some are born great

Some achieve greatness and

Some have greatness thrust upon them

In the case of Chief Sandra C Duru, she has achieved greatness. A woman of substance who has achieved, in her short years in life, much more than most people her age and older only hope to achieve if given more time. What she has been able to accomplish is nothing short of genius considering her very humble beginnings.

Driven by her insatiable hunger for positive change and unwillingness to be just a bystander waiting for the situations that appalls her to change itself or for some imaginary figure to come and someday effect that change that she so desires to see, she has systematically charted a course in her life that can effectively appropriate that change in her nation, her generation across the globe, among the youth, mothers and women in general and also the less privileged in the society. Being a stickler for proper analysis, she has over the years taken up courses and attended programmers' in different countries around the world.

This is a lady who has dared to be different where most are unwilling to let go of the norm of the day and she has an almost childlike approach to achieving great results, never giving up where many others before her have hitherto failed in even seeing hope. She does this with a fearless persona that exudes her finest character, her ability to focus. It is this ability that she has that made her to be accepted as a consultant to the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON).

There she exhibited her strong convictions to get things done right by training the operatives of SON in various aspects of their jobs so that they can more effectively carry out their duties and rid our great nation, Nigeria, of fake and substandard goods, which, in many cases, endangered the life and health of our citizens. This tenacity of hers has not come without its pitfalls.

In carrying out her duties she has rocked the boat of many who would rather they had business as usual in the various operations of the SON and this has led to accusations which led to her arrest by the EFCC and the SSS on trumped up charges. She was in prison for about 3 months and all her documents and business dealings were investigated, but all to no avail because all the charges were dropped for lack of evidence and blatantly false accusations.

Her company, SANCHHY (NIG) LIMITED, was given a clean bill. After all the investigations and all the trauma of the prison ordeal has served to give her company and herself the credibility which it deserves. This has given her a renewed vigor to do more to achieve instead of dampening her spirit.

It is by knowledge that we acquire wisdom, not by age and this is especially true in the case of Chief Sandra C Duru, a revelation for our time, who challenges us to be the change we want in our the society

Remarks by David Ashinze

Chief Sandra C. Duru can be likened to Joseph, who in the face of trials, tribulations and betrayal (from those closest to him) remained resolute, believing in God's providence and promise for a bright future. She has had her fair share of trials with the security agencies; Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), The Nigeria Police and Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) which reprimanded her in prison six times for charges she knew nothing about.

Even while in prison, like Joseph who made the prison was a lively place, Chief Sandra Duru, made sure the welfare of the Prisons was improved through out her stay in the prisons, though this period was a trying time in her life, she remained excited and high-spirited, assured of victory.

Like Joseph, who in the long run was the saviour of the family because he forgave those who offended him and caused him pain, Chief Sandra C. Duru has forgiven and has come out victorious and now is back resilient, stronger to make positive impact in the lives of youth. Just as the saying goes, "when the going gets tough, the tough get going", she stands as a role model for all youth.

She has a clean profile with all charges against her dropped. Chief Sandra C. Duru stands in awe of God's power, grace and mercy which has brought her this far through thick and thin.