



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THE ROSE OF SHARON FOUNDATION
23RD JUNE 2020

THE ROSE OF SHARON FOUNDATION COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY 2020

The Rose of Sharon Foundation (ROSF) hosted its annual International Widows' Day on the 23rd of June 2020 as a virtual meeting which held on the zoom platform. The event was themed- ***'Global Change: Widowhood and COVID-19, The Challenges and Opportunities'***.

The meeting was hosted by the Founder of the Rose of Sharon Foundation, Mrs. Folorunso Alakija. The Special Guest of Honour was none other than the Grand Matron., Her Excellency, The First Lady of Lagos State, Dr (Mrs.) Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu; The Speakers were Her Excellency, Mrs Onari Duke, the Former First Lady of Cross Rivers State, who is also the Country Director of Empretec Nigeria Foundation and Mr. Conrad Adigwe, CEO of Sophia ERP Limited. The participants were drawn from all the six geo-political zones of the country and comprised of the Foundations beneficiaries and the general public. The meeting was anchored by ROSF National Coordinator, Mrs. Nkem Udechukwu.

Speaking during the event, the Founder, Mrs. Folorunso Alakija encouraged the widows to see the current COVID-19 socio-economic situation in Nigeria and the world as an opportunity to be explored. In her own words she said, "though the COVID-19 pandemic has caused untold hardships and loss of revenue for individuals and businesses, some people as well as businesses are recording tremendous profits during this period". She further stated that, "it is our joint responsibility to see that no widow or orphan experiences discrimination of any sort by virtue of the fact that they have lost their spouse or father".

During a good will message by the Grand Matron of the Rose of Sharon Foundation, Her Excellency, The First Lady of Lagos State, Dr (Mrs.) Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu, the widows were advised to see the opportunities presenting themselves during these times in agriculture, innovation and utilising their God given talents; as the pandemic has ushered in a new way of life. She also encouraged the widows to be bold and stressed on the need for women to be self-independent, as this would help to place their families on a better social-economic pedestal.

The program continued with a report from Mrs. Daramola Egun, a RoSF registered widow who spoke on behalf of the ROSF widows in the South-West Zone. In addressing the audience, Mrs. Egun stated that some of the challenges experienced by widows during the COVID-19 lockdown has been the lack of food and shelter. In addition to that widows are also experiencing financial challenges as some widows who are employees have lost their jobs, while others who are entrepreneurs could not sell their wares as a result of the lockdown. She stated that the pandemic has adversely affected widows psychologically, emotionally, health wise and relationally.

Her Excellency, The Former First Lady of Cross River State and Country Director of Empretec Nigeria Limited, Mrs. Onari Duke advised the widows to see the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic as opportunities in disguise. While speaking, she said "it looks like a gloomy situation but there are opportunities that exist. The person who finds a solution, creates value and becomes a benefit to the society". She encouraged the widows to explore new forms of business especially through the use of technology.

In the course of the program, the Foundation's Zonal Coordinators also gave situational reports about the challenges that the widows in their zones experienced during the lockdown and the Foundation's responses to helping them overcome these challenges. They also gave cheering news about widows who are making profits even during the lockdown.

Other widows who were able to take advantage of the lockdown to make profit also shared their testimonies. An example is Mrs. Helen Egbochie, a registered ROSF widow from the South-West Zone, spoke on how she has excelled in her business during the COVID-19 lockdown. She said "I am into soap making but during this period, I started making hand sanitisers which is one of the preventive measures advised by the government. I also employed the social media platforms on my mobile phone to advertise it to my customers". Similarly, Mrs. Egbochie encouraged widows to be bold and creative in business. She advised them to be friendly with their neighbours and in-laws as some of these people may be interested in buying their products.

Furthermore, she appealed to the government and other stakeholders to support widows as they combat life's challenges.

The CEO of Sophia ERP Limited, Mr. Conrad Adigwe educated the widows on the need to leverage technology as the advent of COVID-19 has impacted the way business was done previously. He said "traditional thinking can no longer take us to where we want to be. The rules have changed. There is no playbook for the times that we live in right now. Everybody is inventing and reinventing themselves through technology, widows likewise must do the same"

The event ended with a closing remark and appreciation to all stakeholders by RoSF Ambassador, Mrs. Tope Olusola who thanked the participants for attending the conference in commemoration of the International Widows' Day 2020.

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About the Rose of Sharon Foundation

The Rose of Sharon Foundation is a charity incorporated in Nigeria, with the vision to provide help and succour for widows and orphans in Nigeria as well as the rest of the world. With a mission to guarantee financial independence and educational opportunities for widows and orphans through schemes as well as programmes, the Rose of Sharon Foundation strives to assure greater self-esteem and ease of socio-economic integration for its beneficiaries.

With more than 10 years of on-the-ground experience working with widows in Nigeria, the RoSF understands that deploying comprehensive programs that address the socio-economic empowerment of its beneficiaries is the most effective way to impact them directly.

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