

## **A SHORT HISTORY OF CHARILOVE FOUNDATION (aka Project ChariLove or, simply, ChariLove)**

(ChariLove believes that: Loving concern and care for every needy human person and nature -indeed, FAIRNESS to all- is the obligation of every man and woman of Goodwill; and that this is key to the true and all-round development of society).

I returned from the USA in 1990 with the vision, prayer and determination to offer my all to champion the mission I inspirationally named ChariLove with the hope that, through the work of the outfit, Nigeria might become more a nation that truly cares and which all of us will be proud of.

Up till 1990, the year of the formation of ChariLove Foundation (aka Project ChariLove or, simply, ChariLove), people living with disabilities were generally perceived as cursed, or as witches and wizards, in many parts of Nigeria, including the then Bendel State. The negative superstitions against them were very strong, opinion deep and wide spread. They were generally avoided and stigmatized.

You needed to see how, in their vast majority, the physically challenged, the blind, the deaf and other victims of some misfortunes were helplessly and hopelessly wandering about begging with little or no other option for survival, whereas most of them only needed some minimum required amount of care, support and rehabilitation to turn their lives around.

As at that time, only an insignificant number of parents were enlightened and civilized enough to even openly identify with their specially challenged children. Virtually all others were in utter ignorance. Some families would even kill theirs either directly or in some subtle way. Some would have theirs locked up in the room or behind their homes; some would have theirs abandoned on the streets or in the forest or bush. (See attached for one or more of a number of rescue stories that ChariLove directly intervened in). In the course of the unusual rescue missions that ChariLove embarked upon, its founder and associates were called all manners of ugly names including being called witches and wizards.

It was at that time in the 20th century Nigeria history that ChariLove was established to help confront all the dirty superstitions and barbaric discriminations and acts against persons with disabilities and special needs. That was to be the starting point of ChariLove mission. The ultimate goal of ChariLove is to help

transform Nigeria into a more humane and truly caring, lovelier, civilized and developed country every Nigerian would be proud of.

## **REGISTRATION**

The organization was first registered as Project ChariLove in 1990 with the relevant authorities of the government of the then Bendel State (which was later split into two to form the present Edo and Delta States). The organization came in, head-on, and introduced a number of do-able ideas and ground-breaking innovations aimed at halting the brazen and awful discrimination against people with special needs and challenges.

In 2018, the organization was incorporated as ChariLove Foundation with the Corporate Affairs Commission.

## **THE CHARILOVE BELIEF**

Loving concern and care for every needy human person and nature -indeed, FAIRNESS to all - is the obligation of every true man and woman of GOD or Goodwill; and that this is key to the true and all-round development of society.

## **THE CHARILOVE PHILOSOPHY**

“The disabled, or specially challenged, or critically disadvantaged person (including community or nation) when taught, can learn and become enabled; and when enabled, can become productive; and when productive, can become gainfully employed, and when gainfully employed, can become useful to himself, to the family, to the community and to society; and when he thus become useful, society and the entire nation will learn and benefit greatly from the profound moral and spiritual lessons of such development.”

## **CHARILOVE MISSION STATEMENT**

Commitment to providing broad-spectrum services and opportunities that promote the education, liberty and dignity of children and youths who suffer special challenges and needs -as well as orphans- to become the best they can be, and get to enjoy the liberty of inclusion in the daily flow of society.

## **CHARILOVE VISION**

The evolvement of a truly caring and lovelier Nigeria and humanity.

## **THE CHARILOVE GOAL**

To see the life of the despised, marginalized and left behind being DEVELOPED and transformed to become the best they can be:

=From superstition to ENLIGHTENMENT

=From Disabled to ENABLED

=From Excluded to INCLUDED

=From Nobody to SOMEBODY

=From Unloved to LOVED

=From Worthless to WORTHY

=From Unrecognized to

RECOGNIZED

=From Hopeless to HOPEFUL

=From Less Privileged to PRIVILEGED.

✳ BE A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS.

And ultimately see a more caring and lovelier Nigeria and humanity.

## **THE CHARILOVE POSITION**

ChariLove has continued and will, by the grace of GOD, continue to maintain just one position: If GOD is to choose to spare our country Nigeria because of just one or two upright individuals or groups, we want ChariLove to be a ready name to be presented by the choir of His Angels and Saints. Staying true to this position is our passion. And this is the spirit that has helped to mold our character, our chosen vocation, and our activities and commitment

## **THE CHARILOVE APPROACH**

You may call the ChariLove approach "an octopus approach" -addressing the problem -from all imaginable angles, as holistically as we could.

ChariLove started up with what we will like to term "ACTION-BACKED ADVOCACY" as opposed to mere talk advocacy that had been dominant. While we were preaching on radio and the television, we were passionately and radically on ground,

down-to-earth, "doing the doing" within and outside our ChariLove Centre to prove to Nigerians that, behind every disability, there are abilities.

The doing entailed the inauguration of special self-help skills programmes and other "demonstration projects" to highlight and show-case the do-ability of what we were talking about or preaching.

### **SOME OF THE INTRODUCED NEW IDEAS BY CHARILOVE**

Before the establishment of ChariLove in 1990, the education, training and rehabilitation of persons living with disability, if such programme was ever in place, was generally by sharp dichotomy everywhere, even overseas. For example, it was usually centres solely for the blind, centres solely for the deaf, centres solely for the physically challenged, centres solely for children with autism, etc, etc.

We have always loathed any arrangement that promotes discrimination and exploitation. The concern of ChariLove is for everyone, PARTICULARLY CHILDREN living with disability, deprivation (such as orphans), challenges and exclusion. We needed to carry everybody along.

We were faced with a number of limitations or challenges and necessities that needed to be looked into to realize our yearning.

One of the several ideas we came up with through ChariLove, therefore, was the bringing of persons of diverse disabilities TOGETHER (except those with acute mental cases who might threaten the safety of others) under a common umbrella.

We brought together the blind, the orthopaedically challenged, the deaf and others under the same roof to fellowship together and to support one another, to learn together, to work together, to teach one another -indeed to be mutually supportive and to develop and progress together while happily RESPECTING everyone's individual differences.

As at then, we didn't see the idea as novel. We simply saw it flowing out naturally in the face of necessity. Personally, I have always loved the idea of INCLUSIVENESS even in aloneness. It was my practical way of tapping into THE BEAUTY OF THE MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE AND BENEFICIAL SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP in much of nature and which I have always admired.

We were and have been "preaching by doing" or by example, and only using words where necessary. Hence one of our slogans, "come and see."

It was only much later, when people started copying what they saw at ChariLove Centre, that we came to realize that we had started something novel; something we had never seen or heard being practiced anywhere else; a practice that was going to go global with some little bit of variants from place to place.

From all information at our disposal, it is most likely that the ChariLove's new all-inclusive concept that we began at ChariLove Centre in Benin City, Nigeria, was what gave rise to present day inclusive schools and the formation of various "joint associations."

How I wish the concept can be named "The ChariLove Model."

### **SOME ACTIVITIES BY CHARILOVE**

Through ChariLove, persons living with physical disabilities in Edo and Delta states (then Bendel State) started showing their prowess and excelling in several areas like:

Sports

Arts & Craft

Education

TV programme production and presentations

Music and drama

Above all, they began to see themselves in better light and, therefore, to develop self-esteem.

Available time and space here will not permit us to dwell on ChariLove impact in all of the areas listed above. Suffice it here to dwell a bit on just a few areas.

### **1. SPORTS**

ChariLove did all it could within its very meagre resources to encourage physically challenged youths to develop their talents in the area of sports. ChariLove even went as far as to introduce and encourage footballing for the blind. This is one of the areas ChariLove was to seriously develop and where Nigeria would also have been able to stand out. During the period of the experiment, we had begun to identify

some promising blind football stars. Amongst them we had Rowland Idor (now late) and Kingsley Okojie, presently of the University of Benin.

In 1992, for example, ChariLove single-handedly sponsored a number of the youths who had yearned to travel to Lagos to participate in the national "disabled sports festival" (now national "special sports" festival). The then government who was supposed to take full responsibility for the trip was not ready to, and did not, sponsor them.

Noticing how distressed and morally depressed the youths felt, ChariLove had to scoop virtually all that we had to sponsor the trip. One of our staff was assigned to go with them.

At the end of the sports competitions, the state came overall second after Lagos. All the glory went to the state -whether it was during the commentaries as the events were going on in the stadium, or at the end on the news. No mention was ever made of ChariLove that starved itself to single-handedly sponsor those physically challenged athletes.

It was the outcome of that 1992 outing that sparked the beginning of the state government's noticeable show of interest in the development of special sports. Nobody ever gave ChariLove any credit for that 1992 special sports saga. Not even the government!

Selected from that 1992 sports competition, some of those athletes went much further to win gold and other medals at the Commonwealth and Olympic special sports and were given national honours. A few years later, two or so (such as Thompson Omeregie and Faith Igbinehi) amongst them eventually emigrated to the USA and Europe while others remained to continue to do the nation proud.

ChariLove has remained so happy and grateful to GOD simply because we were able to assist those athletes when they needed help most. And it was that assistance by ChariLove that launched them on to the realization of their dreams and which took some of them even far beyond. To GOD be the glory.

## **2. MUSIC & DRAMA**

A lot of people strongly doubted the ability of specially challenged persons to play any good music.

Beginning with the use of improvised instruments (such as the use of empty paint containers as drums) ChariLove progressed into buying and using standard musical equipment, hiring professional music instructors and having our physically challenged become accomplished musical instrumentalists and musicians. They became so accomplished that they were invited a couple of times to Abuja to entertain national and international audiences. By and large, they individually started going professionally independent with some of them having their own bands and some even becoming music writers and producers. Here we have such stars as Augustine Omorodion who goes by the alias "Smooth Flavour." We also have Mr. Abraham Omigie.

### **3. ARTS AND CRAFT**

We also tried to lead the way in the area of arts & craft. The children actually started excelling in that area of skill acquisition. One of our pioneer students in that area, Augustine Asenogua, furthered on to obtain an HND in Fine and Applied Arts at the Federal Polytechnic, Auchi. Products such as cane trays, shopping baskets, foot mats, chairs, etc, were in high demand and were even proudly displayed and marketed by the then Leventis Departmental Stores - a giant nation-wide departmental chain store. In the days of state and national trade fairs in the 1990s, ChariLove took part and our products were competitively always in high demand. Suddenly, however, the Nigerian markets started getting flooded with Chinese cheap plastic alternatives of the various products.

### **4. RADIO & TV PROGRAMME PRODUCTION AND PRESENTATIONS**

We started a pace-setter and intensive advocacy for the recognition and respect for the rights of persons living with disability by using radio and television in addition to the use of print materials such as fliers. We feel eternally grateful and indebted to the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) Benin, Independent Television (ITV) Benin and Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS) Benin as well as to the Nigerian Observer Newspapers for the much needed and invaluable support and cooperation they all gave to ChariLove at that critical ground-breakong period in the 1990s and beyond.

Initially, we were having volunteer able-bodied media people produce and present our programmes for us. But, a seasoned broadcaster, Pastor (Mrs.) Sidi Lawal-Igloh took it upon herself to train some of our pioneer physically challenged clients to start doing all that. And, today, some of them have become professionals. And, following Pastors Sidi's motivation, some of them went on to the university and are

today graduates of Mass Communication. In this category, we have talented Timothy Osemwegie who goes by the alias, "Prince of the Airwaves" at the Edo Broadcasting Service. And another talent, Kingsley Okojie of the University of Benin

## **5. FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMME**

(We named the path-finder and ground-breaking food programme "Hilda Uwaifo and Stella Berny Soup Kitchen"). This is clearly one of the boldest and most cost-intensive endeavours that ChariLove has ever embarked upon. The food programme is meant to provide "One-Good-Meal-A-Day-FREE-FOR-THE-NEEDY" this programme has yielded some extraordinary and stunning results. For example:

i. In the early 1990's, driven by abject poverty, acute hunger and near total neglect, ex-leprosy patients with their teeming number of malnourished children decided to occupy a long stretch of the ever busy West-East federal highways to beg for food and survival. To them, it was the only option -a "do or die" situation. You could imagine the extreme danger that the poor unprotected children faced day and night as they run after bread and naira notes thrown at them from moving vehicles and the children hardly conscious of the vehicles speeding behind!

The whole scenario was a huge national embarrassment, shame and disgrace.

The federal government (and perhaps with the state that shared the west-east highways) tried to force those beggars off the road to no avail. To that effect, government organized local and international seminars and workshops on how to address the extremely shameful and embarrassing development.

Thank God that the intervention of ChariLove (through its food programme) to try ameliorate the extreme hunger of the poor children of Ossiomo (an enclave or territory designated in Edo State for ex-leprosy patients) was all that resulted in those ex-leprosy patients voluntarily leaving the highways with their children to return to Ossiomo. There, they were then (and now) sure that, at least, every school day, their multitude of children would have one good meal. And that is since 2006.

Up till today, NO government or authority ever said "thank you" to ChariLove for that unexpected and amazing achievement.

ii. During the year 2020 lock-down as a result of COVID 19 pandemic, ChariLove opened a huge "Food Emergency Intervention outlet to meet the emergency ready food supply (lunch only) for those in need. The result throughout the period was



fantastic. It was the only kind in Edo State. And we didn't know of any like it in the entire country.

## **6. INFRASTRUCTURE**

One of the most formidable ideas of ChariLove has been to build and develop infrastructure that will continue to provide education, training and development for persons living with disabilities for generations after generations. We have only been able to make minimal but strongly impacting achievement in this regards. Lack of resources has been our major constraint. However, we have managed to establish ChariLove Group of Special Schools comprising of the following path-finder schools that soon turned role-models:

- i. ChariLove-Effatha School (for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired)
- ii. ChariLove School for Special Vision  
(for the Blind and the Visually Impaired)
- iii. ChariLove School for the Innocent (for Children with Autism and Learning Challenges).
- iv. ChariLove Technical Education Centre (offering vocational and self-help skill training in various areas of specialization)
- v. ChariLove Opportunity Computer Education Centre (in Benin City and at Ossiomo Leprosarium)
- vi. ChariLove Free Library at ChariLove Centre in Benin City and Ossiomo community, Orhionmwon LGA, Edo State.

## **CHARILOVE BOLD INITIATIVE IN OSSIOMO COMMUNITY**

About a century ago, the colonial government carved out Ossiomo community as a leprosarium and an enclave for survivors and others who were afflicted and devastated by leprosy. As the amenities there deteriorated, the community fast became the poorest of the poor communities in Edo state and, perhaps, in Nigeria with the families trapped in ignorance and abject poverty and the consequences of all such miserable conditions.

The mission of ChariLove in Ossiomo is to help break the circle of the abject poverty and ignorance that has held the people down and far behind from one generation to another

Our commitment is to ensure that for as long as ChariLove remains in existence, the children and youths of Ossiomo must be liberated from exclusion and being left behind.

### **THE STRATEGY AT OSSIOMO**

In addition to their normal school programme, ChariLove is giving the children and youths of Ossiomo community an enhanced and free access to quality education by way of:

1. The first major ChariLove intervention in Ossiomo is the inauguration of ChariLove's Hilda Uwaifo & Stella Berny Soup Kitchen with the assurance of, at least, one good meal (lunch) every school day, for the multitude of children in the primary school there.
2. The second major intervention is the establishment of computer training centre that we inaugurated there in 2013 to enable the children and youths have free access to computer education. Our idea is to grow the Ossiomo computer education Centre to embrace all aspects of computer education -including hardware and software engineering, a kind of silicon valley.
3. The commissioning this 9th day of November 2022, of a modern free reading library that incorporates hard copy books as well as e-books.

We promise here that ChariLove will leave no stone unturned to ensure that rural Ossiomo children and youths, by the grace of GOD, will be empowered and liberated from the shackles of abject poverty.

### **CHARILOVE AS STANDARD BEARER AND PACE-SETTER**

Happily, with ChariLove leading the way by example, people gradually began to show interest in matters concerning persons living with disabilities like never before. People even began coming up with foundations, associations and bodies that professed working for people living with physical disabilities and the less privileged. The government, too, started trying to wake up, even though largely for political reasons or gains.

Sometimes we believe in the concept of "the more the merrier." And so we tried to support some of the bodies that were coming up.

But, this time, we were soon discouraged by the so-called "Nigerian factor" or the rat-race that began to play out. Nevertheless, we believed that some of those emergent foundations and bodies meant well but were ill-advised and misled by some others.

### **SOME FEATURES THAT MAKE THE WORK AT CHARILOVE SO VERY UNATTRACTIVE TO THE AVERAGE NIGERIAN:**

▲ Overwhelming majority of Nigerians love life of affluence, glamour, ostentation, flamboyance; and working in prestigious places; places where there is quick and easy money - virtually all of which are lacking in the ChariLove situation and working environment. (ChariLove thinks such lifestyle is not bad in itself. But it views it as unfortunate and insensitive to live a life of affluence when there is anyone around who is hungry, malnourished and unprovided for).

ChariLove lays emphasis on FAIRNESS and PRUDENCE - not allowing any form of cheating, stealing and leakages - in a society where stealing and cheating is virtually a norm.

▲ Ordinarily, most Nigerians do not want to see, relate with, or tolerate persons living with disabilities.

▲ The negative superstitions about disabilities are so wide spread and so deeply rooted many people prefer to keep their distance.

### **SOME OF THOSE WHOSE ACTS OF RECOGNITION WE DEEPLY CHERISH**

The ChariLove journey was greatly enhanced with the implicit confidence reposed in us from inception as demonstrated by HRM. Oba Erediauwa (the then monarch of Benin Kingdom), by Pastor Sidi Lawal-Igloh, Mr. Charles Lot, Alhaji Dauda Momoh and Bro. Chika Nwokoye,; by our very highly esteemed benefactors and friends, Fr. Bill Watters SJ, Mr. Paul Orrson & Family, and Fr. Bill Wood SJ (RIP); as well as by others like Mrs. E. O. Ubani (Rtd. Director of Social Development of the defunct Bendel State), Mrs. Stella Berny, Dr. Richard Iyasere family, Dr. & Mrs Bankole Olusina, Msgr Paul Enow, Engr. Okaisabor (RIP), Frs. Bob Hamm SJ, Bill Scanlon SJ, Jerry Aman SJ, Dominic Totaro SJ, John Ghansa SJ, Jude Odiaka SJ, Kevin Odey SJ, Jameslyvester Urama SJ, Eziokwu Amadi SJ, Ugo Nweke SJ, Bro. O.T. Jonah SJ, and

many others -sll of whom GOD knows and will reward. We were so very encouraged. By the grace of GOD, ChariLove will not let anyone down.

In 1992, for our new and all-doable ideas and ground-breaking innovations, Ashoka: Innovators for the Public (the world's foremost global organization that hunts for and gives identity to world class innovators) in it's panel presided over by its CEO, Mr. Bill Drayton, himself certified ChariLove's founder and the brain behind the idea called ChariLove, Chris Omusi, as a world-class social engineering innovator and Ashoka fellow.

Looking beyond Ashoka, I believe ChariLove deserves special recognition for also being a rare breed in terms of prudent use of available and lean resources, and for its resilience in spite of all odds, some of them incredible. In fact, impressed with the virtues that ChariLove has to offer, UNICEF "B" Zone, under the headship of Mr. Edgardo Cayon in 1999 invited many of the big NGOs in its territory to come on a study visit to ChariLove in Benin City. (However, they didn't come because they perceived ChariLove as poor.

In 1998, the then US Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Twadell together with his wife and son, and the Head of political department at the embassy came all the way from Lagos to see ChariLove and the brain behind it. At the time, we had no place of our own. Before then, the then Oba (Monarch) of Benin, HRM Oba Erediauwa (may peace be with him), had promised to give ChariLove a sizeable land. But the chief he instructed to go show us the land frustrated us because we would not give him a bribe.

In 1999 when we were under threat of forceful ejection from where we had been carrying out our unparalleled humanitarian activities for over eight years, the then government of Edo State under Chief Lucky Igbinedion swiftly came to our rescue in recognition of the unusual services that ChariLove was rendering. The then Gov. Lucky Igbinedion, granted us the use of one of the state government's long abandoned and dilapidated properties we requested for. We carried out some essential repairs and eventually bought over the place which now serves as our permanent centre in Benin City.

About year 2000 AD, a visitor from the Netherlands, Mr. Jaap Rodenburg who was accompanied by his mother, Adri, was led by Dr. ChiChi Aniagolu, (the then country representative of Ashoka: Innovators For The Public), on a tour of Nigeria. In the course of the tour, they stopped by at ChariLove Centre. Jaap and his mother fell in

love with the realities they found on ground at ChariLove. Back home in the Netherlands, Jaap created a website for ChariLove. (Incidentally, I had part of my education in the Netherlands). In my trip to the United States in 2001, I stopped over in the Netherlands and the idea to form a ChariLove Netherlands materialized. Benevolent friends got together to form a formidable Board. They are: Erika Priebee (Chairman), Ruud Poortier (Secretary), Adri Rodenburg-Kool, Joke van Campenhout, Dineke Keizer, Yvonne van Domburg.

In 2004 -the 14th year of the existence of ChariLove, the then governor of Edo State, Chief Lucky Igbinedion, approved a government monthly "token" subvention to support, primarily, ChariLove's bold Soup Kitchen initiative we named after Hilda Uwaifo (a Nigerian) and Stella Berny (an American). The subvention was the first ever to be approved for ChariLove by any government. Indeed, the food initiative has performed feats for Nigeria! To GOD be the glory.

In 2001, CNN crew came over to ChariLove centre in Benin City to interview me and made a video which they aired.

In 2018, Edo State governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, directed an increase in the government monthly subvention to support the Soup Kitchen (food for the truly needy) initiative of ChariLove.

In 2021, Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki before his Birthday, gave a directive that his friends and well-wishers who wished to send him Birthday presents and newspaper Goodwill messages should send all such to Project ChariLove (named first) and one other home in Edo State. That unsolicited kind gesture speaks volume about ChariLove.

ChariLove Centre in Benin City has remained the place of choice for visit by Edo State Judiciary led by the Chief Judge every year during the ceremonies to mark the beginning of their Legal Year.

We feel very encouraged.

ChariLove, by the grace of GOD, will never lower its pace-setter standard even in the midst of different forms of persecution we suffer.

**SOME OF THE PAINS WE SUFFER**

When, in 1990, I returned without noise from the USA to plunge doggedly into the ChariLove's unusual mission in Nigeria, it was like a blind leap of faith. My only mission, hope and determination was to contribute my best towards assisting my country to realize its lofty potentials which I was well aware of. The original idea was that ChariLove would be run by near a hundred percent volunteers. I never knew that Nigerian economy would get so bad as to make the idea almost totally impossible. Besides that, I had grossly underrated the level of corruption in Nigeria, not realizing it had assumed a devastating proportion. I was also not very aware of the horrifying power, spread and influence of this evil in the country. However, with vision, prayer, focus and determination, these are all surmountable.

Because we started with commitment to services for persons living with disabilities (towards their empowerment and liberation), a large number of my friends deserted me. To most Nigerians, it was a most debasing venture. Generally, Nigerians love the life of flamboyance, glamour and ostentation. The services we render at ChariLove and the work environment lack all of that. We were working with those the Nigerian society rejected. One of my former colleagues in Shell, aware of the enviable position I had held, told me to my face that I had gone out of my mind and that if he were a member of my family, he would arrange to "bundle" me to an asylum.

Many people began to look down on me. Some, certainly not all, who managed to come as workers or volunteers, would want to dictate everything to be done their own way. And when I try to get them to consider the very peculiar nature and situation of ChariLove in the Nigerian environment, they would not want to listen. They would abandon me. Some people began to call me all manner of negative names. Some called me a wizard; some, even among the handicapped for whose sake I was pouring out myself, publicly called me an imposture that was trying to use handicapped persons to raise money and run away. They came up with their campaign of calumny just because I insisted that whatever was available at ChariLove - and wherever I belong - must be made to go round, to serve the benefit of the MANY (especially those who are MOST IN NEED) and NOT for a few representatives or the few who are at the front or vocal. Because I insisted on this -

FAIRNESS- the leadership of the handicapped groups we were trying to form then began to conspire viciously against me (the ChariLove founder and servant-leader).

Sadly, I soon discovered that the ChariLove position (insistence on FAIRNESS) was alien not only to the leadership of people living with disabilities who were around us, but even more so to the vast majority of Nigerians who were, or are, in position of leadership, power and/or authority. This lack of the sense of FAIRNESS, or lack of respect for it by those who know it, is at the very ROOT OF ALL THE PROBLEMS bedeviling Nigerians and, hence, Nigeria.

Also very disturbing was the fact that fraudsters - some of them having pretended to be volunteers - came stealing and using our intellectual properties and name fraudulently on the internet and everywhere. At some points, we almost felt overwhelmed. We were like easy prey because we were so very trusting, perhaps to a fault. No one could come to our aid. In the whole situation, we later discovered that ChariLove was swimming against the current in Nigeria. We could write a voluminous book on all of this.

One of the most distressing experiences we have kept having is when people, including parents and some of those in authority, virtually turned ChariLove to a "dump-and-go" ground. They would bring children in extremely critical condition to dump at ChariLove, knowing full well that we do not have the capacity in terms of trained personnel and special equipment to handle such intensive-care cases. Children they kept bringing included those rejected by other homes.

They tried to stress us far beyond the limit of our resources without doing anything to help build our (ChariLove) capacity. Because we are so passionate and sensitive of heart, many a time we would work and work till we begin to feel thoroughly exhausted and wornout. Even at that, they would not stop trying to compel us to accept more extremely stressful cases. We did sense a deliberate attempt to wear us out for reasons best known to them. It got to a breaking point when we felt compelled to say, "enough is enough."

We would very willingly and readily continue to say "yes" if only they would do something meaningful to help build our capacity. They never did.

## AMAZING REALITY

ChariLove's most profound achievement, therefore, is that the body is still alive, hale and hearty, struggling all these well over 30 long years in spite of all the assault even by some of those who ought to owe us gratitude and some others who ought to protect and encourage us.

Listening to my conscience and looking up to GOD, I took the courage to persevere, knowing that not many Nigerians would be willing or ready to make the required sacrifices that ChariLove has been all out to make. Honestly, it has been so very rough and tough for us here in the Nigerian environment.

We thank GOD for His grace, we didn't ever think of giving up. No giving up. We place everyone and everything before the judgment throne of The All-knowing GOD The Ultimate JUDGE.

Like JESUS our Master and Mentor Who went about doing good, and in whose mind is ChariLove, we, too, shall continue boldly and faithfully in doing good. It is our promise and commitment in spite of the bizarre, incredibly absurd and perplexing environment we find ourselves operating in!

We are thoroughly convinced that if we had started ChariLove in some other place or country, and put in a fraction of the vision, time and commitment we have put into it here in Nigeria, by today ChariLove would almost certainly have become a formidable, globally acclaimed and celebrated body. Unarguably, we have paid a huge price for our patriotism. Still, we are not regretting.



To God be the glory.

## APPRECIATION

ChariLove's highly esteemed Board members, Management, Teachers and Caregivers with our numerous Beneficiaries raise up in our heart and prayer all those who in the course of these difficult years have helped us to keep faith. May GOD put joy in your hearts and a smile on your faces for all the kindness you showed us to help us realize whatever it was that we have been able to realize in our passionate option for the truly poor and needy. Please accept our silent but profound gratitude. TO GOD BE ALL THE GLORY!

Bro. Christopher Omusi

(ChariLove founder & Servant-Leader)

- ChariLove Integrated Rehabilitation Centre, Benin City.
- ChariLove Group of Special Schools, Benin City.
- Hilda Uwaifo & Stella Berny Soup Kitchen Project.
- ChariLove Home for Orphans and Children with Special Needs.
- ChariLove Opportuniy Computer Education Centre, Benin City and Ossiomo Leprosarium.
- ChariLove Free Library in Benin City.
- ChariLove-Ossiomo

Community Free Library, Ossiomo.

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