



# The Nigerian Society of Engineers

PORT HARCOURT BRANCH



2011 / VOLUME 102

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FEBRUARY, 12TH 2011

## Interview with Engr. Mrs. Joanna Maduka FNSE, on Women in Engineering

**Engr. Mrs. Joanna Maduka** is the founding President of Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria (APWEN). She became an engineer in 1966. She is a graduate of The Institution of Electrical Engineers, London. She had her first degree in Physic. She lectured in the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University after her Masters Degree in Trinity College, Dublin. After that, she joined a firm of consulting engineers which she became the Principal Partner and since then that is where she has been practicing.



Engr. Mrs. Joanna Maduka FNSE

**E-Newsletter:** *As the founding president of Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria (APWEN), can you tell us more about women in engineering?*

**Engr. Mrs. Maduka:** I am the founding president of APWEN and we started in 1982 with a few young women at that time who were about six. When we started the association, we were not immediately associated with the Nigerian Society of Engineers. It took some time because women wanted women division, a separate division. It took quite a bit of fight if I can call it that, to get to be a division of the Nigerian Society of Engineers. Because of that if you notice, the other divisions have Chairmen but APWEN has President because we came from outside to joined them. Now I can boast that Nigerian women engineers are in thousands. In those days the main activities we had was the promotion of the study of mathematics and science among our young girls in secondary schools just to motivate them into engineering because many girls believe that Mathematics, Physics and other science subjects are too intimidating for them, therefore there were very few of them. Luckily as time went on, girls started moving into engineering and I am very

happy that it has happened. I think we have about twenty-one APWEN branches now and we are still increasing. So I am very happy about that.

**E-Newsletter:** *Thank you very much. What do you have to say about engineering women in Information and Communication Technology (ICT)?*

**Engr. Mrs. Maduka:** It is beautiful. We have so many of them in ICT and they are very bright. They are doing very well. We had this program and I think that's how I came across Engr. Chief Massari actually. We went to Paris, you know we've been discussing with the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) and there was a conference about three years ago where some of us Nigerians went and they were trying to set up women in engineering because they thought the gender was not represented enough. Women were not represented and WFEO wanted to set up standing committee in WFEO for women in engineering and Nigerians put in and Americans were supporting us, so was some other countries but I think the European countries didn't quite like it and by the time we went, the second presentation of the Nigerian proposal which they had deducted actually, we found that the French Society of Women Engineers now brought the whole proposal and at that executive committee meeting they decided to take the France as the headquarters of the new division. So Nigeria lost. We were very angry and Engr. A. K. Ali was the then President of NSE who led our own delegation. So we were very angry that they were not going to take it. So this current president of WFEO, Maria, pacified us. They went and held their own meeting and came back and said that in fact that they never had a region section of the WFEO and they will make Nigeria the first region headquarters for the Africa region of WFEO. Since we have been talking of women, they will want us to take up women empowerment in ICT as pertaining their enterprises, build platform for different type of things, even studies and so on and Maria then drew up a scope for us of what we could do but when we came back we found that what they drew up was too advanced for us and we now sent to

## NSE Port Harcourt Branch Spouses Pre-Valentine's Programme Held on Saturday 12th February 2011 at the Branch Secretariat

**T**here was love in the air in the evening of Saturday, 12th February 2011, at the secretariat of the Nigerian Society of Engineers Port Harcourt Branch as the Spouses Forum of the Branch hosted their spouses (engineers) to a Pre-Valentine. The Spouses Forum treated their engineer spouses to a sumptuous dinner. As the events of the evening unfolded, spouses were taking down memory lane as some of the past chairmen who were present with their spouses opened the dance floor with old school music and dance steps and other members of the branch followed suite. The engineers in various speech responses appreciated the Spouses Forum for organizing the event which is the first of its kind in the branch. In her opening address, the Chairperson of the Spouses Forum, Mrs. Rhoda Asinye-Igoni (Engineers, as the spouses are called), welcomed the engineers to the event which they tagged "**Engineers Lovers Night-Out**" which is the first of its kind in the history of the Branch. Furthermore, she said the purpose of the gathering the engineers is to hang out with them and give

them a little treat, in an attempt to reduce the imposing stresses and pressure of their tedious engineering assignments.



NSE PH Branch Chairman Engr. Dr. A. H. Igoni and his wife & Chairperson NSE PH Branch Spouses Forum, Mrs. Rhoda Asinye-Igoni (Engineers)



NSE PH Branch Spouses Forum entertaining the engineers with a song



Patron of the Spouses Forum, Engr. George Okoyo and family



Engr. Dr. & Mrs. M. E. Ephraim and Engr. Prof. & Mrs. M. J. Ayotamuno (right)



Engr. Prof. & Engr. Mrs H. I Hart and Engr. & Mrs. F. C. Ogolo (right)

**Interview with Engr. Mrs. Joanna Maduka FNSE ...continued**

them what we thought we could do. So a committee was put together here, I chaired that committee of both men and women to carry out this program. We have been meeting about three years now, we had a mixed assessment done for different groups of women and we found out in fact the most urgent is our female primary school teachers. We found out that most of our female primary school teachers are completely ICT illiterate. These are the people training the new generation; I will call them the new generation. Some of them have never touched a computer before; many of them have never even seen a computer before and so we thought ok, why not start with this group. Because I discussed with a lot of people and as a result of that, we have been having a lot of groups; even women lawyers would say "ah so you are doing this why don't you come and empower our people? Yesterday (December 7<sup>th</sup> 2010) in the Ministry of Education, the Chief Librarian for the whole country was there to discuss with the Permanent Secretary and he said "ah ah you have this programme; why don't I make up with you and you come and train my Librarians. So it is as bad as that in Nigeria. So we can't talk of even higher levels of ICT yet, until we are able to see what we can do with these people. So we have our initial cost here 44 participant primary school teacher from

about fifteen or more schools, UBEC, Universal Primary Education, Abuja, because it's a big computer laboratory where we have the training. Now when we trained 44 teachers, they were very interested and they were able to take things away, what next? How won't they forget what they learnt in two weeks? So the UBEC people have said that they will try and package a sort of soft Micro Finance system. So that as we are training them, they will introduce cheap laptop or desktop computers to them which they can pay for; so they would be paying at a very reasonable and very low interest rate over, maybe, 18 months or something.

**E-Newsletter:**  
*Thank you very much; we are very grateful for the audience you have given us.*



Engr. Otueneh, Otunte John & Engr. Mrs. J. Maduka FNSE

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