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# **Walkathon for Women Affected by Boko Haram**

Girls from the Lagoon School, a corporate work of Opus Dei in Nigeria, have helped organise a walkathon to create awareness and raise funds for a health outreach for women and children affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.

02/19/2018

*(Published in worldstagegroup.com)*

Dr Nkechi Asogwa, Director of the Doctors' Health Initiative (DHI), in an interview in Lagos, said the health outreach was targeted at women and children in the Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps.

“The Boko Haram insurgents have decimated whole families and communities in North-east Nigeria.

“As in all conflicts, it is the women and children that are most affected, suffering unimaginable physical and psychological degradation.

“In addition to the trauma of being violently torn from their homes and loved ones, these women and children have suffered the loss of their lands and thus their livelihoods from agriculture.

“For the past three years, DHI has carried out health outreaches with emphasis on women's health in the camps for Internally Displaced

People (IDP) located in Yola, Benin City and Lagos.

“This time, we have worked together with the Lagoon School Environmental Committee; it is the first of its kind and the idea came from these teenagers.”

Asogwa said that the Lagoon School Environmental Committee was made up of 13 to 17-years old students who felt called to make a change in the lives of the victims of insurgencies.

“The driving force behind the walkathon is the spirit of Christian solidarity which makes us brothers and sisters no matter our places of origin, religious beliefs and creeds.

“This is one key teaching of St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, who is the inspiration behind the values and education being imparted to the students of the Lagoon School,” she said.

Prof. Pat Utomi, an economist, while opening the ceremony, commended the students and parents for the project.

“You are the future leaders and there is need to be sensitive to the needs of our environments.

“I commend your commitment, courage, cooperation and hard work,” he said.

Ms. Tolulope Olasewere, who participated in the walk, said, “I did not see age discrimination, gender discrimination, social status, tribe, political ideology and level of education discrimination.

“For the first time in my life, I have seen one Nigeria and one community taking progressive steps for the greater good; there is peace, joy, happiness and tranquility.

“We didn’t just walk for the IDPs; we have unknowingly brought different groups of people together, thereby creating a perfect illustration that ONE NIGERIA is in fact a possibility.

“We must continue to do things that bring us closer together rather than tear us further apart, because together, we are so powerful,” Olasewere said.

Dr Grace Agbo, also a participant and of the DHI, advised the youths to always make positive impact in their communities.

“I want the youths to know that they are never too young to make a difference.

“To the adults, don’t just complain about the youths; rather, create opportunities to support causes like those of the DHI.

“We are all members of the same human family, God has created us and put us in this world to love and hearken to the needs of our fellow human beings, not to destroy them.

“Sadly, our world is now claiming too many new victims through many man-made disasters.”

She said it was important to lend a helping hand to the needy and the suffering in the land.

“That is the only way to win over the human race.

“It is not within your power or ours to stop the violence done to these women and children by the Boko Haram insurgency, but we can heal our land by showing love to those so unjustly treated,” Agbo said.

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(07/27/2025)