



Nigeria: A Church under Siege

Bishop Stephen Dami Mamza standing in Saint James's, Yola – which was still not finished when it started taking in women and children who had fled extremist group Boko Haram.

ACN/Jaco Klamer

“Boko Haram killed my husband before my eyes. They killed my mother too. It was the Church that came to help me and my children.”

Naomi Dawa is one of 8,000 widows being cared for by Maiduguri Diocese. Like so many others, her husband was murdered by the extremist group that is committed to using force to turn northern Nigeria into a hard-line Islamist state. She is now one of hundreds of women being helped at a Church-run trauma centre supported by ACN. Other women being cared for at the centre include former captives who were raped while being held by Boko Haram (see “Giving Boko Haram captives a future” inside).

Although all parts of society suffer from Boko Haram’s campaign of terror, the extremists have made no secret of their intention to drive Christians from the region. In 2020 alone, 3,000 Christians were killed in the country by

militant groups. Against this backdrop, ACN is doing all it can to support a Church under siege.

Fr Joseph Fidelis from Maiduguri is helping to care for trauma victims. He said: **“Thank you Aid to the Church in Need for the support you have given us.**

“Remember, persecution while it makes people suffer, also strengthens them from within, because from within they find a cause to live. We need your help [so] that we may support these people who are suffering.” ☩



Internally displaced women who sought shelter at Saint James's, Yola.

ACN/Jaco Klamer

Giving Boko Haram captives a future

Ginika* was kidnapped by Boko Haram and forced to marry one of the extremists.

She was beaten up for refusing to sleep with him. Eventually, after spending days in a deep pit without food or water, her 'husband' forced himself on her in her weakened state and she became pregnant. Ginika managed to escape with her baby, and is just one of the women who received help at the Human Resource and Skill Acquisition Centre in Maiduguri, northern Nigeria.

Many of those being cared for by the centre are women who, like Ginika, have been raped and given birth to children fathered by Boko Haram fighters. Other women have witnessed the murder of their husbands or were used as suicide bombers.

Local authorities have done very little to address the emotional and psychological

*Name changed.

needs of survivors, so the Church has stepped in.

At the Human Resource and Skill Acquisition Centre, women like Ginika are receiving psychological and spiritual counselling to address the trauma they underwent while held by Boko Haram.

The centre is also teaching women a trade so that they can care for themselves and their children. The centre currently trains 150 women every year to become seamstresses, cobblers and caterers among other careers. Once the centre is operating at full capacity, it is expected that the numbers of women being trained will rise.

The need is immense – currently the diocese is looking after 8,000 widows and more than 17,000 children.

Only your love can help ACN to support essential, life-changing projects like this one. 🙏



These women were cared for by the Church after their lives were destroyed by Boko Haram.

ACN/Jaco Klamer

Leah Sharibu – held by Boko Haram for 3 years

19th February 2021 marked Leah Sharibu's third year in captivity.

Leah was seized with more than 100 other students in February 2018, when Boko Haram raided the Government Science and Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe State. While most students were returned following government negotiations, Leah was held back after refusing to renounce her Christian faith.

When ACN (UK) met Mrs Rebecca Sharibu, Leah's mother, she asked us to remember in our prayers Leah and all those being held captive by Boko Haram. Please pray for them all. 🙏



New Evangelisation takes wing

A new poultry farm will help make the Female Catechists' Formation Centre self-sufficient.

Dominican Sister Biola told ACN that the Female Catechists' Formation Centre recognises "the great role which women can play in the most needed work of evangelisation". There are currently 15 women from five dioceses studying on the programme, which

runs at the centre in Kwall, Plateau State. The poultry farm will not only help fund the centre and its work, but will also provide local jobs.

Sister Biola tells us that they need more than ₦8 million for the project – which sounds an unbelievable amount until you realise it's £17,000 in sterling! She told us the farm will "go a long way in helping to foster our evangelisation mission especially in northern Nigeria". 🙏



Sister congratulating one of the newly qualified catechists in pre-COVID-19 times.



The chicken shed slowly takes shape.

Protecting tomorrow's priests



"Let us... put walls around them..." (2 Chronicles 14:7). Students and staff in front of part of an unfinished stretch of the wall.



Seminarian Michael Nnadi was killed after attackers broke into the complex.

martyred by his abductors. Praising Michael's "outstanding bravery" from his jail cell, his killer Mustapha Mohammed related how the seminarian had forthrightly told him he must change his evil ways.

The coronavirus pandemic caused delays, but now the seminary is making up for lost time, and work on the new perimeter wall is well underway. **Just £140 will pay for a 10-metre stretch of the 2,870 metre security wall.** Your love can help protect the seminary's 268 students as they train to minister in this challenging environment. 🙏

The rector of the Good Shepherd Seminary, Fr Habila Daboh, wrote to Aid to the Church in Need begging for help just days after four of his seminarians were kidnapped.

In anguished terms he told us how, after nightfall on 8th January 2020, an armed gang entered the seminary in Kaduna, making off with the students. **"As I write to you, only one has been released, the other three are still with**

the kidnappers". Fr Habila blamed the seminary's low fence for the success of the attack and asked for help to put up a protective wall. He said: **"We need this assistance in order to secure the lives of the seminarians and the formators who live with them in the seminary."**

Although ACN promised to provide the £39,200 needed to improve security at the Good Shepherd Seminary, the story of the kidnapped students did not end well. 18-year-old Michael Nnadi was



Students at the Good Shepherd Seminary, preparing to serve God's People.

Water, Witches and Money Worries

The Sisters of Our Lady Star of the Sea in the Niger Delta are not facing extremism – but the challenges of witchcraft, poverty, reaching far-flung villages by waterways and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The congregation was set up in 2013 – and was dedicated to Our Lady Star of the Sea because many of the villages they minister to can only be reached by boat.

The villagers scrape a meagre living from fishing or subsistence farming – but their main worries are sorcery and evil spirits. The Sisters' work is bringing great blessings, as they teach the children, help the poorest families, and through the Gospel free them from their fear of witchcraft.

But the COVID-19 pandemic has left the Sisters desolate. Mother Felicia told us, "We have lost our basic subsistence and livelihood... and our congregation has been struggling to support our 33 members."



The Sisters of Our Lady Star of the Sea are helping villagers in the Niger Delta

As a result of the pandemic, the Sisters themselves have fallen on hard times, and their expenses are rising, partly because they have had to purchase PPE to continue working among the people. ACN is promising the Sisters £47,500 to

support their life and ministry.

Mother Felicia told ACN: **"Your financial aid will make it possible for us to survive the negative impact of this pandemic. May the blessings of God be with you now and forever!"** 🙏



Thanks to your love, ACN has funded rooms for 30 more children at the Guardian Angels Motherless Babies Home in Engu. Monsignor Obiora Ike told ACN: "We are grateful once again to you for supporting this project".