

TURNING DISABILITY INTO ABILITY – HELP US BUILD A SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR DEAF CHILDREN IN KADUNA

Aisha Ibrahim, a primary 3 student of the Demonstration School for Deaf Children (“DSDC”) spent her recovery time after heart surgery in July, 2018 begging her doctors to discharge her so she could return to school to take part in a spelling bee. Aisha was discharged from hospital just in good time and appeared in school on Prize Giving day to take part in the spelling bee. She did not win the competition but came in second.



This year, accident prone Aisha sprained her arm and had to stay away from school for a couple of days, just prior to Prize Giving day when the spelling bee would take place. Once again, Aisha insisted on returning to school on Prize Giving day so she could participate in the 2019 spelling bee. She ended up in second place for the second time but is determined to claim her “rightful” first place next year.

This is the passion Aisha and her school mates have for DSDC, a school which has helped transform their lives and given them the confidence to realize that with education, they can become self-reliant and useful members of their communities. In 2018, DSDC students took part in various competitions organized by the Sustainable Development Goals Club in Abuja. Despite competing against hearing students, the confident hearing-impaired students of DSDC won first place in the Quiz and Debate segments, as well as first and third places in the Essay writing segment.

Prior to establishment of DSDC, hearing impaired children at the nursery level had no access to education of any sort as the State-run school for the hearing impaired only admitted children who were at least 10 years old. Along came Brenda Woosman, a Canadian citizen who had a deaf mother and was devastated to find that deaf children in Nigeria were consigned to motor parks and treated like they were less than human. Determined to restore the dignity of the deaf and provide hearing impaired children with skills to sustain them through life, Brenda set up DSDC in 1987 with the assistance of a Committee of Friends.

From a building donated by a member of the Committee of Friends, Alhaji Lema Jibrilu, the school moved into its own premises in 1993 with funding provided by the Canada Fund of the Canadian High Commission in Nigeria. DSDC extended its program to include primary and junior secondary level education in 1996 and 2005 with funding provided by the Petroleum Trust Fund and the Education Trust Fund respectively.

Operating as non-profit organization since it was established over three decades ago, DSDC still struggles with meeting infrastructural and operational expenses but its Board and Management remain motivated by the visible impact the school is making in the lives of the students. Sadly, despite restoring some level of dignity to these hearing-impaired children, their education stagnates after they complete Junior Secondary School.

There is just one Senior Secondary School in Kaduna State which admits hearing impaired children for higher education. No special attention is given to deaf children because the school also caters for blind as well as mentally retarded children. Most DSDC students are indigent and their parents do not have the means to send them to the few specialized schools that exist outside the State. Consequently, after completing Junior secondary school in DSDC, the children end up back at home or on the streets, idle, jobless, without any sense of self-worth and unable to explore their full academic potential since they cannot compete effectively with their hearing counterparts for admission into higher learning institutions.

DSDC has shown these children that they can be anything they desire in life and most of them are full of ambition and determination. They work hard, they have dreams and ambitions and they are passionate for a higher level of education. All they need is opportunity and a level playing field.

Our goal is to raise the sum of \$35,000 (thirty-five thousand US dollars) towards funding Senior Secondary level education in DSDC. With specialized teaching by qualified and dedicated

teachers, the children will be properly equipped to sit for various qualifying examinations which they need to gain admission into universities and other institutions of higher learning.

Approximate funding requirement is as shown below:

S/NO	ITEM	ESTIMATED COST
		\$
1	Construction of two classrooms, science and home economics laboratories	14,000
2	Provision of furniture for 30 students	1,500
3	Provision of Science and Home Economics laboratory equipment	1,500
4	Construction of hostels for 20 boarding students	18,000
	TOTAL	35,000

Please look into your hearts and donate whatever you can to help give our hearing-impaired children a chance to shine and thrive in a very competitive world.