

Peace Education Offered to Secondary School Teachers in Nigeria

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Abuja, Nigeria - As part of efforts to build a culture of peace in Nigeria, UPF-Nigeria has been working with schools on introducing peace education and establishing peace clubs, beginning with the Government Secondary School in Gorki, Abuja, where 45 teachers participated in a workshop on peace education Oct. 22, 2014.

The administration of the Government Secondary School in Garki, Abuja approved the establishment of a peace club during the previous school year, and it was inaugurated with hundreds of students as members and teachers as mentors. When the approval was granted, the peace club officers and their mentors visited the Peace Embassy to submit the approval letter and gain formal recognition of the club by UPF-Nigeria.

Activities

Following the inauguration, UPF-Nigeria has been supporting the activities of the club since the beginning of the school year. The club seeks to create a culture of peace in the school in order to make the school a peaceful community for teaching and learning. Seminars and workshops are periodically organized for the club members to inspire them with the UPF vision of peace as well as empowering them with the needed resources to cultivate the right attitude, knowledge and skills to become peaceful students in school and peaceful children in their families. Parents of the club members have given their endorsement for the involvement of their children in the activities of the club.

Some of the seminars for the students have been focused on peaceful thinking, peaceful expressions and peaceful activities in the school. Club members have been learning the principles of cooperative living and how to communicate with peaceful words. For instance, club members have been focused on promoting dialogue among students instead of debate among students.

During the third term of the last academic year, the peace club members launched a special program to promote peace in the school. Students were invited to nominate teachers for recognition as Teachers for Peace. At the end of the voting, four teachers emerged as most peaceful teachers in their relationship with students and colleagues. The UPF Sub-Regional Director for West Africa, Rev Paterne Zinsou presented certificates of recognition to the teachers at a gathering of staff and students of the school. The ceremony has created a new attitude toward students by the teachers.

Workshop for teachers on peace education

At the commencement of the 2014/2015 academic session, the club members got approval again for a one-day workshop for teachers on peace education. Forty-five teachers registered to attend the workshop, which was held at the school premises on Oct. 22, 2014. The opening session was graced by the principal of the school and the vice principal for administration. The workshop focused on building a culture of peace in schools with emphasis on relationship between the principal and teachers, among teachers, between teachers and students and among students. It was emphasized that the way to live in peace at school was to understand the principle of "living for the sake of others." The principal was enjoined to see herself and be seen by others as the grandparent of the school and the teachers as parents of their various classrooms and the students as children, and consequently, brothers and sisters.

Principal is appointed Ambassador for Peace

At the end of the four-hour workshop, the principal was presented with a certificate of recognition as Ambassador for Peace, after all the participating teachers voted in support of such recognition. Responding at the closing session, the principal declared that her school is a "school for peace" and hopes it will inspire other schools to join the network of schools for peace under the leadership of the UPF. In addition, some of the teachers expressed their willingness to join the "couples for peace" program to be launched on Dec. 12, 2014 as part of the National Unification Summit 2014.

Prospects

UPF-Nigeria is hopeful that the peace club activities at the school in Garki can be replicated in other schools as well as lead to the establishment of a School Peace Council, where teachers, parents and community members can join in the efforts for peace in the school and community. Plans are also in progress for a special student leadership workshop for the school prefects.