

Nigerian Christian leader honored for aiding victims of Boko Haram

Rebecca Samuel Dali was recognized especially for her efforts to reintegrate women and their children who had been held captive by militants.

by [World Council of Churches](#) in the [September 27, 2017](#) issue



Rebecca Samuel Dali. Photo by Ivars Kupcis/[WCC](#).

Rebecca Samuel Dali, a Nigerian Christian leader, received the 2017 Humanitarian Award from the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation at the United Nations office in Geneva on August 21.

Dali, who founded and runs the Center for Caring, Empowerment, and Peace Initiatives in northeast Nigeria, was recognized for her efforts in reintegrating women abducted by the Boko Haram. As the situation in the northern states of Nigeria worsened, the CCEPI relief work grew from focusing on vulnerable children to include “the whole range of displaced people,” she said. The center has helped 1 million people since 2008.

“When I started opening my arms to them, they started coming to me,” she said. “Some were sick, some were hungry, most of them had experienced trauma, violence, abuse.”

Dali was also among the first to visit the parents of the 276 Chibok girls after the mass kidnapping by Boko Haram in April 2014. Dali’s husband, Samuel Dante Dali, at that time was the president of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria), to which most of the kidnapped Chibok girls belonged. EYN congregations suffered attacks by militants, displacing up to 70 percent of their members. Dali and her family fled their home in 2014.

“As we were chased away by Boko Haram, on the first day I slept, but on the second day I was among the other displaced people: registering them, gathering their stories, listening to their needs, and later starting applying to donor agencies to help them,” Dali said.

The foundation that gave her the award cited her negotiation and reconciliation efforts in communities that resisted the reintegration of women and their children if they became pregnant while held captive. Dali and her coworkers ensured care for the children and provided trauma healing for the abused women.

“Sometimes when I am really exhausted, the thoughts of stopping this work come to my mind,” she said. “Then I remember that God did not reject me, and he is not very tired of me, so how can I be tired of people? I believe that God is God of love, and he has said that we should love other people as ourselves.”