Mary Ekah

Loving Gaze last weekend welcomed the Italian President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Hon. Laura Boldrini who praised the Italian community’s effort in supporting vulnerable communities in Lagos. Boldrini who was received at St. Kizito Clinic and SS Peter and Paul Nursery and Primary School in Lekki, Lagos while on an official visit to Nigeria expressed gratitude for the long-term and sustainable projects executed in Lagos communities by Loving Gaze. She particularly impressed by St. Kizito Clinics’ effort in providing access to the children’s vaccination programme to protect them since they were born.

Boldrini has been the President of the Italian Lower Chamber since 2013. Before that, from 1993 until 1998, she worked at the World Food Programme (WFP) as the Italian spokesperson. From 1998 to 2012 she was spokesperson of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for whom she also coordinated public information campaigns in Southern Europe. In recent years she has specifically dealt with the influx of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean. She has taken part in numerous missions to crisis spots, including the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Caucasus, Angola and Rwanda.
Loving Gaze is an independent not-for-profit organisation with 25 years of experience in Nigeria. It serves the unprivileged and most vulnerable communities in Lagos and in Taraba State. Loving Gaze General Manager, Barbara Pepoli who has been in Lagos for over 10 years now, recounted some of her organisation’s activities. “In 2016 we touched the lives of 60,000 people in Nigeria. We helped men and women to get the healthcare they needed, young children to continue their primary education, we helped communities groups save pennies a day that added up to real, lasting change. But all this has been built through the hard work of our local staff and the generous donators in Nigeria and beyond, who supported us from the beginning, when we arrived in Lagos 25 years ago.”

AVSI Foundation, an Italian NGO active in more than 30 countries, arrived in Lagos in 1988 and, with the support of the Italian Development Cooperation aid programme, started the development of two St. Kizito Clinics in Lagos, one in Lekki and another in Idi-Araba. Its first school was actually a “bamboo school” on the lagoon’s shores, in 2003, thanks to the European Development Funds (EDF), which helped to establish the SS Peter and Paul Nursery and Primary School, which now accommodates 450 students. In 2007, it completed the construction of the St. John School in Ikorodu, Lagos. Up till date, the Italian AVSI donors are supporting 300 students in St. John School.

In the last few years Loving Gaze has beyond healthcare and primary education, initiating women vocational trainings, community engagement and education activities with the generous support of the USAID programme, and social agricultural projects in Lagos, with egg production and in Taraba State with a cooperative agricultural initiative with local farmers.”

Dr. Alda Gemmani, St. Kizito Clinic Medical Director, who took the guests through St. Kizito Clinic’s activities, underlined the efforts made in the fight against HIV and Tuberculosis, the educational effort towards sanitisation and malaria prevention, the two nutrition centres which cater for over 120 malnourished children every year and the 24/7 maternity clinic opened last year which has welcomed over 400 new born already.