



Raising voices for  
education in Africa

05 20 2014

## OPEN LETTER

### *Bring Back Our Girls Campaign and girls' education in Nigeria* to the Nigerian President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan

Dear President Jonathan,

It has been a month now that more than 200 school girls were kidnapped from the Chibok Government Girls Secondary School in Borno State, Nigeria, by members of the Boko Haram group. The IDAY network as a whole – a coalition of African and European organisations committed to upholding and protecting the rights of the African youth, particularly their right to quality education – is greatly distressed by this attack and by the plight of these girls. We also mourn the hundreds of people in the North of Nigeria whose lives were claimed in similar raids in the past months.

We empathise with the families who have lost their loved ones and with the helpless parents whose daughters are still in the custody of their Boko Haram abductor. We also stand in solidarity with all those who work night and day at getting all the girls released.

Education is, to quote President Nelson Mandela, “the most powerful weapon which we can use to change the world”. It is one of the most effective ways to foster peaceful societies where people respect and support one another. Schools ought to be safe havens for our children for them to grow into empowered, successful adults and responsible citizens. This grave incident is not only an attack on defenseless and innocent children, but also a direct attack on education and what it stands for in free, democratic societies. The Boko Haram group has led a deliberate terror campaign against schools and students in an attempt to bring down any form of secular education in Borno State. If we allow this to continue happening, the short and long term impacts will be devastating for Borno State and Nigeria as a whole. It will also send a strong message to the world that the kind of education we believe in is under threat.

This tragic situation is also a reminder of the many challenges that continue to face girls' education in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern region. We command the efforts of the Nigerian Government to improve access to education and the conditions of learning, especially

at primary level. Yet the gender gap remains wide in several States. Cultural bias still keeps many girls out of school, especially in families that cannot afford schooling-associated costs or even the opportunity cost of schooling their children. Even for the girls who enroll, many schools lack adequate facilities – toilets. This leads to monthly attendance interruption by female student who begin to menstruate, causing them to fall behind or cease attending lessons altogether due to the related social stigma. Early marriage is also a significant obstacle.

The IDAY members join their voices to the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign encouraging the Nigerian Government to take the necessary action to ensure the safe and immediate return of all the missing girls. We also recommend making post-traumatic stress counselling and support available to the Chibok Secondary School Girls, their parents and relatives affected by this tragedy. In doing so, we trust that the Nigerian Government will care about preventing further violence in the communities that have been affected by these repeated attacks and will see to it that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Furthermore we call for even greater vigilance and dedication on the part of the Nigerian Government to ensure safe schooling in Nigeria. All school-going children and youngsters, school teachers and education professional should be guaranteed protection in school and at home. IDAY-Nigeria and our network as a whole are more than ever ready to work hand in hand with the authorities to achieve this objective and that of quality education for all in Nigeria, particularly girls.

We trust that our call will receive all your attention and we ensure you of our continued support.

Sincerely,

Mr Jean-Jacques Schul, Chairman IDAY-International  
Ms Noëlle Garcin, Secretary General IDAY-International  
Ms Yemisi A. Sanusi, Chairwoman IDAY-UK  
Mr Mohammed Bougei Attah, Coordinator IDAY-Nigeria

**MORE INFORMATION?** IDAY-International - [ddevillers@iday.org](mailto:ddevillers@iday.org)  
Dominique Devillers, Communication Director, will be pleased to answer your questions