

May 28, 2014

Secretary John. F Kerry
The Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Administrator Rajiv Shah
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20523

Dear Secretary Kerry and Administrator Shah:

As members of the international development and humanitarian communities, we write to express our deep concern over the April 14th abduction of over 200 girls from a school dormitory in Northeastern Nigeria. The government of the United States must actively work with governments and international organizations to protect young people from future attacks, safeguard the rights of all children and youth to an education, and actively engage with communities to ensure the ongoing needs of victims are met.

We are pleased that the United States is playing an active role in bringing the girls to safety. It is also critical to address their needs quickly and effectively once they return, recognizing that the kidnapped girls will have significant physical, emotional, psychological, and mental health needs. Children and young people living in conflict-affected areas need continued long-term support to address the trauma and fear that affects their well-being. The continuation of services decreases the risk of future vulnerabilities, decreases drop-out rates, provides a positive environment and leads to a more stable community.

Tragically, the abduction of Nigerian schoolgirls is one of many examples of attacks on young people and schools around the world. For example, students in Syria, Pakistan, Somalia, Afghanistan and many other countries have been the innocent victims of threats, abductions, sexual violence, and murder. Teachers, schools, and education officials have also been targeted for violence. These attacks are unconscionable.¹

Just as we must continue the effort to bring back the Nigerian schoolgirls, so too must we continue the effort to protect students, teachers, and schools, and defend young people's right to education around the world. As such, we feel it is critical for the Administration and Congress to:

- Work with Nigerian authorities, NGOs, and international organizations to ensure that appropriate health, psychosocial, and mental health services are available for the rescued girls; as well as ensure that youth, teachers, families, and communities have access to such services to help cope with the ongoing fear and violence. Interventions include mobilizing networks of children, youth, and women for peer-to-peer support, and training teachers and community volunteers on tools such as Psychological First Aid.
- Robustly fund development and humanitarian accounts to ensure the educational, physical, emotional, psychological, and mental health needs of young people in conflict situations are met.

- Proactively work with governments to ensure the right of all young people to a quality education without discrimination.
- Actively work with country governments to ensure protection of schools and colleges and take steps to mitigate the impact of attacks on young people’s right to education.
- Encourage the inclusion of a rapid response system in National Education Plans to ensure schools are quickly repaired or rebuilt when attacked, and educational materials are replaced.
- Include community involvement in programs designated under the USAID education strategy, with a focus on Goal 3 to increase access to education for children in conflict situations. Interventions could include: community-based and school-based protection committees, school management committees, and community involvement in peace building that engages young people, and the involvement of religious leaders.
- Assist in the finalization, endorsement, and fulfillment of the Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. The Lucens Guidelines provide a set of clear and reasonable actions for governments and non-state armed groups to protect schools from warfare. The Guidelines protect schools from military use during armed conflict and rebuild confidence in the safety of schools to help bring out-of-school young people in conflict-affected countries back to school.

We cannot stand by while young people are victims of violence simply for attending school. The development and humanitarian community remains committed to working with the United States Government to protect the rights of all young people to go to school and to care for those who are targeted.

Thank you for giving serious consideration to our recommendations. Please feel free to contact Anna Roberts at aroberts@basiced.org or (202) 729-6718 for more information.

Sincerely,



*Basic Education
Coalition*



*Global Campaign for
Education, U S Chapter*



InterAction



*The Alliance for
International Youth
Development*



A World at School



Africa Schoolhouse



AFT



American Jewish World Service



Association for Childhood Education International



Baptist World Alliance



Bread for the World



Building Tomorrow



buildOn



CARE USA



Chemonics



Child Labor Coalition



ChildFund International



Creative Associates International



Education Development Center



Edge of Seven



Educate the Children



FHI 360



Foundation for Learning Equality



Girl Up



Girl Rising



Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack



Global Health Council



International Relief & Development



International Rescue Committee



IREX



Islamic Relief USA



Juarez & Associates, Inc. (J&A)



Kenya Education Fund



LitWorld



Making Cents International



Management Sciences for Health



Millennium Campus Network



Mission EduCare



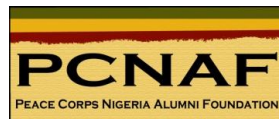
National Consumers League



National Education Association



New Global Citizens



Peace Corps Nigeria Alumni Foundation



Plan International USA



Planet Aid



Population Action International



RESULTS



RTI International



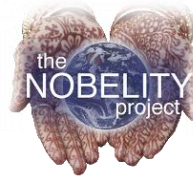
School Girls Unite



SOS Children's Villages USA



The Batonga Foundation



The Nobility Project



The Power of Education Foundation



The United Methodist General Board of Church and Society



U.S. Fund for UNICEF



Unstoppable Foundation



Women LEAD



Women Thrive Worldwide



Women's Refugee Commission



World Education



World Education Foundation



World Learning



Zakat Foundation of America

CC: The House and Senate SFOP Appropriations Committees
The House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee

¹ In the last five years, [30 countries](http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/eua_2014_full_0.pdf) have experienced a pattern of intentional attacks on education: Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/eua_2014_full_0.pdf