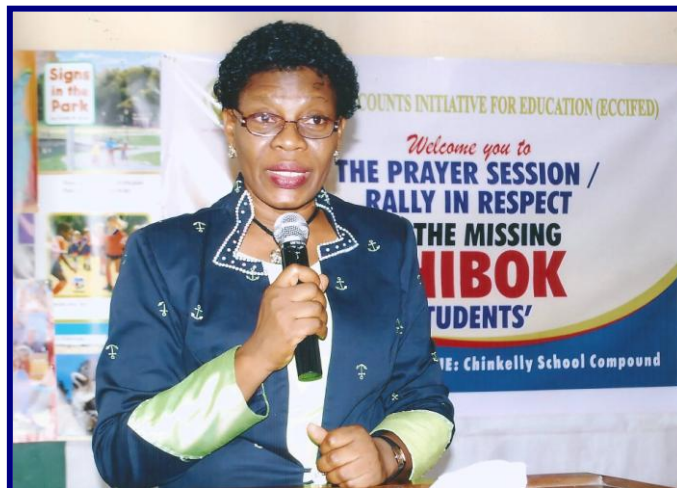# EVERY CHILD COUNTS INITIATIVE FOR EDUCATION [ECCIFED]

...Let's find & support them!

Every Child Counts Initiative for Education [ECCIFED], organized a prayer session/rally in respect of the missing Chibok students, on Tuesday 12th, May, 2014, at Chinkelly schools, Ekpan – Effurun, Delta State, Nigeria. ECCIFED is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that is committed to the course of children, youths and women.

The initiator and founder of ECCIFED is Dr. Mrs. Veronica E. Ogbuagu [JP].

She was highly concerned about the plight of the abducted girls. As a mother and an educationist, she saw the need to organize the prayer session/rally. She invited students from several secondary schools in Effurun and Warri Local Government Area respectively. Also in attendance were parents, teachers, heads of schools and religious leaders. The presence of the State Chairman and Secretary to the Nigerian Aid Group of Islam Jama'atu Nasril Islam and their students added colour to the ceremony.

Dr. [Mrs.] Veronica in her welcome address thanked all present for honouring her invitation. She said she invited students from other schools, irrespective of their religion, tribe or colour to come together and pray for the release of the Chibok students. "Prayers of children," she said, rise up "like incense to God."

She remarked that Boko Haram has been operating in the country's northeast since 2002, and that, the government never saw them as a big threat until now and that, a common practice with Nigerian government is the manner with which they set up committees to deal with matters that could be dealt with instantly. She is of the opinion that, "if we see a snake, just kill it, don't appoint a committee for snakes."

She said, since the abduction of the girls, she has always asked the following questions:

❖   Where could these girls be as we speak?
❖   What are they doing with them?
❖   What have they done to them?
❖   How can they be rescued?
❖   Who will rescue them?
❖   Is this real?
❖   Is this happening in our time?
❖   Could this be a modernized form of slave trade?

The more she tried to figure out answers to her questions the more confused she was. She enjoined the students and guests present to pray fervently for the safety and quick release of the Chibok girls.

She reminded parents, teachers, and adults of their role in ensuing that children are kept safe. "Children," she said, "look to us to make sense out of this world, we soothe their fears as we work to make children and their communities safe. We must try to protect them always." She equally, called on the Governor of Borno State to make frantic efforts to rescue the Chibok girls, because he is the caretaker of Borno's most wonderful resource: the children.

In his speech, the state Chairman of Nigerian Aid Group of Islam Jama'atu Nasril Islam, Sadiq Musa, condemed the senseless killing and abduction of innocent citizens by Boko Haram. According to him, the actions of Boko Haram are in clear contradiction with the tenets of Islam.

 The ceremony was organized in three parts. First, was the prayer session and scripture reading. The students prayed for the release of the girls, prayed for their parents and families, and also prayed for the nation.

The second part, was the making of free speeches. The students sent some strong worded messages to Mr. President and Boko Haram, they also spoke on some vital issues as they concern the welfare of children. These include:

- Every Child Must Be Protected;
- Every Child Is Entitled To Compulsory Basic Education;
- Every Child Has The Right To Life;
- No Child Should Suffer Any Discrimination, Irrespective of Birth, Origin, Colour, Sex, Language, Religion, Political And Social Beliefs, Status or Disability.

In the course of their presentation, and prayers, tears rolled down the yes of every body.

The third part of the ceremony was the rally, where the students and guests displayed their placards.

We congratulate Dr. [Mrs.] Veronica E. Ogbuagu [JP] for her initiative and the wonderful ceremony.