

Freed EYN women include two Chibok schoolgirls

In June, Nigerian troops found two of the former schoolgirls abducted from Chibok by Boko Haram jihadists eight years ago, Mary Dauda and Hauwa Joseph.

Church leaders also celebrated the return of Mary Iliya, who was abducted in 2020 by jihadists from Bolakile. Also recently freed was Rebecca Irmiya.

All of these women are members of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), from congregations located in the church districts of Chibok Balgi, Chibok, and Gulak.

Many other women who have been abducted still cannot be accounted for.

Dauda and Joseph were found by the Nigerian military on June 12 and 14 in two different locations.

Joseph was found along with other civilians on June 12 around Bama after troops dislodged a Boko Haram camp, while Dauda was found later outside Ngoshe village in the Gwoza area near the border with Cameroon.

"I was nine when we were kidnapped from our school in Chibok and I was married off not long ago and had this child," Joseph told reporters at the military headquarters. Her husband and father-in-law were killed in a military raid and she was left to fend for herself and her one-month-old son. "We were abandoned, no one cared to look after us. We were not being fed," she said.

Dauda, who was 18 when she was kidnapped, was married at different times to Boko Haram fighters in the Sambisa forest. "They would starve and beat you if

you refused to pray," Dauda said. She decided to flee and told her husband she was visiting another Chibok girl in the Dutse Mountains near Ngoshe, close to the border with Cameroon. She trekked all night to Ngoshe where she surrendered to troops in the morning.

"All the remaining Chibok girls have been married with children. I left more than 20 of them in Sambisa," she said. "I'm so happy I'm back."

Two more abducted women freed Iliya, who was abducted in 2020, visited the EYN Headquarters in the company of church officials and her uncle. She said that she refused to get married while a captive. As a result, she was starved, and sometimes refused food for some days. She and another woman decided to escape in the night. When they sneaked out, they met hunters. One of them had mercy on the women by agreeing to accompany them to the town of Pulka on June 10, where they met Nigerian soldiers. With the help of the soldiers, they contacted their relatives.

In Sambisa, they saw about 10 of the former Chibok schoolgirls. Some are not willing to escape, she said.

Irmiya said she was taken away by four jihadists with another six girls to Sambisa. "Later they married me to one of them," she said. She was 13 years old when she was abducted.

"I lost two of my children due to lack of medical care in Sambisa," she said. "I am happy to return home and willing to go back to school."

Her father said, "We are happy to see her again. Because we did not expect to see her again. We have been praying for her." —Zakariya Musa, EYN Media



Rebecca Irmiya (at right) was freed with her eight-month-old child, nine years after her abduction from the Gulak area of Adamawa State in northeast Nigeria. At left is the director of the EYN Women's Ministry, Mrs. Hassana Habu.



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Salamatu Billi

EYN president Joel S. Billi was part of a delegation of Nigerian church leaders who took part in an ecumenical visit to Rome in late May. Salamatu Billi posted this photo of her husband shaking hands with the Pope on Facebook, celebrating “a great ecumenical experience.”

Disaster grants focus on Ukraine

Recent grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) have focused on Ukrainian refugees. As of the end of May, more than \$222,000 in donations were earmarked for the Ukraine response.

- \$100,000 supports the Church World Service work with Ukrainian refugees sheltering in Moldova.
- \$25,000 supports the L’Arche International response to Ukrainians with disabilities in Poland, Lithuania, and inside Ukraine.
- \$5,000 supports Child Life Disaster Relief programming for an orphanage in Chernivtsi, Ukraine, which had 27 children as of the time of the grant announcement, more than half newly orphaned from the war.

Other EDF grants:

\$50,000 continues funding for Proyecto Aldea Global hurricane recovery programming following Hurricanes Eta and Iota, which hit Honduras in 2020.

- \$8,000 funds a Brethren Disaster Ministries short-term rebuilding response in western Kentucky beginning this October. Volunteers will respond to the 2021 Kentucky winter storms in partnership with Fuller Center Disaster Rebuilders.

- \$5,000 has gone to Eglise des Freres au Congo to support families displaced by violence.

GFI grants for agriculture

The Global Food Initiative (GFI) made several grants in the first months of 2022:

- \$15,000 supports the Soybean Value Chain Project of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria.
- \$9,900 supports La Fundación Brethren y Unida (FBU-the United and Brethren Foundation) in Ecuador, an organization that arose from former Church of the Brethren mission work in the 1950s.
- \$4,500 supports community gardens in Ecuador, one in Llano Grande connected with a church that was founded by the Church of the Brethren and currently is United Methodist, the other a church in San Isidro de Cajas affiliated with the Church of God.
- \$4,956 supports a Dryland Vegetable Production Workshop in Gitega, Burundi, in collaboration with THARS (Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services).
- \$4,200 supports a community garden in Circle, Alaska, supported by Bill and Penny Gay of Pleasant Dale Church of the Brethren in Decatur, Ind.

- \$2,943.47 supports Lybrook Community Ministries construction of a hoop house at a Navajo Senior Center and Chapter House.
- \$2,917 supports the community garden of Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo.
- \$2,500 supports the community garden of Five Gates Church in Rockford, Ill.
- \$1,350 supports the community garden of Friendship Church of the Brethren in Linthicum, Md.

Brethren Volunteer Service changes

BVS is changing its orientation and placement process, beginning with this year’s summer and fall units.

Volunteers will engage in a process to be pre-placed prior to the start of orientation. Orientation, in turn, will be shortened from three weeks to one week. The monthly stipend will increase from \$100 a month to \$250 a month, increasing to \$300 a month for a second-year volunteer.



Children's Disaster Services

A team of six Children’s Disaster Services volunteers traveled to Uvalde, Texas, to provide specialized assistance to children and families impacted by the school shooting in May. The volunteers were part of a specially trained group responding to critical events that involve the loss of lives, called the Critical Response Childcare Team. The team was honored to be present with the children when President and Dr. Biden visited with families in the center.