



Hi, my name is Giorgia Ferrari, I'm 18 years old and I'm Italian.

I would like to give my support to these wonderful girls who will have a great opportunity thanks to the Batonga Foundation. I started putting my interest in women's education during my last year of school that I spent in the US for an exchange program. Now that I am back in my country I want to keep caring about this topic and I was really happy to hear from UNGEI that girls from Benin have the opportunity to go to school thanks to the foundation.

I want to give my support by telling these girls that you're not alone, the world stands with you. Thanks to the school I had the change to learn something about your country and its bad situations; everyday schools, teachers and classmates help me to learn something more to be better, smarter, or simply happier.

I'm sure education will give you a better life; little by little you will be able to change what's wrong in your country, because I think culture is power.

Sometimes school can be hard, that's why I suggest you to never give up, because when you achieve something you thought was hard, you will have the most sensational satisfaction in life.

The world is here to help you and all yours fellow citizens, because education is a right.

Girls, try to help each other and do the best you can, this is going to be a very important "adventure" for your future.

Giorgia Ferrari

Bologna - Italy

Dear Angelique,

Thank you very much for your commitment to the noble cause of girls' education. My opinion is that Africa could not develop without addressing gender issues in education. Actually, the female population is bigger than the male one (in my dear country Senegal) so it would be utopian to achieve Africa development when its largest population is unfairly quarantined into ignorance and become victims of violence. In this respect, the promotion of girls' education is a must. But girls' schooling is not an end in itself; all forms of violence against them should be banished at school and at home. For me education without protection will not take girls far in their "life changing journey". Considering that, all girls' rights and protection should be respected and realized by all community members who accompany local authorities in development issues. Dear Angelique, I think that you have to tackle the nature of education (in terms of curricula, programs, teachers and school environment) African girls should be offered.

With warm regards,

Amath CAMARA

Learning Adviser

Plan Senegal



Dear Benin girls,

My name is Patience Namanya Gulu from Uganda. I volunteer most of the times with the Girls Education Movement (GEM-Uganda). It was not easy for me to attain an education. Recently I graduated from the Makerere University with a bachelor's degree in the Social Sciences. My advice to girls is- Let them be focused, believe in themselves, work hard and be determined to face the challenges that come their way. Sometimes taking a risk is good if you know that you are going to reap great benefits out of the risk.

I have succeeded because I believed in myself and actually understood my rights and fought for them. Be firm, One day, one time, you will reach there.

Patience Namanya Gulu

Dear colleagues,

This is my word of encouragement to the 229 girls who wish to continue with their education by attending secondary school in Benin.

Studying has no boundaries. Learning begins at birth until death. Education improves our way of life, it enables us to participate equally and benefit profitably. It makes us confident in the way we do things. It improves the way we think and reason. I encourage you to have a vision and an inspiration for your studies. What do you want to be? Why do you want to be what you want to be? and How will you become what you want to be? When you get started on your studies you will get answers to many of your questions. Do not be intimidated by others, by your status. You are able, you can make it and you will make it.

Bye for now

Hajara

Dear Angélique Kidjo

Thank you for updating me. My message for the girls is

“Education is not only reading books or getting information from different sources but it is a process of understanding and exploring our own potential and using this potential to make our future bright. Educating a female means educating the whole family because today's girls are tomorrow's mothers. When we educate girls today then we can secure our future generation. As mothers they can develop



their children from a very young age”. I wish all the girls who are going to join the school with you and I pray for their success and quality education.

Thanks

BABAR KHAN

Faculty

Aga Khan University

Professional Development Centre North

University Road Konodas Gilgit

To the young women in Benin as you begin your secondary school education:

“You must do the thing you think you cannot do.”

- Eleanor Roosevelt

Best of luck in your studies from:

**The Center for the Study of Conflict and the Global Focus Action League of
Chatham College for Women of Chatham University (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania USA)**

Dear lovely girls - our hope,

We are looking to you to learn how to develop your way of thinking, to be more confident and to prepare yourselves to be good citizens. You can be the leaders who make your world different from previous times. Let's do it with joy.

Cheers,

Nuntawun Yuntadilok

Hola!

That is hello in Spanish. I grew up in a small country called Colombia in South America. I was a single mom at age 18. The only thing that allowed me to survive with my baby was my education and the support of my parents. I finished high school, went on to college and I am now a successful researcher. My son is 18 years old now and just left home to go to college himself.



Please trust your education!! Do not give up. Do not give in. You can do it.

Monica

I am sending these words of support to the group of young girls selected to continue their studies. I just would like to share with you my own experience. My mother was illiterate but was lucky to join my dad in his duty stations abroad as an African military in the French army. She started learning to read and write. Her exposure to the World made her understand very early that the only way to protect women from gender discrimination and promote women is education. She sacrificed her life for my three sister's education and mine. While doing so she was blamed by the rest of the family as somebody who believes too much in education. All of us reached University - one is a specialized medical doctor in ophthalmology and one has a Master's degree from an American university. All of us have outstanding jobs, earn substantial salaries and are now providing for our cousins whose parents did not fight to give them a good education. Please make University your target. All the best for your new opportunities.

Adama

Hi

I personally believe that educating the girl child means educating the nation. Women makes up more than 53% of the world's population and children spend more time with their mothers than they do with their fathers. Almost every thing that children learn for the first 5 years in their life they learn it from their mothers. That is why most of the first words pronounced by toddlers is MAMA. No doubt there is an African proverb that goes thus MOTHER IS SUPREME. Have courage sisters do not stumble we are with you and the Almighty and everlasting God bless and see you through.

Dr. Ayukegba Ako

We in the Commonwealth Secretariat wish you all the success in this endeavour! We are sure all of you will complete your education and be bright and responsible citizens of Africa!!

Jyotsna Jha

Advisor, Gender & Education and HIV/AIDS
Social Transformation Programmes Division
Commonwealth Secretariat



Dear Benin Girls,

I know that it must be hard for you to decide something this big by choosing education -learning, as your options. But you know what? If you do work hard and pursue your dreams, I know someday the world will have a chance to be a better place.

Whatever you believe in, stick to it. And try to make the best of yourself.

We are, especially me in Jakarta right now, really proud of you. It's a brave decision, and I know you're brave too.

Love always,

Charyza

Education opens our minds and give us a lot of opportunities.

Hard work and learning always counts – it helped me so much although I live in a very turbulent environment, in Serbia where we suffered through wars and deep economic, political, social crises and poverty for a long time.

Never forget that education is giving us FREEDOM!

Wishing you all the best and offering all possible help from my side as a teacher, trainer and coach,

Love for all,

Sladja



Sladjana Milosevic
Managing Director
Mobilis Ltd, Training and Consulting



My Dear Batonga Girls,

As you will begin this exciting and wonderful journey that will expand your beautiful wings, remember you are not alone; the women of the world love you and believe in you.

I don't know you but I know you will have the power and the strength to learn, grow and support each other. You are the hope of your family, your communities, your country and the world. I believe that each one of you will build a better world for yourselves and for the future generations of girls in your surroundings.

Use the power of knowledge to love and encourage one another and use it to make the difference in a world that needs you. Don't allow the tiredness, the adversity or the environment to discourage you because the only encouragement that you need is yours and it comes from within your heart and desire.

Know that many women like me are proud of you already and would love to have the happiness and honor to see you achieving all your dreams through your education.

Many hugs and kisses for all of you,

Alejandra Rolon-Campise

Many thanks for the initiative taken by your organisation to educate the girl child. I hope you will agree with me that be it the girl child, street child, sex commercial worker, child soldier (- everyone has the right to an education.)

These are difficult issues to handle but must be tackled.

You will surely agree with me that in many homes and cultures there is no rejoicing when a girl child is born, cultural practices may limit her potential or better still mutilate her. We have just opened an Adult literacy center in Kumba. Hope to brief you with what we are going to do there.

Sir Pius Ngoeh



Greetings UNGEI Partners and Friends,

I would like to say thank you for the message received yesterday.

As mentioned in your message I strongly believe in educating young women. It is good to know that we are eagerly working towards a common goal which is educating young women as well as children. As we are aware some countries are facing big problems which include war, HIV/AIDS, poverty, floods to mention but a few. I believe education is very important to eradicate many world problems.

I would like to congratulate the Batonga Organization for the job well done of taking the young women back to school and thereby recognizing the importance of education. I also congratulate the young women for taking the step of going back to school and continuing their education.

Can you please tell my fellow young women that the future of this world lies in our hands because we are the future leaders. Even if they face many challenges of which may include segregation, being looked down upon, not being in the same age group of other scholars; do not be discouraged because education is more important than these challenges.

When they finish school they will be admired and respected. They must be determined and focused because they will take full responsibilities of themselves. They must know that they are special and let them not allow anybody to look down on them.

I am behind them with other young people who are fighting for the importance of education.

Please do not forget to pray.

I wish you all the best.

May God bless you.

Chinyanta J. Chimba



Dear students,

I would like to wish you the best of luck for this school year and I encourage you to continue your studies for as long as possible. The more you learn, the more your minds will expand and the more opportunities you will have.

Even once you leave school, I think you will find that in life, there is no end to learning.

Sincerely,

Amber Apse

Development Officer (Rwanda)
Africa Branch
Canadian International Development Agency

We can't refuse that if you want to be wealthy you must have a good education. We can also get the knowledge from school. Do not ever think that school is not useful, because of your homework and exams. Homework and exams are just for getting the grade for your report book, so you can pass the class. But education is for facing your life. You can't know how big the world is, without learning. Knowledge is not just about science or social studies, there is a lot we can learn everyday at school. We can also learn about friendship. I can't say more because I'm still a student. Just remember that people will appreciate us if we are educated.

shirin umri