

< **Nigeria**

FROM A1

GIRL DESCRIBES ESCAPE FROM KIDNAPPERS

276 still missing three weeks later

forest. Three weeks later, 276 girls are still missing. At least two have died of snakebite, and about 20 others are ill, according to an intermediary who is in touch with their captors.

The plight of the kidnapped girls—and the failure of the Nigerian military to find them—has drawn international attention to an escalating Islamic extremist insurrection that has killed more than 1,500 so far this year.

Boko Haram, whose name means “Western education is sinful,” has claimed responsibility for the mass kidnapping and threatened to sell the girls.

The 16-year-old was among about 50 students who escaped on the day of the kidnapping, and she spoke for the first time in a telephone interview with The Associated Press.

The AP also interviewed about 30 others, including Nigerian government and Borno state officials, school officials, six relatives of the missing girls, civil society leaders and politicians in northeast Nigeria, and soldiers in the war zone.

Many spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing that giving their names would also reveal the girls' identities and subject them to possible stigmatization in this conservative society.

The Chibok girls school is in the remote and sparsely populated Northeast region of Nigeria, a country of 170 million with a growing chasm between a north dominated by Muslims and a south by Christians.

Like all schools in Borno state, Chibok, an elite academy of both Muslim and Christian girls, had been closed because of increasingly deadly attacks by Boko Haram. But it had reopened to allow final-year students to take exams.

At about 11 p.m. April 14, a local government official, Bana Lawal, received a warning via cellphone. He was told that about 200 heavily armed militants in 20 pickup



A newspaper is held up during a rally for the abducted girls on Tuesday in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria.

trucks and more than 30 motorcycles were headed toward his town.

Lawal alerted the 15 soldiers guarding Chibok, he said. Then he roused sleeping residents and told them to flee into the bush and the nearby hills. The soldiers sent an SOS to the nearest barracks, about 30 miles away, an hour's drive on a dirt road. No help arrived.

When the militants showed up two hours after the warning, the soldiers fought valiantly, Lawal said. Although they were outnumbered and outgunned, they held off the insurgents for an hour and a half, desperately waiting for reinforcements. One was killed. They ran out of ammunition and fled for their lives.

As dawn approached, the extremists headed for the boarding school. There were too many gunmen to count, said the girl who escaped.

So, even after the students realized the men were Islamic extremists, they obediently sat in the dirt. The men set the school ablaze and herded the girl's group onto three pickup trucks.

The trucks drove through three villages, but then the car of fighters following them broke down. That's when the girl and her friend jumped out. Others argued, the 16-year-old remembered. But one student said, “We should go! Me, I am coming down. They can shoot me if they want, but I don't know what they are going to do with me otherwise.”

As they jumped, the car behind started up. Its lights came on. The girls did not know if the fighters could see them, so they ran into the bush and hid.

“We ran and ran, so fast,” said the girl. “That is how I saved myself. I had no time to be scared, I was just running.”

A few other girls clung to low-hanging branches and waited until the vehicles had passed. Then they met up in the bush and made their way back to the road. A man on a bicycle came across them and accompanied them back home.

There, they were met with tears of joy. “I'm the only girl in my

family, so I hold a special place and everyone was so happy,” the girl said. “But that didn't last long.”

The day after, the Defense Ministry put out a statement quoting the school principal, saying soldiers had rescued all but eight of the girls. When the principal denied it, the ministry retracted its statement.

With confidence in the military eroded, the residents of Chibok pooled their money, bought fuel for motorcycles and headed into the dangerous Sambisa Forest, which sprawls over more than 23,000 square miles and is known to shelter extremist hideouts.

The searchers appealed to the few soldiers there to accompany them into the forest. They refused, one of them said. Parents wondered why they came within a couple of miles of their daughters, yet the military did not. Many soldiers say they are demoralized, because Boko Haram is more heavily armed and better equipped, while they get little more than a meal a day.

Some of the kidnapped girls have been forced into “marriage” with their Boko Haram abductors, sold for a nominal bride price of \$12, according to parents who talked with villagers.

Others have been taken

Key developments

More abductions: There were reports Tuesday that another group of 11 girls had been kidnapped in the villages of Warabe and Wala in northeastern Borno state. State police commissioner Tanko Lawal confirmed the kidnappings. A resident said the girls, ages 12 to 15, were dragged into the forest Monday night by men armed with AK-47s, according to local journalists.

U.S. help: Amid growing outrage at the Chibok girls' prolonged captivity, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan on Tuesday announced he has accepted a U.S. offer to help in the search, including security personnel and unidentified assets.

Global concern: The British government has also expressed concern over the fate of the missing students, and protests have erupted in major Nigerian cities and New York.

The Associated Press

country's Western-style constitution.

In the meantime, the parents are frantic. Through sobs and jagged gasps for air, the mother of a missing 15-year-old said she had lost confidence in the authorities.

“I am so very sad because the government of Nigeria did not take care of our children and does not now care about our children,” said the mother, who spoke on condition of anonymity to protect her daughter. “All we have left is to pray to God to help them and help us.”

The only way to get the girls back is through negotiation, according to an Islamic scholar who has mediated the release of previous hostages. The scholar, who remained anonymous because his position receiving messages from Boko Haram is sensitive, said the militants are willing to free the girls for a ransom, but have not specified how much.

The 16-year-old who escaped keeps thinking of her friends, and wondering why she was able to get away while they are still captive. She is at times afraid and at times angry.

“I am really lucky and I can thank God for that,” she said. “But God must help all of them ... Their parents are worrying. Every day, everyone is crying.”

across borders to Cameroon and Chad, they said. Those accounts could not be verified, but child marriage is common in northern Nigeria, where it is allowed under Islamic law, but not the

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Week 2

EXPLORING ASIA: ASIAN CITIES — GROWTH AND CHANGE

GROWTH AND PEOPLE IN BANGALORE, INDIA

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Editor's note: This article is the second of five featuring pieces by Dr. Anand Yang, Dr. H Hazel Hahn, Dr. Kam Wing Chan, and Nathaniel Trumbull.

“Development” and “growth” are often imagined as categorically good things for both people and economies. This is especially so in the developing world, also called the Global South. When economies develop and cities grow, many benefits are said to follow: the levels of poverty decrease, opportunities are equalized and people's lives become generally better.

And yet such benefits often obscure the more complicated realities on the ground. Development and growth certainly provide opportunities for some, but can also exacerbate existing social stratifications and make life more difficult for others.

Meet Ms. Muniyamma, a woman in her mid-20s living and working in Bangalore, India's third most populous city. Her genuine smile brightens any room, and her simple cotton *sari* drapes over her small build. She and her husband have migrated to Bangalore from the outlying rural districts to begin their own business: selling tender coconut water (known as *elaneeru* in the local language, Kannada) to thirsty customers.

Elaneeru is one of nature's most refreshing and nutritious drinks, consumed throughout tropical countries such as India, Brazil and Indonesia and often sold by small scale street vendors like Muniyamma. *Elaneeru* sellers often harvest their few coconut trees in rural villages outside of metropolitan cities. Every few weeks, Muniyamma and her husband travel to the village to collect their crop, transport the fruits back to the city and set up “shop” on their bicycle or on the side of the road. When approached by a customer, Muniyamma expertly slices off the top of the tender coconut with her machete. She drops a plastic straw into the opening, and “*aahh!*” Delicious, nutritious, economical goodness. Customers happily meander away, revitalized and their thirst naturally quenched.

But lately, *elaneeru* sellers like Muniyamma and her husband are facing tough challenges due to factors such as globalization, development, growth and progress. We often hear of opportunities that have been created in Bangalore recently because of the influx of jobs, global capital and foreign investment; but their beneficial effects have not spread across all of Bangalore's populations or neighborhoods.

How has all this development and growth transformed the city? Over the past 25 years or so, extraordinary change has been the one constant in Bangalore's social and physical landscape. The advancement of information technology and biotechnology industries—as well as its already established position as a hub for research and development, space industries and academic institutions—have redrawn the city's boundaries and shifted its priorities. Older one story homes are torn down to construct glass and steel high-rises. Ancient trees are uprooted to make way for more paved roads and freeways at incredible cost. Migrants from neighboring states as well as across India now journey to Bangalore to work in the booming construction and services sectors.

All these and other changes affect how people live, work and play—and even what they eat and drink. For example, upper class residents now delight in an expanded range of leisure activities such as frequenting restaurants and multistory shopping malls. With their purchasing power, holidays abroad, elite education and access to information, this segment enjoys a level of conspicuous consumption that is beginning to resemble what in the West is considered “the good life.”

Bangalore's city limits too have quickly expanded into the surrounding rural areas. Vast tracts of farmland, like the one in which Muniyamma harvests her coconut trees, have slowly transformed into semi-urban centers, bustling with new construction and big dreams of quick wealth. Even seemingly personal choices—like what to eat or drink—have been subjected to the pressures of development and growth. Whereas people in the past might have drunk *elaneeru* to quench their thirst, the international media and glossy advertisement campaigns of today encourage the newly wealthy to “modernize”



Green coconut water seller Muniyamma (center) with UW Study Abroad Students.

their tastes toward bottled water and name brand carbonated drinks.

Many people in Bangalore and all around the Global South are contemplating thought-provoking questions. How might these large-scale factors affect the chances of a small-scale vendor like Muniyamma to secure a good livelihood for herself and her family? Are there ways to globalize and develop economically and still include all segments of society?

Muniyamma's story reminds us that when it comes to development and growth, there is no single story to tell, no composite glimpse of “success” to herald. The reality, in Bangalore as in all places around the world, is that rapid changes are great in some ways and not so great in other ways. It all depends on whose lives we are considering and how inclusive our lens might be.

What does Muniyamma think of all this? What might she dream for herself and her family? Perhaps she imagines being reunited with her two children who are in school, living with their grandparents 100 miles away. The family has decided that this arrangement is better for the kids instead of the unpredictable city life their parents navigate. Perhaps Muniyamma dreams of a bigger coconut yield or more thirsty customers. On a good day, she will take home 150 or 200 rupees (about \$US 2-3). For now, she hopes to sell the remaining tender coconuts piled high in her straw basket, eat well and sleep soundly in preparation for another day.