

International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School

2003 Annual Report

February 5, 2004

“When communities are not involved in establishing, supporting, or overseeing a school, the school is often seen as something alien. Villagers refer to ‘the government’s’ school, not ‘our’ school. In *Voices of the Poor* people often complain of absent or abusive teachers and demands for illegal fees to get their children into school or to influence exam results. A study of schooling in rural Nigeria found that villagers often stopped expecting anything from government schools, shouldering the burden themselves.”

– *The World Bank, Making Services Work for Poor People*, ch. 7, p. 15.

This is the second annual report delivered by the International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School (BMN/PS).

As was the case last year, although we have so many great things to report, we did suffer one major loss in 2003. Adele “Susi” Serrins, a dedicated friend and supporter of BMN/PS, died on September 12, 2003. Aside from her financial contributions on behalf of the schools, Susi Serrins also established a wonderful personal relationship with BMN/PS. Susi was sick for a number of years and many people at the schools and in the villages prayed regularly for her good health. Susi corresponded with Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor, the school’s director, on a number of occasions and regularly told me how uplifting she found it to know that people halfway around the world were thinking about and praying for her. Her loss touched many people in Nigeria and I dedicate all of the many other great things in this report to her memory.

Without question, our biggest accomplishment this year was successfully expanding this project to a second village. BMN/PS was founded in Bodo City and we started working this year with an extension campus in the village of Bane, about 30 minutes drive from Bodo City. Bane is the home village of the hanged Ogoni writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and the school there is directed by one of his half-sisters. The two schools have established excellent working relations with one another and the Bane campus has already made great progress on the construction of its new classroom building. My sincere thanks to Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor and Leelee Wiwa Tanen for all of their hard work on behalf of the Bane school.

In addition to expanding this project to Bane, we also developed closer relations this year with two important partners. First, we continued to develop and expand our partnership with the Indianapolis-based children’s charity The Timmy Foundation. The Timmy Foundation continues to provide us with valuable logistical support and they continue to act as our financial agent which means that American donors can receive 501(c)3 tax deductions for contributions to this project. Special thanks to Dr. Chuck Dietzen, Scott Keller, Doris Wright and everyone else there for all of their help. Second, we continued to develop and expand our relationship with Dr. Owens Wiwa, the younger

brother of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the man who first got me interested in this part of the world. Owens is a Bane native and he has personally delivered our last two rounds of funding as well as other materials for both schools. We thank him for his efforts on behalf of this project as well.

We also established, for the first time, in 2003 a partnership with Gardens Presbyterian Church in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. This is my mom's church and they raised more than \$500 to provide tuition fee scholarships for poor children at both schools during their summer vacation Bible school program. Combined with another donation, the \$600 we sent to both schools as scholarship funding will enable about 30 extremely poor children in each village to attend school this year. Thanks to my mother Sharon and to Tracey Eller at the church for making this happen. Those of you reading this who are active church members, please get in touch if you think your church could get involved in a similar way or talk to your ministers about helping this project.

During the year, the Tijen Pegg Mother's Committee in Bodo City successfully initiated their own effort to raise local funds for the purchase of a generator for the school. After consulting with some other members of the International Friends Committee, we contributed matching funds which enabled the school to purchase a generator in January 2004. We thank all the mothers for their hard work and initiative on this project, as well as for their continued strong support of the school more generally.

Thanks to your great generosity, 2003 was our best fundraising year ever. From March 2003 – January 2004, we raised just over \$10,500 in funding for the schools. Thanks so much for your incredible support. Words alone cannot express the joy and appreciation that both Tijen and I and everyone in the two villages in Nigeria feels about your continued support for this grassroots project. As in previous years, our fundraising efforts succeeded for two main reasons: 1) we were able to retain the continued support of many existing donors; and 2) we were able to attract the support of many new donors (about 25 new contributors in 2003). A special word of thanks here to everyone who has been behind this project since its initial inception in the fall of 2000.

Since our last annual report, we have delivered two additional rounds of funding to the schools. Dr. Owens Wiwa delivered \$4,000 of funding in March 2003 and \$4,600 of funding in January 2004. This last round of funding, brought the total amount of money delivered to the two schools to \$20,100. Listed below is a short description of all of our various funding rounds and what they have been used for by the schools (photographs showing the progress made from the first 4 fundraising rounds are available at the <http://www.bebor.org/> website). Please note that the first three rounds of funding just went to the original school in Bodo City. The last two rounds of funding have been evenly divided between Bane and Bodo City.

<u>Round</u>	<u>Date delivered</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Use</u>
1 st	January 2001	\$2,800	Finished previously started 5-classroom primary school building in Bodo City.

2 nd	September 2001	\$4,300	Started 6-classroom nursery school building in Bodo City, built up to roof height.
3 rd	June 2002	\$4,400	More or less finished (put the roof on) the nursery school building in Bodo City.
4 th	March 2003	\$4,000	Finishing touches (floor, plastering walls) on the 6-classroom nursery school building in Bodo City, matching funds for the purchase of a generator for Bodo City, started construction on a new classroom building for the school's Bane extension campus.
5 th	January 2004	\$4,600	Continued work on the new building in Bane, started work on the third building in Bodo City, provided tuition fee scholarship funding for poor children at both schools.

I will personally deliver our next round of funding to the schools in June 2004. Dr. Chuck Dietzen from the Timmy Foundation will accompany us so he can see the schools and the villages and meet the children himself. The exact dates of our trip are not yet set, but they will certainly be in the first half of June. Given Dr. Chuck's schedule, this will be a short trip of about one week's duration. If any of you are interested in joining us, please let me know. I can't promise you great museums or stunning architecture, but visiting rural villages in the Niger Delta is a truly unforgettable experience. You would be warmly welcomed and the kids would love to see you. If you are interested, please think about joining us and get in touch with me about it.

Thanks to great support from Eric Romack, we also substantively upgraded the school's internet website in 2003. If you haven't visited the site recently, please visit <http://www.bebor.org/> and see the improvements for yourself. More than 300 people have visited the school's website since it was revamped and upgraded in August 2003.

We also had two very nice pieces of local media coverage in 2003 thanks to our friends at The *Indianapolis Star*. Dan Carpenter wrote a great op-ed column about the school project and the larger Ogoni situation as a whole called "Hoosier hand lent in ripped-off land" which appeared in the May 28, 2003 *Indianapolis Star*. Subsequently, I was interviewed by Priya Abraham for a piece entitled "Professor, wife help out Nigerian village" which appeared in the June 26, 2003 *Indianapolis Star*. If you would like to see photocopies of either of these articles, please let me know. Thanks to Dan and Priya for the coverage and especially to Dan for his beautiful writing.

In addition to this coverage, I was also able to publish an article on the school project entitled "Scholarship and Engagement: Building a Primary School in Rural

Nigeria” which appeared in the October 2003 edition of *PS: Politics and Political Science*, the teaching and service journal of the American Political Science Association. Thanks to Steve Yoder for his editorial assistance here.

Most importantly, when my wife Tijen and I started this project in October 2000, we both knew that the school would ultimately succeed or fail at the local village level. In terms of the World Bank quote at the start of this report, the schools in Bane and Bodo City were both started locally by people in those communities. Our support has enabled them to reach their goals much faster than they otherwise could have, but the goals and ideas were theirs to begin with. We remain deeply impressed by the quality, vision and integrity of our local partners in Nigeria. For their great leadership and hard work throughout 2003, we owe a special debt of gratitude to Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor, the school’s director, Patrick Naagbantou, a member of its Board of Governors, and Leelee Wiwa Tanen, the director of the Bane school. We also thank the other members of the school’s Board of Governors, the teachers and staff at both schools and the members of the Tijen Pegg Mother’s Committee. The strong support we continue to receive from King Felix Sunday Bebor Berebon and the entire Bodo City Council of Chiefs remains invaluable.

Finally, we sincerely thank each and every one of you for your past, present and future support of this project. With the exceptions of one church donation and one corporate matching fund donation, everything we have been able to do with this project has resulted directly from the support of individual donors like you. Thanks so much. Please get in touch if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Best wishes,

Scott Pegg,
Chairman, International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School