

International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School

2011 Annual Report

November 29, 2012

For oil states in the Gulf of Guinea region, “people no longer count in most circumstances and in most locations.... the population has been deemed expendable, and no resources or attention are lavished, even fruitlessly, on it.... As often as they could, governments delegated to other parties the fulfillment of popular needs; those not picked up by a non-state actor simply went unfulfilled.... The rural setting and its inhabitants in particular have been utterly forgotten, ejected, as it were, from the realm of state obligations.” – Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf of Guinea*, pp. 101-103.

This is the tenth in a series of annual reports delivered by the International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School (BMN/PS). Previous annual reports are posted online in the documents and reports section of the school’s <http://www.bebor.org> website.

As was the case in 2010, we again suffered some delays in getting our work done or having the use of our funds properly documented which slowed the pace of what we could achieve for our schools in Nigeria. As has been the case in the past, if we are forced to choose between delays to our work or compromising our principles on accountability to speed the process along, we will always opt for going slow and getting it right over going fast to make our numbers ostensibly look better even though quality suffers.

In terms of numbers, 2011 appears initially to be a slow or down year. We were only able to send \$6,000 in one round of funding to the school in Bodo in June 2011 to re-roof the nursery school building with a rust-proof aluminum zinc roof. This compares to two rounds of funding (one for each school in Bane and Bodo) worth a total of \$12,000 in 2010 and to a longer run average of \$11,880 in annual funding provided to the schools from 2006 – 2010. By the end of 2011, the International Friends Committee had provided BMN/PS with \$98,500 worth of funding. Including the non-scholarship contributions of our partners at Stepping Stones Nigeria which funded boreholes for drinking water at the schools in Bane and Bodo brings this figure to \$110,600.

The reason that I say 2011 appears initially as a down year and not that it was a down year is that many of the delays we encountered during 2011 were ultimately resolved successfully and this has already enabled us to send three rounds of funding to the schools in 2012. If 2011 and 2012 are taken together, our average funding over that two year period will be very close to our long-term average over the previous five years. Put differently, 2011 was a down year but the issues which caused it to be a down year were resolved and their resolution directly contributes to making 2012 an up year.

The \$6,000 of funding we provided in 2011 went to the school in Bodo to replace the rusting zinc roof on the six classroom nursery building that we originally built in 2001-2002. As I noted in last year’s annual report, at that time and with a number of subsequent rounds of funding, we simply did not have enough money on hand to install initially a rust-proof aluminum zinc roof which costs about double what an ordinary zinc roof costs. The rough math on this is

that we initially spent \$3,000 to roof this building and that roof lasted for about 9 years. That works out to about \$333 a year to rent something (the original roof) without which we could not have held classes or used that building for any other purpose. At the end of 2011, we had three buildings with rust-proof roofs that should not ever need to be replaced (2 in Bodo, 1 in Bane). We successfully re-roofed the second classroom building in Bane during 2012 and at present only have one classroom building left in Bodo that needs re-roofing.

As was the case in 2010, we did not provide tuition fee scholarship funding to the schools in order to allow our partners at Stepping Stones Nigeria (please see <http://www.stepsstonesnigeria.org> for more information) to operate their own expanded and improved scholarship scheme for the poorest students at our school in Bodo. Stepping Stones increased the number of students covered under its comprehensive scholarship scheme (which, in addition to tuition fees also includes such things as school uniforms and supplies) from 40 to 60. We will continue to engage closely with them to help solve any problems they encounter and to coordinate our work to ensure that we are not unnecessarily duplicating efforts. We will also work closely with them to evaluate our relative successes and failures with this program and make whatever adjustments are needed to ensure that the poorest pupils benefit as much as they can from this effort. We remain grateful to Stepping Stones for all their fantastic and continued support here.

From February 22, 2011 to January 24, 2012, we contributed \$856.33 to our partners at Timmy Global Health (formerly the Timmy Foundation, see <http://www.timmyglobalhealth.org> for more information) as part of the 7% administrative fee they instituted on all of their programs starting in June 2010. Given all of the various services that Timmy provides to us (not the least of which is enabling me not to have to set up my own foundation and report directly to the IRS); I believe this is a fair charge to help ensure their longer-term viability as an organization. We will continue to do everything we can to ensure that the other 93% of your donations go directly to our schools in Nigeria. I personally absorb a lot of costs like postage to mail thank you letters or registering the bebor.org domain name, our local Nigerian partners at the Center for the Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) provide a number of free services and absorb a number of costs themselves and our internet website costs are covered by my cousin Andrew Nelson and his firm Accurate Image, Inc. Anyone, me included, who ever travels to Nigeria to visit the schools, will continue to pay all of their own costs out of pocket with no support coming from donated funds. The overwhelming majority of your donations will always go directly to supporting our programs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The quote at the beginning of this report from my friend and colleague Ricardo Soares de Oliveira illustrates why we still do the work that we do and why we still need your continued support in order to do it. The people in villages like Bane and Bodo and countless others like them throughout the Niger Delta most typically encounter the state at police checkpoints where fighting crime is far less of a priority than extracting bribes from citizens. The state in terms of an entity or organization that builds schools, pays teachers' salaries, establishes rural health clinics, provides clean drinking water or ensures that oil companies comply with environmental laws and regulations simply does not exist for the poor people that we serve in the rural Niger Delta. Our interventions are slow and on a micro-scale but over the past eleven years they have added up to significant, real and tangible improvements for the hundreds of children who attend our schools in Bane and Bodo every year.

Our most immediate priorities for the near future remain completing the physical infrastructure needs at both schools, a goal we have now largely accomplished, other than re-roofing the last school building in Bodo. We will also move forward on construction of the permanent home for the Tijen Pegg Mothers' Association in Bodo and their sewing machine workshop. We will consult closely with our partners at Stepping Stones Nigeria about expanding, modifying or improving the scholarships we provide for the poorest and most vulnerable children in Bodo. We also plan to initiate a pilot health program in Bodo for the 2012-2013 school year. As noted before, there are other projects we would like to undertake in the future such as providing better teacher training, providing nutritious school lunches, installing solar panels for power generation, building a secondary school in Bodo or creating additional income-generating opportunities, but those are our most pressing immediate goals.

We will continue to move forward with this project as we always have by remaining humble, sincere, honest and accountable in our service to some of the poorest people on the planet. We remain indebted to our local partners in Nigeria whose dedication, perseverance and honesty while working on the ground in the villages underlies everything we do. We simply could not do the work we do without them. We also remain indebted to you, our international donors, who remain loyal to this tiny and shoe-string operation that incrementally strives to bring the benefits of primary education to children in the rural Niger Delta. For the second year in a row, let me give a special shout-out to Katie Weaver and her students at Mount Vernon High School in Fortville, Indiana who raised more than \$2,700 of funds for our schools in 2011, our largest single donation that year.

We will obviously do everything we can to maintain your trust and confidence in the coming years so we can continue providing scholarships, classrooms, water, sanitation and improved health for hundreds of beautiful children every year in the villages we serve in the rural Niger Delta.

If you have any questions or need more information, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me via smpegg@iupui.edu or (+1) 317-722-1978. As always, thank you so much for your past, present and hopefully continued support of the school project.

Thanks,

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