

## International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School

### 2004 Annual Report

June 17, 2005

The Niger Delta is “a veritable graveyard of projects, including water systems that do not work, health centers that have never opened and schools where no lesson has ever been taught.” – Christian Aid, *Behind the Mask: The Real Face of Corporate Social Responsibility*, p. 23.

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

I apologize for the delay in sending this annual report. Our 2003 annual report was sent out in February of last year so we are running about 4 months behind that with this report. There are two main reasons for this delay. First, while our incredibly lean and basically non-existent organizational structure is great because it means none of your donations get wasted on administrative expenses, the lack of support staff and infrastructure sometimes shows up in delays like this. Second, and more importantly, we experienced major delays in communications with the schools in Bane and Bodo City about the progress made with our last round of funding which was delivered in June 2004. I did not want to send this report until I could confidently report on how that money had been used and this took some time. The good news is that everything is fine and this extended delay has actually been a positive learning experience both for me and for the school directors in Bane and Bodo City.

Without question, the biggest highlight of the year was the visit that six of us made to the schools in June 2004. Our delegation comprised myself, my wife Tijen, her brother Hakan Demirel, Dr. Chuck Dietzen, the founder and president of the Indianapolis-based children’s charity The Timmy Foundation, Michelle De Young and Dr. Owens Wiwa, a Bane native now living in Toronto and the younger brother of the hanged Ogoni leader Ken Saro-Wiwa. Everyone made it over to the Niger Delta and back just fine and a great time was had by all. Dr. Chuck was made an honorary chief in the village of Bane so we now have honorary chiefs in both villages. One measure of Dr. Chuck’s views about our trip is that we made the front cover of the Timmy Foundation’s annual report – visit <http://www.timmyfoundation.org/TimmyAnnualReport03.pdf> to see or get a copy for yourself. Both schools had major receptions for us and I was able to formally cut the ribbon to open the new classroom building in Bane. Tijen and Michelle had a wonderful meeting with the women of the Tijen Pegg Mothers’ Association in Bodo City while the rest of us were treated to fresh palm wine by the family of Victor Gima, a member of the Bodo City school’s Board of Governors. It was great for the women to see another woman on our trip besides just Tijen and I hope some other women will join us next time. A special treat for me this trip was seeing the Gerry Neils Memorial Band (named after my late uncle who was a great supporter of this project) play live. It’s an all-drum children’s band and they can bring some noise. We had a

wonderful and productive trip and I sincerely hope some more of you can come with us in the future.

One highlight of our 2004 trip was seeing the growth and vibrancy of the Tijen Pegg Mothers' Association (TPMA). This group was originally established to give women an institutionalized voice in the school's governance. The TPMA in Bodo City has already successfully convinced the Board of Governors to find another location for the nursery school building so it was closer to the center of the village and initiated its own fundraising effort (which we matched) to purchase a generator. On this trip we met for the first time the newly-established TPMA in Bane. Both groups are organized, motivated and dynamic and we are extremely proud that the women have taken such an active role in both schools' governance. We are especially happy to note that the TPMA in Bodo City has just opened a Skills Acquisition Center where literate mothers are teaching illiterate mothers how to read and mothers with particular skills in sewing or farming certain crops are trying to pass those skills onto others.

For the 2004 calendar year, we delivered \$10,600 in funding to the schools. Dr. Owens Wiwa delivered \$4,600 of funding in January 2004 and we brought \$6,000 of funding with us in June 2004. This last round of funding brought the total amount of money delivered to the two schools to \$26,100. 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. Others will be coming soon as the site is presently being upgraded by Eric Romack). Please note that the first three rounds of funding just went to the original school in Bodo City. The last three 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 <sup>st</sup>	January 2001	\$2,800	Finished previously started 5-classroom primary school building in Bodo City.
2 <sup>nd</sup>	September 2001	\$4,300	Started 6-classroom nursery school building in Bodo City, built up to roof height.
3 <sup>rd</sup>	June 2002	\$4,400	More or less finished (put the roof on) the nursery school building in Bodo City.
4 <sup>th</sup>	March 2003	\$4,000	Finishing touches (floor, plastering walls) on 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 <sup>th</sup>	January 2004	\$4,600	Finished 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.

6 <sup>th</sup>	June 2004	\$6,000	Continued work on the third building in Bodo City, started work on an extension to the second building in Bane.
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There were some delays in both utilizing and reporting back to us on the utilization of our last round of funding. In Bane, the delay was principally related to the fact that Leelee Wiwa Tanen, the school director, had her second child and it was a difficult pregnancy. In Bodo City, Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor, the school director, got married in August 2004 (Congratulations, Moses and Lessi!!). Construction in Bodo City was also delayed because the project supervisor had to leave for a job in the city of Calabar before work was completed and construction was not finished until he returned. I have recently received photographs and accounting statements from each school and can now update you on the progress made. In the case of Bane, the school decided to add a 4 classroom extension to the 5 classroom building we opened in June 2004. This extension comes out at a perpendicular angle from the current building. The entire foundation was laid and construction reached somewhere around waist level before the funding ran out. In the case of Bodo City, the school already had a foundation in place from our previous round of funding. They decided to fully finish 2 classrooms out of what is going to be a 7 classroom building. This decision was taken principally to address the serious and continuing classroom space crisis they have due to continued increases in student enrollment. Rather than build up the entire building but still have it all unfinished, they decided to finish 2 classrooms and leave the rest of the building as is.

The delays in utilizing and reporting on this funding are a salutary reminder that this project is based in rural Africa and run by rural villagers. Nobody said that is easy. The Christian Aid quote cited at the beginning of this report illustrates just how difficult it is to implement successful development projects in the Niger Delta. While they talk about “schools where no lesson has ever been taught,” we have seen the school in Bodo City grow from 4 pupils in 1995 to close to 1,000 pupils a decade later. We expanded to a second village (Bane) in 2003 and we have now had six rounds of funding used wisely and judiciously. This is something we should all be proud of. That said, the delay was frustrating to me because we have enough money on hand to send them another round of funding. Indeed, we missed two recent opportunities to do so when Dr. Owens Wiwa traveled to Nigeria in both January and May 2005. The delays did, however, give me the chance to impress upon both school directors the importance of reporting their progress back to us. While the project has been delayed, maintaining our principle that the schools will not receive another round of funding until they have successfully accounted for how they used the previous round of funding has been a valuable learning opportunity for them. Now that the schools have reported back to us, I anticipate delivering our next round of funding either personally if I go later this summer or else via Dr. Owens Wiwa who returns in October 2005 to prepare for the commemoration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the hanging of his brother and eight other Ogoni leaders on November 10, 1995.

Our immediate priorities for the schools are three-fold: 1) to finish construction on the third and final classroom buildings for each school; 2) to continue and hopefully increase the tuition scholarship funding we have provided for the poorest pupils in each school; and 3) to provide boys, girls and teachers latrines at each school. The lack of adequate sanitary facilities at the schools bothers me more than anything else right now and I hope we are able to solve this problem soon. As UNICEF points out, “safe water and adequate sanitation are as important to quality education as pencils, books and teachers.” With luck, my cousin Andrew Nelson and I will be going later this summer in an attempt to get the latrine project jump-started. We also hope to continue working directly with the Tijen Pegg Mothers’ Association in both villages on individual small-scale projects.

Our efforts fundamentally depend on two groups of people: our local partners in Nigeria and all of you who are our international supporters. As I wrote last year, we remain deeply impressed by the quality, vision and integrity of our local partners in Nigeria. They are the ones in charge of this project and without their support it would not exist. Special thanks to Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor, Patrick Naagbantou, Leelee Wiwa Tanen, the Board of Governors, teachers and pupils at each school and the Bane and Bodo City Council of Chiefs who have always been great supporters of this project. Our sincere thanks also to all of you who have individually supported this project so generously. The only way this project succeeds is if we maintain the support of a large number of our existing donors and we continue to attract new donors. We have been able to do that now for just about 5 years and we hope to do it for many more years to come. Special thanks to our partners at the Timmy Foundation – Dr. Chuck Dietzen, Scott Keller, Doris Wright and others – who help make all of this possible. At least 95% or more of all the funds we have raised and delivered to Nigeria have come from individual donors. As I sometimes write in my thank you letters, it is really no exaggeration to say that this project would simply collapse without your support. Thanks so much for being a part of this grassroots effort to bring the benefits of primary education to the beautiful and talented children of the Niger Delta.

If you have any questions or need any more information, please don’t hesitate to get in touch via [smpogg@iupui.edu](mailto:smpogg@iupui.edu) or 317-722-1978. Thanks again!

Best wishes,

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