

International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School

2005 Annual Report

June 10, 2006

“The state’s core services in the countryside have been reduced to virtually none.... There is considerable variance across countries and across sectors, but the best estimates suggest that somewhere between a third and two-thirds of education and health services now completely bypass the state and are the result of a combination of donor, NGO, and private sector efforts.” – Nicolas van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*, pp. 96 and 100.

This is the fourth annual report delivered by the International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School (BMN/PS). Previous annual reports are available online through the “how you can help” section of the school’s <http://www.bebor.org> website.

In late 2005, the school in Bodo City suffered the loss of Reverend Baritema B. V. Paago, the founding chairman of its Board of Governors. We appreciate all of Reverend Paago’s many contributions over the years to the school’s growth and development and dedicate this annual report to him.

As many of you know, the political situation in the oil-producing Niger Delta region where the schools are located continued to deteriorate throughout 2005, meriting coverage in such venues as *The Economist*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. The basic problem of huge oil revenues being drawn from the area and the people themselves lacking basic amenities like electricity and potable drinking water remains much as it has been throughout Nigeria’s entire history of oil production. The creation and use of militia groups during the run-up to the 2003 elections has compounded this general situation by bringing a sustained increase in the proliferation of small arms into the region with predictable results in terms of increased levels of criminality and violence. Some of these militia groups have tapped into the framework of legitimate demands for self-determination and resource control which were first put forward by Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People in the early 1990s. In many cases, the use of such language is designed to cloak a more selfish interest in personal enrichment through the “bunkering” or theft of oil. Unfortunately, the use of such rhetoric by militant groups contributes to a sense in some of the media coverage that the entire Niger Delta is one large zone of armed rebellion. Fortunately, this is not the case.

The two villages where the schools are located, Bane and Bodo City, remained calm and peaceful throughout 2005. In marked contrast to the mid-1990s when both of these villages were at the heart of the Ogoni freedom struggle and suffered greatly from the military occupation of the area, today Ogoni is one of the most peaceful areas in the entire Niger Delta. To date, the political instability in the region has not affected our

ability to carry out this project in any way. While the larger region remains a difficult and challenging environment in which to operate, the local relationships and support we have cultivated over the years help ensure that this project remains viable.

The quote above from Nicolas van de Walle illustrates why the mission of this effort to provide the benefits of nursery and primary education to children in the rural Niger Delta remains vital. For most people in the villages where the schools are located, the only time they see or encounter a government official is when a policeman is soliciting a bribe from them at a roadside checkpoint. Government in the sense of building primary schools, rural health clinics or providing basic services like clean drinking water does not exist for most people in the Niger Delta.

Scott Baker and I visited the schools personally in August 2005. We were able to meet with the school directors in both Bane and Bodo City, attend receptions at each school and inspect the progress made at each location. Scott Baker thus became the fourth person to visit the schools personally outside of Tijen and myself. We hope more of you will be able to join us in the future.

A special treat for me on this trip was the dedication of “Chief Prof. Scott Pegg Road” in Bodo City. The road (which is really a muddy dirt path) runs through the eastern end of the village and connects to the Bodo-Bonny Island expressway which is immediately behind two of the school’s buildings and which has been under construction since our visit in 2004. Needless to say, this was a great honor for me, especially since the entire Bodo City Council of Chiefs came out for the road dedication ceremony. Scott Baker arrived after the dedication ceremony and when I took him to see the road a few days later, we had the pleasure of seeing four goats running up it. My sincere thanks to King Felix Sunday Bebor Berebon and the entire Bodo City Council of Chiefs for this fantastic honor which is really a reflection of the larger support provided by the whole community of people and organizations supporting this project.

In conjunction with our trip, we bought \$7,000 of funding to the two schools. This was our only financial contribution to the schools during the 2005 calendar year. As I discussed in my 2004 annual report, we occasionally encounter some delays in both utilizing our funding and reporting back to us with the progress made. We have made some progress in impressing upon both school directors the importance of prompt usage of our funding and prompt reporting of the progress achieved with our funding. Maintaining the 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 remains paramount to the longer-term success of this project, even if it occasionally results in short-term delays. Fortunately, this situation seems to be resolved and we should be able to disburse funding at least twice during the 2006 calendar year.

The \$7,000 of funding included tuition fee scholarship support for the poorest pupils at both schools. In Bane, the school used the building part of their funding to construct a portico or walkway extending across the front of their third and final classroom building. The walkway is designed to prevent rain from entering the

classrooms, something that has apparently been an occasional problem with the second classroom building. In Bodo City, the school used the building part of their funding to continue construction on their third and final classroom building. This building is C or U shaped with construction now completed up to the roof frame around the entire C or U and the roof completed on approximately two-thirds of the building.

As described in our previous annual report, our immediate priorities for the schools remain three-fold: 1) to finish construction on the third and final classroom buildings at each school; 2) to continue and hopefully expand our provision of tuition scholarship funding to the poorest pupils at each school; and 3) to provide boys, girls and teachers latrines at each school. We will also continue to work directly with the women of the Tijen Pegg Mothers' Association in both villages as and when we are able to assist them with the realization of female-led small-scale development projects. There are a number of other potential ideas we would like to support down the road when the building phase of this project is complete, but finishing the final classroom buildings and providing latrines at each location remain our immediate priority goals.

In achieving these goals, we will stay focused, remain humble and small-scale, avoid empire building and continue to promote transparency and accountability. We will also ensure that administrative and organizational costs are absorbed in other ways so 100% of your donations actually reach the schools in Nigeria. I will continue to absorb postage, mailing, bank transfer and other costs myself. Dr. Owens Wiwa and his organization AFRIDA have absorbed some bank transfer and other costs and we thank them for their support here. Our wonderful partners at the Timmy Foundation whose own administrative costs are less than 4% continue to provide their services to this project free of charge. Special thanks to Dr. Chuck Dietzen, Scott Keller, Jessica Trimble, Doris Wright and everyone else at Timmy who help make their support possible. Indiana University continues to host the <http://www.bebor.org> website for free and David Serrins who originally designed the site continues to pay for registering the Bebor domain name. Eric Romack generously donated his time and talent free of charge in 2005 to significantly upgrade the school's website. Thanks to everyone here for ensuring that for every \$100 of funding we raise, the schools in Nigeria receive \$100.

Finally, let me acknowledge the support of the two groups of people the success of this project fundamentally depends on: our local partners in Nigeria and all of you who are our international supporters. In Nigeria, we remain impressed by the commitment and integrity of our local partners. We particularly thank Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor, Patrick Naagbantou, Dr. Owens Wiwa, Steve and Leelee Wiwa Tanen and the respective board of governors, parents, teachers, pupils and Tijen Pegg Mothers Association members in Bane and Bodo City. The Bane and Bodo City Council of Chiefs remain great supporters of the schools and we are grateful for their support. Internationally, we are blessed in that we continue to be able to find enough new donors and keep the support of enough existing donors to maintain support for this project. The overwhelming majority of donations we receive continue to come from individuals and continue to be in the \$50-\$250 range. Our sincere thanks to all of you who have been and hopefully will continue to be supporters of the schools. Together, we are able to

make a tangible and significant difference in the lives of many of the talented and wonderful children of the rural Niger Delta.

If you have any questions or need more information, please don't hesitate to get in touch via smpogg@iupui.edu or 317-722-1978. Thanks again for your support.

Thanks,

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