

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

### **2006 Annual Report**

May 31, 2007

“While other significant predictors of civil war, such as mountainous terrain and per capita income, are impossible or very difficult to change, education is an area that can be changed relatively easily.... For example, based on the findings that increased primary enrollment reduces the probability of civil war, an increase in aid specifically for primary education should result in a decrease in civil war.” – Clayton L. Thyne, “ABCs, 123’s, and the Golden Rule: The Pacifying Effect of Education on Civil War, 1980-1999,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 4, December 2006, p. 751.

“many local governments allocate next to nothing in their budgets to support primary education, and much of the money they do allocate disappears.... local education officials and civil servants said their classrooms had not renovated or repaired a single school building during their entire tenures....” – Human Rights Watch, *Chop Fine: The Human Rights Impact of Local Government Corruption in Rivers State, Nigeria*, p. 50.

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

2006 was our best calendar ever in terms of the funding we were able to deliver to the schools. In two separate funding rounds in April and August 2006, we were able to provide the schools with \$15,900 worth of funding. This compares to our previous best ever calendar year of 2004 with \$10,600 worth of funding. By the end of 2006, we had collectively provided BMN/PS with \$49,000 worth of funding.

Much of the spike in funding here can be attributed to the fact that we received two grants from the Timmy Foundation worth a total of \$6,100. In contrast to the donations that all of you make which are 100% earmarked or dedicated to the BMN/PS fund at the Timmy Foundation, most of the money they raise from other donors or from their high school or college chapters goes to support other projects in such countries as Ecuador and Haiti. These two grants for \$6,100 were the first time that general Timmy Foundation funding had ever been used to help the school project.

\$2,500 worth of Timmy Foundation funding went toward the additional cost of putting a rust-proof roof on the third and final classroom building in Bane. Essentially, your donations paid for the cost of a regular zinc roof and their funds enabled us to provide a more expensive rust-proof roof instead. Along with other funding provided earlier in the year, the third and final classroom building in Bane is now completed on the outside and merely requires window and door frames, dividers and a cement floor on the inside. \$3,600 worth of Timmy Foundation funding enabled us to establish a sewing machine workshop for the Tijen Pegg Mothers’ Association in Bodo. Somewhat to my

dismay, the sewing machine workshop has not yet secured a permanent location. Still, we were able to purchase 30 sewing machines and assorted supplies for the mothers to get them started. We hope that over time this will provide valuable income-generating employment in the community and ultimately help the mothers keep their kids in school.

Other funding we provided through your donations made significant headway towards completing the third and final classroom building in Bodo. We also started construction on boys, girls and teachers latrines at Bodo and presently have the shell of the building constructed and the pit the waste will go into dug out and cemented. All that remains at this point is putting a roof on the structure, putting a cover over the pit and connecting the plumbing between them. Finally, the tuition fee scholarship funding we provided in 2006 should enable somewhere between 25-30 of the poorest students at each school (Bane and Bodo) to attend classes this academic year.

One of the real highlights of the 2006 calendar year was the trip that four of us made to visit the schools in August 2006. Joining me on this trip were Bill Alexy, Andrew Nelson and Susan Shepherd. Their participation brings us up to 7 donors or supporters of the project (outside of Tijen and myself) who have now personally visited the schools in Nigeria. Bill, Andrew and Susan all had a wonderful time and the women in both villages were especially happy to meet Susan who joins my wife Tijen and Michelle De Young as the three women who have visited the schools. During our trip, we were able to see the rust-proof roof go up at the school in Bane and we were able to meet with all of the teachers at the school in Bodo. We also had the pleasure of attending dedication ceremonies for the sewing machine workshop and for the renaming of a street to Dr. Chuck Dietzen Avenue in Bodo. Congratulations, Dr. Chuck! Perhaps the greatest adventure was driving to Aba and purchasing 30 sewing machines there in one of the largest markets in all of Africa and then hiring a mobile police officer to ride with them in the van back to Bodo so we didn't get hassled for bribes by other mobile police officers along the way.

We were also joined for a day on our trip by Gary Foxcroft and Naomi Chapple, a British couple who are running a similar school project in neighboring Akwa Ibom State. Gary and Naomi have just done incredible work there in a very short amount of time (see <http://steppingstonesnigeria.org> to learn more about their project) and it was both informative and therapeutic for me to talk to other people with similar experiences and who face closely related challenges and opportunities. Meeting them was just one of the ways in 2006 that our humble little project seemed connected to a small but growing movement to bring the benefits of primary education to the poorest children in the world. The inaugural winner of an essay contest sponsored by the International Finance Corporation (part of the World Bank) and the *Financial Times* in 2006 was a British professor named James Tooley whose essay was entitled "Educating Amarech: Private Schools for the Poor and the New Frontier for Investors." Tooley's work, which includes case studies from Nigeria, highlights what he terms "the revolution of private schools for the poor." I am presently reading a wonderful and inspirational book called *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin which was on *The New York Times* bestseller list for 16 weeks and is about the first author's efforts to build dozens of

schools for poor children in villages in the Karakoram mountain range of Pakistan and Afghanistan. While large-scale government foreign aid programs are beset by any number of problems, our experience as well as that of people like Gary and Naomi and Greg Mortenson and Jackson Kaguri with the Nyaka school for AIDS orphans in Uganda (see <http://www.nyakaschool.org> for more information) all show that relatively small amounts of financial support from western donors can make an enormous positive difference when it comes to primary education in poor countries.

In our 2005 annual report last year, I highlighted the increasing political instability in the oil-producing Niger Delta and noted that this deteriorating situation had fortunately not affected either of the two villages (Bane and Bodo) where the schools are located. Throughout 2006, the political situation in the Niger Delta continued to deteriorate. More than 70 expatriate oil workers were kidnapped in 2006, including three Filipinos who were kidnapped from the Bonny Island liquefied natural gas facility during our visit to the schools in August 2006. Production losses exceeded 700,000 barrels of oil per day in some months of 2006 which was equivalent to more than a quarter of Nigeria's average 2.5 million barrels/day production in 2005. Car bombs exploded at Agip and Shell facilities in Port Harcourt in December 2006.

The volatile and sometimes violent political climate in the Niger Delta can be explained by a combination of temporary/cyclical features and more permanent/structural dynamics. What has not changed, as I noted last year, is the basic situation where local communities see literally billions of dollars of oil revenues extracted from their lands yet lack the most basic amenities like electricity, functioning primary schools, health clinics and piped drinking water. Rightly or wrongly, many of the militants have concluded that the relevant lesson to draw from the Ogoni's peaceful protests in the 1990s is that non-violent mobilization only brings military occupation, systematic repression and sustained human rights violations. As such, they have turned to violence. Many of them have now discovered that such violence can also be quite lucrative whether it is through the theft or "bunkering" of oil, the ransom payments made to secure the release of kidnap victims, payments from the oil companies not to disturb their operations or payments from politicians who want to use their services. Much of the increased instability in 2006 and early 2007 can be attributed to the run-up to Nigeria's fraudulent "elections" in April 2007. As was the case with the 2003 elections, corrupt politicians employed rival cult or militia groups to weaken rivals, physically control polling stations, rig elections and ensure their ultimate victories. These cult or militia groups have proliferated in number and are increasingly well-armed due to the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta. Whether the Niger Delta returns to its (not exactly great) position before the 2007 elections, stabilizes at a new, higher level of instability or continues to deteriorate further now that the elections are over remains to be seen.

Unfortunately, for the first time, some of this violence has affected one of the communities we work in. While we are grateful for the fact that Bane remained peaceful throughout 2006, Bodo did not. In July 2006, clashes between two rival cultist groups, the Deebam and the Deewell, left 10 people dead in Bodo. Most observers saw this violence as directly election-related with the Deebam ostensibly linked to Kenneth

Kobani, a Bodo native and the Rivers State Commissioner for State Finance and the Deewell ostensibly linked to Gabriel Pidomson, a Bodo native and a member of the Rivers State House of Assembly. Although no one at or involved with BMN/PS was affected by this violence, our sympathies go out to the families of the people killed. Fortunately, peace was restored quickly and Bodo was calm during our visit the following month. A few weeks later, though, Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor, the school's director, was attacked by armed cultists at his room at BMN/PS's nursery school building. The good news is that Moses was not physically hurt. The armed robbers were also unable to steal any of our funding as much of it had already been spent and the remaining amount was not with Moses at the school. They did, however, steal some money that Moses's wife Lessi had been holding onto for her church. Subsequently, in February 2007, an unfortunate round of violence broke out between the neighboring communities of Bodo and Mogho. For those of you who have visited the school, Mogho is the transit junction just before you enter Bodo. It is where dozens of motorcycle taxis (okadas in Nigerian slang) hang out waiting for passengers and mini buses pick up and drop off passengers. Apparently, an old woman from Mogho was found dead near the border with Bodo. Mogho residents assumed Bodo people were involved and started harassing Bodo residents passing through their village. Ultimately, they killed a popular mini bus driver from Bodo. A number of Bodo residents then attacked Mogho, destroying dozens of homes and killing 10 people. Peace and calm between the two communities has now been restored.

While the violence and instability in Bodo is of great concern, it also highlights the importance of the work we are doing as indicated by the two different quotes at the beginning of this report. Quite simply, the Niger Delta has been and continues to remain a challenging and difficult environment in which to operate. While corruption has defeated much larger projects with much greater resources than we have, over 6+ years now we have been able to demonstrate consistent and tangible results. We have worked hard over the years to build widespread community support in Bane and Bodo and, outside of Moses being robbed, this has paid off in that the school's operations have not been affected by any of the political instability in the Niger Delta. If and when that situation ever changes, we will adjust our operations accordingly. In the meantime, although the environment remains difficult, we continue to make good progress in it with extremely limited resources.

As was the case last year, our immediate priorities for the short-term future remain three-fold: 1) to finish construction on the third and final classroom buildings at each school; 2) to finish construction (Bodo) and start construction (Bane) on boys, girls and teachers latrines for each school; 3) to continue to provide tuition fee scholarships for the poorest students at both schools. There are a number of other projects we would like to undertake in the future such as providing better teacher training or building boreholes for clean drinking water at each school, but those are our three most pressing goals. We have made significant progress on the first goal and, with luck, we should be able to complete the final buildings at both schools in 2007.

In terms of our own efforts, the most immediate priority is updating and upgrading the school's <http://www.bebor.org> website. My cousin Andrew Nelson who came to Nigeria with us last year and some colleagues at his firm Accurate Image have already started work on a significant upgrade to the website. Most importantly, the site will be much easier to update in the future so we won't have big gaps between updates as we have had in the past.

In moving forward with these and other goals, we will remain humble, sincere, honest and accountable in our service to people much less fortunate than ourselves. 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. In addition to absorbing a number of costs myself, we are grateful to our partners at the Timmy Foundation, Dr. Owens Wiwa, Eric Romack, David Serrins, Indiana University, Andrew Nelson, Accurate Image, Patrick Naagbanton and the Center for the Environment, Human Rights and Development in Nigeria, all of whom absorbed costs or donated services free of charge in order to ensure that for every \$100 you donate, \$100 actually gets to BMN/PS.

Our largest debts remain, as always, to two groups of people. First, our partners in Nigeria, without whose hard work, dedication, integrity and honesty none of this would be possible. Second, to you, our international donors, who have chosen to support this tiny and sometimes slow moving effort to bring the benefits of primary education to children in the rural Niger Delta. We appreciate your confidence and vision in supporting this micro-scale project in the most unstable region of one of the most corrupt countries on the world's poorest continent. Along with our Nigerian partners, we will continue to strive to earn and maintain that confidence every day. Together, we are able to make a positive and fundamental difference in the lives of hundreds of the talented and beautiful 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](mailto:smpogg@iupui.edu) or 317-722-1978. Thank you so much for your past, present and hopefully continued support of this grassroots development project.

Thanks,

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