

International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School

2018 Annual Report

May 15, 2019

“The term ‘accompaniment’ is more about walking together—journeying with another—than about standing fast. At the journey’s beginning, we aren’t always sure where the path will lead, and we’re almost never sure where the end will be. Uncertainty and openness and patience and humility are inextricable from accompaniment.” – from Dr. Paul Farmer, *To Repair the World*, p. 180.

This is the sixteenth in a series of annual or bi-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 <https://www.bebor.org/> website.

In terms of numbers, we sent \$15,950 in two separate rounds of funding to our schools in 2018. This is higher than the \$13,500 we sent the schools in 2017 and slightly lower than the \$16,100 of funding we sent to our schools in 2016. It is slightly higher than the \$14,420 of funding we sent the schools on average from 2010 – 2017. By the end of 2018, the International Friends Committee had provided BMN/PS with \$211,800 worth of funding. Including the non-scholarship contributions of our partners at Safe Child Africa (formerly Stepping Stones Nigeria) which funded boreholes for drinking water at the schools in Bane and Bodo brings this figure to \$223,900.

As I have noted previously, our funding numbers go up and go down in any individual year and that is often connected to how fast or timely the schools can both utilize the funds we provide them and how quickly (or not) they can document that the funds have been used properly. As has always been the case with this project, we are not obsessed with numbers or dollars of output. That is how many corporate charities measure what they do. We do not. Please don’t get too excited that 2018 is up compared to 2017 and please don’t get too worried if 2019 is down compared to 2018. Such fluctuations are inevitable with a micro-scale project like this.

As I also noted in our last two annual reports, our funding portfolio has shifted over time from providing infrastructure (classroom buildings, boreholes, toilets) that enables the children we serve to attend schools with decent facilities to investing more directly in the children themselves, principally through our health and nutrition programs. We transited from 70% infrastructure funding in 2015 to 90% health and nutrition funding in 2016. In 2017, our funding profile was approximately 51.85% health and nutrition funding and 48.15% infrastructure funding. In 2018, our funding profile was approximately 42% for our nutrition program, 28.2% for our health program, 12.5% for infrastructure and 17.2% for scholarship funding. As noted in last year’s annual report, I don’t think there is a necessarily ideal balance here and I certainly don’t think there is much point in trying to hit a specific percent of funding devoted to health, nutrition, infrastructure or anything else. These figures have shifted over time and they will continue to shift as we respond to specific needs at our schools or requests from them. We sometimes need to respond to events beyond our control and that might lead these figures to shift up or down in any given year. In general, though, I think the broad pattern of less investment in

physical infrastructure and more investment directly in the health and well-being of the children we serve is likely to be the longer-term trend for our work in the rural areas of Rivers State, Nigeria. The one potential exception to this will be if we can help Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School in K-Dere (an extension of St. Patrick's in Bodo) get into better facilities at some point in the near future. Their existing infrastructure is clearly inadequate and the children there are definitely in worse conditions than the children at any of the other four schools we serve.

In discussing the funds we sent to the schools in 2018, let me break things down into four categories. First, we provided \$4,500 in funding to our health program which now covers the 600+ children at our three schools plus another almost 600 children at St. Patrick's Nursery and Primary School (a Catholic school in Bodo which already had its own facilities and infrastructure in place before we extended our health program to their students in 2015), and, starting in 2019, another 100 or so kids at Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School in K-Dere (5-10 minutes-drive from Bodo). Our health program currently features four main components: 1) public health education for the children, parents and teachers; 2) sickbays at three of our five schools (with a fourth under construction) which are stocked with some basic first aid materials and Nigeria-specific medications like anti-malarial medication and oral rehydration salts; 3) providing basic vaccines and immunizations including measles, polio, tetanus, typhoid, Vitamin A supplements and yellow fever for the older children (if you have not already seen it, a wonderful video of our health immunization work is posted on the main home page of the school's <https://www.bebor.org/> website); 4) deworming treatment by providing the children twice a year with chewable 400 mg tablets of Albendazole which keeps them worm-free. In 2018, all four elements of our health program described above were carried out by local Nigerian doctors and Nigerian nurses at four of the five schools we serve – our schools in Bane, Bodo and Bori and St. Patrick's Nursery and Primary School in Bodo. Our health program expanded to include Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School in K-Dere in January 2019.

Second, we provided \$6,700 of funding to continue a pilot nutrition program for 50 of the poorest students at our school in Bodo that was originally launched in the Spring 2017 academic semester. As noted previously, the pilot nutrition program features something called Ogi Soy Plus which was developed by a local Nigerian nutritionist. Ogi Soy Plus is based on three main ingredients: crayfish, millet and soybeans (every 1 kilogram of Ogi Soy Plus comprises 0.5 kg of soybeans, 0.3 kg of crayfish and 0.2 kg of millet). All three of these ingredients are available locally and are widely used. In combination, they provide an incredible array of nutritional benefits. Given shipping costs and the problem of corruption at Nigerian ports of entry, we felt it was imperative to use only locally available ingredients. We also wanted foods that the parents and students would already be familiar with. Dr. Nabie Nubari Francis who coordinates our health program continues testing and measuring the children participating in the pilot nutrition program in several ways to generate before and after intervention data that will hopefully demonstrate the effectiveness of Ogi Soy Plus in addressing widespread malnutrition among the children we serve. We hope that the data generated will ultimately help us secure additional funding, so we can expand this effort to all the children in Bodo and then to the children at our schools in Bane, Bori, St. Patrick's and Our Lady's as we have already done with the health program.

Third, we provided \$2,000 to replace the stolen pumping machine for our borehole in Bodo and to cement the entire thing underground in the hopes of preventing any future thefts. The cemented area extends far beyond the actual borehole pump so thieves would not know

exactly where the borehole pump is. This project is now complete, and the borehole was providing both safer and improved drinking water and water to flush the school's toilets when my son Kerem and I visited the schools in June 2018.

Fourth, we provided \$2,750 in scholarship funding to four of our schools. \$1,250 was provided to a special scholarship scheme for the children of widows in Bodo. Widows in Nigeria often suffer horribly as they are frequently kicked out of their former husband's home and have their farmland and other possessions stolen or confiscated by the late husband's relatives. We cannot solve all the problems they face, but we can ensure that their children attend school. \$1,500 was provided in scholarship funding to three of the other schools we serve (\$500 each for Bane, Bori and St. Patrick's), with plans to continue this funding through 2019. I'm pleased to report that our partners at the [Center for the Environment, Human Rights and Development](#) (CEHRD) took the initiative to convene a meeting with all of these school directors to regularize and systematize procedures and data collection efforts for these scholarships. As this system is brand new, I don't have any tangible data to share with you yet, but we all feel more confident moving forward with this new system in place.

In 2018 (see previous annual reports for earlier figures), we contributed \$1,519.47 to our partners at [Timmy Global Health](#) as part of the 7% administrative fee they instituted on their programs in June 2010. Given the numerous 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. Aside from this, Timmy Global Health has also generously provided far more support to our work in Nigeria than we have contributed to them as administrative fees and we remain extremely grateful for that support and proud to work with them. As noted on many previous occasions, 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 or having our website hosted and our local Nigerian partners at CEHRD also provide several free services and absorb many costs themselves. Anyone who travels to Nigeria to visit the schools, will continue to pay all their own costs out of pocket with no support coming from donated funds (as one example, no donated funds were used to cover the costs of me or my son Kerem travelling to Nigeria in 2018).

One great personal highlight of 2018 was travelling to Nigeria to visit the schools and taking my then 12-year-old son Kerem with me for the first time. We generally had a great trip and, with the exception of having to get biometric visas, it has generally become easier to visit Nigeria. There are now direct flights from the US, you can book hotels on travel sites like Expedia or Orbitz, and I had a Nigerian SIM card in my cellphone about 20 minutes after landing in Lagos. Kerem and I were able to visit all five schools we support, including our first ever visit to Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School in K-Dere. We were also able to visit CEHRD, meet Reverend Moses's daughter (now 2 years-old) for the first time, see (and taste) a nutrition program feeding in Bodo and see deworming treatment at St. Patrick's Nursery and Primary School and at our school in Bori. Now that you know the Niger Delta is safe enough for me to bring my own 12-year-old child, I hope some more of you can join us in the future as meeting and interacting with the kids your support benefits is an utterly unforgettable experience.

One of the things we did while in Nigeria was do a census head count of all pupils in attendance on the respective days we visited their schools. These counts almost certainly

understate our enrollments as any students absent for any reason on the day we visited would not be counted. They should therefore be thought of as minimum rather than maximum enrollment figures. A more detailed and extensive report is posted [here](#), but the summary or headline figures are that we counted 1,227 nursery and primary school students at four of our schools (Bane, Bodo, Bori, St. Patrick's) with a gender breakdown of 588 boys (47.92%) and 639 girls (52.08%). We did not conduct a census headcount at Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School in K-Dere. Dr. Nabie Nubari Francis, our health program coordinator, did that in January 2019. Adding his figures for K-Dere with our figures for the other four schools brings our total enrollment up to 1,326 nursery and primary school students across all five schools with a gender breakdown of 642 boys (48.42%) and 684 girls (51.58%). Harvard Professor of Economics Larry Summers has summarized the findings of the development literature on the importance of girls' education as "There is probably no higher return on investment in the developing world than primary and secondary education for girls." Needless to say, we are very proud of the fact that our schools have more than 50% girls' enrollment.

If you have not already done so, please like Bebor's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/BeborSchools/>. Facebook is a good venue for brief updates and it has reached some people that were not previously connected to this project. Thanks to the hard work of one of my former students, Megan Long, Bebor now also has an Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/bebormodelnurseryprimaryschool/>. That page is really brand new and just getting started. If you are on Instagram, please like it and watch for various updates from Megan. A lot of stuff gets shared either on Bebor's Facebook and/or Instagram pages before it makes it onto the school's website or into one of these annual reports so try to follow either or both of them if you can.

Looking to the future, we will maintain our existing physical infrastructure including classroom buildings, water and sanitation at our schools in Bane, Bodo and Bori and address any problems that might arise with any of our buildings or facilities. At some point in the future, we would very much like to improve the physical infrastructure at Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School in K-Dere which currently lags far behind the other four schools we serve. We plan to continue our health programming at all five schools (Bane, Bodo, Bori, St. Patrick's and Our Lady's). As funding permits, we hope to expand our pilot nutrition program to serve more children than just the 50 we have started with at our school in Bodo. Other opportunities or challenges might arise but continuing to sustain our health program and trying to expand our nutrition program are our most immediate objectives for the next few years.

The Paul Farmer quote at the beginning of this report summarizes the now almost 19-year long history of this project very well. At the journey's beginning, about the only thing I was confident about was that I knew at least 20 people who would give \$100 to help the one school in Bodo we started out supporting, that would make \$2,000 and they could "do something" with that. In purely monetary terms, we've now exceeded that goal by a factor of more than 100. I had no idea that we would go from supporting one school in one rural village to supporting five schools in four rural villages or that we would move from constructing classroom buildings to water and sanitation to health and, most recently, nutrition. I'm not sure when or how or if the journey will end but I know we have a lot of work left to do. The longer I have accompanied Nigerians like Patrick Naagbantou, Nenibarini Zabbey, Dr. Nabie Nubari Francis, Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor, Leelee Wiwa Tanen and Father Stephen Amadi, the more uncertain I have become in my own knowledge and the more open I have become to listening to them and

incorporating their local knowledge and expertise which is absolutely essential to the work we do in the rural Niger Delta. That work requires you to be patient as there are seldom home runs, touchdown passes or beautiful goals. Instead, you grind progress out slowly and incrementally over years and decades. Farmer's quote does not mention sincerity or persistence. I would add sincerity and persistence to his humility and argue that those are the three most important things we can bring to bear in serving more than 1,300 poor children every year in Rivers State, Nigeria. We will continue to move forward with this project as we always have by remaining humble, sincere and accountable in our service to some of the poorest people in the rural Niger Delta.

In addition to our Nigerian partners mentioned above, we remain profoundly grateful to Dr. Chuck Dietzen, Kristina Graff and all our domestic partners at Timmy Global Health. As I write this, Kristina Graff is spending some of her last days at Timmy Global Health before taking a new job in Washington, DC. I want to personally thank her for the various small, medium and large things she has done to help our schools and to further Timmy's work in Nigeria over the past few years. As Reverend Moses would say, Kristina has been "a solid friend" to Bebor.

We also remain indebted to you, our international donors, who have so many worthwhile charitable or philanthropic options to choose from and yet support this micro-scale development project that strives to bring the benefits of primary education and basic healthcare and nutrition to hundreds of children every year in Rivers State, Nigeria. We remain focused on using our limited funds wisely and generating tangible results that directly benefit the children at our schools and which demonstrate to you that your donations are having positive impacts.

If you have any questions or need more information, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me via spegg@iupui.edu or (+1) 317-361-8329. As always, thank you so much for your past, present and hopefully continued future support of this school project.

Thanks,



Scott Pegg,

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