

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

### 2019 Annual Report

June 4, 2020

“You came at the right time  
When the torture lessens  
I will remain with you  
Until I close my eyes in protest  
I love you, my treasure” – excerpted from Patrick B. Naagbantou, “My Treasure”

This is the seventeenth 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.

While our schools generally had a good year, 2019 was personally devastating because we lost our dear friend Patrick Naagbantou who succumbed on September 21, 2019 to injuries sustained after being hit by a drunk driver while trying to hail a cab near his home in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The most invincible or bullet-proof human being I ever met died at 49. Aside from being one of my closest friends, Patrick was utterly indispensable in getting this project started. We can continue without Patrick, but we never could have started without him. The poem that is excerpted above was dedicated to his wife Avary. The mother of Patrick’s three daughters (he also had a son from a previous marriage), Avary is the “my treasure” in the poem, but I also like to think that Bebor is one of Patrick’s treasures as well. Along with the human rights organization he founded, the [Center for the Environment, Human Rights and Development \(CEHRD\)](#), Bebor is a continuing and enduring legacy to the love that he had for his people and his country. This annual report is dedicated with love and gratitude to Patrick Naagbantou for his sundry, profound, and essential contributions that made possible the work that we do in the rural Niger Delta.

In terms of numbers, we sent \$15,905 in two separate rounds of funding to our schools in 2019. This is higher than the \$13,500 we sent the schools in 2017 and slightly lower than the \$15,950 of funding we sent to our schools in 2018. It is higher than the \$14,583 of funding we sent the schools on average from 2010 – 2018. By the end of 2019, the International Friends Committee and [Timmy Global Health](#) had provided BMN/PS with \$227,705 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 \$239,805.

As noted previously, our funding numbers go up and go down in any individual year and that is often connected to how fast the schools can utilize the funds we provide them and how quickly (or not) they can demonstrate to us that the funds have been used properly. As has always been the case with this project, we are not obsessed with raw numbers or dollars of output. That is how many corporate charities measure what they do. We do not. Please do not get too excited if we are up or down in any given year. Such fluctuations are inevitable with a micro-scale project like this and they are not necessarily a great measure of its overall health or success.

As I also noted in our last three 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 transitioned from 70% infrastructure funding in 2015 to 90% health and nutrition funding in 2016. 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. In 2019, our funding profile was approximately 42.83% for our nutrition program, 18.95% for our health program, 8.36% for infrastructure and 29.86% for scholarship funding. Our health spending was somewhat lower because we had some funds left over from the previous year that carried over to the start of this year. Our scholarship funding was up both at the request of our school directors and because we added additional schools into the program. We are not 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. 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 major 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 soon. Their existing infrastructure is clearly inadequate and the children there are in far worse conditions than the children at any of the other schools we serve.

In reporting on the funds we sent to the schools in 2019, let me discuss in detail what was sent. First, we provided \$3,013 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 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 four of the five schools we supported in 2019 which are stocked with some basic first aid materials and Nigeria-specific supplies 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; 4) deworming treatment by providing the children twice a year with chewable 400 mg tablets of Albendazole which keep them worm-free. In 2019, all four elements of our health program described above were carried out by local Nigerian doctors and Nigerian nurses at all five schools we served – our schools in Bane, Bodo and Bori, St. Patrick's Nursery and Primary School in Bodo and Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School in K-Dere.

Second, we provided \$6,812 of funding to continue our nutrition program for 50 of the poorest students at our school in Bodo that was originally launched in 2017. As noted previously, the nutrition program features something called Ogi Soy Plus which was developed by a local Nigerian food scientist. 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. Dr. Nabie Nubari Francis who coordinates our health program continues testing and measuring the children participating in

the 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 other schools as we have already done with the health program.

Third, we provided \$1,330 of infrastructure funding for two separate projects. First, \$630 was sent to finish work on a two-room sickbay/computer room building for our school in Bane. Work on this had started much earlier and this funding was basically just to finish a few remaining loose ends. In November 2019, I was able to personally see this building and verify that it is now complete and fully functional. Second, \$700 was sent for a new security gate for our original school in Bodo. Again, in November 2019, I was able to personally see this security gate installed and fully functioning.

Fourth, we provided \$4,750 in scholarship funding to four of our schools. \$1,500 was provided to a special scholarship scheme for the children of widows in Bodo. \$3,000 was provided in scholarship funding to three of the other schools we serve (\$1,000 each for Bane, Bori and St. Patrick's). \$250 was provided to Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School in K-Dere. This funding was smaller for three reasons: 1) it only started in Fall 2019; 2) it was our first time providing funding to them; and 3) they have a smaller number of children at their school. We hope to continue broadly similar levels of scholarship funding throughout 2020.

In 2019 (see previous annual reports for earlier figures), we contributed \$1,390.89 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 grateful for that support and proud to work with them. As noted previously, 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, myself included, will continue to pay all their own costs out of pocket with no support coming from donated funds.

While it was under horrible circumstances, I did get to visit Nigeria in November 2019 to participate in several different memorial services for Patrick Naagbantou. While in Nigeria, I got to meet several female students who graduated from Bebor and are now enrolled at the Bodo City Girls' Secondary School. I also met several Bebor Bodo alumni who either are currently enrolled in Nigerian universities or have recently graduated from them. Menegbo Joy Barineka is close to finishing her undergraduate degree in Sociology. Godstime Barifaara recently graduated from the University of Port Harcourt with a degree in Microbiology. Shortly after I left Nigeria, Vera Hyacinth Kiele was called to the Nigerian Bar in Abuja (see photo on next page). Lives are being changed by the work we do.



During this trip. I also got to visit all five schools we support as well as meet the priests and students at another Catholic School, St. Bernard's Nursery and Primary School in Biara (about 5 minutes-drive from Bodo). The visits at most of these schools were rushed and too quick but I did get to see all the kids and inspect the facilities at each school. As noted above, I was able to verify that the computer room/sickbay building in Bane was completed and that the new security gate at our original school in Bodo was installed and working properly. In Bodo, I was also struck by the fact that the borehole for safer and improved drinking water we originally installed in 2009 was still (after some repairs along the way) working and producing safer water a decade later. I also noted a sign there on the Bjarne and Alessandra Tellmann Assembly Hall Building noting that it was opened in November 2007. Twelve years later, it still has children spilling in and out of its classrooms every single school day. Our interventions are meant to be lasting and enduring and both these facilities poignantly demonstrated that. In Bodo, I also got to meet three new handicapped or disabled children who are now attending our school there. At St. Patrick's, we got to see deworming, Vitamin A supplements and tetanus shots for the older girl students. In K-Dere, we visited what we hope will soon be the home of permanent facilities for Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School (they are currently in rented facilities that are inadequate for their needs). Our schools in Bane and Bori put on super warm, colorful, and charming welcoming ceremonies for us. Tijen and I just blew up a photo of five or six of the Bane students in traditional dress from their welcoming ceremony that might be the best photo I have ever taken in Nigeria. Finally, we were overwhelmed with love and joy on our inaugural visit to St. Bernard's in Biara. It somehow seemed fitting to expand and add a new partner on a trip that was primarily focused on mourning the loss of one of our principle partners and closest friends. We have already started working with St. Bernard's in 2020 and look forward to working with them more closely in the years to come.

Because it was the only school we had not previously done a census head count for, we did one at St. Bernard's Nursery and Primary School in Biara. On the day we visited, they had 133 students in attendance. 81 (60.90%) were boys and 52 (39.10%) were girls. This is by far the lowest percentage of girls' enrollment in any of the schools we support. Rather than not help them because of this, we are going to try to work with them to better understand the importance of girls' enrollment and try to use our future scholarship funding to get a higher percentage of girls enrolled at St. Bernard's. Adding the figures from St. Bernard's to our other most recent census figures now gives us a total enrollment of 1,459 nursery and primary school students across all six schools with a gender breakdown of 723 boys (49.55%) and 736 girls (50.45%). These figures almost certainly understate the full extent of students enrolled at these schools because they only reflect students in attendance on the respective days we visited them.

If you have not already done so, please like Bebor's [Facebook page](#) and its [Instagram page](#). Both places are good sources for brief and contemporary updates on the work we are doing. Thanks to the miracles of cellphones and WhatsApp, I'm now regularly able to post same-day photos from our nutrition program feedings which have continued in a new, socially distanced format after the Rivers State Government ordered all schools closed on March 23, 2020 to combat the spread of COVID 19. 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 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 five schools we serve. COVID 19 permitting, we plan to continue our health programming at all six schools (Bane, Bodo, Bori, St. Patrick's, Our Lady's, and St. Bernard's). As funding permits, we hope to expand our nutrition program to serve more children than just the 50 we currently serve 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 short-term objectives.

Dr. Nabie Nubari Francis, our health and nutrition program coordinator, Dr. Nenibarini Zabbey, the coordinator of CEHRD, and myself all had a brief meeting at CEHRD after Patrick's funeral. We were all sad and grieving at the loss of, to borrow from his poem, our treasure and at the loss of a courageous and colossal human rights defender. But more than grieving, we were resolved and determined. We all agreed that the only way to honor his legacy and the only way to show him the tremendous respect he deserves was to continue pressing forward and working as hard and as smart as we can to help as many children in the rural Niger Delta as we can. We all agreed that the answer to the question "what would Patrick want us to do?" was to try to work harder, try to work smarter, and try to do whatever you can do to help the poorest and the most vulnerable in the rural Niger Delta villages he grew up in and loved so dearly.

The three of us, fortunately, do not work alone. We extend our gratitude to our other Nigerian partners including Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor, Leelee Wiwa Tanen, Dr. Owens Wiwa, Father Anthony Bakel and Father Denis Asomugha. In addition to our Nigerian partners, we remain profoundly grateful to Dr. Chuck Dietzen, Nick Reich, Dan Hirst, Jennifer Habe, Emely Sanchez Baez and all our domestic partners at Timmy Global Health. We also remain tremendously indebted to you, our international donors, who continue to support this micro-scale development project that strives to bring the benefits of primary education and basic healthcare and nutrition to more than 1,400 children every year in Rivers State, Nigeria. We always remain focused on using our limited funds wisely and generating tangible results that directly benefit the students we serve, and which demonstrate to you that your donations are having real and positive impacts. We simply could not do anything described in this annual report without your support.

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

Thanks,



Scott Pegg,  
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