

International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary Schools

2023 Annual Report

June 19, 2024

“Buhari’s failure to remove fuel subsidies and the implementation of foreign currency controls hobbled the private sector, while a lack of economic growth exacerbated the level of extreme poverty. Today, some 71 million people live below \$1.90 a day, a significant jump from 61 million in 2016. By contrast, most countries have reduced their poverty levels significantly - India saw a decline from 74 million people in poverty to 44 million. During Buhari’s tenure the average Nigerian saw their annual income shrink by nearly one-third, from \$3,222 to \$2,200, one of the steepest declines recorded by any country over that time span, while Kenyans saw their incomes rise by more than 40%.” – from Steve Quattri, “Nigeria’s New Dawn?” Morgan Stanley Investment Management, August 2023.

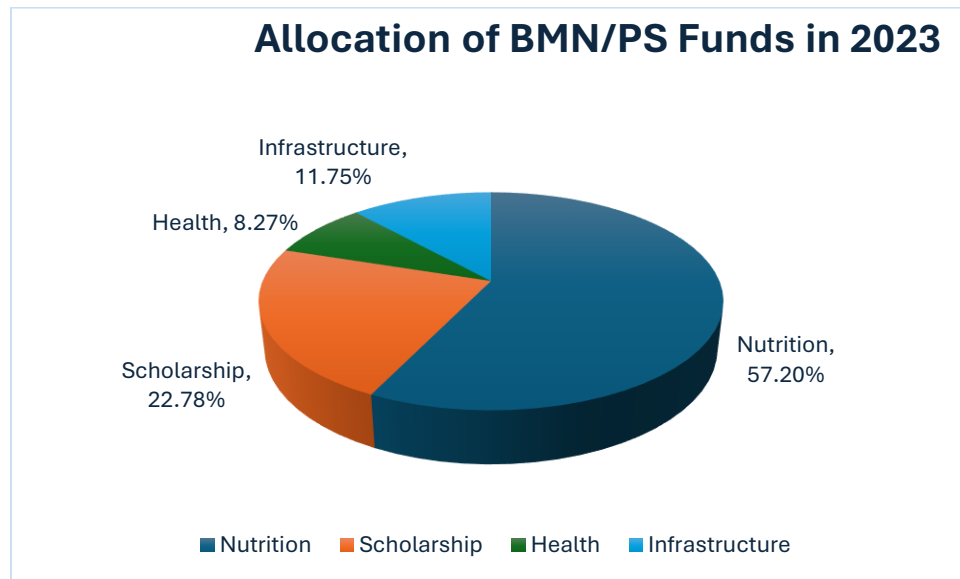
Dedicated with love and gratitude to Patricia Nnem Nendom (2/2/76 – 4/29/23), a long-time Bebor health educator.

This is the twenty-first 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 at <https://www.bebor.org/information/documents-and-reports/>.

In terms of numbers, we sent \$34,465 in three separate rounds of funding to the six schools we support in 2023. This beat our previous annual record of \$29,835 of funding sent in 2022. By the end of 2023, the International Friends Committee and [Timmy Global Health](#) had provided BMN/PS with \$346,955 worth of funding. Including just the water-related contributions of our partners at Safe Child Africa who funded boreholes for cleaner drinking water at our schools in Bane and Bodo brings this figure to \$359,055.

As regularly noted, our funding numbers fluctuate every year. Fluctuations in funding levels are inevitable with a micro-scale project like this, and they are not necessarily the best measure of its overall health or success. That said, the decision to expand our nutrition program from one school to three schools in 2020 to combat widespread malnutrition in the communities we serve, plus increases in the amount of scholarship funding provided have generally increased our costs from the \$14,721 of average annual funding we sent in the 2010s to the \$29,812 of annual funding we have so far averaged in the 2020s. Our costs in 2023 were significantly aggravated by persistently high food price inflation in Nigeria. As noted in a [separate report](#), although it has not helped the communities we serve in any way, the collapse in the value of the Nigerian Naira after President Tinubu unified the black market and official currency rates in June 2023 served to counteract high Nigerian food price inflation for us because our US dollar funding could now buy a lot more Naira than it used to. Our nutrition program costs peaked in early 2023, declined a bit later in 2023 and then declined further in early 2024. Going forward, it is beyond my capacity to predict whether food price inflation (which raises our costs) will outpace currency depreciation (which lowers them) or vice versa. Whatever happens, the larger point that our funds sent going up is not necessarily a victory and our funds sent going down is not necessarily a defeat will still hold.

As I have noted before, 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, through our health, nutrition, and scholarship programs. As the chart below shows, in 2023, our funding profile was approximately 57.2% for our nutrition program, 22.78% for our scholarship program, 11.75% for infrastructure and 8.27% for our health program. We do not try to hit a specific percentage of funding devoted to health, nutrition, infrastructure, scholarships or anything else. Yet, 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 will continue to be a longer-term trend for our work in Rivers State.



Let me break the funding we provided in 2022 down into four main categories. First, we provided \$2,850 in funding to our health program, down from \$3,470 in 2022. We currently have five functioning and equipped sickbays with the only school not having one being Our Lady's Nursery and Primary School in K-Dere because they are not yet in their own permanent facilities. \$1,450 of the health program funding we sent was to re-supply our five sickbays with medications, basic first aid materials and Nigeria-specific supplies like anti-malarial medication and oral rehydration salts throughout the academic year. \$1,400 was to support the non-sickbay components of our health program. Our health program now covers all six schools that we support and the more than 1,400 pupils at those schools. In addition to the stocked and equipped sickbays at five of the six schools we support, our health program currently features three other main components: 1) public health education for the children, parents and teachers; 2) providing basic vaccines and immunizations including measles, polio, tetanus, typhoid, Vitamin A supplements and yellow fever for the older children; and 3) deworming treatment by providing the children twice a year with chewable 400 mg tablets of Albendazole which keep them worm-free throughout the year. As has always been the case, in 2023, every element of our health program was delivered by local Nigerian doctors, nurses, teachers and volunteers.

Second, we provided \$19,715 dollars of funding for our nutrition program which currently operates at three schools in Biara (St. Bernard's), Bodo (Bebor) and K-Dere (Our Lady's). Mainly due to food price inflation, this was up from the \$18,965 of funding we

provided for our nutrition program in 2022, although, as noted earlier, we did see some reduction in costs after Nigeria's currency depreciated sharply after June 2023. The funds we sent in 2023 ensured the continued operation of our nutrition program from March 1, 2023, to February 28, 2024. A subsequent funding round in February 2024 that will be covered in next year's annual report has the program currently funded through August 31, 2024.

Third, we provided \$7,850 in scholarship funding in 2023, up slightly from the \$7,400 we provided in 2022. We provided \$5,850 in general scholarship funding to all six of the schools we support in 2023, up slightly from the \$5,400 in general scholarship funding we provided in 2022. This difference is largely accounted for by the fact that after visiting Nigeria in 2023, I decided to increase the scholarship amounts provided to our schools in Biara and K-Dere to the same amount (\$500 per school, twice a year) we provide to our schools in Bane, Bodo (both Bebor and St. Patrick's) and Bori. As we have done in the past, we allow our school directors to provide smaller scholarships (say, tuition fees or partial tuition fees only) to a larger number of students or to provide more generous scholarships (including, say, school uniforms, books and supplies) to a smaller number of students based on local needs. We plan to provide broadly similar levels of general scholarship funding throughout 2024, most probably \$6,000 divided evenly between all six schools we support.

We also provided \$2,000 in scholarship funding for the Priscilla Lezor Memorial Scholarship (PLMS) fund for students with disabilities at our original school in Bodo. This initiative, the vision of two of our longest-term supporters, Bjarne and Alessandra Tellmann, was launched in 2021 and it remains unprecedented throughout Rivers State where students with disabilities often face far greater levels of stigma and prejudice than they do in more developed countries. As part of the agreement establishing the PLMS endowment, for the first time ever we were able to pledge at least \$2,000 of annual PLMS scholarship funding for a five-year period. Thanks to the continued generous support of the Timmy Juniors club at the International School of Indiana and other donors, we should be able to extend this funding well beyond its original five-year mandate. We sent our inaugural \$1,000 of PLMS funding in April 2021. In 2023, we provided two additional \$1,000 funding rounds for this initiative in February and October. The students with disabilities who benefit from this funding include children with mobility challenges, children who are amputees, and children who have other serious cognitive or physical challenges. This is a revolutionary initiative for the rural Niger Delta. I remain profoundly optimistic that it will have a positive long-term impact in combatting the stigma these children face and helping them to realize the true potential of their incredible abilities.

Fourth, we provided a total of \$4,050 in infrastructure funding for two of our schools in 2023. One of my biggest disappointments in visiting Nigeria in 2023 was finding the borehole that provides cleaner and safer drinking water to our original school in Bodo and a section of the wall or fence separating the school from a major road behind it in disrepair. In October 2023, we provided \$1,700 of funding to them to repair both the wall and the borehole. I'm pleased to report that both were repaired shortly after that and the children at Bebor have again been benefiting from safer and cleaner drinking water since late 2023. In August 2023, we sent \$2,350 to St. Bernard's Nursery and Primary School in Biara for a new borehole to provide their nearly 300 students with safer and cleaner drinking water. Although the borehole was up and running long before then, it was ceremoniously opened by Father Denis Asomugha from St. Bernard's and Dr. Nabie Nubari Francis from the Center for the Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) on March 27, 2024. The photo below shows Dr. Nabie (wearing a black

hat) and Father Denis (in white) drinking water from the borehole's ceremonial opening with some of the students looking on.



One major development in terms of our funding in 2023 was that, for the first time ever, Bebor received general international program funding support from our partners at [Timmy Global Health](#). Timmy had previously supported Bebor on several occasions, often quite generously, but that support was provided on a one-off or case-by-case basis. In 2023, Timmy's board of directors (which I have chaired since May 2022) voted to allow Bebor and Mercy Missions (the other program it supports in Nigeria) to become eligible for general program support. Ultimately, Bebor received \$10,000 of support from Timmy for their Fiscal Year 2023-24. The first \$5,000 of this support was sent to Bebor in August 2023 to help fund our nutrition program expenses. The second \$5,000, which was sent in February 2024, also to help with our nutrition program expenses, will be documented in next year's annual report. It is important to note that Timmy's funding can go up or down along with its relative level of success in fundraising, but their support has made an enormous positive difference in our ability to sustain programming at all six schools we support. Thank you, Timmy!! We appreciate it.

In 2023, we contributed \$2,385.52 to our partners at [Timmy Global Health](#) as part of the 7% administrative fee they instituted in June 2010 for dedicated donations to specific projects like Bebor. As noted previously, even before the general program support provided in their 2023-24 Fiscal Year, Timmy had generously provided far more support to our work in Nigeria than we

have contributed to them as administrative fees. As has always been the case, 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 costs like postage to mail thank you letters or having our website hosted. Our local Nigerian partners at the Center for the Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) also provide several free services and absorb many costs themselves. Anyone who travels to Nigeria to visit the schools, me included, will continue to pay all their own costs out of pocket with no support from donated funds.

The biggest 2023 highlight for me by far was travelling to visit the six schools we support in June 2023. It is impossible to convey the warmth and generosity of the welcome I received. I hope someday Nigeria makes it easier to obtain a visa so more of you can join me in visiting these schools and see exactly where your support is going and who is benefiting from it. It's impossible to pick one favorite photo from my 2023 trip to share here but this one from St. Patrick's Nursery and Primary School in Bodo with as many of its 499 students as could fit in one photo is one of my favorites:



In a [separate report](#), I presented census headcount data on all the students present in their respective schools on the days I visited them. Probably as a reflection of the various poor economic conditions and increases in abject poverty noted in the quote at the start of this report, our nursery and primary school enrollment across the six schools we support was down from 1,459 in 2018-19 to 1,337 in 2023 (including secondary students, we had 1,428 students present during my visit in 2023). Enrollments were down at three of our schools (Bane, Bori, St. Patrick's) and up at three of our schools (Biara, Bodo, K-Dere). Girls' enrollment at the nursery and primary school levels across all six schools declined from 50.45% in 2018-19 to 48.62% in

2023. We had big increases in the percentage of girls enrolled at two schools (Biara and K-Dere) and smaller decreases at four schools (Bane, Bodo, Bori, St. Patrick's). My best guess is that the small decline in girls' enrollment reflects the fact that girls are often the last ones enrolled and the first ones pulled out of school if their families face an economic crisis. We remain proud that even after several years of economic turmoil in Nigeria our six schools collectively are still very close to 50% girls' enrollment.

Looking to the future, as we have always done, we will maintain our existing physical infrastructure including classroom buildings, water boreholes, and toilets and address any problems that might arise with any of the buildings or facilities at any of the six schools we support. As or when they can secure land for a permanent home, we would 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 because they are in rented facilities. We plan to continue our health programming at all six schools (Bane, Bodo, Bori, St. Patrick's, Our Lady's, and St. Bernard's), maintain our nutrition program at the three schools it currently serves and address whatever other challenges and opportunities arise from time to time.

We extend our gratitude to Dr. Nabie Nubari Francis, CEHRD's coordinator and our health and nutrition program coordinator, and all our other Nigerian partners including Dr. Nenibarini Zabbey, Reverend Moses Nyimale Lezor, Leelee Wiwa Tanen, Dr. Owens Wiwa, Father John Poroma, Father Denis Asomugha and Father Dennis Sibeate. In addition to our Nigerian partners, we remain profoundly grateful to Dr. Chuck Dietzen, Melissa Dulaney, Emely Sanchez Baez, Timmy board members and all our partners at Timmy Global Health. We offer a special thanks to Kevin Michaels and all our friends at [AeroDynamic Advisory](#) for their many years of generous support. We remain tremendously indebted to you, our 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 the rural Niger Delta. We remain incredibly grateful for your continued vote of confidence in the work that we do for the communities we serve in Rivers State, Nigeria. Thank you! 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 contact me via spegg@iu.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,
Chairman, International Friends Committee of Bebor Model Nursery/Primary School