



The Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust

*Promoting friendship & understanding through financial support
for Nigerian education*

**THE 11th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of
THE BRITAIN-NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL TRUST
HELD on THURSDAY 19th JULY 2019 at 3.00pm
at
THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE
PARK PLACE, ST. JAMES'S STREET, LONDON SW1A**

Attending: list from Frances

Item 1 WELCOME

The Chair David Brandler thanked all those taking time to attend the meeting and introduced those seated on the top table, table namely Nigeria High Commissioner, Paul Arkwright, Former UK HC to Nigeria; Mr Elizabeth Dudley Secretary; Mr John Lee, Treasurer; HE Dr Tafida and Mrs. Ajoke Omoware.

Item 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair gave apologies for the Patron, Sir Mervyn Brown, KCMG OBE , from Trustees Mr. Dafe Diejomaoh; Mr. Dele Fatunla; Professor Graham Furniss; General (Dr) YD Gowon, BA PhD and Mrs. Fatimah Keheller, along with other members of the Trust whose names have been recorded

Item 3

TO RECEIVE THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

“Following the resignation of Professor Lalage Bown, last year, as a Trustee, there have been changes to the make-up of the Board of Trustees and, also, a refocusing of the aims of the Trust following a review earlier this year.

However, let me first update you on some of our ongoing projects in Nigeria.

Our sponsorship of the NTI continues. This is the distance learning programme at the National Teachers Institute where teachers throughout the Federation can upgrade their skills by taking a four-year course, at the end of which they are awarded an NCE – National Certificate of Education. We assess the results of all the participants from all 36 States – and Abuja – at the end of their first year and sponsor one student from each state for the remaining three years of their course. At the end of the cycle, we award a prize of N100,000 – the Gary Clark Memorial Prize – to the student with the best overall marks.

At the end of 2018, we completed our current cycle and will be awarding the Gary Clark Memorial Prize shortly – next month – as well as choosing the new beneficiaries for the next cycle.

Together with the ACU (Association of Commonwealth Universities), we continue to sponsor two visiting external examiners each year to the Departments of Education at two universities: ABU in Zaria and Ado Bayero in Kano.

This was an initiative the ACU wanted to participate in some years ago as a way of showing solidarity with Northern Nigerian Universities following the upsurge of violence and attacks by Boko Haram. This will be our third year with ABU and our second with Ado Bayero.

Each year the visiting Fellows write a report about their experiences and interactions, not only in their roles as external examiners but, also, about giving and receiving new ideas with their Nigerian counterparts. At the end of this year we will be reviewing the programme with the ACU and with the beneficiary universities to decide whether to continue or, possibly, expand it.

I would like to touch on three other projects we have undertaken this last year.

First, I described last year how we arranged and paid for school furniture for a school in Mirnga, near Biu, Borno State, that was recovering from the Boko Haram troubles. This year, we have provided a supply of equipment for their refurbished science laboratory. The supply was completed earlier this year at a cost of just under £900, including delivery.

Secondly, we completed the delivery of several cartons of books and periodicals to the University of Jos Library. The Library was completely burnt to the ground in 2016 by a fire that destroyed almost everything inside. Organised and

prompted by Professor Bown, many different individuals, including BNET Trustees, and institutions here in the UK, generously donated a wide range of reading materials which were assembled and repacked in London and airfreighted to Lagos. BNET paid for the delivery and liaison in Nigeria with UNIJOS to collect the material and transport it from Lagos to Jos. The consolidation in London and shipment to Nigeria was efficiently arranged by one of our Members, Jan Starren of Star Services.

Thirdly, thanks to an introduction from our Administrator, Frances Tarr, we were donated 15,000 secondary school reading books by Cengage Publishing. Cengage publishes a range of educational books in English aimed at those for whom English is not their mother tongue. They are also publishers of the National Geographic Magazine. We were offered a range of titles from which we chose five, after an assessment for suitability in Nigeria by our trustee, Hindy Mohammed. We organised shipment to Lagos, again with the help of Star Services, who kindly gave us free warehousing both in the UK and in Lagos and from there we have arranged distribution to 60 schools throughout Nigeria – 50 copies of the five titles, s 250 books per school. Distribution has been mostly to government schools and the different schools nominated by the various State Departments of Education throughout the Federation.

Reading and teaching materials in Nigeria generally remain woefully under-supplied and, although only a drop in the ocean, I consider this has been a worthwhile exercise by BNET and one we will consider expanding with Cengage in the future.

I would like to report that we have taken on board three new Trustees this year. They are Hindy Mohammed, Fatimah Kelleher and Dafe Diejomaoh. The first two are active and experienced educationalists already working on projects in Nigeria and Dafe Diejomoah runs his own Capital Investment Company, specialising in Africa. All will bring a wealth of talent, knowledge and enthusiasm to the Board.

One of the strengths of BNET has always been the range and variety of projects we do. From building classroom blocks for Kings and Edo Colleges, a girls' boarding school in rural Edo State, equipping an E-library at UNIBEN and science labs, to drilling boreholes, to supplying library books and kindles, to sponsoring teacher training and visiting university fellows.

Let me make a special mention of the Agbado Learning Centre run in Lagos by our Speaker today, Ajoke Omoware, about which you will hear more shortly. In all these projects, our priority is to ensure they will enhance the educational prospects of those we aim to help and that they are workable and sustainable.

However, as the need increases for BNET to look for outside funding to continue its work, the Trustees are aware that our 'all-rounder' reputation does

not always help outsiders and potential donors to appreciate what we really stand for, or what our core aims are.

So, earlier this year, we organised internal workshops amongst the Trustees to look at whether we should be more focused on our overall objectives and, if so, in what area of Nigerian education.

Whilst this exercise is still ongoing, I would like to share our thought so far.

We plan to change our Mission Statement from, 'Promoting friendship and understanding through financial support for Nigerian Education' to '***Promoting partnerships to advance educational opportunities for young people in Nigeria***'. It may be similar and may be a bit long winded but, as a small voluntary and UK based Charity, we cannot easily achieve as much as we would like to by ourselves. Yet, the breadth and depth of our knowledge and experience of education both in and outside Nigeria is considerable and we want to impart that as far and wide as we can. So, working with other similar thinking organisations can be an obvious first step.

We have, for several years, identified teacher training as the most important area to concentrate on – hence our continued sponsorship of the NTI distance learning course.

However, it has become increasingly clear that teacher training generally has its own challenges if the teachers themselves have personal literacy challenges. So, we are looking to set up a pilot project to improve teachers' English literacy skills so they, in turn, can better improve the literacy of the children they teach. We are still designing the details of the project which, initially, will probably be aimed at two schools in the North of the country. However, we will ensure the methodology can equally be transferred to teachers throughout the country.

I hope, by next year, I will be in a position to give you much more detail of our plans and their progress.

Let me finish this Report by thanking all our Trustees and officers for the contributions they have made this last 12 months. I believe we have an excellent and enthusiastic team and am looking forward to identifying, facing and overcoming the challenges ahead.

My special thanks to our Administrator, Frances Tarr, who, as always, ensures our meetings go smoothly and mail is always answered. Also to the Trust Secretary, Elizabeth Oritsejolomi Dudley, who has recently left her full-time job and who therefore will, hopefully, have more time to concentrate on the Trust's affairs, which will be wonderful. Also to our three Nigerian Musketeers – Greg Ojeh, our Nigerian Representative, Dele Fatayi-Williams and Professor Kabiru Isyaku, our valuable and unpaid consultants in Lagos and Kano. Without their willing involvement, the Trust could not achieve half of what it does.

A final thank you to all our Members for their continued support for the Trust."

Item 4

TO RECEIVE THE TREASURER'S REPORT & ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2017

Compared to the previous year, activity in 2018 was at a similar level as the Trust took the opportunity to consolidate its financial resources and focus on the completion of several projects. Funding remains a matter of concern as incoming resources continue to decline without the benefit of any sizeable donations.

Bank interest and investment improved by 20% to £5,123, while voluntary income comprising membership subscriptions, tax reclaims and donations came to £5,997. Overall income for the year reduced to £11,705.

Governance and supporting costs, including administrative expenses £23,864, a decrease of 10% over 2017. Our combined Funds closing balance reduced to £403,712 as against in 2017 £432,825.

The Trustees are addressing as a priority the need to attract new members and donors. £16,388 was disbursed from its unrestricted funds in support of current projects, as against £25,777 in 2017.

Before closing the Treasurer explained that the full set of accounts were available for viewing on the BNET website.

There being no further questions, the report of the Treasurer and Statement of Financial Activities for 2018 were approved by a show of hands of all members present.

Item 5

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS

BNET Treasurer confirmed Messrs Crowe LLP had signified their willingness to continue as Independent Examiners of the Trust and proposed they be re-appointed for the ensuing year. Kevin Rafferty proposed we carry on with them. Professor Lalage Bown seconded the motion and members present agreed unanimously.

Item 6

ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

Under Clause 5(9) of the Constitution of the Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust, one third of the Board of Trustees retire annually at the Annual General Meeting.

Those Trustees due to retire at this Annual General Meeting were **Hindy Mohammed, Fatimah Kelleher, Dafe Diejomaoh, Tim Cook, Graham Furniss, David Brandler** who, all being eligible and having signified their willingness to serve again, were prepared to be re-elected. Elizabeth Dudley, BNET Secretary, proposed they be re-elected en bloc. Lady Atiku seconded the proposal which was unanimously agreed by all members present.

The Chair advised that Trustee Dele Fatunla has offered his resignation from the Trust from today's date, 19 July 2019.

Item 7

TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Professor Bown asked that a vote of thanks to the Trustees be recorded in the Minutes.

Professor Bown also raised the issue of visas for Nigerians and hostility from Home Office .

Anthony Shillingford reminded members present of the memorabilia from his father's time in Nigeria from 1926 which he had brought to the AGM for members to peruse. Mr Shillingford very kindly offered this historically valuable material to members.

Janet Kirk advised members that the Nigeria Field Society journals have now been digitised. The Society is now 80 years old and a symposium will be held in Sheffield later this year.

The Chair thanked Tony Wright for a £500 donation at the AGM.

The Secretary reported there were no items of other business for which notice had been given (technically questions should have been submitted 28 days before the AGM).

Item 8 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chairman to close the meeting at 4:00 pm and thanked members for their attendance and participation.

- I. The Chair handed over to **Ajoke Omoware of the REEL Foundation** to begin the rest of the meeting with a Presentation about the Agbado Project in Lagos which BNET has supported annually since 2015. A PDF of this Presentation is attached to the Minutes which includes a link to a documentary about the project.

Agbado was started in 2014, a hub to provide educational materials, games and IT technology/e-learning for children from primary school age upwards. Floor space was provided by the Pastor of her Church for the first two years. Six out of ten children visiting the hub had not previously had any interaction with a computer nor access to IT technology, or books. Agbado is now partnering with low-income schools implementing community programmes and projects – e.g. spelling games and competitions. In 2018 there were 200 participants and, so far this year, 300. Additionally, there are now free medical check-ups and free eye prescriptions for the children.

BNET's support has helping to fund a permanent hub, install solar energy, fund a documentary and the production of an operations manual for expanding the hubs. BNET has also distributed books to Agbado's three hubs with remaining copies for future use. REEL now has a relationship with some 30 schools, in three communities over two states.

- II. Following Ajoke Omoware's Presentation, the Chair invited Mr. Paul Arkwright, the UK High Commissioner to Nigeria from 2015-2018 to address Members.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my time as High Commissioner to Nigeria. A wonderful three years, full of discovery and opportunity, challenging yet rewarding – undoubtedly the best experience (so far) of my 33 years in the Diplomatic Service.

I travelled in 30 of the 36 States, and feel I came to understand something of the richness of a diverse country and diverse people. Indeed, diversity is one of the true strengths of Nigeria.

I firmly believe that Nigeria's greatest resource is not oil, gas or mineral wealth, nor fertile but underused agricultural land, but its people. The diversity of Nigeria, and those who live there, is truly astonishing, and as many people say, one of the true strengths of the country.

Everywhere I went in Nigeria I met people who were striving for a better life, working hard to provide for their families, often in the most basic conditions. I visited IDP camps in Maiduguri, farming villages in Kaduna, oil settlements in Rivers, the lagoon community in Makoko Lagos. Always impressed by the can-do, entrepreneurial spirit of Nigerians.

It takes guts and resilience to survive, let alone thrive, in these circumstances. Resilience is a much-used word when people talk about Nigerians, and Nigeria. Resilience implies a determination to beat the odds in the face of adversity. "Muddling through" is another expression I heard a lot when I was there as HC.

According to the World Bank, some 90 million people now live in extreme poverty in Nigeria – the highest number of any country in the world. And with the demographic trends suggesting a huge increase in the population over the next 30 years (I'm told one in 10 babies born globally in 2050 will be a Nigerian) that number will almost certainly rise.

That's a huge challenge. At the moment, 2 million young Nigerians enter the job market every year. That's two million new jobs that need to be created every year. And that is clearly not happening. As in many countries across Africa, youth unemployment is worryingly high, and growing. It's all too easy to see what happens when young people don't have gainful employment. The men get sucked into criminality - or worse. The women often marry very young, and produce children at an early age, contributing to the vicious cycle.

Like many of you, I read the recent open letter from former President Obasanjo to President Buhari this week. It presents a gloomy picture of youth unemployment leading to social unrest, and warns of dire consequences, even another civil war. To quote the letter: "a very onerous cloud is gathering. And rain of destruction,

violence, disaster and disunity can be the only outcome". A bit dramatic, perhaps, even melodramatic. But whatever OBJ's motivations, his words need to be heeded.

So, what's the solution?

One thing I've learned from my Nigeria experience is that there is no shortage of excellent analysis of the woes of Nigeria. An impressive range of statistics is available from the excellent Dr Yemi Kale of the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics. The Nigerian press is full of erudite editorials and prescient columns flagging up the warning signs, recalling previous periods when Nigeria was struggling. The Economist and FT are never shy about giving advice to the Government. Not all of it is welcome!

Alongside the analysis, we often see solutions proffered. A number of these fall into what I would call the "talk shop" category. Nigeria has a proliferation of task forces, commissions, committees, councils and national dialogues. I note that former President Obasanjo has proposed another one: a national conference to come up with a solution, as he puts it.

Now don't get me wrong – I certainly adhere to Harold Macmillan's dictum that Jaw-Jaw is better than war-war.

But what is so often lacking in Nigeria is the political will - and the capacity - to turn good ideas, which could transform the fate of the nation, into practical action. As always, implementation is the key.

And so to education. As in other sectors, there is no lack of robust analysis of the issues facing education in Nigeria. Inadequate facilities, funding and teacher training are at the heart of it. The result? Around 12 million children out of school, most of them girls, and most of them in the North of the country. There are of course some shining exceptions. But the majority of those who are in school learn little – or little that equips them for post-school employment. Teachers in many schools, especially in rural areas, are over-burdened, under-paid and poorly trained. It's impossible to educate children in class sizes of 100 or more.

No country, rich or poor, can afford to neglect education – at all levels. To put it succinctly, a strong and effective public education sector, combined with adequate healthcare, is the very bedrock of a successful society.

I am far from being an expert in education. But as I have been asked to address the subject today, may I humbly suggest three ways in which Nigeria can correct its present course.

The first is a massive increase in Government spending – at Federal and State level - on what the World Bank calls human capital.

When I was in Nigeria in March last year, Bill Gates came to Abuja in March to address the National Economic Council. He spoke a number of hard truths about Nigeria's investment (or lack of investment) in human capital. He said that to anchor the Nigerian economy over the long term, investments in infrastructure and competitiveness must go hand in hand with investments in people: "People without roads, ports and factories can't flourish. And roads, ports and factories without skilled workers to build and manage them can't sustain an economy."

Many thought he had gone too far. But he had a fair point: at all levels, Nigeria invests far too little in education. Very few Nigerians I know who have the means to educate their children overseas choose to go down the Nigerian educational route.

Imagine if the money spent on expensive British private education went into the Nigerian education system. Imagine what a difference that could make. At this point, I should of course be welcoming Nigerian money flowing into the British economy. But I do so with a heavy heart. The TETFUND estimated in 2018 that over \$2bn was spent by Nigerians on student education abroad. That is almost 25 % more than the entire Federal budget for education.

The second proposal is to make girls' education the number one priority for increased spending. The facts are incontrovertible. A girl educated for 11 years is far less likely to marry early and produce children at an early age, and far more likely to contribute to the economic wellbeing of her family and her community. Neglecting girls' education means you deprive yourself of gaining economic benefit from 50% of the population. Which football manager would survive regularly leaving 50% of his best players on the bench?

The third proposal is a ruthless focus on teacher training, combined with a refusal to accept low standards among the nation's teachers. Gov El Rufai was heavily criticised when he sacked 20,000 teachers in Kaduna who failed the Primary 4 test. Unions threatened to

ensure he was never re-elected. But he was right. If you employ teachers who are illiterate and innumerate, what hope is there for the students they teach? Nigeria needs to focus less on pedagogic theology, and more on the basics – the 3 Rs as we used to say in the UK. The fundamentals – and not necessarily fundamentals expressed in the English language. A fresh look at bilingual education is long overdue.

These are not original thoughts. The prescriptions for success have been set out by many before me. But Nigeria is at a crossroads: as the late and much lamented Prof Babatunde Osotimehin said : “when countries’ age structures change favourably, meaning that they have more people of working age than dependents, they can see a boost to development, known as a demographic dividend – provided that they empower, educate and employ young people.”

That’s a clarion call to Government at all levels in Nigeria. Capacity is important, but leadership is critical. Now that I am no longer UK HC I am perhaps able to speak more freely (though I’m not sure my polite proposals will be any more acceptable than those of the FT and Economist.) Given an opportunity, I would suggest to President Buhari that he:

- declare an education emergency and immediately triple the budget provision for education, with a sharp focus on encouraging girls to go to and stay at, schools;
- appoint an education Minister who has a clear vision of what’s needed, and is prepared to roll his or her sleeves up to deliver that vision;
- work with experts in the field, donors such as the UK who can help fund some of these initiatives, drawing on best practice in developing countries around the world. As many of you are aware, DFID is already working on education programmes which are making a difference.

Much of this needs to be done at primary level. But Nigeria needs investment at all levels. I well remember my visit to one of the proudest academic institutions in Nigeria – Ibadan University – and the parlous state of its buildings, libraries, and faculties. I left depressed that a shining beacon of African education has been brought so low – through lack of funds, lecturer strikes, and inconsistent standards of teaching. And yet the students I met were

bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, eager to make their way in the world, and grateful for the opportunity.

That brings me back to my main reasons for optimism – Nigeria's people, her greatest resource. Those people, with their dynamism and thirst for success, their determination not just to muddle through, but to make the most of the opportunities presented. Many of you here today embody that never say die spirit.

My current role is as CEO of the UK-Africa Investment Summit which we plan to hold in January next year. One of the main objectives is to encourage British investment funds to look at the opportunities for sustainable investment in Africa, helping to create those millions of jobs that are needed. But if those jobs are created, and there is an insufficient number of educated, skilled young people to take up those jobs, Africa's potential, Nigeria's potential, will not be realised.

It is indeed a challenge. But as always, and to end, I turn to my optimistic side. With the right focus, the right leadership and the right policies, I am confident that Nigeria will meet that challenge and truly take its place as a leading world power, contributing to global wealth, with a healthy, educated population.

12Thank you for your kind attention.”

Post Meeting Q&A

1.What are the restricted funds kept for? – The Treasurer, John Lee, advised that when the Trust received the £1m donation, the donor specified this should be focused on two particular projects. The auditors requested that these be kept as restricted funds.

2.There remain problems with joining online. The Membership Secretary, Kevin Rafferty, advised that this problem is being addressed.

3.BNET does benefit from Gift Aid.

4.BNET now uses Metro Bank convenience following problems with HSBC affecting the Charities' supporting projects in Nigeria in 2018. Metro Bank was chosen purely for convenience at the time. However, if there is a

problem in the future, the Trust will look to banking with a Nigerian Bank. In the past, BNET had an account with First Bank.

5.Prof Lalage Bown asked to move a vote of thanks to the Trustees and to remember, with regard to the Chair's comment of small educational projects being a 'drop in the ocean, that "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness"; that "education includes little children in buildings and real education should touch the parents, the policy makers, the politicians - and we should not be afraid to talk to them – education is about people from cradle to grave".

D.K.O. Brandler, Chairman