

## **BNET CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 27 JULY 2023**

I start by detailing the various projects we have been involved with in the last 12 months.

- We have now updated our sponsorship with NTI – National Teachers Institute – whereby we sponsor 1 teacher from each of the 36 States + FCT for years 2,3 & 4 of their online NCE course. Additionally, we award a prize – the Gary Clark prize in honour of our late Trust Secretary – for the best overall student. The award was N100,000 but in view of the depreciation of the Naira, we have agreed going forward to calculate it in Sterling at £200. This year we completed sponsorship for the 2018 entrants (whose course were delayed by the covid pandemic) and start sponsorship of a new cohort.
- We have had an association for some years with the Ibra Foundation school in Miringa near Biu, Borno State. This is of course an area that has suffered badly from insecurity in recent years. This year we completed the sponsorship of 3 female staff to take an IT course to help them teach computer studies to their students and donated 3 laptops. We have also agreed to sponsor around 15 orphaned students attending the school to write their final WAEC exams.
- This year we donated PA equipment to a value of about £10,000 to 6 Government Colleges of Education throughout the Federation to be used in their Lecture Halls. Too often Lectures have to try to give their lectures in a Hall with hundreds of students without any PA assistance and much of what is said cannot be heard by the students at the back of the Hall.
- We continue to support the REEL foundation working in the outskirts of Lagos to organize out of school hours learning & games for local children. Originally using volunteers only, the

Foundation has expanded successfully in recent years and we now assist to pay salaries and provide equipment for various staff working with the children.

- In Abuja, we have started to work with the Life Builders Initiative which is a private organisation working with children at various IDP camps. Many have no access to formal education and the Life Builders Initiative organizes its own classes for them. We have started by sponsoring 25 children and if this is successful, will expect to expand our sponsorship.
- Just before covid, we successfully distributed several thousand reading books aimed at late primary/early secondary school students donated by Cengage – the educational publishing arm of National Geographic Magazine. They have now donated 11800 books comprising nine new titles which we have airfreighted to Lagos and divided into 3. Some will be distributed to schools in the South, some will go to Abuja for distribution to Life Builders Initiative and other IDB schools and some will be distributed in the North via the Ministries of Education in Kano, Jigawa & Katsina States.
- We continue to support the Immaculate Conception Girls' School in Umutu, Delta State – a village secondary boarding school founded jointly by the Catholic Church together with BNET. This year we completed supply of school furniture and continue annual tuition fees sponsorship of 10 girls from the local community whose parents would otherwise be unable to afford to send them to the school.
- We sponsor 15 children at the Daily Delight Montessori school in Lagos. Again, these are children whose parents would otherwise be unable to afford the fees and we have agreed to sponsor them for 5 years.

All these are projects we feel fit in with our core aims of assisting with teacher training where feasible, ensuring whatever projects we support are sustainable and give value for money and where we can see the maximum benefit to the maximum number of Nigerian children/students.

We have many applications, most of which we reject upfront as they do not fit in the above criteria. Those we feel may be worth following up, we refer to our Nigerian Trustee team in Nigeria – Engineer Greg Ojeh & Dele Fatayi-Williams in Lagos and Professor Kabiru Isyaku - to investigate and report back on. We are lucky to have such distinguished and conscientious colleagues without whom our work would be severely curtailed and I take this opportunity again to thank them officially.

In the last 12 months, our administration here in London has had quite an upheaval. We have shared offices with Invest Africa in central London. Unfortunately, they were asked to vacate the offices at short notice at the end of last year by their landlords. They have relocated but have been unable to give us a desk due to lack of space. So, we no longer have an official London address. Luckily most of our correspondence now with members and regarding our work is online via email etc and Invest Africa forward letter mails to Elizabeth our Secretary or to John our Treasurer or Edith our membership secretary for actioning. It is not ideal and we are still organising how to forward telephone calls which may come into our Invest Africa number. However of course we save on the rent and so far, it has not caused too much disruption. We continue to look at the best way to organise ourselves going forward.

The office has been manned for more than 30 years by our Administrator Frances Tarr. It is fitting I close this report with a tribute to her as she has decided this year to retire. To many, she has been the face of BNET & the BNA before that, being 'on seat' for longer than any of the current Board and always there come rain or shine

organising our office, answering phone call and letters, attending Board Meetings to take notes for the Minutes and ready with advice whenever needed. She has taken an active interest in the work of the Trust and for example the donation of books from Cengage came specifically via Frances who met the MD and introduced him to us. Even after her retirement, she has volunteered to come to the AGM again to make sure we are all where we are meant to be when we are meant to be! She will be sorely missed and again I want to formally record our gratitude as Trustees and Members for her dedication and enthusiasm in our cause.

I close by once again thanking the Trustees and the officers for their invaluable involvement & advice. We are all volunteers and have other interests and responsibilities but the work of the Trust is close to all our hearts and we are grateful for the continued support of our members that allows the Trust to continue.