

NIGERWIVES BRAILLE BOOK PRODUCTION CENTRE

(A National Project of Nigerwives Nigeria)

P. O. Box 52335, Ikoyi, Lagos

Patron of the Braille Centre:

Professor V. C. Ike



Nigerwives National President:

Mrs. Luchelle Nwokogba

Newsletter - No. 7

March 2001

(A Newsletter to inform Friends of the Centre of its progress, activities and needs.)

AIM OF THE CENTRE

The main aim of the Centre is to produce brailled books for visually impaired students in Nigeria, thereby assisting them towards fulfilling their best potential.

NIGERWIVES OPEN BRAILLE SECTION IN IBADAN

Ibadan Nigerwives, in association with the Oyo State Library, have opened a room in the Ibadan Library for blind and partially sighted readers. The official event was held on the 19th February in the spacious library hall.

The venue was attractively decorated with fresh flowers, greenery, and balloons. In a corner of the hall some 150 volumes of brailled text from Nigerwives Braille Book Production Centre were displayed. People purchased these and donated them to the library. The many people attending included government officials, students from University of Ibadan and a good number of Nigerwives from Ibadan, as well as a delegation of Nigerwives from Lagos. Gloriastene Agboola, the MC for the occasion, conducted the programme with grace and efficiency.



MC Mrs. Gloriastene Agboola, Mrs. Jean Obi, and Ibadan NW President, Mrs. Malita Ashiru welcoming the Commissioner for Women's Affairs, Chief (Mrs.) Bukola Oni (2nd from right)

The president of Nigerwives Ibadan, Mrs. Maliita Ashiru (from Tanzania) welcomed the crowd and Jean Obi, co-ordinator of our Centre, gave the history of the Centre and future plans. Other speakers included the representative of the governor, the Special Advisor on Education - Chief S. A. Adetutu, Mrs. Adejumbi representing the Honourable Commissioner of Education, Mr. Oyegade - Chief Librarian for Oyo State and the Commissioner for Women's Affairs - Chief (Mrs) Bukola Oni.

A consignment of brailled books which Nigerwives had received from the American Library of Congress, was presented to the Chief Librarian, Mr. Oyegade, by Mrs. Ashiru. (see picture below)



Emmanuel Asuquo, a blind student from Kings College, read an address he had written to Nigerwives in appreciation for making it possible for him to "read" his textbooks. (Extracts are included elsewhere in the newsletter).

The programme came to a close with a vote of thanks from Katie Oruwariye, a very active senior Nigerwife, who entreated us all to spread the word about the facility and also identify students who could benefit.

Mr. Adetutu invited Emmanuel to accompany him to cut the ribbon to open the Braille Section and a large crowd managed to visit the venue. (see picture below)



Mr. Adetutu cutting the tape, with Emmanuel Asuquo and Mrs. Katie Oruwariye close by.

CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

The last 12 months

At this time last year our accommodation consisted of one portakabin, situated in the compound of the NNPC Zonal Office in Ikoyi plus a bare 20ft container that was camped out awaiting refurbishing.



(from right to left)

Mrs. Liisa Thornton (AWC Community Services Chair) with Joyce Fatona, Perla Amu & Doris Fafunwa inside the portakabin refurbished by AWC

A donation from the American Women's Club of Lagos enabled us to buy the container but we had not been able to start refurbishing it because we had no permanent place for it. In fact we almost lost the money to refurbish it because we couldn't find a site for it to stay on whilst it was being refurbished. The Lagos Zonal Manager of NNPC came to our rescue despite the very tight accommodation problem in his office complex, and offered us a temporary site in an unoccupied residence, providing we moved out if the house became occupied. Happily that situation did not arise during the refurbishment though the residence will soon be occupied so we now have to find an alternative site. NNPC gave us a 40ft container during their relocation exercise and this too has been refurbished through a donation received from the *Small World Project*. We are now therefore the proud owner of three portakabins. The original one will remain our Book Production Centre, the 40ft. will house our Computer Training Programme and the 20ft will become our Volunteer Centre. We urgently need a site for all three portakabins.

Support

You will see from our list of donations later in this newsletter that we have continued to receive good support from many sources. We are indeed grateful to our many friends who show confidence in the project by donating in a variety of ways. Without their support the Centre could not continue to exist because there is no way the Centre can pay its way.

Looking ahead

We had very much hoped that by the time this newsletter goes out, both the Computer Training Centre and the

Volunteer Centre would have started off but often things don't go quite as planned. The actual portakabins are ready and we have received some donations of furniture but we will not actually set up the furniture and equipment inside them until they have been moved to the site they will operate from. We are however very hopeful that by May we will have found a suitable site and that both will have started to function. Quite a number of visually impaired persons are eagerly awaiting the start of the training programme because they see it as their access to employment for which they are academically well qualified. There are also a good number of volunteers who are waiting for the Volunteer Centre to open. It is very appropriate that it should be opened this year because 2001 has been designated *International Year of Volunteers* by the United Nations. There is more about the Volunteer Centre later in this newsletter.

So far we have concentrated on producing secondary school text books and we will continue to add more titles to the those already available. However, we have now identified two other areas that we are starting to work on. They are the production of a primary school series in Maths & English and the conversion of easy-reader print books to print and braille. Details of how you can help with these are given further down.

Our sincere gratitude goes to all those who support us in so many different ways. We thank NNPC for their continued hospitality and for the very friendly way in which the NNPC staff accept our presence in their compound. We thank Resourcery for their continued technical support and back-up. We also thank you for your interest in the work of the Centre for the very fact that you have read this newsletter so far shows that you are interested in the project and we appeal to you to help us in whatever way you can. As we move into new areas of the project this year, we look forward to the continued support from our many friends so that the Centre may serve the visually impaired even more effectively.

Jean Obi - Co-ordinator

SUPPORT

Company Reports & Most Any Other Paper

We want to remind all our friends that we have a never-ending need for old company reports and magazines of heavy quality paper which we recycle for our brailled books. The printing on the paper does not disturb the blind reader and it can be in any language!! They are only interested in the raised dots which they read with their fingers.

Bundles of old newspapers, magazines or sheet paper are always welcome. We sell these to generate funds for buying print books for processing and other administrative items.

Donations

We are grateful for contributions from the following:

Mobil Producing Nigeria Ltd.	2 Braille writers
American International School	2 cartons braille paper 9 packets laminated paper
American Women's Club:	N400,000 (2000) N130, 000 (2001)
British Women's Group, Lagos:	N50, 000 (in 2000) N200,000 (in 2001) 2 packets braille paper
Statoil Nigeria Ltd.	7 used computer tables
Polyproducts Ltd.,	10 kg. polythene bags
Nuplas Industries Ltd.	4 rolls PVC blister
Mr. V. Wranti (Abuja)	N1, 000
NNPC	40-foot portakabin
Small World	N260, 000
USIS	27 cartons waste paper sold for N4, 350
Lagos Caledonian Society	N150, 000
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Smiech	N3, 000
Julie Gray	used computer system, laptop, printer, UPS
Prof. & Mrs. V. C. Ike,	N10, 000
Mr. & Mrs. C. A. Osborne (UK),	CD Re-writer
Annelies Mueller	£353
Contributions from Branches:	
Ibadan Nigerwives	N30, 000
Enugu Nigerwives	N10, 000
Akwa Ibom Nigerwives	N1, 000
Port Harcourt Nigerwives	N6, 000
Abeokuta Nigerwives	N1, 500

Visitors to the Centre

We are always pleased to receive visitors to the Centre. The following are some we have had the pleasure of receiving during the past 12 months:

Dr. B. A. Masha, Nigerian Society for the Blind, Oshodi
 Mrs. Yvonne Syrstad, Scandinavian Society
 Mrs. Denise Rose & son David (A.W.C.)
 Engr. B. A. Nnamdi, NAPIMS, Lagos
 Mr. Joel Ukama, Resource Teacher, Kings College
 Mr. Akintunde Asalu, Shepherd's Hill Baptist Church
 Arch. W. A. Adebisi, International Consulting Architects
 American Women's Club Delegation (President: Mrs. Sheila Kassner)
 Ann Solomon of Nigerwives, Ikeja & 2 guests from New York, Sue Davis and Janet Moore
 Mr. A. Harris Eze, Agip Oil, PH
 Mrs. Lesley Stern, Charities Secretary, British Women's Group
 Mrs. Maryam Haruna, wife of General Haruna

BOOK PRODUCTION

We now have over 60 completed titles and many more at various stages of completion.. Many blind students now look to the Centre to supply their textbook requirements, at the same price as sighted students buy their print books. Book lists have been sent to all state Library Boards and Ministries of Education to publicise the availability of the books.

The Volunteer Centre

Those of you who read last year's newsletter will know that the idea of a Volunteer Centre came from our Co-ordinator's visit to the Canadian Institute for the Blind in Toronto, where a large number of volunteers enthusiastically work together on both braille book production and recordings of books.

It is timely to open our Volunteer Centre in 2001 – the International Year for Volunteers. We have a refurbished portakabin that will house the Centre and all we need now is the place to put it, along with the Computer Training portakabin. Already a good number of people have indicated their desire to be part of the Volunteer Centre. There will be a variety of jobs to do: book binding, computer editing and scanning, sticking the braille pages on the easy-reader braille-print books.

Volunteer editors may work at home using their own computer facilities. Can you volunteer as an editor?

We need many more volunteer editors. Anyone who has computer skills and facilities can help with editing. Editors are given a book, the scanned files of the book on disk and guidelines. If you can help, please contact us by phone, by post through our P. O. Box or, better still, visit us at the Centre.



Mr. Agboola (a teacher of blind students, who is himself visually impaired) with guests examining books at the opening of the Ibadan Braille Library Unit

Primary School Books

We have had several requests to produce primary level books. Most blind students at this level are in special schools, and most have no textbooks in braille. We have therefore decided to produce a Maths and an English series in readiness for the new academic year which starts in September. Most of the textbooks at this level are very visual. So far we have not been able to include diagrams in our books but graphical images are more important for younger children. We have identified some equipment that will enable us to include diagrams and hope to acquire it soon, to use it in the primary books.

Print & Braille easy-readers

We have had requests for easy-readers that a sighted parent can read with a blind child or vice-versa. Such books are converted into print and braille in some countries by brailleing the text on clear plastic adhesive sheets but these are too expensive for us to use here.

Our friends in the plastics industry helped us to identify PVC blister and Nuplast Industries have donated two large rolls. We braille the text on the plastic and then stick it over the appropriate pages of text so that the text and pictures show. A sighted person and a blind person can then read at the same time. We have experimented with different types of adhesive but the plastic peels off. We have finally used double-sided adhesive tape (½" or 1 cm wide) which seems to work fine but we have not found where it is sold in Nigeria. If you know where it is sold please let us know. If you travel abroad and can buy a roll for us it would be greatly appreciated.

We are collecting fairly used easy readers for this project and would appreciate any you can collect. We thank the children in the Lagos American International School, who raised money and bought 9 packets of the special adhesive plastic sheets for us to use for this project.

COMPUTER TRAINING

The computer training programme is mainly for visually impaired graduates to equip them with computer skills to enable them to work effectively in sighted work environments. Companies will be asked to encourage visually impaired applicants during recruitment exercises for young graduate staff. The Centre will transcribe any materials necessary for the interview process. It will also provide free training for any successful applicants.

The employer will purchase the necessary software for the employee's use (cost approximately \$700).

We would be pleased to know of any employers who may be interested in this programme and will gladly provide further details on request..

During the school holidays we will run computer programmes for blind secondary school students.

EXTRACTS FROM EMMANUEL'S ADDRESS



Emmanuel Asuquo delivering his message at Ibadan
Emmanuel's address was too long to reproduce in this newsletter but here are some of the points he made:

The Nigerwives Braille Book Production Centre has enhanced the academic performance of blind students.

Before the establishment of the Nigerwives Centre brailled books were extremely voluminous and the price of brailled books was exorbitant. (New General Maths for JS2 produced by NERDC cost from N3,000 whereas it is sold by Nigerwives at N350, the same price as the print book.).

The Centre has also produced brailled 4-figure tables for Mathematics and nail boards for Maths diagrams.

I am delighted by the Centre's plan to start a computer training programme for visually handicapped persons.

I hope the Centre will make efforts to be part of the information super highway, the internet.

My profound gratitude goes to whoever conceived the idea of a centre such as this. I deeply appreciate the relentless effort of the dedicated staff at the Centre.

CONTACT

The Centre's portakabin is situated in the compound of the NNPC Lagos Zonal Office on Kingsway Road, Ikoyi.

There is no phone at the Centre but the following members will gladly take messages or give information.

Doris Fafunwa	261-5028
Jean Obi (evenings only)	267-2040 & 42
Pearl Ajayi	615-462

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Co-ordinator/Technical	Jean Obi MBE
Public Relations	Perla Amu
Finance	Joyce Fatona

Newsletter	Doris Dada & Doris Fafunwa
NW President (Lagos Branch)	Wendy Onuba
Administrator/Secretary	Pearl Ajayi