

NIGERWIVES BRAILLE BOOK PRODUCTION CENTRE

(A National Project of Nigerwives Nigeria)

P. O. Box 54224, Ikoyi, Lagos

Patron of the Braille Centre:

Professor V. C. Ike



Nigerwives National President:

Mrs. Luchelle Nwokogba

Newsletter - No. 9

March 2003

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

Aims of the Centre:

- 1) To produce brailled books for visually impaired students,
- 2) To provide computer training to prepare visually impaired applicants for the world of work.

Emergency Rescue!

The day before Christmas a great fire engulfed the NNPC Zonal Headquarters, home to our Centre for producing brailled textbooks. NNPC had graciously allowed that our portakabin-office be hooked up adjacent to their building. One of our staff, Peter Onah, discovered the blaze when he arrived on the scene about 8 a.m. Noting the danger to our portakabin he rushed to inform Coordinator Jean Obi. Jean rapidly recruited her two sons, Uzo and Ikem, who immediately drove their vehicles to the spot. There was no way of telling what might have been stored in the building or if a sudden explosion might occur. Not minding the risks, they all, with the assistance of Kemi Agbogun (a former employee of the Centre) and NNPC Dr. Abiodun Balogun, managed to pack out the technical equipment, books and files. These were then deposited in our Volunteer Centre portakabin in Kings College Annex V.I. We are relieved and forever grateful to these folk who braved the impending inferno to save our Centre from disaster!.



The Volunteers' portakabin before equipment from our portakabin at NNPC was transferred to it

Coordinator's Report

The last twelve months have been a very mixed bag of activities. We have had a change of administrator, and the staff strength increased from five to eight when we moved into the extension at Kings College in August. In January we had a further increase of one because we

needed a back-up tutor for our computer training.

With the move of some of our staff to the extension at Kings College in August we were feeling fairly comfortable with respect to our accommodation. That situation changed at the end of December with the fire at the NNPC building, in the compound where our main portakabin was situated. Happily the fire did not reach our portakabin but we had to vacate it for the time being and all staff are now at the extension. The accommodation there is now over-stretched but work is going on there. We hope it will not be too long before we can move back.

Dec.
Nov.
Oct.
Sep.
Aug.
July
June
May ADDAX
Apr. Chevron
Mar. Chevron
Feb. Chevron
Jan. NAOC

Last year our major problem was finance for the salaries of staff. We receive support from various sources but many associations do not like their donations to be used for paying staff. However, no matter how well equipped we are, without the staff to operate the equipment we cannot achieve the aims of the Centre.

We therefore decided to appeal to companies to sponsor the salaries of the staff for a month (or more) so that with 12 such sponsors the salaries of the staff would be assured. The total salary bill for a month is N100,000. So far we have got sponsors for the months January-May. There are some other offers in the pipeline but we cannot count our chickens before they are hatched! Maybe you can help us get a sponsor to complete the year.

There is no way the Centre can pay its own way because our services are provided at highly subsidised prices. We hope therefore that this way of sourcing salaries will be successful.

Our other major problem during the last 12 months has been the maintenance of our Index Braille printers. Resourcery is ever ready to assist but the parts are not locally available. We have recently arranged for replacement motherboards for the printers and some spares but the real answer is to have local technicians who are recognised by the manufacturers.

In February we had a visit from Dick Tucker of the Force Foundation, Netherlands. He is involved in setting up library services for the visually impaired and so he is also concerned with book production. Having seen our problems first hand, he contacted the Index

manufacturers, whom he knows. There is now a proposal for an engineer from Index to come to Nigeria to run a training programme in the use and maintenance of the machines and set up availability of spare parts. This should solve our problem.

In the rest of this newsletter you will read of further activities and achievements of the Centre and of the many friends who continue to help us in a wide variety of ways. We wish to thank all our friends - individuals, associations and corporate bodies - for their continued help, support and interest, without which we could achieve nothing. We can assure you of our determination to work hard to maintain your support.

Jean Obi

Coordinator

New Staff Join the Centre

Our Administrator, Joyce Dawotola, hails from Tanzania. A Nigerwife, she is admirably suited to taking on the task handed over by former administrator, Pearl Ajayi.

Joyce has been a reporter and has a Masters in Journalism from Rostov State University, Russia. For the last 5 years before starting work at the Centre, she was Personal Assistant to the MD, Givanas Nigeria Ltd./Newone Industry in Apapa. Quiet and conscientious, yet very enthusiastic, she says "It's *very, very* different from what I had been doing. It's really challenging and I'm enjoying it. I feel I'm doing something useful."

Other new staff

Julia Omochere is employed as a computer editor. She has settled down well and is able to pursue a part-time tertiary course in English Education alongside her job at the Centre. The Centre is happy to encourage staff to better themselves, providing the course is compatible with their working hours.

Mercy Williams is employed as a proof reader and she also does printing and book-binding. She is visually impaired and is a graduate of the Federal College of Special Education at Oyo.

Eno Dan is employed as an office assistant and she is also learning to do computer editing. She is a secondary school graduate who hopes to pursue her education further eventually.

Tunde Mohammed has been a frequent visitor to the Centre for some time and has shown a keen interest in the activities of the Centre. He has now been employed as an understudy to our computer trainer. He is visually impaired and a graduate of Jos University. Before joining the Centre he was a teacher at Pacelli School for the Blind in Lagos.

The Centre now has a total staff of nine, four of whom are visually impaired.

Computer Training for Graduates

The Centre's second aim – *To provide computer training to prepare visually impaired applicants for the world of work* has taken off and is proceeding slowly. All equipment and staff are in place to train visually impaired

applicants on computers, with special software, to compete in a sighted work environment. The course is aimed mainly at graduates of tertiary institutions, to enable them to gain employment in administrative positions,

The programme is open to applicants country-wide providing they can arrange their accommodation in Lagos. The course consists of 25 sessions. Full-time students can complete it in five weeks. The fee for the course is N10,000.

The programme took off in January and two students have enrolled so far. Several others have made enquiries and are still trying to source the necessary funding. Some have brought possible sponsors to see the Centre.

We take this opportunity to "spread the word" so that anyone interested in assisting a young visually impaired applicant to complete this course should please contact us. These young people have degrees and need only to acquire computer skills to enable them to perform in the working world.

Many secondary schools now offer computer literacy programmes. The Centre will therefore also offer holiday programmes for visually impaired secondary school students so that they can have an equal opportunity with their sighted counterparts.



Meekam Mgbenwelu, Marketing Manager of Microsoft, presenting a computer system to Ope. Meekam has solicited much support for the Centre

Presentation by Newone Industries

Mr. Samir Ajani, MD, Newone Industries, donated two complete computer systems, each with a UPS and printer. He also donated N85,000 towards the employment of a second trainer (Tunde Mohammed) for the computer training programme. The picture below captures the presentation.



Femi Afonja (Newone) Abiodun, Ope, Joyce, driver (Newone), Julia and Peter kneeling

Nigerwives Website

Nigerwives-Nigeria now has a website, The Braille Centre has pages on it where you can find the current booklist, details of the computer training programme and back issues of the Centre's newsletters. Contact us at our e-mail address: braille@nigerwivesnigeria.com. We hope you will make use of our website and that it will make it easier for you to keep in contact with us. Any comments on the information there would be welcome.

Support for the Centre

Nigerwives Branches

Branches of Nigerwives are involved with the work of the Centre in various ways. Many are involved in the Primary School Reading Project which you can read about elsewhere in the newsletter. Some provide books for blind students in local schools. Abia State Nigerwives bought a large consignment of our books for the blind students at Government College Umuahia. The photo below shows some of the Nigerwives with the students at their college during the presentation.



Company Reports & Most Any Other Paper Appreciated

We can use practically any kind of paper donation. Although we use the thicker paper (like old annual reports or calendars) for book production, we sell other types, (including newspapers) and use the proceeds for print books which we transcribe into braille. We make use of enormous amounts of paper, so whatever you may contribute you can be sure it goes for a good cause! Can you collect through your church, work-place or school? Please help us. Recycling paper is also environment friendly!

The following contributed paper of various kinds during the past year:

Dr. B. E. Idoniboye	old newspapers sold for ₦ 1,500
USAID	cartons of paper sold for ₦ 4,000
Mrs. Sally Udoma (Chevron)	Large quantity old calendars
Mobil	Large quantity old calendars
Mrs. Marliese Allen	Large quantity of paper reports
Belgian Embassy	regular supply of all types
Austrian Embassy	regular supply of all types
Citibank	large quantity of reports
Mrs. Oputa - Elf	supplies of calendars and papers
Mrs. Adejumobi	calendars
Annemie Omole	supplies of assorted papers

Donations:

We are grateful for the following support this past year:

Small World programme 2003	₦450,000
(sponsored by Nigerwives-Lagos Branch)	
Chevron/Texaco (3 months' staff salaries)	₦300,000
ADDAX Petroleum (1 month's staff salaries)	₦100,000
Nigerian AGIP Oil (1 month's staff salaries)	₦100,000
Newone Industries	₦85,000
plus 2 computers systems with UPS & printer	
Information Tech. Assn.of Nigeria	1 computer system
Nigerwives - Port Harcourt	₦50,000
Nigerwives - Nsukka	₦500
British Women's Group	₦150,000
Dr. Adanna Phil-Ebosie	₦42,760
Mr. & Mrs. D. H. Osborne	₦46,070
Lagos Caledonian Society	₦200,000
Simba Travels	₦10,400
Mrs. Nkoli Osuno	₦2,000
PolyProducts (through Mr. Biswas, Marketing Mgr)	regular supply of polythene bags for book covers
Braille Institute Press (USA)	300+ cartons of braille books
Atlantic Hall	27 novels for secondary schools
Nigerwives - Abuja	₦40,000
Nigerwives - Abeokuta	₦7,000
Nigerwives - Ibadan	₦10,000
Nigerwives - Owerri	₦10,000
Nigerwives - Kano	₦700
Nigerwives - Ijebu-Ode	₦300
Nigerwives - Warri	₦12,370
Nigerwives - Enugu	₦5,000

Yet again we express our gratitude to *Resourcery Ltd* for their continuing maintenance support..

A Smiling Benefactor

Hilda Itegebe, a Kenyan Nigerwife, runs Simba Travel Agency. After visiting the Centre she decided to invite her customers to help raise money for the Centre. The photo below shows Hilda presenting money to Perla Amu, a member of the Steering Committee.

Customers write down their donations in a book and Hilda submits them at the end of the month. The receipts are pasted in the book for all to see. In three months her customers have contributed N10,400 towards the work of the Centre. This lady has made us all smile!



Hilda with Perla Amu, a member of the Steering Committee

An Anniversary Gift

David & Ilene Osborne (brother & sister-in-law of Jean Obi) celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary last July and decided to ask their guests to donate money to the Centre instead of giving them presents. They knew we required a lot of things for moving into the extension in August. Out of the money collected we were able to (a) upgrade two computers from 486 to Pentium, (b) have a carpenter make a large bookshelf, 6 computer tables, a book-binding table, and three small cupboards, (c) buy a supply of printing ink from the UK at a much cheaper price than we get it here, (d) contribute ₦46,070 to make up a year's salary for an understudy for our computer tutor.

It really went a long way in helping us to move into the extension.

Braille Reading Project for Primary Schools

Our newest initiative is sparked off by the generosity of the *Braille Institute Press* in California. About 300 cartons of brailled reading books for primary children have been received. We are now distributing the books to Nigerwives Branches and contacts all over the country. Our aim is to boost Braille literacy amongst the very young visually impaired school children.

Each Branch is asked to organise volunteers to go into the special local schools on a regular fortnightly or weekly basis for *reading time*. The children will be encouraged to read aloud and talk about what they read.

So far cartons of books have been distributed to: Anambra, Enugu, Abia, Kano, Oyo, Osun, Abeokuta, Ekiti, Kaduna, and Kwara. Various companies and offices have been helpful in seeing that they reach their destinations, including Vina, Anammco, Peugeot, Abia State Liaison Office and the governor's wife of Ekiti State, who is the daughter of a Nigerwife. Books are still to be sent out to Jos, Edo, Ondo and Delta

We do not have Nigerwives branches in all places where there are primary schools for the blind but we are trying to contact individual Nigerwives where there is no branch so that as many schools as possible can benefit. The truth is that children's books in Braille in Nigeria are very few; yet only if these children become skilful in Braille can they progress in today's world. With the arrival now of a choice of reading books, the children's outlook should be broadened and skills enhanced.

With the cooperation of the Branches in 2004 the Coordinator hopes to arrange a Braille reading competition for the primary school children who have participated in this project. There would be prizes for each state, with an overall national prize if we can bring the state winners together.

Canadian Braille Literacy Foundation Project

In the last newsletter we reported that several primary schools had requested us to produce textbooks for them and that we were trying to meet these requests.

Last year we had the opportunity to present a proposal to the *Canadian Braille Literacy Foundation*, requesting for assistance in purchasing necessary additional equipment and the funding of salaries for two additional staff for the first year of a project to produce primary level books. We received news in January that our proposal had been accepted by the Foundation and we expect the project to take off in time to supply English and Maths books to primary schools for the new school year in September.

We are indeed very grateful to the Foundation for assisting us in this way.

Work on the masters for some of the books is already in progress. Lists of all students in primary schools are being compiled in readiness for the take off and we look forward to full cooperation from all Nigerwives branches in identifying the students in their respective areas.

Secondary School Books

We now have a total of 120 titles on the book list, having added 30 titles over the past year. More are continually being added. There is a wide selection of literature books that are suitable for general reading. They would be welcome additions to libraries in schools and tertiary institutions where there are blind students

Our booklist is available on the Nigerwives-Nigeria website, details of which can be found below. The list will be updated regularly on the site. For those who cannot access the website, it can be obtained by post.

The Volunteer Centre

By December 2002 the Volunteer portakabin was ready to welcome volunteers to work at the Centre. Unfortunately the NNPC fire that month forced us to relocate the staff from NNPC Centre to the Volunteer's portakabin, leaving no space for volunteers presently.

Contact Us

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e-mail: Administrator <braille@nigerwivesnigeria.com>

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Jean Obi <jeaneobi@yahoo.com>

Telephone: 080-2339-3763 or, after hours you may call:

Doris Dada 01-613-332

Doris Fafunwa 01-261-5028

Jean Obi 01-4709790

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Co-ordinator/Technical	Jean Obi MBE
Public Relations & Personnel	Perla Amu
Finance	Chris Achimu
Newsletter	Doris Dada & Doris Fafunwa

NW President, Lagos Branch	Funmi Hunter
Administrator/Secretary	Joyce Dawotola
Member	Wendy Onuba
Rep. NW Central Council	Gloriastene Agboola