

Fantsuam Foundation Building Rural Businesses through Microlending

By Cicely Brown (VSO)

In March and April of 2009, 45 clients from the village of Dangoma in Kaninkon each benefited from a N10,000 (\$100) loan from Friends of Nigeria. Having successfully repaid the loans in full, both groups have now moved on to the second loan cycle of N20,000.

As you will read from the interviews with eight of the women, the loans have really helped them move their businesses on to bigger and better things!

Dangoma village is about 30 minutes by car from Kafanchan in the chiefdom of Kaninkon. Unlike the typical pastoral Fulanis, the Hausa-Fulanis of Dangoma have settled into this community although they still maintain some of their pastoral traditions such as treating all visitors to a delicious bowl of nono (yoghurt) with sugar and millet.

Mobilised by recently qualified Fantsuam field officer Sarah Michael, over 60 Dangoma women have received loans from Fantsuam in 2009 with strong support from their community leader or hakimi, Baba Galadima. The eight women interviewed vary in ages from 16 to 84 and have businesses that range from selling firewood to tailoring.

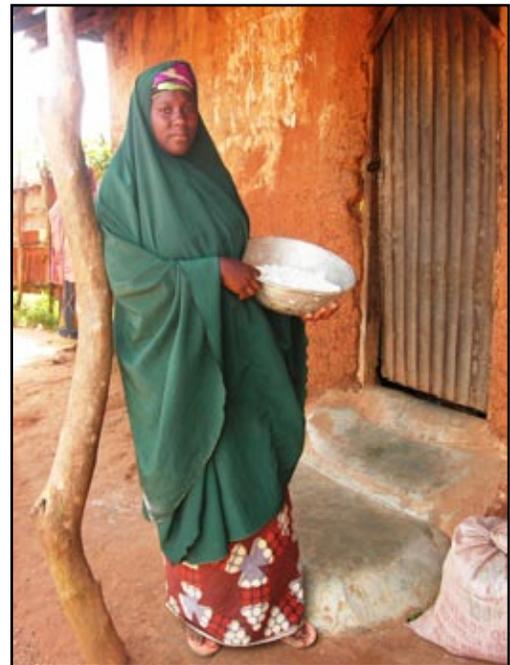


Fantsuam field officer Sarah Michael with community leader Baba Galadima.

Here are their stories.

Fatu Galadima, wife of the hakimi, has a business buying and selling furniture and household items, such as beds, mattresses, chairs and cooking dishes. Travelling to the main market of Jagindi about one hour away, she buys second hand furniture for sale in her village. Combined with the profit from the business, the loan from Fantsuam helped her to buy a cow adding to the wealth of the family and providing a rich source of milk.

Prior to receiving the loan from Fantsuam, **Salamatu Abdullahi** bought kerosene in bulk from Kafanchan market which she sold from her house to the local community. The loan gave her additional capital with which to diversify her business, allowing her to move into selling sugar. Though it is a luxury item, sugar is in high demand in the Fulani communities because it takes the edge off the sour traditional nono yoghurt. The cost has prevented it from being readily marketed in the village and with her extra cash, Salamatu quickly took advantage of the market opportunity. Twenty-five years of age, Salamatu has two children and has



Salamatu holds a bowl of sugar which she will package into small bags for sale to sweeten the traditional nono drink.

been in business for five years.

At sixteen **Libabatu Zilani** is the youngest of the group but is already in business to support her one child, buying yams from local farmers in Dangoma and transporting them to the main wholesale market in Jagindi. The Fantsuam loan gave her the capital to buy yams in larger quantities, therefore, making the weekly journey to Jagindi more cost-effective and allowing her to realize a greater profit.

Hadiza Shafiyu makes the journey between Jagindi and Dangoma in the opposite direction, buying cassava flour and rice wholesale at the large Jagindi market and selling it in Dangoma. Prior to receiving the loan from Fantsuam, she prepared food and buns for the local community. The loan enabled her to

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President's Column

By Mike Goodkind (16) 65-67

“When is Peace Corps going back to Nigeria?”

That question was raised during the FON General Meeting in Boston. My answer is that hurdles still exist, but there are promising signs as well. One positive sign is a new Peace Corps director, Aaron Williams, appointed by what appears to be a Peace Corps-friendly presidency.

Funding has always been a hurdle any time Peace Corps enters another country. But there is also positive news on the funding front. FON is exploring recent initiatives that may bring new funding and potential expansion of the Peace Corps. One such initiative is More Peace Corps, launched by the National Peace Corps Association (www.morepeacecorps.org/), which is pressing for a \$450 million appropriation for the upcoming federal fiscal year to support Peace Corps and double the number of serving volunteers. Currently the number of PCVs is down to about 8,000, half the number who served four decades ago. A newer organization, Push for Peace Corps, is spearheaded by **Donald Ross (15) 65-67**, among others, and is showing much enthusiasm as it augments what we hope is a successful push to expand and reinvigorate the Peace Corps.

A second key hurdle is persuading Peace Corps officials that security concerns are manageable in Nigeria. Based on our own memories such a pitch might seem reasonable. But the 9/11 tragedy has changed the country and the world significantly. It seems also to have made Peace Corps and a lot of agencies, federal and otherwise, risk-averse for civilian employees, including Peace Corps volunteers. Again there is a positive sign — the success and safe deployment of VSO volunteers as our relationship with that organization has highlighted. VSO's success is a strong argument that security concerns are manageable although reports from our own FON back-to-Nigeria-tour members raise some cautionary issues and the need to carefully manage safety.

In summary we support a reasonable

course of action that will make returning volunteers to Nigeria a top priority, and we are starting to find hopefully effective ways to make that happen. Please check our GoogleGroup for updates. [*See article on next page for tips on how to join the group.*]

Holiday card fundraising for VSO and Fantsuam.

Hopefully by the time you read this, your holiday shopping obligations will have been finished. I hope that FON was part of your holiday cheer this year — in the form of gift cards announcing your donation to one or both of FON's projects — the Fantsuam Foundation (www.fantsuam.org), which offers microloans to women, and VSO (www.vsointernational.org), the British-based nonprofit organization which posts volunteers on the Peace Corps model in Nigeria.

We hope that the gift cards were and continue to be useful in providing a gift that won't be tossed into the bottom of a drawer or left out on the counter in the vain hope that somebody will want to eat it. You may already have seen details about this program via mail, the GoogleGroup or our FON website (www.friendsofnigeria.org/Announcements.htm), and we do hope that you will include FON in your gift giving to your friends, family and business contacts throughout the year. If you've already donated, please accept our thanks.

We are assembling a great team of FON members to work on the fundraising projects. If you've contributed, you've received, or soon will get, a thank you from **Tom Cassidy (27) 66-67**, a task he enthusiastically inherited from **Anne Sherwood (11) 64-66**, a board member who has been an invaluable source of support to FON in many ways.

Newsletter changes.

In late September I came back from a teaching assignment in India to read

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FRIENDS OF NIGERIA NEWSLETTER

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Barbara Tansey Bush (11) 64-66

In September 1964, I went to Nigeria with Group XI and was assigned to a girls' secondary grammar school in Sapele in the Midwest. I taught English,



Barbara with students.

French, math, and science. At the time, Sapele was a port with several industries, a movie theater, two supermarkets, a European sports club, and about a dozen Peace Corps Volunteers. I left in September 1966 several months after the first coup.

After leaving Nigeria, I settled in Boston, MA where I still live. I worked in several businesses on mainframe computers as a programmer, a systems analyst, a systems programmer, and finally, as a data base administrator. In my last several years of work, Nigeria came back into my life. A young Nigerian woman was hired for a new project and we worked together. Efua was born the year I left Nigeria and her

father is Itsekiri (from the Sapele/Warri area) and her mother is Ibo. It was such a pleasure to work with Efua and share our experiences - mine in her country and hers in mine. Somehow it brought my work life full circle working with this bright, articulate woman on a technical project after having been a PCV in her country. Also, at that job, I met Dave Crandall who had been in Nigeria V and taught in the Western Region. Every so often, we got together to reminisce about Nigeria.

After I retired several years ago, I started doing volunteer work at several local agencies tutoring young people, assisting a middle school teacher one day a week, teaching English to immigrants, and for over two years, being a mentor to a Somali Bantu refugee family. Additionally, I spend more time with my six step-grandchildren. Two years ago, my husband died. He was a playwright so I am putting together a collection of his plays and stories for his sons and grandchildren. Last spring, I worked with a theater in New York City to put on several of his short plays. Also, I take singing lessons and sing in a choral group. Finally, I have taken many photographs over the years and I'm a member of an association of artists.



Barbara, now.

How to Join the FON GoogleGroup

The FON GoogleGroup was established several years ago for two reasons. One purpose was to keep FON members informed about FON and Nigeria news in a timelier manner than the quarterly newsletter. The other was to provide a vehicle for ongoing discussions on a variety of topics of common interest.

FON president **Mike Goodkind (16)** has developed a simple 3-step process to join the FON GoogleGroup:

1. Send a message to mgoodkind@earthlink.net from your email address asking to join.
2. Briefly explain your interest in joining, e.g., "FON member" or "I'm the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria."
3. Mike will respond through the GoogleGroup with an invitation to join.

You will then start receiving emails from the group as they are posted and may post emails to the group by sending an email to FONmembers@googlegroups.com. We strongly encourage you to become an active participant. If you have any difficulties receiving emails from or posting emails to the group, Mike would be happy to help. Email him directly.

If you wish to have access to the GoogleGroup website to view the past history of postings to the group, you will need to create a Google account. This involves entering your email address (not necessarily a Google email address) and a password of your own choosing. Go to www.google.com, follow links at the top to the page to the Friends of Nigeria group and then follow the instructions.

Projects

(Continued from page 1)

enter into the more lucrative trading business although she still prepares and retails food locally in her spare time. The profits realized from her expanding business have enabled her to pay school



Hadiza Abdullahi amongst family in her compound.

fees for her three children and contribute towards household food expenses. Hadiza is 28.

Aged 80, **Hadiza Abdullahi** is the oldest of the group and still has nine children living who have given her over 30 grandchildren. For more years than she can remember, she has been buying trees locally and chopping them up to sell as firewood at Kafanchan market.

She travels there between once and three times per week and makes about N5,000 each time. She sells the firewood on credit to retailers in the market, and the profit she realizes at the end of the day, depending on how much is sold, allows her to return more or less frequently.

The Fantsuam loan has helped to provide a greater level of capital stability to her business so that her activities are less dependent on market variations.

Groundnuts have many uses and hardly any part is wasted. **Kulira Abubakar** processes the groundnuts for

oil and uses the remaining pulp to make kuli kuli, a popular snack. She wholesales the kuli kuli to retailers in the village, making batches worth about N10,000 twice a week. The loan from Fantsuam provided the capital for her to switch from low volume buying and selling of beans to the more profitable groundnut



Kulira Abubakar in the hakimi's compound.



Fatima outside her house from where she sells wrappers and children's clothes, a selection of which she is holding.

processing business. Kulira is only 22 years of age and has two young children.

The northern city of Kano is the centre of Nigeria's wax-dyeing trade, and 26-year-old **Fatima Zachary** travels there twice every month to buy up to 40 wrappers for sale within Dangoma and surrounding villages. She has a keen eye for what's in fashion which helps her pick out the right fabrics, and she's also developed a reputation for supplying the wrapper "uniforms" that are so popular with events such as weddings, community group outings and anniversary celebrations. Since taking out the loan, she has diversified into children's clothes which has increased the profit in her five-year-old business. She has one child herself.

The Fantsuam loan allowed **Ramatu Zachary**, a tailor by trade, to branch out into the communications business. Network reception is scant in rural Dangoma. She used the money from the loan to buy a mobile phone handset and phone recharge cards. While she still tailors, a young boy in the market runs her phone business for her, moving around the community to find the networks that are available if reception falters. Ramatu is 26 and has four children.

Keep The Lorry Rolling!

As of October 4, 2009:

VSO Project (since 2004):

Total raised:	\$34,750
Number of donations:	612
Number of donors:	339

Fantsuam Project (since 2008):

Total raised:	\$6,470
Number of donations:	110
Number of donors:	109

FON/Fantsuam Microloans:

Sept. 9, 2008 – March 9, 2009
March 10, 2009 – Sept. 10, 2009
March 4, 2009 – Sept. 4, 2009
April 23, 2009 – Oct. 24, 2009
Oct. 23, 2009 -
Oct. 30, 2009 -

Zankan I, 10 clients @ N10,000 (US\$100) = N100,000
Zankan I, 10 clients @ N20,000 (US\$200) = N200,000
Dangoma I, 22 clients @ N10,000 (US\$100) = N220,000
Dangoma II, 23 clients @ N10,000 (US\$100) = N230,000
Dangoma I, 22 clients @ N20,000 (US\$200) = N440,000
Dangoma II, 23 clients @ N20,000 (US\$200) = N460,000

The Zankan 1 group completed their second loan in September and are in the happy position that their businesses do not need further capital at this time. The savings they have made over the two loan cycles have been returned to them. The Dangoma I and Dangoma II groups have completed their first loans and are now each in their second loan cycle. Because of the amount of money involved, the second loans are only partially funded by FON.

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the fall newsletter. The newsletter has always been great, but **Owen Hartford's (23) 66-67** new design is attractive and easy to read. And now you can see the black and white photos you enjoyed in the paper version online in color: www.friendsofnigeria.org/Newsletters.htm. [With this enhanced color version of the newsletter on the website, you may find you no longer need the printed black and white version mailed to your home. If so, please inform Peter Hansen (pjhansen@ia.net) and he will remove you from the newsletter mailing list, thus saving mailing costs and trees.]

Thanks to the Boston Organizing Committee.

The Fall newsletter contained a lot of information and nostalgia about our biennial general meeting held in August in Boston, and this is my first opportunity to publicly thank the Boston organizing team, headed by FON board member **Greg Jones (22) 66-68**. While many people contributed significantly, I'd like to spotlight a few folks who worked on the project through months of planning and execution: **John Bewick (08) 63-65**, **Barbara Tansey Bush (11) 64-66**, **Murray Frank (staff) 61-64**, **Owen Hartford**, **John Page (20) 66-67** and **Ron Wheatley (07) 63-65**. Thanks to them and the entire team — and to the FON members and guests who attended and made the event so successful.

Please volunteer.

As we move forward with our fundraising drives, Peace Corps expansion advocacy, meetings, newsletter, new media and other activities, we will need the support of more members with the full range of expertise and skills — from public policy to data entry. Please feel free to get in touch with me directly, mgoodkind@earthlink.net, or with any of our board members and leaders whose pursuits look interesting to you. [See this page for a volunteer opportunity with the newsletter.]



Help Wanted – Newsletter Columnist

How would you like to read analytical articles on Nigerian current events in the newsletter? Topics such as development, corruption or politics. Perhaps regular feature articles on prominent contemporary Nigerians such as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the former Finance Minister and Foreign Minister of Nigeria, who is quite outspoken on the issue of development aid. What do you think?

If you like this idea, the next step is to volunteer. Would you commit to write such an article once or twice a year? Or, maybe you know of someone who would make a good columnist but may need some gentle encouragement? Or, would you be willing to coordinate this project? Whichever it is, please let me know.

Warren Keller, Newsletter Editor
warrendkk@yahoo.com.

Ikenga figure
Ikenga Achalla, Nri-Awka (Igbo)

Islands of Hope 2005-2008

By V. James Garofalo (04) 62-64

Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense regardless of how it turns out.

— Vaclav Havel

During my four years at the American University of Nigeria in Yola, I experienced many overwhelming frustrations with the number of barriers — and the level of their entrenchment — to democratic processes and even to the living of everyday life. But over the four years I also found islands of hope where the roots of democracy are being nurtured. In this article I describe five such islands of hope.

A Nigerian couple, retired teachers, was using its retirement funds and the proceeds from their small farm to fund and run a school for children with special needs in Yola, because the national, state and local governments provide very little for these children. My first visit found very shabbily dressed children with a range of disabilities: blindness, deafness, mental retardation, physical deformities, and speech impairments. The children were all sitting in the same classroom with one or two non-certified teachers in the room. There were very few materials appropriate for instruction of special needs children. A bus in its ninth life was used daily to transport the children to and from school. The founders' initial concern was to get the children off the streets. The school, a safer environment in which to spend the day, provided shelter from the sun and rain. It also provided kind adults who provided instruction in self care, personal hygiene, math and literacy and a meal and snack daily.

Since that first visit this couple linked with a congregation in the Netherlands that sent some supplies, clothing, and volunteers who would work a few weeks to a few months of the year. They raised funds to expand the school from two classrooms to seven, plus a room for a library and three rooms where the Nigerian and Dutch staff live; persuaded

USAID to build an out-patient medical clinic next to the school with the expectation that the children would be seen by the local staff assigned to the facility; and got special education faculty from the Jos teacher training college to visit the school and pledge to send student teachers.

Another island of hope can be seen in some very successful Nigerian business people, mostly men, small in number, who are at the forefront of gathering people who support an ethical democracy. These groups discuss and implement actions to create democratic undertakings within the areas they can influence: their businesses, communities, and organizations (churches, social groups, local unions). They are a support group and a resource of ideas to each other. These groups are developing a wider sense of ownership for responsible actions in individual Nigerian states and the country as a whole as well as in their work places and social organizations.

Tulsi Chanrai Foundation works with local groups to restore abandoned wells into sources of clean water. The foundation provides the technical expertise and materials; the local community supplies the labor. Chanrai workers identify members of the community who truly want safe water - the mothers. They work directly with the mothers to gather the work force and get the work done. On average the cost to the charity of one well restoration is \$75. Other foundations and the Nigerian government fund similar projects at a cost in the thousands of dollars per well and usually end up with no well restoration and larger bank accounts for the leaders and on-site managers.

Chanrai also funds four or five Nigerian eye clinics that focus on cataract surgeries. The clinic established in Yola in 2006 was created with the general requirement that the local hospital provide the space and identify the local doctors who are to go to India for the training. The charity supplies the initial doctor and pays for the equipment,

personnel, and costs related to the clinic and for the training of the local doctors. The nominated local doctors work with the Chanrai clinic doctor for a year before going to India for the training (9 months to 2 years). Upon return they become part of the staff of the clinic. The local clinic also trains the nurses, social workers, and other personnel in appropriate procedures to maintain a first-rate clinic.

By December 2008, over 3,000 surgeries had been carried out with a 92% rate of full eyesight restoration and a 98% sight improvement rate. About 85% of the surgeries were for cataracts: the rest were for eye repair from injury and eye trauma from heredity, illness or infection. The eye clinic is free to the public and demonstrates that high quality health care can be performed daily in Nigeria.

A fourth island of hope is local governments across Nigeria sponsoring a monthly clean-up day. During this half day, all transportation is stopped and people are expected to clean up around their living spaces. Although there are logistical challenges that need to be met and these days are occasionally cancelled, people on the whole do clean up their areas and respect the travel curfew.

A fifth island of hope is a wealthy Nigerian businessman from northern Nigeria who has created elementary and secondary schools in several areas of Nigeria. He pays all costs for students who are orphans and has made arrangements with Nigerian universities to pay the costs for the orphans who graduate from the secondary schools and qualify to attend universities.

These examples of good works have limited visibility, if any, to most Nigerians and certainly to outsiders. However, I believe there are many more examples of hopeful activities going on throughout Nigeria, invisible to most, but the bedrock for a better Nigeria.

You have not lived until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.

— John Bunyan

Photographer's Dilemma

By Owen Hartford (23) 66-67

I was a teacher at Ohafia High School, a few miles from the main towns in the Ohafia area of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. In the afternoon, after school was out, I would sometimes bicycle into town to do some shopping, or to hang out at a palm wine bar and talk to people I was getting to know. This was a fairly remote area, and white people were relatively uncommon. Bicycling down the road, I was always greeted by waves of kids shouting, "Onye Ocha, Onye Ocha," or "Onye Bakay" (white person). Apparently, the first white person to visit the area had been a British doctor named Bakay, or perhaps Baker. So "Onye Bakay" became the alternate name for white person in that area, and I was something of a curiosity.

One day at one of the palm wine bars, I met a graduate student from the University of Nigeria at Nsukka. He was studying architecture and was originally from Ohafia. He was back home to do research on the unique style of the houses native to this area and asked me if I would help him take some documentary photographs of the buildings. I developed my own film, and had an arrangement with someone in town to let me use his darkroom, so I could make the prints.

The next day, we set off, wandering through some of the more remote parts of the village to start photographing houses of architectural interest. As we began our work, several kids started following us — partly out of curiosity about the "Onye Bakay," and — once they realized I had a camera — to get in a picture.

When we spotted a building of interest, I would stop, focus the camera, and take the shot. But I was only able to do this a few times before the kids realized I was taking pictures of houses. So the minute I would set up the camera, they would all quickly get in front of the house, and ended up blocking the view. This wouldn't work, so I developed a new technique: when we spotted a house of interest, I would pre-set the camera focus

and exposure, and instead of stopping to shoot the house straight on, I would snap the photo of the house before we got to it, shooting at an angle as we approached.

This worked, for awhile. But the kids soon caught on to the technique. They quickly maneuvered themselves into two groups, one walking in front of us, and another walking alongside of us — so one group was always likely to be in the photo, playing the odds as to which way I would go. It was becoming a game of cat and mouse: who could out-manuever whom.

And as we walked through the village, we were picking up more and more kids as we went along, and I was beginning to feel like a captive Pied Piper. The architectural student and I were getting frustrated, and his admonitions to the kids did not seem make a difference. We wanted to show the architectural details of the buildings, but couldn't with a lot of bodies standing in the way. So I developed yet another technique. Now we would identify a building, walk slowly past it, and then whirl around quickly to take the shot of the building behind us — with no one standing in front of it. Again, this worked for awhile — until the kids divided themselves into three groups, more or less, one in front, one parallel, and another walking behind

us. There was no more hope of getting any more clean architecture-only shots. But by now we had photographed most of what we needed.

The grad student suggested that we go upstairs into what was probably the only two-story building in the area to get some overview shots of the village. I felt relieved when I came out onto the balcony of the second floor to be able to get a good hassle-free shot of the town. But the kids gathered below looked betrayed. I had finally found a way to ignore them, and there was nothing they could do about it.

They pleaded with me to take their picture. Now, for once, I might actually enjoy taking a shot of them, so I told them all to get ready, many of them assuming poses (as Nigerian kids often do in front of a camera), and I would take their picture. After I snapped the shot, they cheered and then began to disperse, as if they had finally achieved a victory. The architecture student had his images to take back to the university, and this photograph turned out to be one of just three black and white photographs that I managed to bring back through the evacuation of the summer of 1967. The irony, of course, is that the kids I had been trying to elude that day made the most memorable photograph of all.



Edited by Virginia DeLancey (04) 62-64

Nigerian Military Pursues Oil Thieves in Niger Delta

The Nigerian army said that it would increase security around oil facilities in the Niger Delta to prevent illegal lifting of crude oil, as thieves have increased their attacks on the oil facilities despite the recent amnesty granted to militants by the government. The special military force in the Niger Delta, known as the Joint Task Force, says that its strategy of fighting a network of criminal gangs involved in crude oil theft remains unchanged.

Criminal networks in the Niger Delta earn millions of dollars a day from the illegal trade in industrial quantities of stolen crude, known as “bunkering”. A report commissioned for the government estimated the amount of crude stolen could be up to 300,000 barrel a day. The stolen oil is transferred on barges to tankers waiting offshore before being mixed in with legitimate cargo and sold on the international market. Although violence has subsided during the months following the government amnesty, activists and skeptics fear that more and more former militants could easily turn to oil bunkering if the government fails to quickly find work for them or a new way of life. (Source: VOA News [Abuja], 11/16/2009).

The God of Soccer is a Nigerian

Ekiti State Governor described Nigeria's qualification for next year's World Cup in South Africa as the work of God, saying, “Truly, the God of soccer is a Nigerian.” He commended the Super Eagle players for bringing out the “Nija” in them to defeat the Harambee Stars of Kenya 3-2, to win the slot in the competition. Other African teams to earn slots are Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, and Ivory Coast. As host of the competition, South Africa also qualified for a position.

The President of FIFA seems to have a different opinion of the African teams, however, cautioning them that they should not think of winning the Senior

World Cup, despite strong representation of the continent in the competition. According to him, the good performance of the African teams in the U-17 and U-20 World championship held in Nigeria and Egypt should not give the continent the basis of thinking of winning the World Cup in South Africa. “Winning the senior World Cup is both scientific and mathematical, and the team would have to be strong tactically and technically which these African countries don't have. They may be strong technically or tactically, but scientifically and mathematically, the odd is very much against them. Even getting to the semifinals will be difficult for them.” That sounds like a challenge.

Unfortunately, following the Super Eagles win, the Swiss National U-17 team beat the Nigerian Golden Eaglets 1-0 in the National Stadium, Abuja, stopping them from making history as the first team to host and win the U-17 World Cup. The Eaglets won the tournament three times in the past, in 1985, 1993, and 1997, and they were hoping for a fourth title. To round out the World Cup tournament, the U-20 Black Satellites of Ghana triumphed over Brazil in an exciting game ending with a penalty shoot out in Cairo. (Sources: *Daily Trust* [Abuja], 11/15/09; FIFA.com, 10/17/09; *Leadership* [Abuja], 11/16/09; *This Day* [Lagos], 11/15/09; *Vanguard* [Lagos], 11/14/09).

Oprah Selects Uwem Akpan's Short Story Collection

Oprah Winfrey recently chose Nigerian writer Uwem Akpan's short story collection, *Say You're One of Them*, for her book club. Oprah, whose book club is the largest in the world with about 2 million readers, says she is deeply impressed with Akpan's work. His book is a collection of six short stories, each one set in a different African country (Kenya, Benin, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Rwanda) and told from a child's perspective. They cover issues like child trafficking, religious conflict, child prostitution and genocide.

Akpan began to write at seminary

school while studying to be a priest. His first motivation was to critique the ills of his own society, but when he realized he couldn't get his essays published by the *Guardian* newspaper in Nigeria, and when he realized that the paper published fiction once a week, he decided to try to write fiction.

Akpan won the 2009 Commonwealth Writers Prize for best first book and his collection has also been shortlisted for the prestigious Caine Prize for African fiction. (Source: VOA News [Dakar], 10/1/09).

Nigerian Eagle Airlines will Codeshare with Kenya Airways

Nigerian Eagle Airlines, formerly Virgin Nigeria Airlines Ltd., has signed a codeshare and interline agreement with Kenya Airways. The CEO of Nigerian Eagle Airlines, speaking at its headquarters in Lagos, said that the codeshare will pave the way for the future of aviation in Africa, as passengers will have direct access to the benefits of the wide-route network which will benefit the travelling public. (Source: *Tradeinvest Africa* [Cape Town], 11/16/09).

Nigerians Buy Home-Made Guns from Ghana

Blacksmiths may be trained to produce cooking utensils, but many of them in Ghana now prefer to make guns, as they can make more money that way. One blacksmith said that when sales are good, he can earn \$1,000 a week with foreigners paying better than Ghanaians and most of the buyers coming from Nigeria. He can make an AK for anyone with the money, and he sells to clients using gun-runners, most of whom are ex-peacekeepers or mercenaries, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

There is a growing clandestine small-arms industry which has helped to destabilize the countries of the West African region and has increased the intensity and human impact of conflicts in the region. The Minister of the Interior of Ghana recently toured the country to ascertain the state of Ghana's small-arms industry and met with

hundreds of gunsmiths who admitted to producing guns, despite the fact that local small-arms manufacturing is illegal in Ghana. They also reported that they have been invited to teach their gun-manufacturing skills to local blacksmiths in the Niger Delta, although insurgent groups tend to purchase heavier weapons from outside the region. (Source: IRIN [Accra], 10/26/2009).

Lake Chad is Disappearing

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization warns that Lake Chad could disappear in 20 years, creating a significant impact on the 30 million people in the area. Since 1963, it has



Lake Chad from Apollo 7

shrunk from 25,000 square kilometers to less than 1,500 square kilometers, causing a 90 percent decrease in the amount of water available for drinking, for agriculture, for animals. It also poses a food security issue. Although some believe it is a natural cycle, others believe that it is due to the impact of climate change, climatic variability, the drought in the region and local use and water management in the area.

A number of proposals have been set forth to save the lake, including recharging the aquifer to lessen evaporation, developing better irrigation policies to help conserve water, and putting water back into Lake Chad, transferring it from the Oubangui River to the lake. A feasibility study is now in progress. The Chari and

Logone Rivers were the original sources of replenishment, but their flow has decreased significantly in the last 40 years. (Source: VOA News, 10/15/09).

MEND Dismisses Government Amnesty Plan

As militants have continued to wage increasingly violent attacks on international oil companies in the Niger delta and carry out a wave of kidnappings of their employees, a leading Nigerian lawyer and Niger Delta activist, Japkor Oghenejapkor, has suggested that it is time for a change in tactics. Shell Oil agreed in June to pay \$15.5 million to settle the legal action for human rights violations in Ogoni in the eastern Niger Delta. Oghenejapkor now urges the militants to drop their arms and pursue a legal option, as well. In June, President Yar'Adua offered a 60-day amnesty to the militants. However, the best-armed, most sophisticated group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), initially rejected the offer.

While negotiations continued, 300 ex-militants began new lives in September after receiving six months of government training. At their graduation, the Minister of Defense announced that the government would not extend the offer of amnesty beyond October 4. However, he also noted that 20 of the former militants had already found employment. This was accomplished with computer training, as well as training in agriculture, sports, acting and modeling, music, and auto engineering. Another 300 ex-militants were to begin six months of training in October.

Just before the expiration of the offer of amnesty, key rebel leaders succumbed to government pressure to disarm along with thousands of their fighters. Militant commanders Ateke Tom and Farah Dagogo led fighters from the creeks of

the delta to Port Harcourt, where they handed over the weapons two days before the end of the amnesty. Tom Polo, one of the three most important leaders of the rebel groups, led thousands of his fighters to drop their arms at a ceremony in Warri on the last day of the amnesty. As the amnesty ended, yet another top rebel commander surrendered. It is estimated that the amnesty program brought in more than 8,000 militants, and the government says that the final figure could be more than 15,000. Peace activist Onengiye Erekosima, President of the Niger Delta Non-Violent Movement, urged the government to quickly take advantage of the cease fire to begin building a genuine peace.

President Yar'Adua declared that the conflict had ended as a result of what he deemed a successful amnesty for the rebels. He told a visiting OPEC delegation that Nigeria would now be able to meet its current production quota of 1.8 million barrels per day (and at peak production, the country can pump around 2.6 million barrels per day). The President assured the OPEC officials that the attacks on the oil industry had subsided, thanks to the amnesty program. However, the U.S. Embassy urged restraint and dialogue in resolving outstanding issues relating to the amnesty.

On its part, the government is planning to offer residents of the Niger Delta region 10 percent of all oil and gas ventures, in an effort to end the unrest. The President intends to add this to the reforms that are to be enacted by the end of the year. Under the proposal, all citizens of oil-bearing communities would be entitled to cash benefits, delivered through trusts that could be used individually or collectively for social projects. This could amount to \$338 million in the first year. The payment would be linked to production in each area, providing a disincentive to oil theft and sabotage. The president met with former key rebel commanders and agreed to talks with MEND.

(Continued on p. 10)

(Continued from p. 9)

MEND called the peace process a sham and ended the cease-fire on October 15, saying that it would resume attacks against the oil industry. It dismissed the government's amnesty program as a propaganda exercise aimed at hoodwinking companies to return to the Niger Delta and pump production back up, while the military threat persists. MEND claimed that it would burn down all attacked installations and no longer limit its attacks to the destruction of pipelines. It also denied the government's claim that it had conducted a successful disarmament exercise, maintaining instead that the government had "rented" the so-called "repentant militants" in the hope that real militants would be persuaded to emerge. It also maintained that most of the so-called recovered weapons were bought for this purpose in a shameless charade. (Sources: *Vanguard*, 11/16/09; VOA News [Abuja], 10/2/2009, 10/4/2009, 10/5/2009, 10/15/2009, 10/19/2009, 10/25/2009, 10/21/2009).

Traditional Rulers Urged to Apologize for Slave Trade

Some traditional rulers in Nigeria have been asked to apologize to Africans on behalf of their ancestors. This followed the resolution of the U.S. Senate on June 18, formally apologizing for the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality and inhumanity of slavery and the noticeable attempts by some heads of governments and global opinion leaders to wash off the blights and stains regarding the roles they played in the trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave trade. Human rights activist Malam Shehu requested the apology of the traditional rulers on behalf of the Civil Rights Congress in an open letter to the Sultan of Sokoto, Oba of Benin, Obong of Calabar, Oni of Ife, and Oba of Lagos. After noting the well-known fact that the continent was plundered by European and American slave raiders, he reminded the leaders that, "Regrettably, most of the African traditional rulers participated by collaborating and colluding with

the slave raiders in the enslavement of African people." He continued, "Traditional rulers acquired an inglorious reputation of engaging in the act of slave trade, helping to systematically raid and kidnap people from weak and defenseless communities or villages and then trading them off with Europeans, American and other collaborators." He further described the continued negative impact of slavery on Africans living in the Diaspora today. He concluded by appealing to the Nigerian traditional institutions, saying, "We cannot continue to blame the white men as Africans, particularly the traditional rulers, are not blameless in their involvement in slave trade." He concluded the letter by calling on all the traditional rulers to apologize without delay to the descendants of the victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. (Source: *Leadership* [Abuja], 11/14/09).

Federal Government Works to Eradicate Malaria

The Federal Government intends to distribute 63 million mosquito nets, two to a family, between the end of this year and next year and also to provide treatment for every case of malaria in every public hospital in the country, free of charge. The government has also initiated measures to eradicate malaria with assistance from Cuba.

The government's effort to insure provision of effective health care delivery throughout the country is part of the seven-point agenda of the administration of President Yar'Adua to improve health care delivery through provision of facilities that are competitive with those in hospitals abroad. The government believes that there is no need for Nigerians to go abroad for treatment in countries such as Egypt, South Africa, or India. (Source: *Leadership* [Abuja], 11/15/09).

Ex-U.S. Congressman is Jailed for Corrupt Deals with Nigeria

Former U.S. House of Representatives member William Jefferson, Democrat from Louisiana, was sentenced to 13 years in prison

after conviction on 11 of 16 counts of corruption. It was the longest term ever imposed on a U.S. Congressman for bribery charges.

Jefferson was said to have taken money from Virginia businesswoman Lori Mody with the intention of bribing then Vice President Atiku Abubakar with respect to telecommunication contracts. Mody acted as a cooperating witness and secretly recorded her conversations with Jefferson for the FBI. When U.S. government agents raided Jefferson's home, they found \$90,000 of bribe money hidden in his freezer, all but \$10,000 of the total. (Sources: *This Day* [Lagos], 11/15/09; *Vanguard*, 11/14/09).

Prison Reform is Slow

Last June, 150 prisoners escaped from Enugu state prison, beating wardens and raping female prisoners before they fled. A few weeks earlier, eight inmates reportedly were killed in another jailbreak at Agodi prison in Ibadan. Escape may seem to some prisoners to be the only way to get out, as about two-thirds of Nigeria's prisoners have been detained without trial, according to a report by the Centre for Social and Legal Studies in Abuja, which has called on the government to pass criminal justice reform legislation immediately. A recent report said that in Kuje prison in Abuja, 85 percent of the 622 prisoners have not been tried. And, a 2008 Amnesty International report estimated that the overall number of detainees without trials at 65 percent. The researchers saw prisoners who have been awaiting trial for nine years.

There are many reasons for the delays. Police often arrest and illegally detain people on "holding charges" while they collect evidence. Bail conditions are often impossible to meet. With few government-subsidized legal aid programs, prisoners often cannot afford a lawyer. Ineptitude has led to the loss of hundreds of files. When a case goes to court, witnesses, with no official protection scheme in place, are often too frightened to give evidence, leaving cases hanging. As a result, without a trial,

prisoners spend more time detained than they would have under a conviction, as minor offences incur a maximum six-month sentence in Nigeria.

As a result of these problems, the prisons are over-crowded, prisoners sleep on the floor and receive minimal food rations. Poor sanitation leads to a high incidence of disease, and the prisons have no health facilities, according to Amnesty International. In addition, almost 80 percent of prisoners say that they have been beaten, threatened with weapons or tortured in prison cells, according to Amnesty's 2008 report.

Former President Obasanjo set up a committee to propose improvements in prison conditions, and the committee drew up recommendations, including updates to the criminal code (which is over 100 years old) and to criminal procedural law. They drafted a bill over two years ago, but the National Assembly has not yet acted upon it. (Source: IRIN [Abuja], 9/18/09).

Erosion is Becoming a State of Emergency

Severe erosion over many years in southeastern Anambra State has cut off or destroyed hundreds of homes, businesses, farms and schools, prompting the governor to call for a state of emergency in the area where he says thousands of people now risk being displaced and as many as one million people could be forced from their homes. Buildings have collapsed in several towns and farmers have seen their fruit trees washed away during this year's rains. In one town, deepening gullies threaten to make the town's only state-run school unreachable.

Until 150 years ago southeastern Nigeria was covered by thick rainforest, but degradation began with widespread planting of trees to meet European demands for palm oil. Palm trees generate soil salinity. The combination of the loose soil, hilly landscape and strong rains for several months of the year is ideal for erosion. In addition, the farmers' habit of burning off brush means roots and shrubs that could help

curb erosion are no longer there. Poor urban planning, population growth and improper waste disposal have exacerbated the problem. People dump refuse or build houses on waterways and canals, obstructing the flow of rainwater, causing deep gullies to form when it rains. The Anambra government is trying to clear rubbish from ditches and plant trees near towns and is encouraging families to reinforce their houses with sand bags during the rainy season. Village leaders in some towns are encouraging people to plant erosion-resistant and soil-binding crops such as India bamboo and cashew trees. (Source: IRIN [Abatete], 11/3/09).

Security is Poor in Waterway between Nigeria and Cameroon

The Governor of Cross River State has raised an alarm about the poor security situation in the waterway between Nigeria and Cameroon. He said that the creation of a buffer zone following the ceding of the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon, as well as 76 oil wells from Cross River to Akwa Ibom, had increased piracy and militancy, culminating in the formation of the Bakassi Freedom Fighters who claim to have fought for the interests of Nigerians against the activities of Cameroon gendarmes. Because Cross River is a land-locked state, the Governor believes that this compromises the security of the nation and wonders if ships now must go through Cameroon before reaching the port of Calabar. (Source: *Leadership* [Abuja], 11/14/2009).

Gas Flaring to Stop by End of Year

Oil companies operating in Nigeria will not be allowed to flare gas from the end of this year. The country requires the gas to meet the demand for power generation, as well as support proposed gas pipelines from the Niger delta. Gas flaring occurs when the fuel is burned during oil production. According to the Petroleum Ministry, Nigeria loses \$3 billion a year as a result of gas flaring. (Source: *Devex*, Global Development Briefing, 11/12/2009).

Obituary

John Baldwin O'Brien (staff) 66-68

It is with deep regret that *Friends of Nigeria* reports the death of John Baldwin O'Brien, M.D. John passed away peacefully in his sleep at his home in San Francisco on October 21, 2009. He served as Peace Corps staff doctor in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria, from 1966 to 1968.

John was born on July 16, 1937, in San Mateo, CA, and was a third generation Bay Area resident. He attended Serra High School, the University of Notre Dame and received his medical degree from the Stanford University School of Medicine. In 1966, he moved his young family to Nigeria to work for Public Health Services caring for Peace Corps volunteers. Following his Peace Corps work, he returned to the San Francisco area where he joined his medical practice and remained with his partners until shortly before his death.

Passionate about life, Dr. O'Brien is remembered fondly by his patients for his reassuring style and his intensive commitment to their care. He was always willing to share his services with anyone in need and was an avid conversationalist, always ready to engage his many friends in lively debates on a variety of topics. He was a devoted husband and father and a caring friend always ready to embrace his friends as if they were family.

John is survived by Peggy, his wife of 47 years; six children: Patricia, Robert (Colette), Timothy (Rita), Margaret, Jennifer (Scott) Weslow and Megan; and ten grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his father, Robert Emmett O'Brien; mother, Claire Aldeline (Tuite) O'Brien; and a sister, Margo Brahm.

[Sources: *San Francisco Chronicle* and Patricia O'Brien]

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