



## Stepping into a brighter future...

### About Us...

Stepping Stones Nigeria is a UK-based charity with a passion for defending and upholding the rights of children in the Niger Delta region. Our work with Nigerian partner organisations saves and transforms the lives of vulnerable and stigmatised children; provides outstanding levels of education and significantly raises literacy levels of less privileged children. Through advocacy and campaigning we promote a greater understanding of child rights and aim to prevent the abuse of children today.

Our vision is that all children in the Niger Delta have access to their rights and are able to realise their full potential. Through establishing an effective model to uphold child rights in a challenging environment we hope to inspire others in similar circumstances.

### Our Partners

- \* Bebor International Model Schools
- \* Centre for Environment Human Rights and Development (CEHRD)
- \* Stepping Stones Model School (SSMS)
- \* Stepping Stones Nigeria Child Empowerment Foundation (SSNCEF)
- \* University of Uyo – Jolly Phonics Team

## PACT Music, Drama and Comedy Message Reaches 40,000 People

In the last few months, Operation Enlightenment - a widespread public awareness-raising campaign that aims to challenge the widespread belief in child witches in the Niger Delta and eradicate the abuse of children in the region, has truly taken off in Akwa Ibom State. It is estimated that two recent 10 day tours of local districts in the State attracted a staggering 40,000 people!

Performances by the Oron Cultural Dance Troupe and Jobazz and Faith Bluze – artists on the Prevent the Abuse of Children Today music album - proved to be great forms of entertainment whilst helping to significantly spread the mission of PACT. A local comedian, popularly known as 'Rechargeable' also spiced up the campaign with insightful messages and jokes in the local language. The performances took place at key locations such as schools, markets and stadiums and were a great way of giving local community members the opportunity to ask questions about the PACT campaign. Many became very engaged with the issues and openly discussed their thoughts and attitudes.

Thousands of PACT materials such as music CDs, Nollywood DVDs, posters and t-shirts were distributed, and announcements and adverts on radio stations ensured the message of the PACT campaign was spread even further.

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In addition to the resounding success of the tours in helping to bring about long-term change in the Niger Delta, SSN was delighted to receive news of some wonderful and unexpected outcomes. These included a young boy who was severely malnourished and extremely withdrawn being rescued from the streets and a performer of the Oron Cultural Dance Troupe donating his wages from the tour to his grandmother to allow her to set up a fish stall to generate income for her and the rest of their family. Stories like this highlight the fact that SSN's work in the Niger Delta often has a much wider impact than is first anticipated, which we find extremely encouraging.

# Akwa Ibom State Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Accusations

In November 2010 the Akwa Ibom State Government announced the creation of a Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Accusations against Children. Since then SSN has been working tirelessly to; compile and submit an 800-page dossier containing detailed evidence of over 250 cases of abuse, work with our lawyer and partners to monitor each day's proceedings and encourage other parties to submit information to the Commission.

This is the first Commission of its kind anywhere in the world and SSN considers this to be a major opportunity to make sure that the State Government is fully aware of this issue and takes action to implement the Child Rights Law and prevent the further abuse of innocent children. The Commission has been overwhelmed with the response to their call for evidence. Indeed, over 60 witnesses have now submitted evidence and recommendations including those from government agencies, the Catholic Church, UNICEF and various other NGOs, law firms and community members. This fantastic response to the Commission shows just how many people are prepared to stand up for child rights in Akwa Ibom State.

SSN has received widespread support on this issue from organisations such as the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Together with them we will continue to monitor the activities of the Commission and ensure that the findings are open to public scrutiny. We are very hopeful that this will lead to more positive action being taken to help all those children who have suffered as a result of being accused of witchcraft, as well as making sure that no more children ever have to endure this terrible form of abuse.

## Christmas Parties!

Lots of fun and laughter was had by many of the children that our local partners support this Christmas time. Thanks to SSN's support, the children enjoyed lots of tasty food and drinks to celebrate the festive period, as well as the opportunity to dance, play games and meet Father Christmas. Much to their delight, every child was given a small gift to keep which led to lots of happy, beaming smiles. It certainly was a day to remember!



## Bebor Scholarship Programme

Access to basic education, especially in the Niger Delta where poverty rates are extremely high, is a luxury that thousands of families cannot afford. Mismanagement, negligence and corruption have led to the near collapse of the public school system in many areas. SSN is therefore delighted to announce the commencement of a new scholarship programme at the Bebor Model School.

The first 40 children to benefit from the programme include orphans and children who were previously forced to drop out of school due to financial constraints. All the children have been provided with school fees, uniforms, books and transport costs. SSN hopes that this initial pilot project will be replicated across many other schools in the region over the coming years so that we may be able to bring a brighter future to the lives of even more children.



## One Child's Story

Joseph\* is just 8 years old. Up until late 2009, he lived at home with his mother and four siblings. Following accusations of witchcraft, Joseph suffered severe physical abuse at the hands of his uncle and was later thrown out of the family home. On the streets Joseph initially sought refuge with a so-called prophet. He didn't realise that he would later be forced into unpaid labour with a local fisherman. Whilst working long hours in dire conditions Joseph soon got sick and was abandoned back on the streets where he was forced to steal to get by. With the help of the SSNCEF team, Joseph has since received lots of advice and support which has encouraged him to stop stealing and he now has a much more positive outlook on life:

"Everyone in the office has helped me in many ways. I can now eat good food; I have soaps and two new clothes.... Life on the street is very dangerous and lonely. It could have been worse if not for the friendship I share with all of you. I have the confidence that I am not alone anymore".

\*Name changed to protect child's identity.

# Securing the Safety of Our Partners in the Niger Delta

SSN's local partners are made up of deeply committed individuals who continue to put their lives at risk to defend the rights of children. In response to growing insecurity in the Niger Delta, SSN recently organised a two-day personal safety and security training event. This was well attended by representatives from 12 organisations and feedback highlighted that it has significantly helped participants develop new skills to prevent them from harm and therefore allow them to continue with their invaluable work.

## 75 New Cases of Child Abuse Documented

A new project being conducted jointly between SSN and the Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD), has over the last six months documented 75 new cases of child rights abuse in four Niger Delta states, including rape, trafficking, abandonment and child witchcraft accusations.

As a result of this invaluable work, 25 people have been arrested and charges are being brought in 10 cases. The project has also assisted 11 victims of abuse in accessing medical and counselling services, and has provided legal advice to all children and their families. These documented cases have been of great value when producing the reports for the Commission and have allowed us to continue working with and influencing the work of the UN and wider Government departments. They also inform urgent

actions for the PACT Campaign Bulletin, in which SSN campaigners can participate to help secure justice for children who have suffered abuse of their rights.

Over the coming months, we will be working hard together with CEHRD to ensure that perpetrators of child abuse are held accountable for their offences - a major step to ensuring that all children in the Niger Delta enjoy their rights both now and in the future.

## Letter from Grace



### STEPPING STONES MODEL SCHOOL

Uquo,  
P. O. Box 884 Eket  
Postcode 824001  
Akwa Ibom State,  
Nigeria

1st April 2011

Dear Supporters,

It gives me great pleasure to update you on all the latest achievements of our Stepping Stones Model School and to thank you for your invaluable support.

The school continues to wax stronger with lots of credits to her achievements. During the year 2010 three pupils who represented our school during the state wide competitive examination organised by Macmillan Publishers were able to win excellent prizes, including a trophy, beating twenty five other prominent schools.

The school has recruited five more academic and non-academic staff and successfully organised Jolly Phonics training for them. Indeed the school has acted as a true model school, providing training to schools in Rivers State and Kogi State.

The playground equipment has been installed - these are made of iron rods to replace those wooden materials. We have also constructed a parameter fence and a school entrance gate. We are proud to have laid the foundation stones for our newly planned secondary school. Currently we are planning the maiden edition of the inter-house sports competition and the children have been training hard.

Donors, we wish to thank you for all your support, financially and materially which has helped to develop the school to this standard. We look forward to further support from you and promise that we are going to use ALL your resources judiciously. SONSONG!

With heartfelt thanks,

Grace O. A Udua  
Secretary BOM

Head Teacher



## Read and Write Now!

The Read and Write Now project continues in earnest. Project staff have been busy monitoring the schools by visiting hundreds of teachers and giving them support and advice. The project has helped to generate significant interest in synthetic phonics across Nigeria, with nine other state governments contacting SSN and expressing an interest in carrying out pilot studies into this method. We look forward to working with Cross River and Ebonyi State Governments in the coming months to carry out pilot studies with a view to full implementation in 2012.

# SSN's Fabulous Fundraisers

Late in 2010, SSN was nominated as one of the beneficiary charities of an art auction organised by the Art of Giving, an organisation set up to promote and sell art while raising awareness and donating funds to charities. The event, which took place at the prestigious Saatchi Gallery, London, was a thoroughly enjoyable evening with great attendance. SSN's gallery was generously organised by one of our valued supporters, Toby Clarke, and contained pieces from globally renowned artists including Leonardo Drew and Gavin Turk. The sales of these artworks helped in raising a phenomenal £63,000 for SSN!



Six of our younger supporters – Gabriel, Sam, Jack, Alex, James and Hugh – took on an incredibly challenging event to raise over £500 for SSN. Over nine and a half hours, the boys completed the Ironman triathlon in their local gym which included a gruelling 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride and a 26.2 mile run. An outstanding effort – well done!

## Make a Difference and Get Involved!

### 1 SSN Week: 23rd – 29th May 2011

This year sees the launch of SSN Week. The aim of this week-long event is to give our supporters the opportunity to come together and organise fun and exciting activities to raise vital funds that will allow us to continue helping and supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children in the Niger Delta. SSN invites all our supporters to take part in our 'You Name It! You Raise It!' fundraising challenge from 23rd – 29th May 2011. Whether you choose to raise £50, £100, £500 or £1000, you will be contributing to vastly improving the lives and futures of children by providing essential items including food, clothing and tuition fees, as well as key awareness-raising tools such as DVDs, leaflets and radio adverts to educate local communities about child rights. Help us make lasting change in the Niger Delta by signing up today!

### 2 Trek Mount Kilimanjaro for SSN

This year, SSN is organising its first ever overseas challenge event to Mount Kilimanjaro - the world's tallest freestanding mountain. The trip will be one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences that our enthusiastic and intrepid supporters and staff will ever have. The trek will take place between 1st and 10th December 2011 and aims to raise around £40,000, giving us the potential to make a huge difference to the lives of the many disadvantaged children that our partners work with. If you fancy snapping up one of the few remaining places and joining us on this trip of a lifetime, please get in touch with Natalie now!

Contact Natalie for more details:  
[fundraising@steppingstonesnigeria.org](mailto:fundraising@steppingstonesnigeria.org)

## PACT Launch Event

SSN would like to invite you to our official PACT Launch Event:

When: Wednesday 18th May 2011  
6.00-9.30pm

Where: Amnesty International  
Human Rights Action Centre  
London EC2A 3EA

Cost: Free



To reserve your place, email  
[campaigns@steppingstonesnigeria.org](mailto:campaigns@steppingstonesnigeria.org)  
We'd love to see you there!

Don't forget, you can also get involved with the PACT Campaign by visiting [www.makeapact.org](http://www.makeapact.org) and signing the PACT. You can also sign up to receive regular PACT Campaign e-bulletins. Just drop us an email and we'll make sure you're added to our Campaigns Group.

## Thank you...

We would not be able to accomplish as much as we do without the voluntary input from our interns and volunteers who kindly give up their time and skills each week. Special thanks go to: Justine Atkinson, Lisa Atkinson, Fiona Basden, Michelle Brown, Louise Gittens, David Gott, Carly Hobson and Rachel Towers



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