



A PROJECT OF THE
UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION

**University of Nigeria,
Nsukka, Nigeria.**

*By reading we learn,
By knowledge we serve*

NEWSLETTER

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In This Issue

This issue recounts a number of significant events at the Children's Centre. Due to donations from friends, we have been able to purchase a bus, complete walling and embark on tree planting, and rebuild the pavilion. Children participated in two virtual projects, a global summit on water and international sharing of a picture book. The period has seen significant activities in assisting school libraries, including supporting a national workshop, conducting local workshops with teachers, and channeling book donations from PULA to selected school libraries. We also include a second report from the women's reading club, which takes up three foreign titles for discussion. We invite you to share these experiences as you go through this issue of the Newsletter.

Bus Donated by Chief (Dr.) E. C. Iwuanyanwu

From the two million Naira donated by our benefactor Chief (Dr.) E. C. Iwuanyanwu following our Silver Jubilee celebration, the Centre has procured a white 18-seater Toyota mini-bus. The bus began service taking children on excursions during the 2008 long vacation program. It has equally proved its worth in book-buying expeditions, such as going to Enugu for the regional book fair in October, outreach to primary schools in the area, the prison library service and local runs.

Grounds Development at the Children's Centre

The year 2008 saw completion of the walling of the Centre compound, a long-acknowledged priority required before development of landscaping, playground and sports facilities. This was financed by funds realized during the Silver Jubilee celebration, including donations from our grown children based in the United States, raised by Ejim and Chinelo Dike, and gifts of Chief Iwuanyanwu and the Department of Library and Information Science. In addition to the walling, trees and flowering shrubs have been planted and a lawn mower purchased from caroling and other donations solicited for that purpose. The Vice-Chancellor has also approved employment of two gardeners to take care of the Centre grounds.

Pavilion Re-built at Permanent Site in Memory of Uju Ubagu

The Children's Centre pavilion, originally built at the old playground in 1980, has been moved and re-constructed at the permanent site, where it is already a favorite locus of activity. The builder, L. O. Onuzulike was able to incorporate the sculpted panels made by art students of El Anatsui and many of the original building materials in the new construction. A thatched roof and low wall were added to the original design. The pavilion has been named in memory of Uju Ubagu, a former child of the Centre who died in October 2006 at the young age of 23. It was made possible through donations raised by Uju's mother, Sue Ubagu, who taught art classes at Children's Centre in the 1980s. These donations include 530 GBP in tribute gifts given at Uju's memorial service, 100 GBP inheritance from Uju's grandfather, and 302.6 GBP from fundraising by the Merrileas Nursery School attached to the Parkside School where Sue teaches in England.

Participation in National School Libraries Workshop

A mini-library of 500 books and other Children's Centre Library display materials supported a national train-the-trainers workshop for teacher librarians held in Abuja from September 25-27, 2007. The three-day workshop, organized by the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria for the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), explored the role of school libraries in the new basic education program recently initiated by the government. Eighty-seven supervisory personnel from seventeen states of the federation attended the workshop. Topics included the role of the library in basic education, expanding resources for teaching and learning, developing information skills, and promoting reading for lifelong education. Participants also learned how to set up a user-friendly library and organize effective school libraries services. The Centre received an appreciation of N300,000 for providing the mini-library to support this workshop.

Virtual UN Global Summit on Water

From January to May, 2008 the Children's Centre engaged in an Internet project exploring water problems with children in the United States, India, Sweden and Philippines. We were introduced to the project by Ogonna Agu, a former CC member now teaching in New York City. The project culminated in a global summit during which each group presented a power point on a water problem in their area. The Children's Centre presentation on water scarcity is available at www.childrenscentreunn.org. The children were glad they were able to participate in spite of various constraints. Due to lack of Internet access at the Centre, time was arranged at Afrihub, a local business center. Committee member Helen Eke volunteered use of her phone camera and laptop. As a follow-up, Ogonna Agu, Rebecca Llach and their friends in New York donated a digital camera to the Children's Centre to assist with future activities.

Children Share Amadi's Snowman via the Internet

The Children's Centre participated in a second Internet project in November 2008 by joining a virtual tour and sharing responses to a picture book set in Enugu, Nigeria. *Amadi's Snowman*, written by former Enugu resident Katia Novet Saint-Lot and illustrated by Dimitri Tokumbo, tells the story of one boy's discovery of the value of reading. Children from the Saturday story hour and Central School I in town shared reactions to the story, art work on this or other books, ideas about reading, and questions and answers about each other's lives with children in other countries via the Internet.



Sharing Amadi's Snowman in story hour



Excursion using bus donated by Chief E. C. Iwuanyanwu

CHILDREN'S CENTRE EVENTS 2007 - 2009



Visit to Motherless Babies Home



Uju Ubagu



Enjoying the new Uju Ubagu memorial pavilion



*Demonstrating Children' Centre materials
at Abuja workshop on school libraries*



*School children from Onuiyi visit the library
for story hour program*

School Workshops on Information Literacy and Library Periods

Head teachers, teacher librarians and teachers from primary schools in Nsukka Central Local Government Area attended workshops in January and November 2008 on developing information literacy and enhancing education through library period. This was partially in response to the state ministry of education's recent approval of the inclusion of library period in the timetable. The January workshop looked at library periods and information literacy, the use of story hour during library periods, and project work as a way of developing information skills. The November workshop introduced a sample curriculum teaching the use of the library and its resources through stories and other literary experiences, project work and other activities, and information related to topics in the primary school science and social studies curricula.

Prison Libraries Showcased at Reading Conference in Ghana

The role of prison libraries in developing literacy for the reformation, rehabilitation and reformation of prisoners was highlighted by Virginia Dike and Margaret Ngwuchukwu at the Pan-African Reading for All conference held in Accra, Ghana in August 2007. The presenters used questionnaire and interview to find out the preferences, needs and expectations prisoners have of libraries in the Nsukka prison, an initiative of the Children's Centre, and Awka prison. It was found that the inmates placed great value on the libraries, which were seen as furthering their need for educational advancement, survival information, spiritual support and recreation.

School Library Development through PULA Book Donations

The Children's Centre continued its cooperation with People United for Libraries in Africa (PULA) in developing primary school libraries in the Nsukka area. Because of the astronomical increase in postage following the abolition of surface mail from the United States, the bulk of the assistance is now given in cash and books purchased locally. Checks of \$1,500 were given in August 2008 and March 2009. With this assistance three schools have been given collections of over 400 books (Agu-Achara, Community Primary School Obimo, Township II), while two have received over 300 books (CPS I Nru, CPS Nguru), and another four about 200 books (Model II, Central School Nru, Township I, Central School I). A number of other schools have received small donations. The Children's Centre is providing assistance in organizing the collections and guidance on their use.

Motto - "By Reading We Learn, By Knowledge We Serve."

Former committee member Joanne Ezeilo introduced the activity of creating a motto for the Children's Centre during her visit in May 2009. She and the children at Saturday storyhour suggested this motto, which has been approved by the Committee and adopted as summing up the mission of the Centre.

Vacation Programs 2008

The Children's Centre held both Easter and Long Vacation Programs in 2008. The Easter Vacation Program from March 25-29 was organized by AIESEC, an international university students' organization with which the Centre has a cooperative relationship. Children received training on the use of computers and the Internet, on leadership and HIV/AIDS. Activities included quiz competition, debate, talk show and a picnic.

The Long Vacation Program, from August 18-September 9, 2008, was coordinated by Fidelia Asiegbo, assisted by Margaret Ngwuchukwu, Ngozi Osadebe, AIESEC members, and staff. Activities included computer appreciation, bead-making, card-making, baking, debates and a talk on self discovery. The highlight was an excursion to the Nigerian Bottling Company at 9th Mile Corner, Ngwo.

Donations

Ngozi Odenigbo raises 1,225 Euros for Children's Centre at her birthday party

For her birthday party in Berlin, Germany in July 2008, Ngozi Odenigbo asked friends to donate to Children's Centre rather than give her presents. Ngozi, a former staff child (Obi and Elisabeth Odenigbo), was a Children's Centre member growing up in the 1980s. Friends rallied round to raise 1,225 Euros for the Centre.

Kodili Ezeike donation of N25,000 used for display case

Kodili Ezeike, a former committee member and secretary of UWA, donated N25,000, which has been used to construct a case to display Children's Centre history through photograph albums, publications, and reports.

Edith Ihekweazu Memorial Fund reaches N100,000

The fund set up by the Ihekweazu children (Chikwe, Ada Ozoemena, Edozie) in memory of their mother, Professor Edith Ihekweazu, marked five years in 2009. The family furnished an alcove to house the Centre's research collection in 2005 and pledged an annual gift of N20,000. This annual gift has to date resulted in N100,000 for updating the African Children's Literature Research Collection and providing recent African titles for borrowing.

Ejim Dike sponsors website for five years

Former member Ejim Dike has been supporting the Children's Centre website at www.childrenscentreunn.org for the past five years, at the cost of approximately \$100 per year or a total of \$500. In January 2005 the Children's Centre first opened its site, designed and maintained by webmaster Chinweze Dike.

Obi Umeh and family donate N30,000

Dr. Obi Umeh, son of Uriah and Bessie Umeh, and his family have donated N30,000 to the Children's Centre. Now a doctor in the United States, the donation came after Obi found news of recent Centre activities through the University of Nigeria website.

Special Report on Women's Reading Club

By Chiazio Igboeli

Editor's note – In addition to its work with schools and the prison, PULA has been supporting a women's reading club at the Children's Centre, sending eight copies of selected titles from the United States. The club began by reading four novels by Nigerians (Uzodimma Iweala, Chris Abani, Chimamanda Adichie and Buchi Emecheta), as reported in Newsletter #12. Members then turned to three foreign titles, a nonfiction title highlighting the plight of mothers in the United States, an American novel exposing historical race problems in the South, and a classic English novel on family life in the Victorian Age.

The Price of Motherhood, by Ann Crittendon

We usefully and delightedly discussed the book, a critique of American policies inimical to women as mothers, and noted the following points from the book and during the discussion. It was found that Sweden and France support working mothers through granting maternity leave and through a well-planned preschool and day care program. Fathers who desire a paternity leave can take it after the new mother goes back to work. In contrast, the USA penalizes working mothers; few get maternity leave; women who want to combine motherhood with part-time employment find it difficult to arrange because employers are not willing. The USA does not have a reasonable program for preschool and day care.

In Nigeria, current generations of working women are having problems with childcare because house girls and nannies are no longer easy to get. There is a mushrooming of daycare and preschool centers; these are not properly certified and supervised, although the preschool program is an integral part of Universal Basic education. Current generations of working young fathers are more involved in the care of their children; many do the school run. Because many young parents are both working outside the home, they may not have enough time for proper child upbringing (parenting). It was also noted that in situations where the man stayed home (regardless of the country) to help while the woman worked, if the woman started earning more than the man, the man seemed to lose his ability to speak boldly as the head of the family.

Suggestions for action included arranging workshops/seminars for young couples on parenting skills, child care, sharing of responsibilities in the home, etc. This can be achieved through the auspices of the University Women's Association, the churches, our patron (the Vice-Chancellor's wife.) In organizing the workshops/seminars, attempt should be made to a variety of instructional materials and approaches—modern technology, short plays, and role plays.

To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee

We had an animated and extensive discussion of the book. We agreed that it is still relevant reading today even though for one of us it was a required reading in high school in the USA many years ago and even though the story captures life in southern USA in pre-Civil Rights days.

A reading of the book could help African immigrants in the USA who grew up in societies in which they were not dominated by the white man to appreciate what African-Americans have suffered and may still be suffering in parts of the USA. Such an appreciation may result in greater empathy for the African-American. It was observed that there is some antagonism between African-Americans and African immigrants in the USA; we believe that a

reading of the book will help the latter begin to understand what the former has suffered in a society where there is discrimination. Such an understanding could result in a more cordial relationship.

The book is good reading; the story is well-crafted. It is encouraging to encounter a man of integrity like Atticus who, as a widower, used the services of a black woman (of integrity also) to give his motherless son and daughter sound upbringing free of prejudices and unnecessary social restrictions. We noted that not all white people discriminated against blacks and that without the support of white persons of integrity, who like Atticus fought for the rights of blacks, the struggle for freedom may not have been won. Club members who were familiar with the Civil Rights Movement mentioned names of some white people who had supported the struggle. We appreciated the familiarity, love and respect that existed between Atticus and his children; the latter addressed their father by his first name. This was unconventional in those days.

Mr. Obama's election as the first African-American president of the USA was acknowledged as a turning point; if a black man can become president of the USA, then anything is achievable by African-Americans.

Pride and Prejudice, by Jane Austen

Though three members were present, we had a useful but brief discussion of the book. Austen reflected the society of her time; there was not much concern with work; all the talk was about social activities and the presentation of young girls to society as they came of age.

We found the book relevant with respect to Nigerian society. Mothers in Austen's book had the same concern as today's Nigerian mothers—to have their daughters properly married. Economic considerations were important in contracting marriages then as they are today, and marriages tied families together and not just the couples only. In Austen's time girls seldom inherited from their fathers; this is true of most ethnic groups in Nigeria today. The Bennett's inheritance was entailed; that is, it would pass on to the closest male relative on the death of the man because he had no male child.

We observed that D'Arcy thought too highly of himself (or appeared to); but was indeed a kind-hearted man who was misjudged by people. Elizabeth was witty, very independent and with a mind of her own.

Members are now identifying new titles to read and discuss in the coming months. We look forward to another stimulating set of new Nigerian novels.

Newsletter editorial committee –Virginia W. Dike, Ngozi Osadebe, Margaret Ngwuchukwu,
Elizabeth Babarinde

More news is available on our website www.childrenscentreunn.org. Visit us online!