



# Rural Africa Children's Education Trust

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[www.racet.org](http://www.racet.org)

## Big Changes for Government Secondary School Ipollo

When RACET first began its mission to improve education in the Yala area of Cross River State, Nigeria, one of the three schools the charity hoped to serve was at a significant disadvantage. The Government School at Ipollo sits nearly on the border between Cross River and Ebonyi states. Unfortunately this area was the epicentre of inter-tribal violence that flared up in 2005, leaving fatalities and destruction in the surrounding rural villages. In an effort to stop the fighting, government troops were stationed at the Ipollo School in order to control the border with a military checkpoint. Overnight, classrooms were turned into barracks where the soldiers slept and ate, and the grassy area between the road and the school became littered with tin cans and beer bottles. And yet, somehow, teachers and students continued to come and try to make the best of a very challenging situation. For years now, two different year groups have had to share the same classroom, with one group facing to the front and the other to the back.

The government neglected all maintenance or refurbishment of the old buildings, and gaping holes in the floors and ceilings appeared, while the bore hole for water was left broken for more than 10 years. Conditions deteriorated further and teachers no longer wanted to work at this school so retaining staff became a serious problem.

Initially RACET tried to help by bringing students to the Learning Centre at Ntrigom School, both for tutoring and access to the computer centre. The charity also liaised with



As classrooms at Ipollo Secondary School were converted to barracks for many years, the remaining classrooms have had to accommodate two separate classes simultaneously.

the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC, an obligatory year of service teaching in different areas of Nigeria for recent university graduates), practically begging that more young graduates be posted here to make up for the lack of actual teaching staff.

Although violence in the area flared again in recent years, the military checkpoint is gone for the time being, as are the soldiers.



Durojaye Oluwaseun Micheal was hired to help the students at Ipollo learn the basics of computing by bringing 5 laptops to the school. But he has to take them back to Ntrigom as there is no safe place to keep them or recharge them at Ipollo. For this academic year RACET has addressed the shortage of teachers, and Micheal is now the full time Maths and Physics teacher at Ipollo School.

## Government Responds to RACET's Requests for Ipollo School



Long overdue government investment at Ipollo Secondary School means RACET can now move forward with a third Learning Centre.

In 2021, RACET took a chance and invited Cross River State's Secretary for Education to come visit the Learning Centres at Ntrigom and Mfuma schools to see how the Charity had provided two computer centres running entirely on solar power. They also saw first-hand RACET's provision of textbooks, scholarships and bursaries, tutoring and preparation for external exams, toilet blocks, boreholes for clean water, and distribution of sanitary products for all girls to facilitate their full time attendance at school. Furthermore, they saw how RACET obtained additional teaching assistance from NYSC graduates to help with subjects where the schools are unable to provide full time teachers.

RACET's Head of Operations **Ayo Gbadebo** explained to the government officials how a similar Learning Centre could be created at Ipollo as well, but only if the government could provide the necessary upgrades to infrastructure there, in particular a secure classroom that could house the computer centre. As of Autumn 2022, RACET is delighted to report that a new classroom block has been built (though not yet inaugurated), with a particularly secure and reinforced room designated for the future Ipollo computer centre. Additionally, the Charity will provide an Enviro-Loo toilet block at Ipollo. RACET will begin looking for help with funding these projects in the new year.

## Three Cheers for National Youth Service Corps



RACET is grateful for the knowledge and skills our "Copers" bring to the Ntrigom area communities, but also for their youthful enthusiasm, team spirit and ability to be good role models for our students.

In 1973, Nigeria introduced the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) for university graduates to spend a year in a different part of Nigeria from their home state teaching in a spirit of selfless service to the community.

"Copers" who arrive in the Ntrigom area from more developed parts of the country or cities suddenly find themselves living quite a basic existence like the locals: most of the time without running water in the house or even electricity, and no places for going out to socialise. It's not easy and the tiny amount of stipend they receive certainly does not add up to hardship pay. Although RACET tops up that monthly stipend, many graduates who have arrived in Ntrigom have quickly departed. But those who stay for their full year and really shine are sometimes employed by RACET after their year of service. In fact, all four full-time RACET staff members were "discovered" as NYSC graduates.