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**Our needs and events**

I will now speak about our needs for 2024 and beyond. Our sustainability as an organisation depends largely on the support we get from our donors and partners so we will use this medium to let the public know what our needs are for now and for the future.

*Our needs*

* Student sponsorship

We need sponsorship for our students. It costs us a little over N1m per annum to train each student who are with us for a two-year programme. Yet, we only charge N210,000 for full boarding and tuition which creates a huge shortfall that we have to fund through the support of donors. Even with the highly concessionary fees, many of our students still struggle to pay. As we approach our 70th anniversary, we are looking for those who will fully sponsor 70 students at N1m per annum – This is a special programme we are calling “70 for 70”. We are also setting up a GoFundMe account for this.

* Operational expenses

We require support for the payment of our staff salaries. This could be for the monthly payment of the salaries of instructors in the Vocational Training Centre or administrative staff.

* Equipment and resources

In terms of equipment and resources, some of our major immediate needs include the following:

* 1 Braille embosser large volume printer
* 1 Braille Translator
* Easy Converter software
* Computers – 2 laptops and 2 Desktops
* 1 no. Operational vehicle

These items along with others we require will improve our effectiveness at delivering our services.

*Visits to Patrons*

In the course of the year in preparation for our 70th anniversary, we shall be visiting our Patrons and Grand Patron to inform them and solicit their support for our 70th anniversary celebrations.

*Events*

Our events this year will include:

* Open House – This is a day when visitors can come round to see the Vocational Training Centre in session and observe the students performing various. activities. Visitors find it very enlightening as they see all what the blind and visually impaired are able to do. This will take place during Easter.
* May Ball – Our May Ball brings together donors and other supporters of the society to enjoy a relaxing and entertaining time together. It is an opportunity for us to fund raise. Success stories of our students will be shared, and guests will have the opportunity to see and buy products made by our students. This will take place in the second quarter of 2024.
* International White Cane Safety Day – This day internationally gives significance to the White cane used by blind and visually impaired people. It will feature a charity walk, rally and eye screening to help prevent blindness. This will take place in October 2024.
* Graduation ceremony – This is the graduation of our students who have successfully completed their training and are now ready and equipped to go back into society as blind or visually impaired people. It is a day of great joy and pride for the students and for their families who have walked the journey with them. It is an opportunity for our guests to see how far our students have come and to encourage them as they take their first steps back into the world. This takes place in December 2024.

All our events are platforms for our continuous fund-raising efforts. We look forward to more donors partnering with us to help us fulfil our objectives.

Thank you very much!

**Fusi Akinkugbe**

Chairman, Executive Council

January 23, 2024.