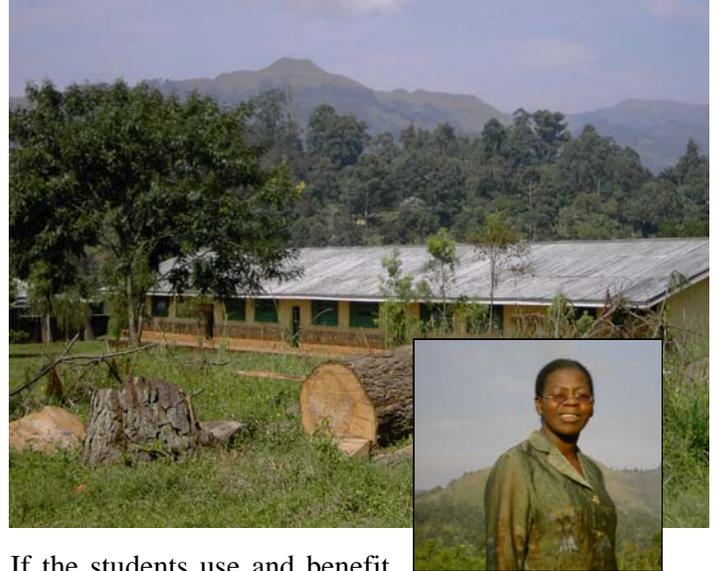




## INTEGRATED EDUCATION FOR DEAF CHILDREN, NJINIKEJEM COMMUNITY MAKING PROGRESS

UNAFAS sent two people to visit BCHS Njinikejem (right), November 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> 2009. Their purpose was to evaluate the benefits of support to the deaf centre and to start the process of typing teachers notes on the computers there. Hearing impaired children often depend on the class notes of their hearing friends, which can be incomplete or contain errors. It was suggested that providing them with access to complete, well written sets of teacher's notes would be helpful. So Penny and Patience offered to set the ball rolling. They stayed in the home of the vice-principal (below right) who was unperturbed by their late nights and early mornings typing, sometimes by candlelight. They started with notes for students sitting exams this year, succeeding to type class 5 English Language and Health studies. If the students use and benefit from these we hope that teachers and perhaps students will continue to type up study notes for other subjects and levels. Patience Agwenjang, who has been responsible for liaison visits with the school for the past year, wrote the report below.



During this my last visit to Baptist High School Njinikejem, I noticed that lots of things had changed, to my amazement. The administration seemed to have changed its approach to inclusive development, the teachers and students alike.

Peer education amongst the hearing impaired children is now more visible; besides interpretations during lessons and around the campus, the deaf club leaders are interpreting sign language in church service, unlike before when it was only the translators would do that. Nдох Elkane, one of the student interpreters (he was one of the translation partners on the Yaounde excursion in June) has been in the signing club for only two years (beginning his third year) and now can interpret for the school as a whole. Some hearing impaired students teach sign language to others, they lip read and manage to produce some words to supplement their signs, we became their students while on campus, as they gently take time to 'explain' when we didn't understand their signing, even came to explain how to use a malfunctioning keyboard when we were struggling with a computer.

Teachers on their part are getting more interested in the deaf resource centre for various reasons including attending the signing forum, preparing notes from text books, reading and researching in the library, and interacting with hearing impaired children on a different line of communication.



Teachers have formed their own 'environmental club': they have made a seed bed/nursery protected by bamboo and palm shade where cashew seeds have already germinated. When asked if they were really interested in this, because we thought it was a student thing, the tart reply was that they wouldn't have gone to all this effort if they were not interested!

The computers in the deaf resource centre as I noticed are facilitating administration for the translators as they have all data concerning the hearing impaired students collected and well coordinated – reports and databases for the organizations that sponsor deaf children are very orderly and comprehensive.

Hearing impaired students are only 53 but their presence makes them seem to be more than half on the student population which is 251 students. Sign language seems to be the order of the school; everywhere on campus, one will notice someone signing or interpreting.

Personally, in the course of typing students' notes in the computers with Mme Penny, I learnt quite a lot about Health Science and its associated terminologies. It was interesting though I know a lot of work still needs to be done to get the study documents typed and to keep them updated.

Most striking when visiting Njinikejem is the lively and happy atmosphere on campus, amongst all the students. It is very clear that hearing impaired students enjoy a happy, secure learning and living environment.

We were told that extra computer study to the deaf students is gradually being introduced, students have been formed into study groups, each led by a senior student, and allocated a computer. The students were certainly dropping in and out freely during the afternoons and evenings while we were there.

**Moving forward still further** - some rules and regulations for managing the resources and space are needed, and training on computer maintenance as well as use - by who and for what. There was a lot of music, and were a lot of viruses on all the machines, and concepts of files and folders and organizing data and software clearly not well understood. We hope that training for staff and students can be arranged, and management systems put in place to ensure that once the excitement of having new computers has worn off, maximum learning benefit goes to the deaf children. It would be wonderful if some of the students competent in sign language could be given work experience after graduation, to work on some of these issues.

