Dear Friends,

We're really pleased that you're considering knitting one of our fabulous hand puppets to be used as part of our 'Read and Write Now' initiative, which aims to dramatically improve literacy rates amongst vulnerable children in the Niger Delta. You'll find all the knitting patterns below, but first of all we'd like to tell you a bit more about our charity and the reasons behind this knitting project.

Stepping Stones Nigeria (SSN) is a UK-based charity that defends and upholds the rights of some of the most vulnerable children in the Niger Delta. We work with grassroots Nigerian partner organisations to transform the lives of disadvantaged and stigmatised children to ensure they get a proper education, healthcare, food and protection.

With high levels of malnutrition, poverty, persistent violent conflicts and being orphaned due to HIV/AIDS, increasing numbers of children in the Niger Delta are being forced to the streets putting them at risk of abuse, rape and being targeted by traffickers. Due to deeply-held beliefs in witchcraft as the source of problems in society, children are the most vulnerable group at risk of accusations of witchcrafts. This stigmatisation can lead to abandonment by their families and communities, torture, public humiliation, disgrace and murder.

We're a small but effective organisation that is passionate about child rights and proud to be partnered with some truly inspirational Nigerian community groups. To find out more please visit www.steppingstonesnigeria.org or our PACT campaign site www.makeapact.org

The Read and Write Now Initiative is an innovative two-year project aiming to dramatically improve literacy rates amongst disadvantaged children in the Niger Delta. Working with the University of Uyo's Institute of Education, the lead training provider for education in Akwa Ibom State, we will train, resource and inspire 3400 teachers from 1146 schools in year one to teach reading and writing to 85,900 children using the fun and successful method of synthetic phonics.

With limited resources, your hand-knitted puppets will be an invaluable resource for teachers to engage young children in learning how to read and write. This will bring lasting hope to the lives of thousands of children by improving life chances for employment, income, health status and housing. Please send your finished puppets to: Stepping Stones Nigeria, 24 St Leonard's House, St Leonard's Gate, Lancaster, LA1 1NN, UK and we will forward them to the schools we are working with on this project.

Thank you for your support and happy knitting!

Kind regards,

Naomi Foxcroft
Literacy Officer

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Knitting Patterns

A note on the yarn used in these patterns: I tend to use yarn I've recycled from jumpers, scarves, etc I've found in charity shops. I've mainly knit the patterns here using worsted weight acrylic. Feel free to experiment with different colours and textures!

Gauge: Don't worry too much about gauge, it's probably better we have puppets of slightly different sizes for all the different-shaped hands of the teachers.

Needles: 4 double-pointed 4mm needles.

If you want any help or find there's a problem with any of the patterns please email c.hobson@steppingstonesnigeria.org

Abbreviations used:

BO – Bind off
CO – Cast On
K – Knit
P – Purl
K2tog – knit two stitches together
Kfb – knit front and back
Ssk – Slip, slip, knit *(slip the first stitch as if to knit, slip the second stitch as if to knit, then slide the left-hand needle into the front part of both stitches and knit them together)*
St – Stitch
Rnd - Round

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Mouse

Yarn:

Main Colour (MC): Beige/brown worsted weight acrylic

Contrasting Colour 1 (CC1): Pink worsted weight acrylic

Contrasting Colour 2 (CC2): Black worsted weight acrylic

Body:

With MC CO 40 sts and join in the round.

Work in k2, p1 rib for 16 rows.

Rnd 17: K1, K1, kfb, k20, kfb, k2, kfb, k to last 2 sts, kfb, k1. (44 sts).

K16 rnds in Stst.

Top jaw:

Rnd 34: K24, turn (you'll now just be working these 24 sts back and forth on 2 needles – put remaining 20sts on a stitch holder or waste yarn).

K13 rows in St st.

Row 48: *K1, ssk, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. (22 sts)

Rows 49 & 50: K *

Rep last 3 rows * to * once more. (20 sts)

Row 54: k1, ssk, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. (18 sts)

Distribute sts evenly onto 3 dpns and join in rnd.

Rnd 1: K

Rnd 2: K2tog, k to last 2 sts, k2tog. (16 sts)

Rnd 3: K2tog twice, k to last 4 sts, k2tog twice. (14 sts)

Break yarn and using tapestry needle pull through sts.

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Bottom jaw:

Put remaining 20 sts on needle and re-attach yarn.

Row 1: k1, ssk, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. (18 sts)

Row 2: P

Rep rows 1 & 2 six times (6 sts).

Break yarn and using tapestry needle pull through sts.

Inside of mouth:

Inside mouth is worked in garter st throughout.

Using CC1 CO 2 sts.

Row 1: Kfb [twice]. (4 sts)

Row 2 & 3: K

Row 4: K1, kfb [twice], k1. (6 sts)

Rows 5 & 6: K

Row 7: K1, kfb, k to last 2 sts, kfb, k1. (8 sts)

Rows 8 & 9: K

Rep rows 7 to 9 six times. (20 sts).

Row 28: P

Row 29: K1, ssk, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. (18 sts)

Rows 30 & 31: K

Rep rows 29 to 30 six times. (6 sts)

Row 50: K1, ssk, k2tog, k1. (4 sts)

Rows 51 & 52: K

Row 53: K2tog [twice]. (2 sts)

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Row 54: K

BO.

Nose:

NOTE: you may find it easier to place the nose if you attach the inside of the mouth first!

Using CC2 pick up 4 sts near tip of top jaw. Distribute on 3 dpns and join in rnd.

Row 1: [kfb, k1] rep once more. (6 sts)

Row 2: K

Row 3: [K2tog] rep 3 times. (3 sts)

Break yarn and using tapestry needle draw through sts.

Ears (make 2):

With MC CO 4.

Row 1: K1, kfb [twice], k1. (6 sts)

Row 2: P

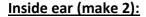Rep rows 1 & 2 four times. (14 sts)

Row 11: K four more rows.

Row 15: K1, ssk, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. (12 sts).

Row 16: P

Rep rows 15 & 16 three times. (6 sts).

Break yarn and using tapestry needle pull through all sts.

Inside ear (make 2):

Using CC1 CO 2 sts. Inside of ear is worked in garter st.

Row 1: K1, kfb [twice], k1. (4 sts).

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Row 2: K

Rep rows 1 & 2 four times. (12 sts).

K four more rows.

Row 15: K1, ssk, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. (10 sts)

Row 16: K

Rep rows 15 & 16 three times. (4 sts)

Break yarn and using tapestry needle pull through all sts.

Finishing:

Attach inside of mouth to mouse using mattress st.

Attach inside of ears to outer ears using mattress st.

Pinch the CO edge of ear and sew together to give it its ear shape! Sew to top of head (see pictures for guidance if you're not sure).

Sew googly eyes on, or embroider eyes if you prefer.

Optional: If you want to put a tail on your puppet CO 3 sts in CC1 and work I-cord until it's the desired length. Cut yarn, thread through sts and pull tight. Attach tail to mouse.

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