



Summer 2018

Dear friends,

In this fourth edition, we will bring you up to date with news of this year's appeal; a report from Umutara School for the Deaf following the payment of our first grant to them; news of the project to build a Vocational Training Centre in Rwanda; the start of a series of pen pictures of colleagues in Uganda and Rwanda; and a story of 2 deaf children, one very sad, the other more hopeful.

Umutara 2018 Appeal

You may recall that we set ourselves a target of £30,000 to be raised this year to go towards food and teachers' salaries at Umutara and the preparatory work in relation to the construction of a Vocational Training Centre for our partners, Friends of Handicap in Rwanda (FHR). I am pleased to report that we have raised almost £23,000 by mid-August 2018, all from personal donations (plus associated Gift Aid). Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed.

Umutara School for the Deaf

Umutara is run by FHR and we sent them the first tranche of our 2018 grant at the end of May. They have recently sent us a report on actions taken in anticipation of our sending out the next tranche at the end of this month.

A year ago, Umutara lost a long-standing grant from a Dutch charity which it used to meet the costs of 30 children whose parents could not afford the fees. These children had to be sent home, and of these 18 had still not found a school place by the end of May. Our grant has meant that they have now all returned.

We have written previously about the vital need that deaf children have for pre-school education. The grant has enabled a stand-alone class of 10 children to be established with their own designated teacher. And all the teachers in the school, 12 in number, who were quite poorly paid, have had a payrise.

Finally, the school has been able to improve the diet of the children, both in terms of quantity and quality. In addition to the staples, they now enjoy meat, eggs and fruit on a regular basis.

Vocational Training Centre

Our main project is to be the construction and equipping of a Vocational Training Centre (VTC) for FHR. At present, the school has 21 young adults in training within three subject areas: construction; tailoring; and hairdressing and beauty. But the space and facilities are not sufficient either to meet demand or to qualify for Government recognition.

While the school does have some land available, it has been decided that the VTC should be sited closer to larger centres of population. The VTC will be an inclusive provision, serving both hearing and deaf students, and in order to be financially viable, there needs to be a minimum number of families able to pay the fees. Umutara is a long way from a town and so 2 towns are being considered for this development: Kayonza and Nyagatare.

We have also made contact with an architect, Stephen Waldron, who has offered to design the centre on a pro bono basis. Stephen has just designed the new school buildings at Nyabihu in Rwanda, where our trustee, Isobel Blakeley, also worked. Isobel is a Teacher of the Deaf and was a VSO volunteer at the 2 schools for some 18 months.

A Project Advisory Group has been set up and held its first meeting at FHR's offices in Kayonza. It is likely that the capital cost of the VTC construction will be between £120,000 to £150,000. It is unlikely that DeafReach will be able to find all of this money, and so part of our support to FHR will be for the employment of a Development Manager to help with their own fundraising.

The next job is to produce a Business Plan for the VTC project, and to help with this our consultant, HT, will journey out to Rwanda in December for a stint of 3 months. But we have already have had pledges totalling £30,000 so we are already well on our way.

Our African colleagues

In each edition of our Newsletter, we will present individual colleagues from our 2 partner organisations, FHR and Signhealth Uganda. This time round, we feature Nasser from Uganda and Angelique from Rwanda.



I am called Angelique UMUNEZERO. I was born 1984. I have worked as a teacher of primary 6 at Umutara school for the Deaf(UDS) since 2011. I am married with one child. I am also a sign language interpreter and I have been working with Friends of Handicap and VSO Rwanda as interpreter of Rwandan Sign Language in different training courses. Before that I was living together with deaf children as school matron for 5 years, helping them at school with communication and solving some problems when it happens, offering counseling and guidance, and helping them to review their studies in the evening.

This is the job for me. How did this happen? One day I was at the bus station waiting for the bus from Kiramuruzi centre heading to Kigali when I heard the noise of a crowd circling a girl with hearing impairment. She had a problem with a young man who was trying to kidnap her. When she tried to express her problem nobody could understand her and everybody was laughing and mocking her signing with gestures. Then I took her and moved away from the crowd and took her to a quiet place. I tried to communicate with her by using local gestures and advised her to go home. When I left her I felt ashamed that I had failed to communicate with her. After a couple of months I met her again with a little baby and I realised that this was what she was trying to express in front of people that day when I met her. Since that moment, my heart kept pushing me to look for somewhere where I could learn sign language. When I visited my sister in Nyagatare ,

Gatunda sector. I was surprised to find that she lives near Umutara Deaf school. So I visited the school and met Rev. Dominique. I told him the story and I asked him how I could learn sign language. Fortunately he recruited me as a teacher. I started as a volunteer looking after the children and this gave me the opportunity to learn about deaf culture. I was able to learn sign language quickly and after one year I became a full teacher . I really like my job and the children with hearing impairment and I feel interested to be with them. When I am in the class with them I always see them as innovators and men and women of the future.



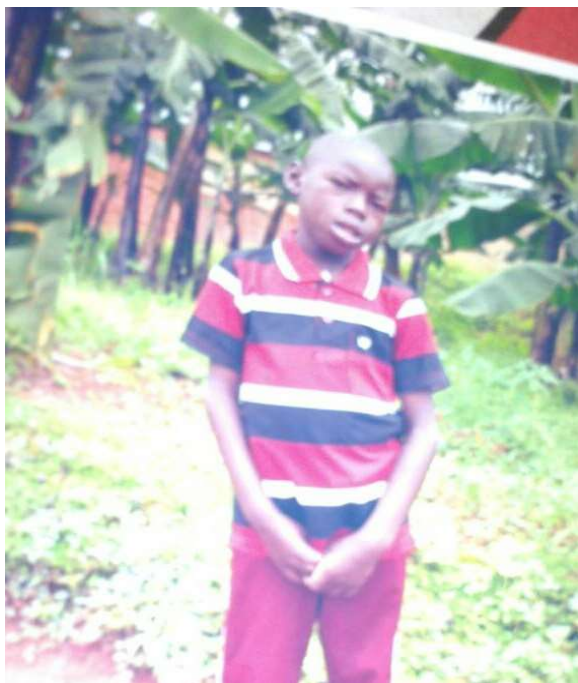
My name is Nasser Ssenyondo and I am a Social worker with experience in programme management and human rights advocacy with a critical focus on children/youth welfare and disability spanning over 10 years. Due to my personal loss of hearing at the age of 10 years to Meningitis, SignHealth Uganda has helped me to turn my personal struggles into a new brand of activism and hope aimed at supporting families and communities with hearing impaired children.

My work and activism centre around disability rights, policy and advocacy for service delivery. At SignHealth Uganda, I am working in direct field service delivery: training of service providers in education, health and other fields; in awareness on Disability issues; building partnerships; and assisting the Executive Director in programme management. As a growing professional, I am proud that SignHealth Uganda is offering me a platform to continue my work towards raising community awareness and advocacy on the rights of children with disabilities especially the Deaf among service providers and duty bearers. I have a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Social Administration and an MBA in Human Resource Management.

Study Tour

This coming November we will be welcoming 3 colleagues from Rwanda who are coming to the UK on a study tour organised by Isobel Blakeley, one of our trustees, together with Suffolk County Council. They are Omar from Umutara, whose pen picture will feature in the next edition, plus Louis and Elie from Nyabihu. We are hoping to arrange a reception for them in London during the first week of December, and any supporter that would like to meet them and learn more about their work in Rwanda would be most welcome.

The Lost Boy and the Found Boy



The lost boy is Antoine HABUMUGISHA who was brought to Umutara school by his father from Ngoma district in the southeast of the province. Three days later at around 1.30 pm he disappeared.

“We are still looking for him everywhere and hope that we shall find him. We have tried to use different ways such as announcements on the radio, publishing some announcements and putting the child’s picture in the papers. Every health centre in Nyagatare has been contacted and made announcements. We have reported the case to the police, and we have also approached what we call Health Community Workers (HCW) who are local people who meet a wide range of people in the villages. We have also been in touch with every school in the neighbourhood. Our next step is to start searching in the second district called Gastibo.

What do we think would cause a deaf child to disappear? We find that many of our children are brought to school without being aware of the reason why they are being taken to such a place. Since they are not familiar with the life in their new school, we establish a process of special care and attention so that we can be sure of their movements and so that we can observe their reactions to all the new situations they are experiencing. We use the child’s peer group in this task and it has proved a useful tool to both children and staff.” Sadly, there is no news of Antoine’s whereabouts as yet.



The found boy is also called Amani SIBOMANA, who was found in a village quite a long way away from Umutara. He too was lost and looking for his parents.

“Hearing of our lost child, the villages called Omar to come and see if he was Antoine, but when he got there he realised that he was not. The deaf boy was being cared for by a poor family who, although unfamiliar with how to treat a deaf child, were kind. They asked Omar to take the deaf child to the school while we searched for his parents. First of all, Omar took the deaf boy to the police station to report him as a missing child, and the police also suggested that we keep the boy in the school where he might begin to learn Sign Language.

Just one week later his biological parents came to school to see if the child we was theirs. Indeed he was. They begged us to keep teaching their son even though they could not afford the fees, only being able to provide some of Amani’s school materials. Amani is now registered as a student of USD, and he has got his uniform and some of the basic materials.

For further information about any aspect of our work, do get in touch.

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