



Turn of the year 2018

Dear friends,

We hope you have all had a happy and fulfilling time during this holiday season, and we send you all the very best wishes for 2019.

This fifth edition of our Newsletter is devoted to our work in Rwanda. Our volunteer, HT, is back at Umutara Deaf School for a 3-month stint. He and the FHR team are working hard, firstly to appoint a Development Officer and Company Secretary to help Dominique, FHR's Chairman and Chief Executive (unpaid) with the tasks of managing the charity and growing its income generation capacity.

The rest of this Newsletter is a report by Isobel Blakeley of the reverse situation – a Study Tour to the UK by three of the teachers we work with at two deaf schools: Umutara and Nyabihu. The tour almost did not happen. Only one of the three was successful in getting a visa first time round, the second was successful on the next application, and we had to enlist the support of Shrewsbury MP, Daniel Kawczynski, to obtain the third. Daniel spoke directly to the Immigration Minister for which we are extremely grateful. We end this edition with a pen picture (and a visual one) of Omar from Umutara whose visa was the one supported by Daniel.

Isobel writes:

Since my 18 month VSO placement in Rwanda which ended in July 2015, I have been in constant contact with Umutara School for the Deaf in north Eastern Rwanda and re visited three times. As a Teacher of the Deaf in the UK, I have often wished that my colleagues in Rwanda could see what is possible to achieve in Deaf Education, and to that end, a few friends and I decided to invite three of the teachers we had met to visit the UK this winter, 2018.

It might seem a strange time of year to invite them, as for them, it was pretty cold! But our children were still at school and they were on their long holiday, so they would not be missed at home and could visit some of our schools here. They also experienced an English winter (it was pretty mild!).

We wanted them to see what services were available to children here and start with them a discussion around how they could adapt some of these to their own situation in their very different environment. There were a host of practical problems, which I won't even begin to tell you about!

So we invited Louis, Elie (from Nyabihu) and Omar (from Umutara) on a 20 day whistle stop tour of English services for the Deaf. Two of them had never been out of East Africa before, and none had been to a European country. And they came in November!

We visited:-

- Five different 'Hearing Impaired Units' for Primary pupils observing pupils in class with support and also in separate language lessons with the Teacher of the Deaf (TOD).
- Children in mainstream classes with weekly support from TOD
- A pre-school group.
- Three Residential schools for the Deaf, looking at how they manage out of school activities as well as the academic provision.
- An FE college which provides support on vocational programmes for Hearing Impaired (HI) pupils
- Two Deaf clubs
- Groups of parents of deaf children
- Staff of Sensory Services, including Vision Impairment (VI) and Communication provision
- Deaf pupils with significant additional needs.
- An audiologist
- Speech and Language sessions with deaf pupils

We were also able to visit individuals and groups who have fundraised for the schools during the last five years, to thank them in person for the help they have given. This was particularly moving for both the donors and recipients. Here is Omar, receiving a

gift from Janet, on behalf of Betty, one of the teachers of Umutara School who is supported by the URC Church in Linton, Cambridgeshire.



At most of the places we visited, our visitors were also able to present their PowerPoint presentations from Rwanda – so giving both English staff and students a taste of a different world.

As you can imagine, we have engaged in a multitude of different discussions, both with those we met and between ourselves. Driving home from many of the visits, rapid in-depth discussions in Kinyarwanda (the language of Rwanda) were going on in the car!

Their visit is now almost over and I asked them if we had been right to invite them. Seeing the provision – however imperfect and incomplete we might think it is - that we have here compared to their situation at home, was it unkind to show them? Would it have been better to leave them unaware of what is possible?

‘It is hard for us to see what deaf pupils can do when they have good support, but if we don’t know what is possible how can we plan for improvement in the future’, said Louis, the founder of Nyabihu Demonstration School for the Deaf.

‘I did not know that it was possible for profoundly deaf children to learn to speak like that. At first, I did not believe that they were profoundly deaf’, Elie said of children he observed with cochlear implants.

In terms of Transition, they are already managing some of the practical situations that they face. The

transition from home to Primary school, from Primary to Secondary and then to vocational training in rural Africa. This often happens on the same site, in a Residential setting, so the situation is very different from here, and in many ways, simpler.

However, their challenge is much bigger than that, and what is needed is potential leaders who understand what can be achieved. The major transitions that lay ahead for Rwanda if their provision is to move into line with what is available to deaf pupils here are :-

- The transition from a charity funded provision for a few deaf pupils to a government funded provision for all.
 - Medical assessment for early identification.
 - The transition from a fully sign dependent education to one where hearing equipment is available for those who can benefit.
 - Facilities to train Teachers of the Deaf.
 - The transition of teaching methods to develop speech for those with ‘hearing aids’.
- The list could go on, but:-

Most of all, what is needed is a transition from a society that does not understand the value of educating deaf children into one that sees that a deaf child, given the financial investment necessary to provide the right human, educational and equipment resources, can become a contributing member of the economic development of the country, channelling their unlimited potential.

Many older teachers of the Deaf will, like me, have seen huge changes in the education of the Deaf in Britain over the last 40 years. My hope is that Omar and Elie, two young men of 30, will see a similar transition in their lifetimes.

‘I am excited’, said Omar with his unstoppable enthusiasm. ‘Now I will not be satisfied with where we are. I know that we can achieve much more’.



Elie and Louis in discussions with staff from the Peterborough Sensory Service.

You will notice by their clothing that the transition from the equator to England in November was also a challenge!

Our thanks go to the very many people who made this visit such a success, too numerous to mention, but not forgetting those who provided bed and board over the three weeks of their stay.

Isobel Blakeley
December 2018

Web links.

Umutara School for the Deaf

Omar's school – umutaradeafschoo.weebly.com

Nyabihu Demonstration School for the Deaf

Louis and Elie's school - nyabihucenforthe deaf.weebly.com

Donation Charity

www.deafreach.org (Beware, NOT .com - that's another Charity!)

My individual fundraising page for teacher training

www.wonderful.org/fundraiser/teachertrainingatnyabihurwanda-f0eba5cc

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

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Charity No: 262962

Omar KAYIGI



is a 31 year old professional teacher. He is still single and can speak Kinyarwanda, French, English, Swahili and Rwandan Sign Language, his dream was to become an accountant which is why he studied Accountancy in high school. How did he become a teacher?

On 22nd January 2009 it was his first time to meet deaf children at school. Until then he could not believe that a deaf child could go to school, until he visited Umutara Deaf School. He was surprised to see a group of deaf children having a special way of communicating. A little girl named Loda gave him a sign name that day, drawing an O on her chest. He spent 2 days at this school, but continued to visit and found that he liked being with the deaf community. So in 2013 he left Kigali to Nyagatare (the nearest town to Umutara) where he started being trained in Rwandan sign language. He also got the basic training in teaching methodology, Gentle teaching methodology, and Deaf education.

In April, 2015 he decided to join Mount Kenya University for his Bachelor of Education. In 2017 he was approved as a Rwandan Sign language interpreter. In 2018 he attended the University of Rwanda for a Diploma in Effective School Leadership. Currently he is a senior Sign Language interpreter in the Eastern province (a volunteer role).

Omar states that, working in Deaf Education is the most interesting thing ever in his life. His vision is that he will do his Masters in Deaf Education. At the beginning his salary was low just enough to help him to survive, but with the support from DeafReach the school has been able to increase teachers' salaries and he was able to buy a small piece of land where he is planning to build a small house close to the school, since he has determined to work there for many years in the future.