



September 2019

Dear friends,

So much has happened since I last wrote in July that it seems to have been a much longer gap. But first of all, it has not been a bad summer at all here in the UK, and I hope that you were able to make the most of it. And this has been one of the best Septembers I can remember.

The Headlines. The **construction of the first building of the new TVET** (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) Department at Umutara School in Rwanda is nearly complete. This has been made possible by the generosity of Sue Tindall, one of our trustees, plus a grant from the Beatrice Laing Trust. We are now heavily into fundraising for the next phase of the works.

We have joined forces with **Aurora Deaf Africa Aid**, a UK charity working principally in Burundi, but also in Rwanda. It was established by Chris Kubwimana, a deaf man from Burundi who now works as a social worker in Croydon. We plan to amalgamate the 2 charities next year. Chris has recently returned from a conference in Burundi, which we have supported, which has led to the formation of an Association of Families of Deaf Children.

Training, Research and Development. Seven members of our Teacher Training Group will be travelling to Rwanda in October to run sessions at both Umutara and Nyabihu Schools. In addition, and at about the same time, our International Director, Howard, will be travelling out to Rwanda, DRC and Uganda, visas permitting, for a further 3-month stint.

He will be running a Business Planning programme with Signhealth Uganda (SU), a planning session with CENYSED in DRC for the proposed deafblind school in Goma, and continued management and income generation training with all of our partners across the 3 countries. In addition, following on from the deafblind developments in DRC, he will be travelling the length and breadth of Rwanda, to research the existence and identification of deafblind children and their educational needs. For this, he will be accompanied by Eric Ngabo, from Nyabihu School. Anne Ryan, our Uganda Lead, will also be visiting SU at this time.

TVET at Umutara

The first phase of the new department at Umutara School, which will serve some 75 trainees in hairdressing and beauty, tailoring and construction, is almost complete. This is the construction of a new dormitory and toilet block to free up 2 existing dormitories for conversion into workshops. Here are 2 photos, one from the start on site in June, the second from the end of August.



Most of the money for Phase 1 of the development was donated in memory of Nick Tindall, husband of Sue, who sits on our board. Our training team will be in Umutara following the completion of the construction, and will be present for its inauguration. They will present the Umutara Team with a plaque to mark the occasion, which is shown in the picture below taken at our last Trustees' Meeting.



From the left: Teresa Quail, Isobel Blakeley, Anne Ryan, Sue Tindall, Rod Clark, Chris Kubwimana and Anthony Eaton.

AURORA

We have been mightily enriched by the appointment of Chris Kubwimana as a Trustee. Chris has been supporting work with deaf children and their families in Burundi through his own charity, Aurora Deaf Aid Africa for some years now. He has also instigated a Livelihood Programme for deaf adults in Musanze, close to Nyabihu School, in collaboration with the Rwandan National Union of the Deaf. Chris was looking for a charity with which to join forces, and we are delighted that he found us.

Chris has just returned from the first Conference of the families of deaf children in Burundi. As a result, they have now become an Association to promote services and awareness.

Take a look at Aurora's website for a fuller picture of their work: <http://www.auroradeaf.org/>



Participants in the first conference for the families of deaf children, Burundi, August 2019



Rod and Chris signing the agreement for Aurora and DeafReach to join forces. If successful, the 2 charities will amalgamate in 2020

Continuing Professional Development More than one way of supporting and developing our partners

An article by Isobel Blakeley, our Rwanda Lead, prior to the group's departure for their October training visit.

There are so many ways in which we can support our partners, some of which you can see by visiting our DeafReach website. One way, which has developed from my initial work in Rwanda through VSO, is 'Continuing Professional Development'.

My initial brief with VSO was to improve the 'teaching methodology' at Umutara Deaf School.

Considering that most of the teachers there at that time were not qualified teachers and that there is no specific Teacher of the Deaf course that anyone can attend in Rwanda, there was quite a lot of background understanding in education and specifically the education of deaf children that needed to be covered.

Since then, the Rwandan Education Board (REB) has stipulated that all Primary School teachers must have a basic teaching qualification by January 2020. So all of the teachers at both Umutara and Nyabihu are now either qualified, or will be by Jan 2020.

There is one exception – the wonderful Betty who is deaf herself, will not be able to achieve this qualification. It's complicated – and anyone who is particularly interested in supporting her, please let me know! However, there is still no specific course in teaching deaf children.

Don't we take CDP for granted here! In fact, sometimes we moan about it! However, we don't have to pay, we can choose which courses are most relevant and we meet up with fellow professionals who are struggling with the same issues that we have. They are actually invaluable!

For our colleagues in Rwanda, there are no courses. So, some of my professional friends who visited me when I was first in Rwanda (2014/15), have already visited twice since and now we are planning another two week visit in October this year. We will spend 5 days at Nyabihu in the north-west and 5 days in Umutara in the north east, leading almost the same training sessions to both schools.

We now know the staff at both schools really well, and look forward to talking with them face to face and discussing issues common to us all. Our 'team' consist of Teachers of the Deaf, an Educational Audiologist, a very experienced classroom assistant, a maths specialist and a Speech and Language Therapist. All of us have been in the 'education' business for many years! We have a very ambitious programme, which, to be honest, we probably won't be able to complete!

But it's always better to have more material than you need.

We have come up with the topics to be covered in conjunction with the staff at the school and with some suggestions from our side. We also plan on this visit, to include both Head Teachers of the schools as part of our 'Training Team'. Our aim is not just to provide guidance on the various topics, but also to enable the staff in Rwanda to develop their own training skills. As they become more experienced, and experts in their field, then they will be able to train the next generation of teachers themselves.

Topics to be covered – in no particular order:-

- Early Years curriculum
- Assessment and Monitoring (including baseline assessment, pre-school assessment and 'IEP' writing)
- Safeguarding
- Music with the Deaf
- Speech and Language development
- Books – which ones and how to use them
- Maths teaching – different approaches for linguistically challenged pupils
- Hearing Screening
- Organisational structure of the schools – Roles and Responsibilities.

All in five days! Well, if we can stimulate discussions on most of the topics, then it will have been a success!

One additional really valuable outcome of visiting will be that we can see with our own eyes, the progress that has been made in the 5 years since my first visit to Rwanda. Also, we can discuss with staff, students and parents, what the most pressing needs are now for the schools in terms of financial support, training, and future directions for development. Rwanda is a rapidly changing country, with its government working hard to bring it into the modern arena. As yet, there is no financial commitment to supporting the education of the Deaf, but we want our schools to be there, ready and well equipped when that time comes.

Please note: DeafReach supports this project as it is in line with its policy of professional development in-country and enabling Nationals to become responsible for meeting their own professional needs. Indeed, while there will always be a place for visiting trainers, our ultimate aim is for training to be provided on a “south/south” basis, in this case either within Rwanda, or failing that, the wider East African region. We are and intend to remain a volunteer charity, and as such all UK participants cover their costs out of their own pockets.

Isobel Blakeley
September 2019

Audiology

Teresa Quail is a Teacher of the Deaf, and also an Educational Audiologist. She is currently planning a Strategy for the development of a national Audiology service for deaf school children in Rwanda. Here she is pictured at a conference held in Manchester last June at which she presented a paper on *Worldwide Parental Aspirations and Fears echoed from Rwanda*. This arose from a series of interviews she and Isobel held, together with Elie, Headmaster of Nyabihu, with parents of children at the school. This presentation is available on request.



A Proud Moment



Our colleague and friend, Omar Kayigi, is appointed Head Teacher of Umutara Deaf School. He is being welcomed by Eleanie Kamana, the school’s Founder.

We had the pleasure of Omar’s company in the UK both this year and last when he visited us, despite horrendous visa problems, for two extended periods to observe teaching practice with deaf children here.

Uganda

One of our oldest friends is a driving force in the Parents’ Association in Uganda, called NAPADEC (National Association of Parents of Deaf Children). They have just been successful in obtaining a grant from Global Giving for a project entitled “Empowered Parents, Inclusive Communities for Deaf”. The Project will train and provide start-up loans to 180 mothers of deaf children who are unemployed in rural Uganda. The small businesses include: goat rearing, vegetable growing, chicken rearing, mushroom growing, tailoring and small-scale shop management. The training will include: Business Skills, Planning, Market Research, and Value-Added Production. By learning a marketable skill the mothers will generate income and lift themselves out of poverty to sustain their deaf children in education.

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