



July 2020

Dear Friends

Earlier this month I wrote to you with news of the completion of the Tailoring Department at the TVET (Vocational Training Centre) at Umutara Deaf School. Because of the universal lockdown I did not have enough news for a full-blown Newsletter. However, since then, we have received a report from Umutara on their Outreach Project. As a result, this is our eleventh edition, in which I am repeating the Tailoring information, in addition to the new report. The report also contained testimonies from parents and teachers which I have not included here but which I will gladly forward to anyone interested in reading them.

All of the schools we support are closed - hopefully they will reopen in September. Meanwhile, our partners are doing their best to make good use of the time they did not expect to have, as well as coping with the huge financial problems that lockdown has brought them. Kamonyo in Congo is actively fundraising for the deafblind school he wishes to build, and Spes in Burundi is finalising the design for her new Deafblind Department. You can see what our friends at Umutara in Rwanda are doing in the attached photographs.



The school wished to be recognised as a Vocational Training Centre (TVET in Rwandan terminology) by the Workforce Development Authority (WDA), part of the Government's Education Ministry. For such recognition, without which they are not allowed to offer formal qualifications, they require a minimum of 25 equipped places in each subject. Umutara offers Tailoring, Hairdressing & Beauty, and Masonry & Construction.

Our first target was to fund the buildings to house the three departments. This we have mostly done. We have now sent out the final payment to enable the school to acquire 25 sewing machines and associated equipment, which you can see the team assembling in the pictures. Thus Umutara can now register Tailoring with the WDA. Our next target is the hairdressing equipment at a cost of just under £30,000. This should keep us busy well into next year.

A group of our trustees has provided funds for a project run by a Young Deaf Group in Burundi, providing food and health care to vulnerable individuals in their area.

Thanks to everyone who has supported us, not least those who supported the purchase of equipment and the Food Bank, which I am pleased to report is still going strong. In addition to this, the Umutara staff have been able to visit some of their pupils at home to help them continue with their studies. The report follows.

Finally, we held a DeafReach Trustees' meeting during the last week of June, at which it was decided that DeafReach and Aurora Deaf Aid Africa (ADAA) would amalgamate. ADAA is not deregistering with the Charity Commission at this stage. We are going to defer this for a year or two while we see how well the amalgamation works.

We hope you are managing to deal with this difficult situation and not getting too fed up!

All good wishes

Rod Clark, Chairman

Umutara's School Closure and Outreach Programme



During this period, in which all children are with their families until September, the Ministry of Education established programmes to help students via radios and television.

These programmes were designed to help a large number of students in the country and deaf children were not forgotten, as the programmes included sign language interpreters. One of these is Omar Kayigi, the Headmaster of Umutara. However, quite a number of students were unable to make use of this as they come from very poor families who do not have a television.

Friends of Handicap in Rwanda knew that most of their pupils came from such families and that they would not be able to make use of the TV broadcasts. As a result, it established a series of weekly visits to those children who could be reached. DeafReach makes a grant towards children's food and teachers' salaries each year, and we were pleased to transfer the money saved on school meals to supporting the costs of this programme.

The main elements of the Outreach Programme

- Teaching the children so that they can continue to be at the same level in terms of studies as others

- Demonstrating to families how they can help with their children's education during lockdown
- Training the parents about all aspects of safeguarding children
- Explaining to children that Covid-19 is a pandemic and the ways in which they can prevent themselves from catching it
- Encouraging parents to prepare their children to attend school on time in September with the required school materials
- Training the family in basic sign language.



Omar interpreting on TV and teaching children at home

The common problems that are facing the children while at home

- Almost 82% of children visited in June 2020 said they had problem of communicating with their families.
- 69% of children visited said that they did not understand why they were at home.
- 58% forgot some sign language and some of the lessons they had learned because their parents did not know how to help them.
- 94 % of parents said they did not know about safeguarding policies for children.
- 63 % of their parents are illiterate
- 74 % of their parents are not aware that supporting their disabled child is their responsibility.
- 78% of the families visited considered that the job of looking after a child with a hearing impairment was the responsibility of the women, while men seemed to take no interest in the needs of their children with a hearing impairment.

The challenges the group faced during the Outreach Programme

Most of the villages in Rwanda uses motorcycles and bicycles for transport and the costs can be very expensive. In addition, there are some places which motorcycles cannot reach and so the teachers have to continue on foot, often two kilometres or more.

Mostly when we visit a family, it is rare to meet both parents. Almost 95% of the parents we meet are females and when we ask them where the father of a child is, they say that he is not interested. In communities in Rwanda, gender balance has not yet been achieved because of longstanding cultural practices. "The word that matters is the one spoken by a man", and this makes us worry that the advice we give to families on how to take care of their children will not be followed by both parents.

Because it is an undeniable fact that many of the children with hearing impairments are less cared for in their families, we find that books have been lost and it is difficult to pick up the teaching from the point when they school closed.

The teachers reported that the availability of a motorbike would be the greatest help in achieving the programme.



Angelique with her teacher and with her family

Positive outcomes from the Programme

- Since the start of the programme in June, 44 children and their families have been visited.
- It became very clear that teaching was markedly improved when a teacher knows the child very well and understands the home life and the standard of living of the family.
- It helps a teacher to know the nature of the daily living of a child within their family.
- Parents find that teachers have a special place in their children's lives because of their ability to communicate. As a result, they value the teacher's role in helping them to communicate with their children.
- When a child sees their teacher coming to visit them, they gain hope that all the misunderstandings that exist within the family are going to come to an end because they have an interpreter.
- The disabled child is "given value" in the society they come from when it is seen that they are attending school in the same way as other children, and are seen to be responsive within the educational setting.
- Parents and relatives now understand the safeguarding policy.
- There were many experiences that a teacher gained in the Outreach Programme which will inform their teaching when back at school
- The Outreach Program enabled teachers to understand how some of the behaviour exhibited by the children emanate from their home lives, as a result of which they became much better placed in finding ways to modify this behaviour.

For a full copy of this report, please go to deafreach.org/app/uploads/2020/07/outreach0720.pdf.

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