



October 2020

Dear Friends

We had hoped to send you a Newsletter this autumn reporting on much more activity than earlier in the year, but alas the virus is still curbing our work and that of our partners. We hope that you and yours remain safe and well. I am pleased to report that we have not received any accounts of COVID sickness within our area of work, either here in the UK or in Africa. And we had a wonderful end to the summer here in England, enabling people to get out and about a bit more. But of course, many of the activities we used to take for granted remain denied to us, and that has had a profound impact on our normal Deaf Reach routines.

Trustee meetings have taken place via Zoom, but it has not been possible to undertake any of our planned fundraising events, with one or two honourable exceptions. Helen Gibb undertook a sponsored Cycle Ride and Isobel Blakeley has made and sold masks. We can normally expect to receive some support from charitable trusts and foundations, and Howard, our International Director, has filled his unexpected free time with making applications. However, the response has been much lower than in virus-free times, and the feedback we are getting is that donors have been inundated by requests from charities that are facing closure, so profound has been the impact of the lockdown on them. But we have still been able to make some advances, particularly towards vocational training in Rwanda, thanks to some sizeable donations from our trustees.

One of the main outcomes is that we have been unable to undertake any visits to our partners since the beginning of the year. We aim to make visits on an annual basis at the least. Our programme this year included

- A Business Plan for Signhealth Uganda, including a proposal for the development of Early Years Education, which we have supported since we began;
- A Business Plan for the Centre d'Éducation Spécialisée pour Déficients Auditifs, Gitega (Centre for Special Education for Hearing Impaired) in Burundi;
- A Conference in Kigali, Rwanda for Special Needs Schools to consider areas of mutual need and co-operation, and also to examine the potential for the establishment of an educational programme for deafblind children;
- Intensive fundraising support to Friends of Handicap in Rwanda to generate more income both for the current TVET capital project and for a long-term regular increase in revenue; and
- Liaison visits to partners with active programmes that we are supporting.

Given that there are almost certainly fewer cases of COVID in sub-Saharan Africa than here, probably thanks to the spread of the population, we are now looking at the possibility of undertaking a visit within the relatively near future. Watch this space!

In Africa, most of the schools we work with remain closed, and so our projects involving them are on hold. For Umutara Deaf School in Rwanda, we have been able to divert the money we normally send out towards the costs of feeding the children, to the Outreach Programme which we reported on in the last Newsletter.

However, our major project, the TVET (Vocational Training Centre) at Umutara is happily unaffected by this situation, and the only hitch in this year's plans has been raising the necessary funds to meet our targets. Nevertheless, most of the main buildings have been erected (thanks in part to the support we have received from the Beatrice Laing Trust), and we have completed the equipping of the Tailoring Department. We are hoping that by the end of 2020 we will have made major headway in equipping the Hairdressing and Beauty Department (the budget is approx. £26,000).

We have recently funded an Awareness and Sensitisation Programme on Coronavirus and COVID put on by a young deaf group in Burundi and this is described below, together with Helen's article on her Cycle Ride.

All good wishes

Rod Clark, Chairman



Graduates of the Tailoring Department at Umutara Deaf School.

FHR has reopened its workshop in the town of Kayonza, and the tailors were commissioned by an organisation called The Streets Ahead Children's Centre Association to make 1000 masks to be given free to children living on the streets. A larger contract has been promised.

Burundi Covid Awareness Programme

The Association for the Self-Development of Deaf Women in Burundi (ADFSB) supported by the Burundi National Association of the Deaf became concerned that the measures taken by the Government to inform the population about the virus and its effect were not reaching the deaf community, particularly girls and women in the countryside who suffer triple discrimination – by gender, by disability and by geography.

They therefore devised a programme to inform vulnerable Deaf people in Gitega province about the virus and the disease, and the ways to prevent them. This also included making food and hygiene kits available. While the programme identified a direct group of 20 people to benefit initially, it also included a wider plan to spread the information and awareness nationwide.



A team of 5 deaf women plus a sign language interpreter carried out field visits across Gitega Province

Odyssey to Norfolk – by Helen Gibb

I am a Teacher of the Deaf in Peterborough and was fortunate enough to meet Head Teacher, Elie Kwizerimana of the Nyabihu Demonstration School for Deaf and Louis Ngabonziza, the founder of the school, when they were invited over to the UK for an exchange visit. They gave an inspiring presentation about their school and what they had achieved for their deaf pupils. I have also heard about the DeafReach charity that support their work from a couple of my colleagues who are DeafReach volunteers.

I wanted to support the charity by doing a sponsored cycle ride. My friend, Glenys Dawkins and I love cycling about the roads and lanes near us and we decided to build up our stamina over the summer holidays and at the end of August to attempt a 100km sponsored cycle ride from Gorfield on the Fens (Cambridgeshire) and up to the pretty seaside town of Sheringham for a bag of chips and a pint of beer!

Our goal was to raise £200 for DeafReach to help pay for some equipment for the new vocational Training Centre for deaf young people in N.E. Rwanda in Umutara.

Of course these Covid times did complicate things as it always does. We had to social distance so we needed two separate vehicles and drivers that could bring us both home separately. The day arrived, the sun was shining, the wind was not too strong so a positive start. I arrived at Glenys's house and to my surprise there were two extra bike riders and an expanded support team. All in all, we had eleven people setting out for the day to the seaside. It was all the better for it as we had lots of support and meet-ups for tea and sustenance. We did take a slight detour ...erm... in the wrong direction. We finally arrived in Sheringham at about 4 pm having added on an extra 20km to our 100km target, but still in good spirits and in time for a pint of beer and some chips!

It was a long time since I had done such a long ride so I certainly had a big sleep that night. The other three cyclists had never done a 100km ride before so everyone was very happy and proud to reach the destination. In the end we doubled our target sponsorship money by raising £400 from our generous family and friends so it was all worth it in every way.



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