



November 2021

Dear Friends,

Before anything else, a huge vote of thanks to the many people who responded to our Goma appeal for donations to buy food for the deaf family members of our DRC partner, CENYESED, following the eruption of the volcano and the obliteration of their fields. This was a double whammy, as the effect of the pandemic had already caused a great deal of hardship. Thanks to you, we raised the magnificent sum of £6,185 which, unable to establish a bank account in DRC, we sent out through Friends of Handicap in Rwanda, for which we are most grateful. You will find a report later on in this newsletter.

Meanwhile, we hope that you and yours have been safe and well during this difficult time and will continue to be so. Thinking we were a bit overdue in sending out a Newsletter, I realised with some amazement that the last one was in February. The difficulty we had in putting a Newsletter together this year, it hardly needs to be said, was finding enough to write about. Our work in Africa was mostly put on hold as all of the countries we work with were on the UK's red list and therefore impossible to enter. But there is some good news to report, but sadly also some not so good news.

As I have written in previous Newsletters, before we take on any partner organisation overseas, our policy is to work with them on a Business Plan to identify their strengths, their plans and the means to bring them to fruition. Most urgent is an exercise with Sign Health Uganda, which has been on the stocks for over two years. Happily, with travel bans now lifted, Howard will be going out to Uganda at the end of this month to start work with Paul Ssentenza and his team. We hope that he will be joined by Eric Ngabo, from Nyabihu Deaf School in Rwanda, which is due for a Business Planning exercise in 2022. Eric has just returned from visiting CENYESED and he has sent us a most useful report on the current situation in Goma, extracts from which are given below. He is also coordinating a national conference of deaf and other disability organisations and institutions in Rwanda.

The idea for a national conference of these organisations came about as a result of our work with Friends of Handicap in Rwanda and the need to find how best to ensure that the projects we have undertaken with them at Umutara Deaf School can be sustained after our support comes to an end. This would include formal recognition of the school by the government which would lead to an increase in governmental funding. It became clear to us that the effort required would be better spent on a national campaign including all private special schools with the aim of establishing an umbrella group which would undertake a range of joint campaigning and projects, such as the National Deaf Sports programme that Isobel Blakeley helped set up during her time in

Rwanda. There has been a fantastic positive response by the schools approached, and already two meetings have been held with a third about to take place. We are delighted to report that our friends at The Beatrice Laing Trust have agreed to sponsor this event. Eric is the Co-ordinator and a wonderful job he is making of it.

In the New Year, Howard will travel to Burundi to undertake with Chris Kubwimana, our deaf Burundian trustee now settled in the UK, one or two Business Planning exercises with the Ephphatha Deaf School in Bujumbura, and hopefully one of the deaf organisations.

International Women's Day in Burundi



In the last Newsletter, we reported on our funding of a tailoring workshop for deaf women. The project also included a conference as part of International Women's Day last March. The dresses worn by these delegates were all made in the workshop.

The Good News and the Not so Good at Umutara

In our last edition, under the title Almost There, we reported on our major project in Rwanda, the construction and equipping of a Vocational Training Centre at Umutara Deaf School, a project that we have had of necessity to undertake over four years. Thanks to our trustees and supporters we were able to complete the project this summer. The final element was a major grant from the UK based Rangoonwala Foundation, which provided the resources for a large percentage of the very expensive hairdressing equipment.



All three departments are now fully operational, but not with a full complement of trainees because of the pandemic and because of the need to build up to full capacity carefully. What was once VTC, then TVET, is now titled Umutara Technical School for the Deaf.



And now the not so good news. In the last week of October, a violent storm destroyed many houses and other buildings in Umutara, including the roofs of the new school dormitory and the Baptist Church, where FHR Chairman Dominique is the minister. We are going to include the cost of repairs in our 2021 Christmas Appeal which we plan to send out shortly.

Goma Update

As mentioned above, Eric Ngabo visited CENYSED in DRC to see the extent of the damage caused by the seismic shocks from the volcanic eruption in October, and to assess the need for further food support to families. Two of the school buildings were badly damaged and we were hoping to include the repairs in our Christmas Appeal but we are still awaiting an engineer's report as to whether they can be saved or whether they need to be demolished.



Internal walls on the first floor of the storied unit have been badly damaged



From left to right, Jonas, Rev Kamonyo, Founder of CENYSED, Eric and Agizo sitting on the lava stones which less than six months ago were productive fields, with Nyiragongo, the volcano, behind them covered in fog

Eric reported in detail on the food programme we supported and he sent us the following narrative. Please let us know if you would like a copy of his [full report](#).

Report on the 20-day food distribution programme to deaf students and their teachers carried out by CENYSED and funded by DeafReach.

In the aftermath of the eruption, DeafReach sent an immediate grant that was to cover humanitarian needs of CENYSED's beneficiaries, The first tranche of the donation was used to procure and distribute food stuffs to 50 deaf families made of more than 350 people. One of the benefiting families is headed by BUANGA Muamba, a single mother of ten who had a hard time evacuating with such a big family. To be able to get to safety, she had to leave everything else behind and run with her kids, as soon as they returned, there was nothing left in their house.

“There are days when we don't have food at home, normally, our neighbours and friends save us from those kinds of situations but this time it was different, everyone was affected. I was really worried that my kids would end up on the street and there was nothing I could do to stop them. Thankfully, that has not been the case. CENYSED with the help of the donor gave us a hand up when we needed it the most. I was able to feed my children for enough time until life came back to normal and I was able to work and earn to take care them. On top of that, I was also able to share a few of what I had received from CENYSED with my neighbours who did not have anything at the time. It felt really good to finally give back and save a few people of those that have saved me and my children from going to bed hungry so many times.”



Buanga had an insurmountable responsibility of feeding her 10 children on her own in what was a very difficult period of time.

Teresa's Audiology Report

One of our trustees, Teresa Quail, is a Teacher of the Deaf and an Educational Audiologist. She is DeafReach's lead on Audiology and Deafblindness. In respect of the latter, she is helping with the planned Deafblind Units in Goma and Kayonza, and also co-ordinating the attendance of delegates from among our African partners at next year's Deafblind International World Conference in Nairobi.

Delivering audiology in sub-Saharan Africa is immensely challenging because of the lack of infrastructure. Audiometers need to be regularly calibrated, and batteries for hearing aids regularly accessible. On our visits to deaf schools in Rwanda, we found that one school had an active audiology service. This is St Gabriel's School in Butare which has its own trained audiologist, Brother Peter Bizoza. Teresa has visited and communicates with Brother Peter on a regular basis. One huge outcome has been the school's willingness to train personnel from other schools.

Teresa has written: "St Gabriel's school for the deaf in Butare, Rwanda, is soon to be united with their audiometer and other resources to support their audiology-in-education interventions. In February 2020, the audiometer had been taken to the UK to be calibrated as there are no calibration services in Rwanda or neighbouring countries. It was due to be returned when DeafReach Trustee, Chris Kubimana, was visiting his home country, Burundi in March 2020. However, the flight was cancelled as the world moved into a lockdown due to the coronavirus.



Brother Peter Claver Bizoza & Déo NTAKARUTIMANA
Audiologists at Centre des Jeunes Sourds Muets de Butare-Rwanda

Keep calm
and listen to the
Audiologist

Nevertheless, throughout the pandemic, Brother Peter and his colleague, Deo, have continued to deliver audiology services and training. They have also experienced an increasing number of requests from the local audiology service to access younger children and toddlers. DeafReach expresses its thanks to the Aud-M-Ed Trust for recently approving a grant application to fund resources to assist St Gabriel's with their childhood hearing screening programme. Aud-M-Ed Trust was started by doctors, audiologists and Teachers of the Deaf involved in audiology services in the UK. Their main aims in developing countries are to help improve services available to people with hearing impairment and to help improve the knowledge, training and facilities of those working in the hearing impairment services. In the coming month DeafReach hopes to dispatch the following items that will assist the testing of children with suspected and confirmed hearing loss and those who have dual sensory vision and hearing impairments in their school setting and in their outreach provision.

Handheld audiometric warbler (Audio-3)
Sound level meter
PA5 handheld audiometer
Chime bars (a musical instrument used in hearing testing)”

We are pleased to report that, again thanks to Aud-M-Ed, we have already purchased the above items. Chris took out the original audiometer two weeks ago, and Howard is due to take the remainder of the equipment with him when he leaves for Uganda and Burundi at the beginning of December.



St Gabriel's audiometer

Christmas 2021 Appeal

Hunger remains a huge problem in all the countries in which we are working because of the effects of coronavirus on livelihoods. In the case of Goma, there is the added difficulty of the farmers' fields covered in lava. Our main thrust this year will be to raise funds to feed deaf families in all four of the countries in which we work. We will also be seeking support for the repairs to the dormitory at Umutara and to the Baptist Church. The latter is not formally a part of DeafReach's appeal as our formal charitable purposes do not include the "advancement of religion". However, the two establishments are the largest in the village and are linked in many ways, not least because Dominique is the Minister at the church and the Chairman of the charity that runs the school. However, we are happy to act as banker for those individuals who wish to send money out to help repair the church. More details in the appeal itself, which we hope to send out shortly.

We hope that you remain safe and well in this lead up to Christmas and that you have a grand time when the festivities arrive.



November 2021

DeafReach

31 Sutton Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6DL, UK

T: +44 (0)1743 358998 M: +44 (0)7984 662165

E: info@deafreach.org W: www.deafreach.org

UK Charity No: 262962