



November 2023

Dear Friends,

It has been quite a considerable time since we sent out a Newsletter, but we were waiting for the moment when we were able to report on our next major capital project. This project is the construction and equipping of a new school for deaf and hearing children, Karurama, in Cibitoke Province, Burundi.

Firstly, it is a pleasure to report that our now not so new relationship with Signal is working out very well, with Mitch Payne, its Executive Officer, and I working alongside each other one day a week. Sadly, we have had to say goodbye to Howard, DeafReach's International Officer, and to Ally MacDonald, former International Programmes Director for Signal. They will both be greatly missed, not least by our partners in Africa.

Mitch and Ally undertook a first visit to Signal's programmes in Malawi and Uganda. And were kind enough to include a visit to Burundi on DeafReach's behalf. Mitch's report on the visit follows, as does an update on Karurama.

Otherwise it has been a relatively quiet year for us, given that our first major capital project, the Vocational Training Centre at Umutara Deaf School in Rwanda was completed some 2 years ago and the current projects with partners were much smaller in size and scope and therefore not requiring so much in the way of fundraising efforts.

As you will read the project to complete the construction of Karumara needed funds totalling more than £20,000 and we are indebted to our those of our trustees and supporters who between them covered the whole amount. I really cannot thank them enough. I would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to those members and supporters who every month send us donations to sponsor children's fees and to pay teachers' salaries in those schools where we work.

Rod Clark
Chairman

Visiting Burundi

During the summer our team visited Burundi to meet with local deaf organisations to explore opportunities to establish projects to support the local deaf community. Burundi is a beautiful country with welcoming people. However, it is has the lowest GDP per capita in the world, indicating that is the poorest country in the world.

We arrived at Bujumbura International Airport, where we were welcomed by representatives from Ephphatha School for the Deaf. We checked into La Tulipe, our hotel, and met with Maurice, the headmaster of Ephphatha, setting the stage for our visit to the school the following day.

Ephphatha Deaf School

As promised, Maurice collected us the next morning for a visit to Ephphatha Deaf School, conveniently located near our accommodation. The classrooms offered a window into the realm of deaf education, where we observed the dedicated interaction between teachers and students. The school exuded a sense of commitment and engagement, leaving a positive impression.

An assembly followed, where we received a warm welcome once again. Students sponsored by DeafReach received their annual results, and we expressed our gratitude for the hospitality. Ally and I were given sign names by the students. Post-assembly, we engaged in a constructive discussion with Maurice and teachers regarding the school's future needs, including their planned relocation to a larger site, accompanied by exciting opportunities and accompanying challenges.



Association Rafael de Burundi (ARB)

Our exploration led us to the Musigati Commune in Bubanza, guided by Andre and members of the ARB board. This picturesque commune, spanning two acres of hilly terrain with breathtaking views, was currently being used as a day care centre and had the potential to be repurposed into a small school. Two crucial meetings with ARB, one at their Bubanza office and another at our hotel, focused on the project's background, growth potential, and plans for a school accommodating up to 18 deaf children. It was great to spend time with Andre his team and learn more about the work they do and have planned.

Cibitoke School

A visit to Cibitoke provided valuable insights into a school building boasting 18 classrooms designed for the education of deaf children. Conversations with local government officials, teachers, and students showed the potential scale of the school being able to initially take in 200 students, with 140 of them being deaf. The biggest challenge for the school was financial, as there was a gap in capital funding which was preventing the school from opening.

Please see below for further information on the school and DeafReach's recent decision to support its completion.



Deaf Women Self-Development Association of Burundi (ADFSB)

Our schedule for the next day was filled with meetings at our hotel. We commenced with the Deaf Women Self-Development Association of Burundi (ADFSB), a group with remarkable potential and passion. This deaf-led group showed clear understanding of their members needs and unwavering commitment to the work they do.

Burundi National Association of the Deaf (BNAD)

In the afternoon, we met with the Burundi National Association of the Deaf (BNAD), where the enthusiastic chair shared their plans for expanding deafblind provision. This well-established organisation aimed to establish partnerships with international non-governmental organisations.

APEES Burundi

We met with a local parents' association dedicated to supporting deaf children. Their unwavering passion left us with a compelling project proposal to consider. The small project would teach parents sign language to help them to communicate with their children.

Our journey in Burundi introduced us to remarkable individuals and organisations committed to transforming the lives of the deaf community. While challenges were evident, the dedication, commitment, and growth potential within Burundi's deaf community were equally inspiring. As we departed Burundi, we carried not just the memories of the places we visited but also the dreams and aspirations of the local communities. It feels like our work there had only just begun, and we were eager to continue supporting these remarkable initiatives.

Mitch Payne



Karurama School, Burundi

Since DeafReach is a volunteer charity, we are only in a position to take on one major program or project at a time. With the completion of the Vocational Training Centre for Friends of the Handicap in Rwanda, we have been working with the Government of Cibitoke Province in Burundi on the construction and equipping of a new school for both deaf and hearing children, Karurama School. This represents a rare, perhaps unique, development between the government and the community.

The project was born following a meeting bringing together women at the provincial level under the patronage of Her Excellency the First Lady of Burundi where one of the participants, who was deaf, asked why people living with this disability are excluded from the development of the Burundian nation. This led to a decision by the group to build a deaf school and the implementation was entrusted to the provincial administration.

When the building is completed, it will have 18 classrooms able to house 450 students in 18 classes of 25 students. The unfinished site is presently used for teaching of non-formal deaf education which DeafReach is presently supporting via the National Deaf Women's Association.

The site available for this initiative is approximately 3 acres, with good space for residential accommodation and washing/toilet blocks, a large play area and an administrative building. Construction started some 3 years ago. DeafReach could not intervene during the early stages, but agreed with the Provincial Governor that it would finance the final stages and also assist with the furnishing and equipping of the school.

During the early period of our involvement, we have made 2 visits to the project, during the first of which we worked with all interested parties on a Business Plan for the development. Funds for the completion of the buildings have been generously made by DeafReach's trustees and supporters. The next challenge is to raise funds for furniture and equipment. It is planned that the formal opening of the school will take place in September 2024.

Signhealth Uganda

As we reported last year, the major Outreach Programme which SU was conducting in the refugee camps and local villages in the north of the country came to an end in 2022. This was funded by a UK charity, The True Colours Trust through Signal. We are delighted to report that they have renewed their support for a further three years, and DeafReach has undertaken to provide approximately 60% of SU's core costs for two years. It should be noted that, with the much closer relationship between DeafReach and Signal, DeafReach is now much more closely involved in Signal's work in both Uganda and Malawi.

Rwanda

In addition to the regular sponsorships of children from poor families at both Umutara and Niabyhu Deaf Schools and salary support for teachers at both institutions, we sponsored a conference with the aim of establishing a National Association of Schools for Children with Disabilities. Grants have also been made to St Gabriel's School, Butare for the purchase of audiological equipment.

Emergency grants.

We made a number of emergency grants during the past year. These included:

Rwanda: Teachers' salaries. The Government substantially increased salaries in state schools and the private special education schools we support lost a number of teachers as a result.

DRC: Food. The increased activity by militias in and around Goma saw the displacement of whole families in Rutshuru and the closure of CENYSED's school. We also continued to support the Chicken Farm in Goma and gave grants for school materials.

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