



A Young charity with Trustees with years of Experience!

'Our mission is to support schools and vocational training centres for disabled children and youth in sub-Saharan Africa'

At present, our particular interest is to support the education and vocational training facilities for deaf pupils in Eastern Rwanda, and also pre-school work in Kampala, Uganda. We are a small charity, and all of our Trustees are volunteers.



At present, our main partner in Rwanda is Umutara Deaf School in the Eastern Province.



Most of the children and staff at Umutara Deaf School

Umutara is a Residential school for 125 deaf pupils in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. It is the only facility for deaf children in the whole Eastern Region. Most of the pupils are from poor rural farming families as well as 15 pupils from different Refugee camps in the area, Congolese, Burundian and one boy from Tanzania. 'We are an International School', Dominique said to me!

The children learn in small classes at the school. The first, immediate need is for the children to learn Rwandan sign language so that they can develop a means of communication and begin to access education. They start in the Pre-school class (no matter what their age is), then progress to P1 and so on. If they pass the P6 exam, they can attend the local (hearing) Senior school, but there are no staff to offer support at the school, so it is difficult for them to succeed in that situation. The older children are offered vocational

courses in Knitting, Tailoring, Hairdressing and Construction, as well as basic Business management.

They have chickens, two cows and a goat farm, with 40 goats plus a varying number of kids which are sold when they are large enough for brochettes! Many thanks to Rotary for providing the funding for the farm. They also grow some of their own food on the land around the school.

The school organises sign language training for families, local communities and health workers in the District and works hard to promote the rights of disabled people in the local and national arena. A recent programme of education in sexual health issues for pupils, teachers and local health professionals has been very successful.



Nyabihu Demonstration Centre for the Deaf

This residential school for 130 deaf pupils is situated in the north West of Rwanda – not far from the gorillas! The weather here can be cooler and is definitely wetter! DeafReach has helped to fund the installation of 3 water tanks for the new school recently built here.

One of three water tanks delivered to Nyabihu just in time for installation before the big April rains!

We are also involved in providing professional expertise in audiology and SALT here as there is a small group of pupils who have been given hearing aids by a Polish Charity – and we want to make sure the pupils can get the best on-going support possible! There are quite a few challenges which we are working through with them.

There are also plans to support the further development of their enterprise outlets in order that the graduating vocational students have the opportunity learn the necessary skills to market their products.



Professional Development

In Rwanda, there is little opportunity for training and professional development in Special Needs education, and nothing that is dedicated specifically to deaf education. DeafReach is supporting a two week outreach programme whereby 7 professionals from the UK will visit to offer 'taylor made' training and discussion sessions to the staff and older students at both of these schools. The subjects for the sessions are agreed upon after much discussions with the school leaders. The last thing we want to do is to 'tell them how it should be done'! Our aim is to support them in their own development, in their own society. Only they can understand the relevant constraints and opportunities in Rwanda.



DeafReach is supporting the running of two classes for pre-school deaf pupils in Kampala.

The two schools, Ntinda and Mulago are residential schools for the Deaf in Uganda's capital city. The pre-school classes are run as day classes only, with the children attending for the morning school session. All children are given a breakfast and lunch. They learn sign language and social skills as well as engaging in other Nursery activities. However, these are limited through lack of resources. The aim is to prepare them for entering the main Primary school.



Children at the Pre-school classes in Kampala



New Initiative

Just across the border from Gisenyi in North West Rwanda is the city of Goma. Here, members of the Management team from the Deaf School in Goma are discussing with DeafReach representatives, the possibility of establishing a Deaf Blind Unit there. It is early days yet, but this represents an exciting new venture which will make a huge difference to a few very needy children.



We are also setting up a fact finding project in Rwanda, to locate deaf/blind children, centres which may be interested in starting a Unit for multisensory impaired pupils and links which could be made with neighbouring countries to share expertise and resources. Exciting times! There is no provision at all for deaf/blind pupils in Rwanda.



Be Part of the Difference!

We are a group of volunteers who are intent on improving the lot of deaf and deafblind children and young people in East Africa. There is much to be done, but it only takes a little time, effort and money to make a BIG difference.

Be part of the difference!

Visit our website for more information. www.deafreach.org

Other websites of interest. <https://umutaradeafschoo1.weebly.com/>

<https://nyabihucenterforthe deaf.weebly.com/>