January – June 2019

# Newsletter

Rukundo INTERNATIONAL

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## *It's All Thanks to YOU!*

The first half of 2019 has brought so many accomplishments, it's hard to fit them in one newsletter! As a donor, you are not just supporting our school, but you also facilitate the running of ALL of our life-changing programs by meeting the funding needs for staff, supplies, and the organizational structure necessary to sustainably transform lives through educational and economic opportunities.

**The main highlights for each of our core program areas from January-June, 2019 are inside.**

## *Inside This Issue*

**PG. 2**

109 students are receiving holistic care at our school, Rukundo Preparatory

**PG. 3**

137 girls graduated from our Girl's Empowerment Program

**PG. 4**

51 students are receiving scholarships and care through our Scholars Program

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRESS

Because of your generosity, all of our Ugandan staff are now receiving medical insurance for themselves and their families, and many are also provided with a housing allowance. We were able to host a staff retreat where our employees learned about working together, and had time to relax and rejuvenate.

In the U.S. we welcomed a new Board Chairperson, Laura Pettus; a new Treasurer, Jed Kreitman; and a new Controller, Valerie Watts. We are preparing for an audit so that we can begin to seek larger funding through grants & corporate sponsorships. We are also diligently working on a strategic plan to guide our next 3 years (2020-2023) of progress.

**We now employ 23 Ugandan staff members who support over 500 children and families directly, and countless indirect, beneficiaries.** It's truly because of you. We can never say THANK YOU enough.

## AMAANI GABATO

Our children's community program, Amaani Gabato (The Power of Kids), is another program blossoming thanks to your support. We now welcome well over 100 children to our school facilities each Sunday. Often, the attendance exceeds 150. 627 children showed up on Easter for a full meal, dancing, presentations, and our infamous Easter egg hunt. After the party, we received many compliments from the community members, thanking us for thinking about their children and organizing something most families cannot afford.

We purchased a TV and a DVD player, which is a special treat, since most TVs in this rural area are only in bars. We also hired an expert in the field to develop a new curriculum for us, and to train our staff to better engage the children, utilizing participatory learning and smaller age-based groups.

The Deputy RDC (Resident District Commissioner) reported that he has never seen any school in Kabale with standards like ours!

## RUKUNDO PREPARATORY SCHOOL (RPS)

At RPS, your generosity allowed us to complete our P1 (1st grade) and P2 (2nd grade) classrooms. We supplied and prepared the P1 classroom to welcome our 2018 nursery school graduates, and hired a new P1 teacher, Caroline. Our total enrollment now stands at 109 students! We are one of the only schools in the area to offer a diversified menu to meet the student's nutritional needs. As part of our holistic care model, we receive regular visits from a local nurse, and are so proud to report that we have ***zero*** malnourished students at our school.

The Deputy RDC (Resident District Commissioner) reported that he has never seen any school in Kabale with standards like ours, a compliment of the highest honor! We are also excited to report that we were able to purchase another small piece of land where the children will be able to have more room to play - especially soccer, their favorite sport!

## GIRL'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

This program continues to improve morals, skills, and economic prosperity for adolescent girls. 137 girls, from six schools, graduated from this program in April. The impacts are far-reaching. The schools report that girls have acquired life-skills like making healthy choices to stay in school (and avoid early pregnancy and marriage), how to positively communicate with the opposite sex, and other skills which will help them manage challenges they meet in their daily lives.

**The enrollment of girls has increased in schools, which means the problem with dropouts has been minimized.**

Through the entrepreneurial part of the curriculum, girls have learned how to make crafts and how to grow crops. They have sold these products, and purchased items, like basic school supplies, that rural families often struggle to provide for their children.

In May, we trained teachers to begin a new session, and added a 7th school, Kakore primary. We also hired an assistant to more regularly monitor this program.  For the 2019-20 session, we are working diligently to make sure the girls are expanding their gardens and other activities to their homes. We are also taking steps to engage their parents.

## WOMEN'S MUSHROOM COOPERATIVE

Our mushroom program got off to a rough start, but we are now starting to see positive results. Six of our senior members were able to attend an expo and workshop in the capital city of Kampala, thanks to a grant from the Women's Microfinance Initiative. Jackline, the Chairperson of the group, reported that she is so grateful for the experience and the great learning that took place. She says, "The lessons learnt were so enriching and the impact was great."

We hired mushroom-growing experts from this workshop to come to Kabale to monitor our project. They identified our problem areas, offered solutions, and monitored the planting of a new round of spawn. We are now waiting on positive results during the harvest! Please pray for this project, as the women are counting on this income to support their families, and we are relying on the harvest to continue to support our school nutrition program with nutrient-rich and delicious mushrooms!

## CLEAN WATER PROGRAM

We monitored and completed repairs on 3 of 4 water tanks that we installed at rural schools, benefitting over 2,500 students and staff.  All tanks are now in working order and providing the necessary, and much-needed, resource of clean water.

## BOYS SOCCER PROGRAM

We are rebuilding our boys' soccer team, and they made it to the quarter finals during the last tournament. The boys will continue to be trained and mentored for success on the field and in life.

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## SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Our Scholars program has grown to provide scholarships to 51 total students! 23 of those students attend RPS, while 28 attend outside institutions, ranging from elementary up to university level. These students are fully supported with school fees, medical care, and more. The students are visited 3 times per year at their schools to monitor their performance, and are also visited in their homes to assess their care. We regularly hold meetings with their caregivers to encourage their participation in each student's development.

During home visits, we advise on sanitation issues, so that the students can thrive both at home and at school. For example, when we initially started the program, we found that many families were not prioritizing the use of boiled water for drinking, but that has now changed after our counseling. The students in our program are flourishing, and some are being admitted to the best educational institutions in the country as a result!

All of our Scholars participate in bi-yearly community service projects during their school holidays. In January, they cleaned the two main markets in Kabale-town. The Scholars and community alike benefit from these activities. Another huge accomplishment is that we were able to add a part-time counselor to our staff. Since many of our students have suffered severe trauma at their young ages, this service has brought invaluable healing and progress.

Graduates from our Scholars program have the opportunity to be supported with micro-loans, to set up their successful futures after graduation. We currently have five students who are participating in our micro-loan program: two in tailoring, one with a snack cart, one with a pharmacy, and one with a hair salon. Their small businesses are monitored closely, and all but one has made their monthly payments in full, and on time.

**109 Students at Rukundo Preparatory School**

**137 Graduates from our Girl's Empowerment Program**

**23 Ugandan Employees**

**51 Scholars Supported**

## THANK YOU!

We are so thankful for your dedication to our cause. As you can see, these programs are making a **huge** difference towards transforming this rural community.

We hope that you will continue to support us with our goal to raise $30,000 during our annual holiday campaign, coming up later this year. We can only continue our life-changing programs with your support!

Thank you for partnering with us in this journey of rukundo (love).