2021 Third Quarter

Newsletter

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Schools Remain Closed, But Our Work Keeps Going

The teachers at RPS have now completed over 3,100 homeschooling visits since schools closed in March 2020. In addition, our teachers have also been working on their professional development, making the most of this time of "lockdown" to continue to improve their skills. Recently all of our teachers attended "The Stoplight Approach" training, which has the goal of giving teachers tools to create physically and emotionally safe environments for their children and students.

GEP Program

We can't wait for schools to reopen, so that we can launch our GEP program in three new schools within walking distance of RPS! By choosing schools local to our home base, we will be able to make even greater impacts, including routinely counseling girls who have experienced sexual violence, those who are HIV positive, etc.

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COVID-relief Efforts Continue for Our Students and the Community

COVID-related lockdowns continue in Uganda, including school and business closures and bans on transport. Our dedicated staff have continued to not only walk to work, some spending as much as four hours each day, but have also continued to walk door-to-door to continue to homeschool our students and make sure that holistic health is supported.

Rukundo International strives to promote and support holistic health for every student attending Rukundo Preparatory School (RPS). When schools are in session, RPS provides a balanced diet, in the form of two daily meals, for the students at school. Providing adequate meals is often far outside the reach for our families. As a way to continue to keep our students healthy, after 16 months of schools being closed, RI provided agricultural packages to every single student's household in July.

In total, over **11,600** seedlings were distributed!

Parents reported that the food relief came at a time when they needed it the most, after struggling to feed their children at home for such a long period of time. Each household received 10 kg of bean seeds, 0.5kgs of maize (corn) seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides.

In September, we continued these efforts by providing vegetable seedlings to both our students and members of our women's cooperative. Seedlings were grown and nurtured by RI staff on the grounds of RPS, and included eggplants, spinach, cauliflower, carrots, and cabbages. Each family received 110 seedlings.

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Peninnah

Peninnah is 70 years old, and has custody of her two grandchildren, Davis and Bridget, who both attend Rukundo Preparatory School. Peninnah tries her best to support them by relying on small-scale farming, but she struggles to provide enough income or food. Penninah was a beneficiary of our Covid-19 Agricultural relief packages, and is now assured of daily meals for the children.

"I am very much happy and appreciative that the vegetables will help me to get what to feed my grandchildren in full amounts since I was spending the little money I was earning from casual labour on buying food vegetables.

I am happy that my children are not malnourished because of the support I get from Rukundo International."

In addition to providing food-relief for the students at our school, RI also distributed relief items to an additional 218 of the most vulnerable households in the community surrounding our school. **These efforts will provide food and hygiene items for 1,103 of our neighbors for at least three months.** Families received beans, corn meal, salt, soap, and assorted fruits.

When performing the household surveys to decide which families were in most need, even our Ugandan staff were surprised at the poor living conditions that they found in the rural communities that we serve. They uncovered high incidences of poor sanitation, including **many households who were completely lacking toilet and handwashing facilities.** Others were in disrepair and unsafe to use. They also found that many families did not understand the importance of boiling their water, which can lead to many different illnesses. High incidences of alcoholism, various sickness, and untreated mental illness and handicaps were also observed. They discovered many elderly individuals who live alone with no land to farm, and with inadequate shelter. Many of the elderly were being looked after by their young, orphaned grandchildren, who are also vulnerable themselves and not equipped to safely prepare meals and walk long distances to fetch water.

This importance of the relief we have been able to provide goes far beyond the actual items - the care and concern is just as vital and helps us identify additional areas where education and support are needed.

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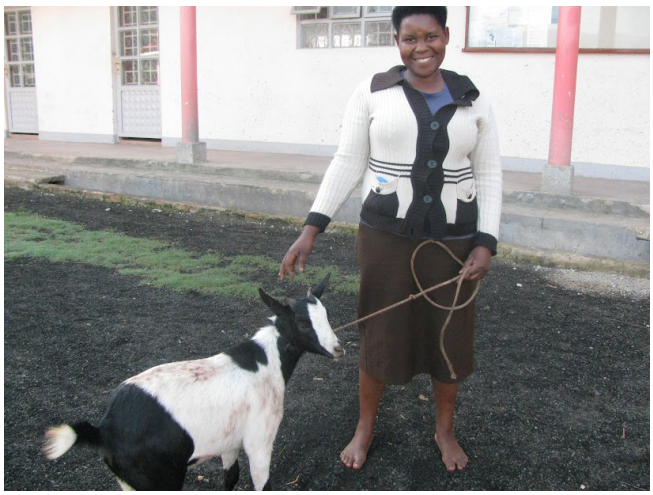
Our Goat Projects Continue to Thrive

Women in our goat co-op graduate to full autonomy from the program with ownership of their goats after their initial, donated goat bears seven kids. Women are required to gift two of the seven goat kids back to RI, to ensure sustainability of the project. The returned goats are now starting to roll in and are being kept at RPS, so that we can begin to build additional income-generating projects at our school.

In addition, three new goats were provided to students and families in our scholars program, so that our scholars can also have income-generating projects and constructive things to do during the long lockdown. Scholars who received goats include Samuel who is a University student, and Paula and Smile, both high school students. The students were so surprised and happy to receive the goats and they promised to look after them well.

The women in our co-op program also used their collective innovation to team up to create a savings group back in March. By saving as a group, the co-op can accumulate a larger amount of money more quickly by pooling their savings in a common fund which can then be used by the group or a member of the group for productive investment.



Each member contributes 11,000 UGX monthly ($3), for a total of 242,000 per month ($68). Two members are randomly selected by the group to receive the funds at the start of each cycle, plus 22,000 ($6) is deposited into the group savings account. So far the women's group has accumulated 1,742,000 UGX ($490) in savings and 12 out of the 22 women have benefited from the group funding, which is especially important during these challenging times!

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Our Scholars Continue to Excel

JOEL

Joel is 16 years old. He lost both of his parents to HIV at the age of 8. He is the middle child, with an older brother and younger sister. He is now under the care of his aging grandmother, who is unable to work to provide for all three children. Joel recently sat for his primary leaving examination (the exam you take to graduate from elementary school) and scored Division 1, the highest grade! Joel was so happy for the good results and he is grateful to his sponsor and RI for the support of his education. He wishes everyone good health and safety during this pandemic. He promises to work hard at high school once schools reopen.

SHELIA

Sheila is another successful scholar that we celebrate.

"I am very happy and very grateful for RI and its support towards my education. I attribute my success due to hard work both by my school and my personal hard work, but more importantly due to the support of my sponsors through RI that contributed a lot in terms of paying my school fees in time and providing the necessary academic essentials. I am also thankful for the staff here in Uganda that has been working hard, following my academic progress which gave me a lot of morale to also work hard. I have always dreamt of becoming a midwife and I am so happy that I am going to achieve my goal. I'm ready to work even harder so that I become an important person to help others. I would like to thank RI for loving me. It's because of RI and my sponsors that I am who I am today."

Many of the students we sponsor in Uganda haven't been able to access the educational materials provided by the government over the radio, due to many not having radios, phones or even electricity. Not having access to study materials during the lockdown can lead to students falling behind in their education. During the extended lockdown, RI staff have been hand-delivering materials to our scholars so they can keep up with their studies, and even food packages for those in need. Routine monitoring ensures that their holistic health, which includes their physical, social and emotional needs, are also met during these uncertain times.

We are so very proud of Joel, Sheilla, and all our Scholars! We have only seven Rising Stars remaining who need a partner. Visit **www.RukundoInternational.org/rising-stars** to learn more!

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www.shop.rukundointernational.org/collections/give-hugs

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