2020 First Quarter

Newsletter

Rukundo INTERNATIONAL

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The COVID-19 Situation in Uganda

While, to date, there are only 79 reported cases of COVID-19 in Uganda, we know that number will continue to climb. The Ugandan government has taken proactive measures to stop the spread, including closing schools and businesses, suspending travel, banning gatherings, establishing curfews, and halting public transportation. Our staff in Uganda have also taken proactive measures to protect the students in our care. Our workers are all working from home and we are staying in close contact via mobile phone regularly with our beneficiaries, where possible. We have delivered food packages to the most vulnerable and relocated our students to safe spaces, as necessary. In addition, all of our staff members were fully educated on COVID-19, and encouraged to be community liaisons by spreading only facts and not fear, and discouraging stigma.

The unfortunate reality is that developing countries often do not have the infrastructure in place to support individuals in a time of crisis. Most of the families in our program live on a modest salary of 5,000 shillings ($1.40) per day. Prices of food and other bare necessities have already begun to climb and we expect food insecurity to become a reality. There is only so much we can do as a small nonprofit, but we hope to be able to fully support our staff and beneficiaries until this threat subsides. If you are an individual who has been able to build a financial cushion, we hope that you consider sharing with others who haven't been as fortunate.

Charity Gala Postponement

Although our additional expenses due to COVID-19 are small by US-standards, our biggest concern is the postponement of our Seventh Annual Charity Gala and Silent Auction that was to take place on April 25th, 2020. That fundraiser is our largest fundraiser of the year, and normally brings in more than 10% of our yearly income. As such, our 1st quarter budget is stretched until we can recover those funds, hopefully in the fall.

Things may feel uncertain, but we retain hope through our faith and belief in God's provision, even in the darkest of times. We will recover, and we firmly believe a new way of caring for each other and sharing "rukundo" is on the horizon! Through good times and bad, we live by Rukundo Preparatory School's motto: *"Above All, Love One Another."*

Rukundo Primary School

February 3rd marked the first day of the new school year for our children at Rukundo Preparatory School! In line with our school mission *"To create world-changers through the power of high-quality education, love in action, and humble service,"* our prayer is to continue to serve our students in a holistic way, and that EVERY child that enters our doors feels valued, accepted, and loved. This year we added our second grade class, bringing our total number of students to 134 (59 boys and 75 girls). Expanding our school by one grade level per calendar year would never be possible without our donors. For you we are so thankful.

Construction Update

The first floor of our three-level primary building is almost completed! Thanks to a successful holiday giving campaign, we will soon have a dining room to hold all our students and our P3 classroom will be ready for the 2021 school year. In addition, our office in town will be relocated to our school grounds, which will save on rent, utilities, and security costs. Thank you to all of you who made this huge accomplishment possible!

Scholars Program: The Home that Rukundo (Love) Built

The Scholar's Community Service Project in January was to build a home for three of our scholars who were in need. Thanks to generous donors, we have now completed the roofing and are doing the smearing (adding the mud). The smearing must be completed in phases, and we hope to finish by putting in the windows and doors in early April. Read more on our blog: https://www.rukundointernational.org/community-service-day…/

"Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much."

HELEN KELLER

Rukundo INTERNATIONAL

About Our Scholars

The 58 students we support through scholarships never cease to amaze us! Joshua T and Mackline, our students who were graduating from primary (elementary) school to secondary (high) school, both earned D1, the highest grade possible on their exams! They both secured scholarships and are now happily attending secondary school.

Two of our most senior scholars, Gift and Angela (nursing students) have started a daily prayer time, specifically because they are concerned for the health and safety of their sponsors and volunteers in the U.S. They have asked us to join them each day at 3:00 PM (that's 8:00AM EST in the U.S.) to pray with them regarding the effects of COVID-19 on the world.
They have also asked us to share this word with you:
"When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, 14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:13-14

Scholar Phionah

One of the first things people notice about Phionah is her big, genuine smile. Phionah joined the Rukundo International (RI) Scholar's program in 2016 and has had her share of challenges. With a high school (secondary) education out of reach of the family's resources, Phionah would have been forced into the impoverished life of a rural wife and farmer. However, Phionah was able to beat the odds through our Scholars and Graduate Microloan Program. Read her story on our blog: https://www.rukundointernational.org/phionahs-microloan-success-story/

Our New Community Vocational Training Center, Supported by Macy's!

We are excited to report that we received a $5,000 grant from Macy's to establish a skills and vocational training program for teens! The program launched on December 1st, 2019, with 64 students registered in programs for craft-making and information technology. By expanding our youth program to impact teens, we hope to encourage vocational training and introduce entrepreneurial skills that create self-sustaining adults and an economically stable community.

In February, we successfully graduated the first 50 students from a two-month short course in computer applications, where they learned skills in Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, Publisher, and PowerPoint. There is now a buzz in the community about the great service we are providing through these training sessions. Huge thanks to Macy's for empowering youth around the globe!

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Girl's Empowerment Program

We have 203 girls benefitting from our program this year! In addition to learning how to stop the spread of HIV and STDs, the girls also learn basic financial practices. The girls are given a small microloan to start a small student-led microenterprise together at their school. In addition, the girls are encouraged to take the skills they've learned at school to start their own small projects at home. Two girls have made enough funds from their projects at home to purchase pigs! This is a huge accomplishment and we are so proud of them.

Goats

Our goat program is thriving! Introduced in October, 2019 to impact the 22 women in our agricultural cooperative, the program provided each woman with a female goat. As of the end of February, seven goats have produced 11 kids, nine other goats are expected to deliver soon, and four goats have just been introduced to a mate. The women attend regular training sessions, where they are advised on proper goat management from specialists.

We are looking forward to the long-term impacts that this project will bring to these families, and eventually the whole community as the offspring are passed on to other women. We send our heartfelt thanks to the donors who kick-started this program.

Make a Difference

- Donate to our Giving Tuesday fundraiser
- We need a sponsor for Abiasa
- Provide the full or partial salary for our security guard
- Purchase a meaningful gift for Mother's Day or any day
  - Handmade Ugandan Jewelry
  - Buy a Brick
  - Purchase Rukudo Wine (the amazing Peach Chardonnay is ready to pick up in Gaithersburg, MD)
- Become a volunteer! Email us at info@rukundo.com (All skill sets welcome!)
- Provide an item for our Fall Silent Auction, or volunteer to help us solicit donations
- Create a fundraiser for Runkundo International
- Share our mission with friends & family
- Shop Amazon Smile

Despite these uncertain times, we still celebrate all of the things we accomplished in the first quarter of 2020...and it's all thanks to YOU! Our fervent prayer is that you stay safe and healthy. We are in this together!

Soccer Program Update

Join us in congratulating our RI soccer teams! Each of our 49 players gave their very best, and two of our three teams made it to semi-finals in the Kabale Municipal Youth Tournament in January. Our team of 15 year olds went all the way to finals! In addition, one of our players, Victor, made a total of nine goals, making him the best scorer in the entire tournament!

Read more on our blog:
https://www.rukundointernational.org/boys-soccer-youth-tournament/