2020 Fourth Quarter

Newsletter

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December Update

It's almost the end of the year! So much has happened in 2020, and we want to reflect on the progress Rukundo International (RI) accomplished with your support. As we all know, the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic impacted lives and communities all over the world, including Kabale, Uganda, the home to RI's programs. The pandemic created even more challenges for our community and propelled us into action to solve them with creative solutions.

With your ongoing support, we've continued to make a difference in the lives of children, women, and families throughout 2020:

- You helped us raise over $15,000 from our Virtual Charity Gala and Silent Auction to expand Rukundo Preparatory School.
- Rukundo Preparatory School staff adapted to teaching our students through at-home learning and conducted 1,161 home visits.
- Our new bean project supplied over 1,000 community members with a sustainable solution to combat food scarcity.
- You supported more than 200 girls through our Girls Empowerment Program to learn technical skills they'll use to start a small business and build their livelihoods.
- The Women's Goat Program more than doubled in size, and expanded it to our Scholars program.
- We launched our Rising Stars program – a way for donors to partner directly with one of our students through responsible sponsorship.

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Share our Rising Stars Program with family and friends

This month, in the spirit of giving, we launched our **Rising Stars** program – a way for you to partner directly with one of our Rukundo Preparatory School students and make a difference in their lives. We recognize the benefits sponsorship can offer students, including an increased likelihood of graduating from secondary school and college, and starting a career. Rukundo developed a responsible sponsorship program that enables partners to form authentic, personal connections with our students, while simultaneously promoting education and advocacy. For only $1 a day, you can guarantee a child's education. Our goal is to match 30 students to 30 donors during the month of December and so far, we've matched five students.

Will you help us spread the word? Share our Rising Stars program with your friends and family to help us raise donations and match all 30 students.

The Bean Project

Your donations provided over 1,000 community members with a long-term solution to food shortages.

In October, RI established a partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture to implement an Agricultural Cluster Development Project and launched our Bean Project. Through this project, we supplied bean seeds to communities in Kabale and Rubanda Districts in an effort to combat hunger and food scarcity.

Beans are an essential source of protein and micronutrients and, after only three months, they're ready for harvest. We distributed the seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides to RI's 203 Girl's Empowerment Program participants, as well as 56 of our Scholars. Additionally, we taught the families proper harvesting knowledge to ensure they can continue to maintain the crops in the future.

Before this project's implementation, the pandemic caused many families to wonder how they would receive their next meal. With your help, we eased their worries by providing over 1,000 community members with a long-term solution to combat food scarcity. This life-saving initiative provides a sustainable way for our community to feed themselves and their families, and they're extremely grateful.

Women's Co-op

The goat program has more than doubled its impact!

The 22 goats we received from your donations in October 2019 have birthed 34 new goats, more than doubling the impact of the project! Goats support our 22 women participants to earn supplemental income and maintain manure for their gardens. Our mushroom project is also ongoing and we're providing mushrooms on a small scale to our staff during the country lockdown.

Margret, a 54 year old widow in our community, lives with her four children and is the head of her family's household. In 2018, Margret was invited to join our Women's mushroom co-op, which she excitedly accepted, "I was happy and thankful for having the chance to attain a skill in my life." In October 2019, Rukundo distributed goats to all 22 women in the mushroom program, including Margret. From the first day she received her goat, Margret began harvesting manure to use in her garden. Although the garden had never previously yielded crops, after six months of using her new fertile soil, Margret began seeing results. She hopes to harvest beans from her garden this year for the very first time, "I am hoping to harvest 50 kgs of beans from this garden and it is not by my own making but by the manure from the goat I received from Rukundo international."

Rukundo Preparatory School

Our staff is working hard to support our students through at-home-learning

Although Uganda has been on lockdown since March 20, RPS' teachers and staff remain committed to the success of our school and students. Our teachers swiftly adapted from teaching in classrooms to conducting at-home learning. They delivered four different workbooks for each student and have made regular home tutoring visits to ensure our students stayed on track with their learning, all at no additional cost. While other local private schools have been forced to close due to economic hardships, RPS has persisted because of our donors, and our students and their families are eternally grateful.

In addition to supporting our students' growth, our teachers are also investing in their own professional development. This year, we launched computer training for our teachers to enhance their digital and technological skills. RPS teachers successfully completed the one-month training course and have learned new ways to manage RPS data and develop meaningful analytical reports.

Gordon, our third-grade teacher, had this to say: "I started working with Rukundo in January 2018 as a teacher with little to no knowledge of computers. Since completing Rukundo's training course, I'm now well-versed in programs like Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, and Publisher. I believe the knowledge I learned will enable me to improve the standards of our school, including providing students with typed and printed tests, exams, and homework, as well as maintaining data for my class and our Sunday kid's community program, Amaani G'abato."

Lastly, we're making improvements to the school for when our students do return, including in our gardens. This year, our staff planted beans, corn, apples, avocados, and other fruits and vegetable seedlings in the school compound. When our students safely return to school, hopefully in February, we'll have new, nutritious foods for them to enjoy.

With your support, RPS will continue to serve as more than a school for our students. Our goal is to expand the school, with the addition of a fourth-grade classroom, to ensure our third-grade students have a place to continue their education. So far, we've made progress in reaching our $45,000 fundraising goal and have raised $35,000! We're proud of the progress we've made, despite this year's challenges.

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Girl's Empowerment Program

Our 200+ participants show off their agricultural and weaving skills through their final projects

When the pandemic emerged, we creatively modified our GEP to incorporate at-home-learning. It was now even more important to protect vulnerable young girls while they were home. Since the country's lockdown, teenage pregnancies increased dramatically, with over 2,600 new reported cases since March. Furthermore, 20% of the reported cases were from girls 17 years old or younger. These numbers are startling. They enforce why it's important to advocate for girls in struggling communities. With your help, we were able to engage our Girls Empowerment Program participants in meaningful work and protect them from increased harm.

Over the last several months, we distributed two workbooks to our 203 participants where they learned about entrepreneurial and financial skills, as well as reproductive health, HIV and STD prevention, and unplanned pregnancy. More recently, the girls have been hard at work on their entrepreneurial projects -- their chance to shine and show off their skills and talents. They received the necessary materials to complete an agricultural or hand-crafted project of their choice. Since then, they've made woven baskets, cared for livestock, and grown seedlings, and have learned how to sell and market their products – skills that they'll carry into their futures to build and support their livelihoods.

Scholar's Program

Our Scholars program is expanding, including a goat program of its own.

Our Scholars program has increased in size this year – we enrolled four new Scholars, for a total of 57 Scholars. Although the country is in lockdown, our Scholars remained committed to their studies by completing the school workbooks they received from RI. Our teachers also ensured our Scholars had the necessary educational support and visited each of them on regular home visits over the last several months. Additionally, to continue to support our Scholar microloan recipients in learning practical life skills, our staff hosted a training to teach them business management and record keeping skills.

Beyond education, we ensured our Scholars and their families received the necessary resources to weather the pandemic. Your donations helped provide meals and essential supplies to over 90 families throughout the lockdown and supported more than 60 families through our seedling project.

You also made it possible for us to support our Scholars' families with long-term sustainable solutions. With the success of the Women's Goat Program, we've now launched a similar program with our Scholars and their families. One of our Scholars, Joam, recently lost both of his parents and is now the sole caretaker for himself and his younger siblings. Joram was the first to receive a goat as part of this new program. As the initiative expands, we'll make it possible for each Scholar to receive a goat in hopes that, eventually, the families will be able to pay their children's school fees. Lastly, three of our Scholars were living in extremely poor housing conditions and, with your support, RI was able to build a new home for them and their family, as part of our Scholar's community service requirement.

Virtual Charity Gala: We raised $15,000

We hosted our Annual Charity Gala in October all virtually! Our team got creative to deliver a show you wouldn't forget, including live music, dancing, testimonials, and more. Our goal was to raise $15,000 through our Silent Auction to help secure funds for the construction of our fourth-grade classroom at Rukundo Preparatory School. We were blown away by our community's support and had over 150 viewers tune into our live Facebook watch party. Thanks to our generous community members, you helped us meet our goal, as well as secure five new recurring monthly donors! Did you miss our live-watch party? Check it out **here** and share it with your family and friends.

Shoe Collection

Our community donated 8,450 shoes--300 more pairs than last year!

This fall, we hosted our annual Shoe Collection. Shoes create micro-enterprises in developing countries and allow for impoverished families to earn a living. This year, you helped us collect 8,450 shoes--300 more pairs than last year! These shoes helped raise nearly $3,300 to support Rukundo International's programs and initiatives.

Thank you

As we close out 2020 and look ahead to 2021, we're excited about the plans we have for our future. Thank you for playing a role in our initiatives this year. We hope you'll continue with us on our journey in helping to make a difference for those that need it most.

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Amazon will donate 0.5% of every purchase to Rukundo International at NO cost to you!

Follow these simple instructions to turn on AmazonSmile in your phone app and start generating donations:

1. Open the Amazon Shopping app on your device.
2. Go into the main menu of the Amazon Shopping app and tap into "Settings".
3. Tap "AmazonSmile" and follow the on-screen instructions to complete the process.

Make a Difference

- Purchase Rukundo Wine (ready for contactless pickup in Gaithersburg, MD)
- **Become a volunteer!** Email us at **info@rukundo.com** (All skill sets welcome!)
- Watch and share our Fall Silent Auction
- **Create a fundraiser for Rukundo International**
- Share our mission with friends & family

No matter where you are around the globe, we understand things are uncertain and challenging right now, and that many worthy organizations need support. We appreciate you choosing to stand with us to allow us to continue to educate and empower our kids. Webale Munonga (Thank You).