2021 Second Quarter

Newsletter

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A Note From Our Founder, Andrea Sedlock

Friends,

If this last year and a half has taught us anything, it's that the world is constantly changing. This holds true more than ever with the unexpected twists and turns that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought. We were so excited to welcome our students back to the classroom in June — after more than a year of homeschooling. However, with COVID-19 cases on the rise, the Ugandan government reinforced its lockdown, this time with tightened restrictions. Now, even homeschooling is not allowed.

These changes remind me of why we do what we do. Our students — our kids — need us…now, more than they've ever needed us before. While some of us are experiencing hopes of "normalcy", Uganda is still experiencing the worst stages of the pandemic. Families are being forced deeper into poverty. Individuals are without access to basic resources needed to survive. This time reinforces why it's critical that we support these vulnerable communities.

I hope this progress report on our year's accomplishments thus far demonstrates how much good we can do together. Let's continue on this journey and continue to change lives for the better.

Andrea Sedlock
President & Founder

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COVID-19 Update

We were excitedly anticipating the reopening of our school in June 2021 to welcome our students back to the classroom for the first time in over a year. However, with COVID-19 cases surging, Uganda's President extended the country's lockdown with tightened restrictions, meaning we were no longer welcoming our students back or allowed to offer homeschooling services.

This extended lockdown has created even more hardships for children and families who are already severely impacted by poverty and a lack of essential human resources, including food, healthcare, clean water, and hygiene supplies.

Despite the difficulties of working in such an environment, and through the innovation and dedication of our staff, RI was still able to accomplish many of our ambitions for this year so far. We remain committed to our goal of empowering our students and their families with opportunities to reach their full potential, especially during this time of uncertainty.

"I thank the organization for continuing paying workers during this lockdown and for the good plans they have for the community".

Reverend Canon Phenehansi Akampira, Grandfather of Isaac, a Business Scholar

Key Accomplishments From January-June 2021

892 kg of beans harvested from our bean project to combat food insecurity

729 home visits to RPS students conducted

243 homeschooling packages distributed

203 students graduated from our Girls' Empowerment Program (1,577 total graduates)

80% of 2020 GEP participants continued their small businesses >1 year post graduation

23 goats born in our Women's Co-op (81 total goats)

2 new floors' masonry work completed at RPS

1 community service project for RPS students, staff, and scholars completed

ZERO TEEN-PREGNANCIES AMONG OUR GEP PARTICIPANTS REPORTED

Rukundo Preparatory School

Despite setbacks from the pandemic, the expansion of Rukundo Preparatory School (RPS) is still on track! While our students are home, we've used this time to complete the heavy construction work of our school. During this quarter, we completed the brickwork for the first and second levels of the school building, which will provide space for five classrooms, a computer lab, and a library! We still have some work to complete the finishings of each of these rooms, but we're so excited that our vision of expanding RPS is coming to life. If you want to help make our dream a reality, consider donating on our **website**.

Not only did we make strides in our expansion of RPS, but we continued to offer homeschooling services for our students, making us the only school in the district continuing to offer at-home learning. Prior to the June 6 reinstated lockdown, we distributed **243 home-schooling packages** and conducted **729 home-learning** visits to make sure none of our students were left behind.

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Scholar's Program

When Uganda reinforced the country-wide lockdown, our scholars were so disappointed that they'd have to delay their education, friendships, and lives again. Despite these setbacks, our scholars accomplished the following goals so far this year:

- Two women scholars graduated from college
  (one with a Bachelor's degree in Nursing and a second with a certificate in midwifery)
- Two scholars admitted into vocational programs
  (one in motorcycle mechanics and second in fashion design)
- 173 home visits to scholars' homes
- 12 scholars received monthly food packages during pandemic
- 13 scholars and RPS students were provided special healthcare coverage during covid

Meet Our Recent Graduate: Merab

It's hard to express what a college education can mean to a girl in rural Uganda. Our scholar, Merab, shares how this milestone has changed her life for the better. We hope her own words will help you to understand why your support for our programs means so much!

Greetings full of appreciation and smiles. I am so glad, oh not just glad but so happy, finally I am graduating. Too bad it's online. There are no celebrations because of Covid 19, oh I hate it. Am heartbroken but nevertheless, it can't stop me from becoming a graduate. Celebrations will wait until everything becomes okay again. Finally a bachelor of clinical medicine and community health graduate omg it doesn't seem real and Rukundo International made my dream come true. You people, you are lifesavers. Every time I close my eyes and look back, I start to imagine, what would have happened to me if I didn't meet you, Ms. Andrea, and the whole Rukundo team? Ohh no I don't want to think about it, it will ruin my moods.

I'm failing to get words to express how thankful I am to you, should I cry or laugh? Obviously I've to laugh. If I cry, trust me they will be tears of joy. I am so proud to have you in my life. May you keep healthy forever. Look at me now, I am a big girl now, no longer hopeless, just ready to face everything that comes my way heads on. I promise I won't let you down. I am now volunteering in Kisiizi hospital, trying to get familiar with the medical field. Honestly it's a bit challenging, realizing that sometimes, someone's life depends on me, it's quite scary but I love what I do. Here everything is still messed up, because of Covid 19 but vaccination has already begun with health workers first, so we hope for the best soon. Lastly, I thank you so much. Again and again from the bottom of my heart. Extend my appreciation to everyone out there, you are the best I know. I can't thank you enough for loving and supporting me, a mere hopeless girl from Kabale, Uganda. May you keep healthy forever plus your family. Stay safe.

Love and thanks,
Merab

Girl's Empowerment Program

In Uganda, schools require families to purchase their children's school supplies and uniforms, and it's not uncommon for a family to prioritize a boy's education over a girls. With this fact, young girls are more likely to drop out of school because they have no way to make up the costs. **With young girls at home, they're even more at risk for early pregnancy, marriage, domestic violence, or contracting HIV.**

Our Girl's Empowerment Program (GEP) aspires to change this. Through GEP — now available at seven public schools in Uganda — we help young girls learn their self worth, develop safe habits, avoid peer pressure, and gain experiences and skills to achieve financial independence. The program is delivered by certified coaches and uses an activity-based curriculum to start conversations that promote healthy lifestyles among the youth.

To continue offering this transformative program during the pandemic, we developed new ways to execute GEP:

- Providing girls with a series of workbooks to learn from their homes (406 workbooks distributed)
- Supplying materials that would help participants start small entrepreneurial projects
- Monitoring their projects and workbook progress by conducting home visits (614 visits)
- Providing them with bean seeds to plant at their schools as a group

Among all of our partner-schools, all 203 participants have started entrepreneurship projects from home:

- Craft-making: making bags and tablecloths, crocheting, and/or weaving baskets and mats
- Crop-growing: how to properly grow and care for crops to get high quality yields
- Animal-rearing: properly keeping rabbits, hens, pigs and ducks

Many parents commend GEP for keeping their girls safe during the lockdown period, where other young girls succumbed to early pregnancy, marriage, or sexual violence. Through this life-changing program, we're proud to empower these bright young girls with the tools they need to reach their full potential.

Women's Agricultural Cooperative

We launched our Women's Goat Project in October 2019 with 22 goats. **Today, this initiative has almost quadrupled its impact.** As of June 30, the original 22 goats have had a combined total of 59 kids – bringing the total goats to 81! As this program continues to grow and expand, we will partner closely with our families to ensure that the goats are well looked after, including offering veterinary services and wellness check ups every quarter. We're so proud of this program – and the fact that it's completely self-sustaining!

Our Women's Mushroom program also continues to reach new milestones. So far this year, our participants have planted 25 new mushroom gardens – that's over 110 lbs of mushrooms! Your donations also enabled us to afford two new dryers, allowing us to expand our market for mushrooms nationally.

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Our **accomplishments** so far this year continue to demonstrate the **resiliency and commitment** of our community, our team, and our supporters. In some of our most challenging moments, we're proud to share how much progress we're able to achieve because of you.

We hope you'll continue to stand with us and the people of Kabale, Uganda as we see them through the darkest parts of the pandemic, the rest of 2021, and beyond.

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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 (ThankYou).