



RSVP February 2009 Newsletter

News summary:

- School Meals in 2009: Every day, we are catering for up to 187 pupils from P4, P5 and P6 classes or 10, 11 and 12 year olds, respectively.
- Curriculum books: So far, only 26 books have been paid for. The language of education has undergone further changes!
- Bursary: Providing 3 more bursaries in 2009.
- New programmes under consideration: Community lending and Health Insurance.
- Loss of 2 of our teachers: 1 through death at the age of 24.
- Prayer points: Patience, wisdom in decision making and funds for 2010 projects.

1) School Meals

The first meal for this first term was served on 4th February 2009. This is because although schools resumed a month earlier, the mayhem associated with the education changes meant we had no choice but to wait.

Children have a meal only when they are on the afternoon shift. They take turns such that a given child gets a meal every second day. There is a conflict of interest already disclosed to Trustees in that my older brother's son gets a meal at school as well. He is in P5.

2) Curriculum books

There are 4 books on the market which are consistent with the New Curriculum and New language of Education. Those are Integrated Science, Primary Mathematics, Primary English and Primary Social Studies.

Two different companies got the licence to print them and there are suggestions the government has already paid for those book in a 1:2 or 1:4 book to pupil ratio.

No book has so far reached our school, and there is news that these books are being sold to schools. With the first school term almost over (6 weeks to go), our dilemma is do we buy these books or do we wait? Unfortunately, waiting has meant children are going to school and not learning anything!

This has been compounded with the news of further changes in the language of education: As from last Wednesday, children aged 7, 8 and 9 will learn all their subjects in Kinyarwanda. Not English as previously directed!

We are praying and constantly exploring how to best support our children during these difficult times.

3) Bursary

Thanks to very generous responses, 3 more children, including Solange featured on our video, will get their secondary school fees covered. This will bring the total of sponsored children to 6.

You can read our sponsorship selection criteria [HERE](#). We are hoping to match children to sponsors by April 2009. The aim was really to do this by 5 January 2009. However, although the children sat the National Test at the end of October 2008, the government didn't release the results until 20 January 2009. Also, unfortunately, pupils were not matched to the boarding schools until 29 January 2009. And then expected to report to their boarding schools by 2 February 2009!!!!

So, we really did not have time to implement our bursary selection. Instead, we paid the 1st term fees for all 13 pupils and mattresses for 11 pupils so that they can all meet this tight deadline.

4) New Programmes under consideration

You will hear about this in the coming months. A community lending scheme will provide either interest free or minimal interest loans to parents of the children enrolled on our projects so that they can start small-medium income generating activities. This would help families help themselves whereas a health insurance scheme extendable to the entire family of the children supported by RSVP will mean all family members will get consultations, generic drugs, hospital treatment for malaria, immunizations, and other basic services covered.

5) Loss of two teachers

We have lost a 24 year old motivated and enthusiastic young man later in February. Cause of death thought to be multi-organ failure due to herbal medicine used against what he thought was "poison" attacks. He was a Mathematics teacher and deputy to the head teacher. I had a privilege of [meeting him in September 2007](#). He was a Christian and was attending the Church hosting the primary school.

The poisonous attack, locally known as Uburozi, is very common. People seem to believe you could get TB from it, and the herbs used induce emesis (or vomiting) and diarrhoea. The two are thought to get rid of the poison. These herbs range from very concentrated tea to other herbs known only to limited number of people believed to cure such conditions!

The other teacher who took English classes has emigrated to South Africa.

So how could you pray for us?

a) Patience: Setbacks are multiple and unpredictable. Dealing with this requires patience that God alone can provide. Frustration and anger have become our cup of tea.

b) Wisdom in decision making: For example, when we eventually build purposeful and lasting classrooms, should we go for a private school status instead?

c) Funds: As you can see from our monthly accounts, we have enough funds for 2009 projects, if of course our regular donors continue to keep their generous commitments. However, it's clear we need more fundraising for 2010 projects, which are expected to require about £20,000. Please pray also that the GBP £ recovers: a few months ago we were sending £1 for 1,000 Rwandan Francs (RWF), but it has lately gone down as low as 800s RWF!

Thanks again for your support and encouragement.