



The Kisoro Trust

Newsletter December 2021

Dear Supporter,

As 2021 draws to a close, we reflect on what has been a difficult year for schools in Uganda, just as in the UK. Having reopened following the initial Covid-19 lockdown, term 3 was to begin in August 2021 and end in December as usual. However the Ugandan President's response to the ongoing pandemic was to put the whole nation back into lockdown, so that pupils were not able to return to school. It was anticipated that schools would reopen during the term, but as the situation has not improved this has not been the case, and the term has ended with no pupils having returned to their classrooms.

The closure of schools has impacted negatively on the Deaf children in many ways, including:

- Interruption to their education and the learning of important life skills
- Reduced access to regular nutritious meals
- Limited opportunities to communicate and interact with other sign language users. In particular, parents of children who have recently joined the school will not yet have had much training in sign language, so have to resort to gestures to communicate with their children.

Kisoro District Association of the Deaf (KDAD) which oversees the Deaf unit within Kisoro Demonstration School has reported wider economic and social issues experienced by the local community as a result of Covid-19:

- Agriculture is a key economic activity in Kisoro whereby those with gardens can grow food for home consumption and for sale. Those who sold food in local markets have lost business as a result of markets being closed to avoid large gatherings of people.
- Those without gardens are often employed as casual labourers and a number of Deaf members of KDAD earned a living in this way; this has been badly affected by the closure of markets.
- Lack of tourism has significantly affected those who deal in arts and crafts, as their products were typically bought by tourists.
- Reduction in income has reduced development projects. This has had a knock-on effect on those who would normally work as masons and porters on construction sites.
- Many parents have seen their sources of income reduce and have found it difficult to afford food and basic necessities for their families.

The Kisoro Trust has sought to support the families of the Deaf children, and those who work with them, over the last few difficult months.

As regular payments to Kisoro were stopped during the first lockdown, reserves were built up enabling us to make one-off payment to KDAD in the summer. This £2000 grant provided new beds, mattresses, bedding and mosquito nets as well as a payment to each member of support staff, thereby retaining them on the payroll so that they would be able to return to work as soon as the schools reopened, and helping them to feed their families in the interim. Regular payments to Kisoro were also resumed and this has allowed KDAD to provide food relief to the families of the Deaf children, continued part payments to support staff, and ongoing utilities payments to ensure proper maintenance of school facilities.

Schools in Uganda are set to reopen on 3rd January 2022. We hope and pray that this will be the case, but nothing is guaranteed in these uncertain times, particularly in view of the global spread of the Omicron variant. Whatever happens, we will continue to support the Deaf children of Kisoro, their families and local community.

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To make a donation to support the work of the Kisoro Trust, please go to
www.kisoro.org. Thank you!