

## Challenging Times

As we move into 2008 and a new academic year in Uganda, it is both an exciting and a challenging time for the school for deaf children in Kisoro.

Amazingly, the first cohort of pupils, who began their education at the beginning of 2001, have now completed their full seven years of primary schooling, thanks to the generosity of all our supporters during this time. These pupils sat their Primary Leaving Examination, and it is hoped that some may now be able to go on to secondary school. Two out of the seven primary leavers have each been offered a four-year scholarship by an individual donor, and the school is pursuing its contacts overseas in the hope of securing support for the remaining five pupils to continue their education.

The Kisoro School for Deaf Children has always taken the physical well-being of its pupils as seriously as their educational needs, and last term an eye specialist from Ruharo Hospital in Mbarara, the central town in the region, came to assess the deaf pupils. One or two pupils who had eye infections were provided with appropriate medication at the local Kisoro hospital, and dietary advice was given to help improve the visual health of the pupils. However, four of the deaf children were discovered to be developing symptoms of retinitis pigmentosa, a genetic condition which cannot be treated, and which can lead to total blindness.



Children in the refugee camp help their mothers prepare beans for cooking

There is now an urgent need to support the parents of these children in coping with this additional disability, as well as an urgent need to introduce the children to Braille. The Ugandan government has been asked to supply the necessary equipment as well as a specially trained teacher for these children.

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing the school at the moment is the impact of natural disasters – severe flooding in many areas of Uganda which have destroyed crops and caused food to become scarce - and of the unrest in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Kisoro is already hosting many refugees from Congo, and providing safe water and sanitation is a major problem, with the result that people are at an increased risk of catching water-borne diseases such as dysentery, malaria and cholera. As the strife in DRC continues, more refugees continue to pour across the border; there are already around 4,000 refugees in a camp only 4 kilometres from Kisoro town.



More refugees pose for a photograph

It is hard to determine the impact that the refugee situation will have upon the school, although its effects are already being felt in terms of a rapid increase in the cost of food and other essential commodities in the area. The challenge for the Kisoro Trust is to continue to provide the level of financial support needed by the school in this tough situation.

## Fundraising News

*Two of our longest-standing supporters tell the story of their involvement with the Kisoro Trust:*

### “From a Tiny Acorn ...”

We don't know what Uganda's native tree is, but here it is the oak, which develops from a very tiny acorn into a spreading, magnificent tree with shade and shelter as habitats for many creatures. It is a common expression – “from a tiny acorn a big oak tree grows” and that is how our relationship grew with the Kisoro Trust.

We are Thelma and Joyce, a couple of friends, one Deaf, one hearing, who first heard of Kisoro through Rosie Addis, Chair of the Kisoro Trust. We became interested and then later, got involved.

The two of us originally met in 1999 as Primary School teachers, though neither of us teaches in primary schools now. One activity we both love is signed singing, and since meeting we have raised money for different charities using this medium. We then decided to adopt the Kisoro Trust, and from this point our involvement began to grow, and is still growing!

Thelma first led her group of teachers to raise funds through signed songs. She later began teaching conversational sign language, and then signed songs, to pupils and staff in Joyce's school, Larkhall Academy. It has been a great encouragement to the different groups of pupils to know of some of the projects that have been supported through their efforts; and important for them to realise, especially at Christmas time, when many are wondering what they will receive, just what they can give to help others in situations of need that they can barely comprehend.

And what are the new branches that are sprouting from this young tree?

Together we have taught signed songs to various Girls' Brigade companies throughout Scotland, told them about Kisoro, and several have given donations to the project. We have also taken an evening church service or a Women's Guild meeting and our



expenses go to Kisoro. Many others catch the vision and so a new opportunity to spread the word begins. Another recent new shoot has been local churches, urged by our enthusiasm, also giving donations – and so the branches continue to grow.

Who knows what would happen if **you** became involved with Kisoro? Neither of us expected to be as involved as we are, but the implications just grow and grow and we meet many new, interesting people on the way. What simple activity might **you** do to plant a seed and grow a tree?

Thelma Petty (Deaf) and Joyce Larson (hearing)

*And here is one small way in which one small person has made a big difference for Kisoro:*

## Birthday bonanza

Our star fundraiser of 2007 has to be 6 year old Lindsey Gilchrist. At her birthday party, instead of presents, Lindsey asked her friends to send cheques to the Kisoro Trust. Lindsey's thoughtfulness resulted in the fantastic sum of over £125 being raised for Kisoro. Well done, Lindsey!

## To Make a Donation

I would like to make a donation to the Kisoro Trust. I enclose a cheque for £.....

Please send me a standing order form.

Name: .....

Address: .....

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Tel: .....

Email: .....

If you are a UK taxpayer, you can increase the value of your gift by nearly a third, at no extra cost to yourself, by completing the Gift Aid Declaration below:

Please treat as Gift Aid Donations all donations made by me to the Kisoro Trust from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2001. I understand that I must pay sufficient tax each year to cover the amount to be reclaimed.

Signed:.....