

News from Kisoro

From its small beginnings in February 2001, the Kisoro School for Deaf Children now comprises 47 pupils who study in classes primary 1 to primary 3. Supporting these children are three teachers, two house parents and three day workers in the boarding section. In addition, as we reported in our last newsletter, Voluntary



Service Overseas have placed a development worker/deaf education specialist at the unit, who is assisting with development activities.

The children continue to do well in their academic studies, and this term they have had the opportunity to participate in some additional activities which have been of great benefit. The first of these was an **Educational Visit** to the Uganda School for the Deaf in Kampala.



Twelve pupils and 5 adults took part in the tour, which aimed to allow the children from Kisoro to interact with their counterparts at another specialised school; provide them with a model of fluent and standardised Uganda Sign Language, and introduce them to other deaf adults as positive role models. The teachers from Kisoro benefitted by sharing skills and experience as well as having the opportunity to study a particularly efficient system of administering a special school. The four-day visit included a visit to the Uganda National Association for the Deaf, a service at Emmanuel Church for the Deaf, classroom activities, sports, games and crafts.



In December the deaf pupils participated in a **Life Skills Workshop** also over four days, to educate youngsters about the spread of AIDS. Topics included how to prevent transmission of the virus, encouraging healthy lifestyles, and to show how best to care for and support HIV/AIDS victims.

A series of **Home Visits** has been organised recently, to enable staff to get to know parents and guardians better, to improve the flow of information between home and school, and to encourage consistency between the home and school environments. It is hoped that the visits will also generate ideas for future programmes which might help parents and guardians to meet the need of their deaf children at home.



Sign Language - a basic guide

Some of you are involved in the field of deafness and have extensive knowledge of communication systems and sign language, but for those of you for whom this is a new area, the following may help to provide a simple introduction.

One of the first questions I get asked is whether sign language is the same all over the world. In fact there are numerous different national sign languages, with each country having developed its own vocabulary and grammar. There is such a thing as International Sign, which is used at international conferences and when deaf people from different countries meet, but often it becomes a matter of using a lot of gesture, facial expression and throwing in the odd bit of American, International . . . whatever comes to hand!

Many of the children in Kisoro School would, if they were in the west, be able to hear speech using hearing aids, but rely totally on Ugandan Sign Language (USL) to communicate.

USL is a relatively new sign language and as well as coining words and phrases for new technologies and ideas, it is still working on consistent ways of expressing some of the basics. Staff at Kisoro School maintain links with the Kampala Deaf School, which also includes the East African Centre for sign language research. In this way linguistic developments can even reach this rural corner of Uganda.

The Kisoro Ceilidh II



The **Kisoro Ceilidh II** with Sandy Brechin and The Sensational Jimmy Shandrix Experience was a great success with nearly 150 people turning up for a great night of dancing in the Thomas Morton Hall, Leith. It raised over £860 and many new people were introduced to the school for the first time. Many thanks to all our volunteers on the night and to Proven & Co. for sponsoring the evening.

Thank You

Thank you once again to all our friends and supporters who are helping to change the lives of deaf children in Kisoro. Special thanks this time must go to the congregation of St Paul's & St George's Church, Edinburgh. During their weekend away at Crieff in January they held a collection for Kisoro, raising over £1000.

More Good News

A British Couple serving with the Church of England have just returned from the Diocese of Muhabura, which includes Kisoro. They contacted us to report how impressed they were with the way in which the school at Kisoro is operating. Although the political situation in Uganda at present is not good, and many other government-run services are have ceased to operate, the school is thriving and has become a model of good practice which others are hoping to emulate. Thank you again to everyone who is helping to make this happen.

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:

Other ways to help

Have you ever thought of holding an event (coffee morning, sponsored event, . . .) in aid of Kisoro? If you'd like to do something like this on behalf of the school, we'd be happy to supply leaflets and posters to help you. Just contact us at the address below, giving us plenty of notice of your plans. We look forward to hearing from you!