

RGT

Reg. Charity No: 1074656

Rwanda Group Trust

Newsletter

www.rwandagrouptrust.org.uk

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Recession

Since the last edition of this Newsletter in autumn 2008, we have been badly affected by the economic downturn. Our shop in Syke St., Preston has suffered a fall in takings of about 25% and there has been a marked decrease in general activity i.e. fewer people in the shop, fewer donations in both cash and kind, and fewer phone calls offering us larger items to be collected. The only sign of any improvement in the situation ('The green shoots of recovery' possibly) is the inexplicable increase in the price paid to us for 'rags' i.e. old clothes, shoes, handbags, sheets, blankets etc., which are in too poor a state to be sold. The price we receive is now 22p per kilo instead of 10p per kilo. We can't explain this, but we can accept it – and we do, gladly! We are trying hard to encourage people to give us their old clothes, but even without any increase in 'rags' received, our 'take' on this will be over £3000 in 2009.

The effect of the downturn on the shop is bad enough, but in Rwanda it is far worse. Whereas last year the cost of each of our regular three-monthly payments to our RGT groups in Rwanda was £10,000, now it is £14,000. Because of this we have had to put new projects on hold, and we may have problems in meeting our existing commitments. These regular payments are distributed by our four groups in Rwanda to the poorest people in their areas and are used mainly to pay school fees, provide a midday meal at school, repair someone's home, or to pay for medical care and the like. This is basic stuff, and without these payments, it is the poor who will suffer. The sad fact is that those poor people played not the slightest role in bringing about the downturn, but it is they who will have to suffer most. 'Twas ever thus!

In fact, we have accepted two projects since our last Newsletter, of which you will find an account elsewhere in this edition, and a third, which at first we had to reject has, through the kindness of a benefactor, now been fully financed. It is proposed to set up a small farm, on rented land for the rearing of pigs, cows and goats, together with feed for them and other saleable produce. It will be run by Mme Petronille Uwizeye, who has had a previous success in this area, and the profits will go to help child-heads of families, and other families with problems. This project has been fully funded (£6,400) by Kitchen Table Charities Trust, a Charity supported by John Humphreys (of Radio 4 and Mastermind), and it goes without saying that both the Rwanda Group Trust and Petronille and the poor people of Gikongoro are very grateful for this substantial help. More about this in due course



How we spend your money

Last year, 2008, the Rwanda Group Trust sent approximately £98,000 to Rwanda. This is a considerable sum, and we have to make sure that it gets there and is used for the right purposes. We have established four RGT Groups in Rwanda consisting of lay people, sisters and priests (no one of higher rank than parish priest) and all Rwandans, all of whom we know personally and trust. They have all signed our 'founding document' whereby they seek out the poorest people in their regions, and help them in four specific areas, HEALTH, EDUCATION, SHELTER and FOOD. They hold regular meetings, decide on whom to help, spend the money, and then report back to us. Here are extracts from two such reports. The photo (above) shows five houses built by the Cyangu group for five poor families in Mibirizi parish and the other is taken from the report of the Gikongoro group, showing the sums spent on stays in hospital for ten handicapped people. Food is included because you have to have food brought in by families or friends when you are hospitalised. (When these reports were sent, the £ sterling was worth about 1000 Rwandan francs; it's much less now.)

In order not to appear patronising, or, worse, look like a bank or financial institution, we stress that these payments are made as between friends and equals, and are only an attempt to right a wrong; we are doing justice, not charity, but a suggestion that they had no need to thank us merely appalled them!

Please remember to 'Gift Aid' your donations to RGT – Don't let the Tax-man keep it!

La Charite



This is a small group of families, led by Jean de Dieu Kamanayo, which each pay £2 per month into a central fund. From this each family can borrow if they meet with some unexpected expense (illness, accident etc.) We contribute £50 to the fund every three months. This group acts as a true Christian base community, and does good works for any of the local community such as repairing roofs and paying medical fees. This fits in exactly with the RGT policy of targeting the poorest individuals and families.

The photo above shows a second layer of thatch being applied to the roof of the house of Leonidas, a blind man. Opposite are Francine and her three children. They have had their medical expenses paid for 2009.



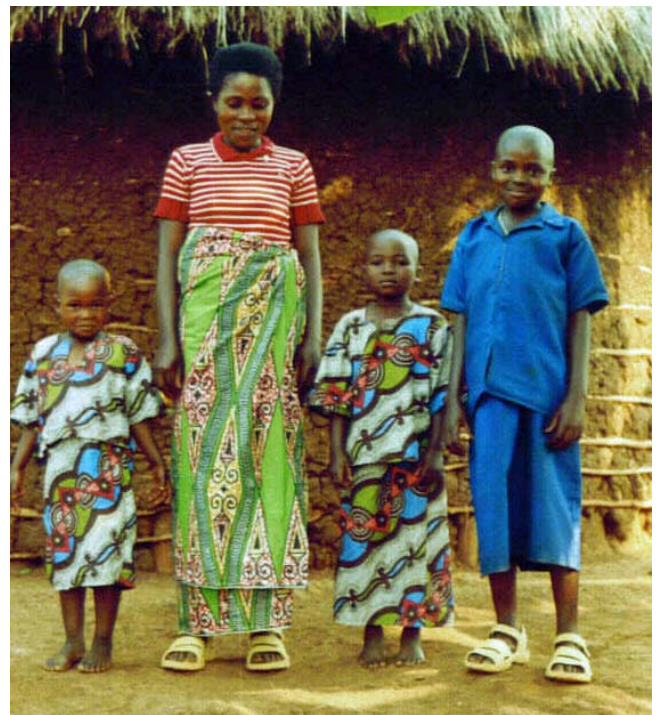
New Projects

(Accepted before the recession)

Nkanka parish: A project to buy twenty-four sewing machines. With our help, the parish priest, Fr. Felicien, set up a sewing and tailoring workshop two or three years ago. Just recently, twenty-four people (and they are all girls!), have completed the course and received their Diplomas. Each girl will now be loaned a sewing machine and, in cooperatives of six, will set up in business in Kamembe. There they will make and sell clothes and school uniforms. They will be paid a wage and thereby have some security and will re-invest any profits in the business, which should be self-sustaining. The cost of this project is \$5,500.

Mibirizi parish. An on-going project to pay for subsidised school meals for students of the Secondary School in 2009. Cost \$6,700

Gikongoro. Mme Petronille Uwizeye will set up a small farm to rear cattle, pigs, goats etc and grow foodstuffs and animal fodder. The profits will be used to support child-heads of families and other families with problems. Cost £6,400, paid entirely by the 'Kitchen Table Charities Trust' – to whom we, and Petronille, are very grateful



Two faithful companions in misfortune

This item was sent to us by Fr. Fabien who is President of the Rwanda Group Trust in Nyundo, NW Rwanda

Lazarus Ruvamwabo (right) is 86 years old. His granddaughter, Marie, is 6. She is his guardian angel. While waiting to start primary school at the age of 7, she is always at his side. Lazarus can no longer see clearly. Movement is painful for him and he can't hear very well. Marie guesses his needs and wishes with kindness and patience. In the afternoon, Marie's brother, who is in his second year at primary school, comes to help her. During the day, when she is alone and can't help her grandfather, she runs to her neighbours' houses to ask for help. On the photo you can see her getting ready to spread out a mat for the old man to go to sleep on in the sun. It's still morning but when the sun begins to strike harder, she will gently make him understand that it would be better to go inside.

The little house has just been rebuilt, thanks to the financial help of the Rwanda Group Trust. The walls have been re-plastered, the woodwork repaired and new roof tiles put in place. The local Christian-based community supports Lazarus and gives him food from time to time. His two grandchildren know how to prepare meals; they are everything to him. On the other photo, you can see him talking to his grandson. He is his adviser. The other children of the neighbourhood bring him wood for the fire from time to time.



Cases like this are numerous. Some of them because of age, others because of illness. Our RGT has helped some of them and we will continue to do so thanks to you. Please allow us to thank you again.



Introduction to Jean de Dieu Iyamuremye's article

Jean de Dieu Iyamuremye is well known to RGT in Kigali. He and his little sister, Justine, were orphaned as a result of the Genocide in 1994. We built a small house for them in Kigali. He is now studying Civil Engineering at the National University in Kigali, and Justine has a small business there.

"After 1994, the period of the Genocide, the last time I saw my parents I was hopeless and I didn't care for anything. I grew up in an orphanage; I was 10 years old. I was in fourth form primary but after I had done my secondary school studies in mathematics, I wasn't lucky enough to find a bursary to continue in any university or institute.

One whole week in 2003 I was thinking about my life and I could see no future for myself and my sister, Justine. Then one Saturday, in church, an idea came into my head: You will live!

When I left the church I went to the orphanage to greet the priest but a worker was cleaning out his office and threw the useless papers to me. I picked up one paper aimlessly. I read it and found three different addresses of persons who had helped us.

See page 4 to find out how YOU can help the Rwanda Group Trust

I had 1,500 Rwandan francs, almost 3 dollars.

The day following I wrote two letters. One for J.W. Bamber, another for a priest but I am still waiting for his answer! By chance Mr. Bamber answered. I sent another letter to tell him my hard situation. I'm telling you, I give many thanks to RGT(UK) for thanks to them I'm now in the fourth year Civil Engineering in National University of Rwanda. Next year I will be in fifth, my last year to become an engineer.

Every year RGT(UK) has sent me \$1,000 almost 540,000-560,000 FRW for fees and 150,000 FRW for food and lodging, the rest for materials. This year the school fees are 970,000 FRW instead of 300,000 FRW in Civil Engineering and RGT(UK) have given me \$1,200.

I hope everything will go OK; for this moment I study and I do my best. According to my wish to have a good life. I don't forget the poor, many people who suffer, and many children who don't study not only because they don't have the knowledge but they lack the luck.... That makes me think about the chances we have and this is a burden to me. I have to do something in this world for others but how, when...?

My sister, Justine, does not have the chance to study because of many problems including the fact that she was traumatized in 1994. She was very young, only six years old and she was with our mummy when our mummy was killed. She saw it all.

I was very happy to hear from you in December when you decided to support her. I did not think there was anyone to do that. She received \$300 from you that she uses to sell fruit, cabbages, carrots... this is a small business to help her and her child who is in nursery school; next year she will begin primary school. But for the moment they are OK because of this small business. They have soaps, something for eating... I hope little by little everything will be alright. Justine thanks you ever so much."



Our Shop

We have a Charity shop at 3, Syke St. Preston (opposite the Avenham multi-storey Car Park). We are always in need of people to help in the shop, morning or afternoon, any day of the week except Sunday. If you could help at any time, you would be most welcome. Or if you could be put onto the reserve list to help during holidays or illness, you would be equally welcome.

We also need goods to sell, anything from jewellery to furniture, but it needs to look good and be useful; and that includes electrical items, which are all carefully checked for safety and utility. In general, what we can't sell are hard plastic items, including toys, most glassware, records and audio cassettes, and most kitchenware unless nearly new. Good, clean books and clothes are always welcome. Anything antique or valuable we always have professionally valued or sold at auction.

We would like to thank sincerely all our helpers, cleaners, sorters and donors but especially our CUSTOMERS without whom there would be nothing for the poor in Rwanda.



A modern house built mainly in wood with a sheet metal roof.

Many Rwandans build their own houses but the metal roofing is very expensive.

How can I help?

Give a donation by a one-off amount or by a monthly or annual gift. Are you willing to Gift Aid your donation? All you need to do is to make sure that we have your name and address and we can recover the Income Tax you have already paid on your donation, assuming you are a UK tax payer. This is currently about 28p. in the pound. This means a gift of £20 becomes £25.64 and a gift of £100 becomes £128 – at no extra cost to you.

Please think about it. Why let the Taxman keep it?

Could you work in the shop weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or as a stand-by in case of an emergency or covering for illness or holidays?

Please contact RGT, c/o Mr. Joe Bamber, 48, Kennington Rd, Fulwood, Preston, PR2 8BT, Tel: 01772 700102 giving your name address and telephone number. Thank you.

Have you visited the RGT website? Go to www.rwandagrouptrust.org.uk