

## Green Shoots ???

In our last Newsletter, I wrote that we had been badly affected by the economic downturn, not so much in our shop takings, which had remained pretty stable, but in the fall in the value of the £ Sterling, which had added, at a stroke, £16,000 p.a. to the cost of our annual support for our four groups in Rwanda – without them receiving an extra penny. Indeed, because of their country's high inflation, they can now buy far less with the money we send them. In fact it is the Rwandans, and especially the poorest Rwandans, who are the most badly affected by this crisis. And as yet 'green shoots' are hard to find.

Perhaps the example of one man and his family will best illustrate the current situation in Rwanda. His name is Jean de Dieu Kamanayo and we have known him for many years. He is married to Belancille and they have seven children. They have a small mud-walled house in the parish of Nkanka, near Cyangugu in southern Rwanda, and in two respects they are perhaps better off than most: he has a job as a primary school teacher in one of the schools in his parish, from which he probably receives the equivalent of about £40 per month: and his house, which is way out in the country, stands in a small patch of land which he owns and on which he can grow bananas and vegetables and keep a couple of pigs. He considers himself to be quite fortunate, and so long as his family suffers no major accident or illness, he can afford to pay his way – school fees (approx £7 per term per child (primary), £30 (secondary)), uniforms, books, food, fuel, transport etc. But if he or any of his family were to fall ill, that would be a disaster.

Knowing this, he and some neighbours set up a small Credit Union a few years ago, into which each family paid £1 per month and from it could get credit for emergencies. They would have to pay this back with interest over time. The RGT also contributed at first £50 every three months and later £100 to this fund (not much, so as not to swamp their efforts). Now, Jean de Dieu has just informed us that the families can no longer afford even £1 per month because of the crisis and this at a time when the group were beginning to repair the walls and roofs of homes of widows and poor people who weren't members of the union. This is how the poorest, the grass roots, are affected!

So much for the 'green shoots' in Rwanda!

(Joe Bamber)

## ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI HANDICAPPED CENTRE

(Sr. Philomene has sent us this account of the problems and their solutions.)



The problem with handicapped children is that their very existence causes both family and social difficulties; for example, disagreements between the parents of the handicapped, which can often lead to divorce; inability to make friends or to find employment through lack of training and education, leading to on-street begging by handicapped children. Furthermore, such children are often abandoned or rejected, excluded from groups, and not much loved. That is why we have taken the initiative to rehabilitate them, train them and to see that they are cared for and reintegrated into society. THE ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI HANDICAPPED CENTRE attempts to do all this. It is in the capital, Kigali, to avoid the need for long journeys and accommodation and the associated costs.

The whole Centre has been financed by three groups; the re-education building by Missio Austria; the sewing workshop by Francis and Heidi, Austrian friends; and the equipment for both buildings (chairs, tables, sewing machines) by the Rwanda Group Trust (UK).

Right now we have on the register 117 children (up to the age of 25); among them are blind children, deaf-mutes, mentally retarded children and those with physical disabilities. Most of these can go to primary or secondary schools but there is an older group which has received little education and it is primarily for these that the workshop for sewing and tailoring has been set up.

To all those who have helped us in this project we give our most sincere thanks. We would like to do more, for example, kitchens for meals and accommodation but even with so much outside help, we still have a debt of €13,196. This is mainly because of a decrease in the foreign exchange rate and price increases here.

## Report of 'La Charite'

(by Jean de Dieu Kamanayo,  
President. Please see Editorial)



Hello. Here at last is our report. As I explained in my last message, it is late, so please excuse me. Please accept my thanks for your contributions. All these people you help are very grateful for them. They pray for you and hope they will continue.

Here, money is becoming a rare thing. So, to support our activities, we have just decided at our meeting of July 2009, to replace our contributions of money with gifts of provisions instead. We will do this twice a year, after the harvests, throughout 2010.

Our two cows, which we bought, as capital, when times were better, are still here. But we plan to sell one of them at the end of this year, to increase our power of helping.

(Jean de Dieu Kamanayo)

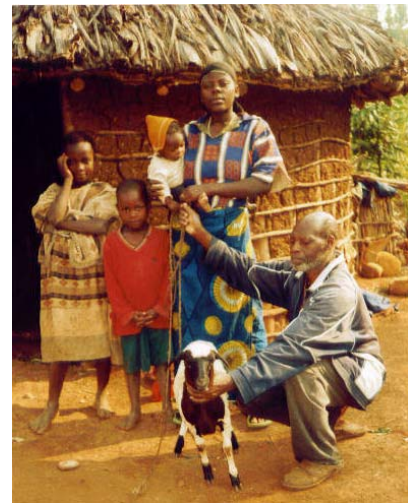
The financial statement then shows that in the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of 2009, 'La Charite' members had contributed 8,100 Rwandan Francs, had loan repayments of 12,300 Rw Fr. interest of 2,180 Rw. Fr. and contributions from RGT(UK) of 83,625 Rw. Fr. making a grand total of 106,205 Rw. Fr. which is about £106.00.

With that sum the group had bought and distributed 25kg. of potatoes, 25kg. of beans, 5 litres of vegetable oil, 2 she-goats, 5 washing soaps, £23 worth of scholastic materials – exercise books, maths sets, pencils etc. and building materials (corrugated iron sheets, timber, nails etc) worth about £62.

Jean de Dieu finishes his report with the observation that they had had to dip into their reserves but had ended up with a balance of about £24.00

The photos show (left) the distribution of school exercise books to the pupils of Ntura Primary School. These children are all orphans.

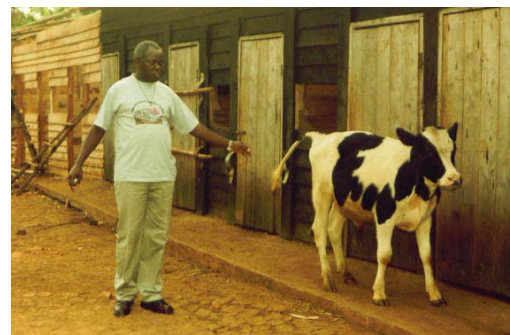
(Below) Jean de Dieu is giving a sheep to Vestina and her family. The sheep were given by a 'La Charite' member, Vincent.



## All is well at Mwezi

Photos are witnesses which do not deceive and here (below) you see Fr. Eugene Dusabirema rejoicing at the four calves produced by his four cows.

The project began last year with the aim of helping families consisting only of children, and in particular of obtaining for them a supply of milk so as to improve their diet. I am very grateful to the RGT in the UK which has understood my plan and given me the funds to get started. By now we are able to satisfy the needs of ten families of children, and every two days we have the means of finding five litres of milk for each family. The cows have produced four calves and they are now into the sixth month of their next pregnancy. In three months we should have another four calves; the project is very successful and beneficial. I thank, once again, all those who have contributed to the success of this project.



## Nyundo

This is a small town in the north west of Rwanda, not far from the Virunga volcano range where the mountain gorilla still survives, and close to the frontier with Congo and the town of Goma, well known for its refugee camps. There is an RGT group at Nyundo consisting of five members, with Fr. Fabien Rwakareke as its President. His recent report shows that the last money we sent them (\$4,000 in August 2009) was divided equally between the five members who then each sought out about a dozen students in local schools who needed help with school fees, uniform, books etc. In Rwanda, if students do not pay their fees they have to leave. Where else could these 60+ students have gone, had there been no RGT in Nyundo?

Fr. Fabien also sent us an account (below) of some recent developments since the apparitions of Our Lady at Kibeho in southern Rwanda.

## Abahire Ba Nyina Wa Jambo

(The Blessed of the Mother of the Word)

Kibeho is the place where the sanctuary of the Virgin Mary stands in Rwanda. Our Lady appeared to three young people of the school at Kibeho. She called them to conversion, prayer and penance. It was ten years before the Genocide, which was to be responsible for the deaths of a million people. She foretold this catastrophe but no one paid any attention.

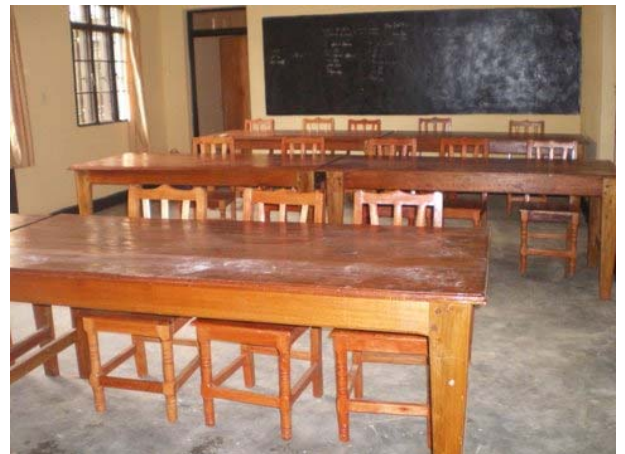
The Virgin Mary asked that the young people would become better so as to be for her 'beautiful flowers'. A group of them who had gathered there took her invitation seriously and they got together and a congregation was founded. The former Vicar General of the Diocese of Nyundo, Monsignor Louis Gasore, supported them and the work prospered. There are now thirteen communities in three dioceses and they are about to open the 14<sup>th</sup> at Kibeho in a fourth diocese. There are already seventy-five who have made vows and nine more, six girls and three boys, who will make their first vows on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009. They form one big family of two branches – one male and one female. It is the female branch which will soon go to Kibeho to welcome and serve the pilgrims who come there. They are called 'Blessed' because they seek to live and to witness to the Beatitudes in imitation of the Virgin Mary at Nazareth.

May the Mother of the Word of God obtain for us all brotherhood among people and joy in mutual service for the greater glory of God?

(Fr. Fabien)



This photo (above) shows Beatrice (second from the left) and her mother (extreme right). Beatrice has just been discharged from hospital in Kigali after a successful fistula operation. That's why she is happy and smiling. Before the operation she was doubly incontinent, and probably shunned by friends and society. The condition, very distressing to the individual, is caused by problems in childbirth and the lack of medical help. Sr. Philomene (second right) is President of our RGT group in Kigali and it was she who master-minded the process of finding Beatrice, getting funding, and organising food washing clothes etc. whilst Beatrice was in hospital. In fact, the entire cost (£500-£600) was borne by a benefactor in this country. There are many more women like Beatrice in Rwanda.



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

## Thanks and Appeal

We are most grateful for money received as a result of families requesting donations to RGT rather than flowers on the occasion of a death, anniversary or birthday. Many thanks. We would also be most grateful if people would remember us in their wills. For these purposes, our name is Rwanda Group Trust, and our Registered Charity No. is 1074656

## Malnutrition and Poverty

Problems for Rwandan children under 5 years old.  
By Mme Petronille Uwizeye, President. RGT Gikongoro.

Rwanda is a small country in Central Africa bordered by Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is the most densely populated country in Africa with a population of more than nine million people in an area not much bigger than Wales. The population is likely to reach thirteen million by 2020. Children under five years old make up 17% of the population.



The majority of the Rwandan people live in the rural areas and are, for the most part, engaged in subsistence farming. There is a shortage of land and a declining agricultural productivity. The average size of a family's piece of land is little more than two-thirds of a hectare.

Consequently, child malnutrition is a huge problem of public health in Rwanda and it's getting worse. Acute malnutrition, at 9% of the child population, and chronic malnutrition, at 45%, are serious problems.

In the area of Gikongoro in southern Rwanda, the problems are much the same, but even children who show no signs of malnutrition, do show signs of poverty.

They have no easy access to such basic provisions as clothes, food, health care and even decent living conditions.

So, in this area, when the RGT sets out to help vulnerable groups, poor families with malnourished children are prioritised, and they receive food, clothes etc. We aim to try to improve the living conditions of these families, especially the children. In their name we say 'Thank you' because your support, through the RGT(Gikongoro), has brought a smile to the lips of these children.

With the help of 'Kitchen Table Charities Trust' run by John Humphrys of Radio 4 and Mastermind, Petronille has recently embarked on a project to establish a small farm near Gikongoro which will provide milk, vegetables and other food for impoverished families in her area.



## 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 our charity shop on Syke St., Preston, 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](http://www.rwandagrouptrust.org.uk)