

Special overseas membership – annual article

Louis Ngabo, founder of Nyabihu School for the Deaf, describes the impact of the pandemic on families supported by the school

The first Covid-19 case in Rwanda was confirmed on March 14th. A week later all schools across the country were ordered to close as a measure to curb the spread of the virus. Despite school closures, Nyabihu School for the Deaf has been able to continue helping children remotely by sending school work (exercises) and having them back for marking as a way of keeping students in good learning shape as well as monitoring their progress.

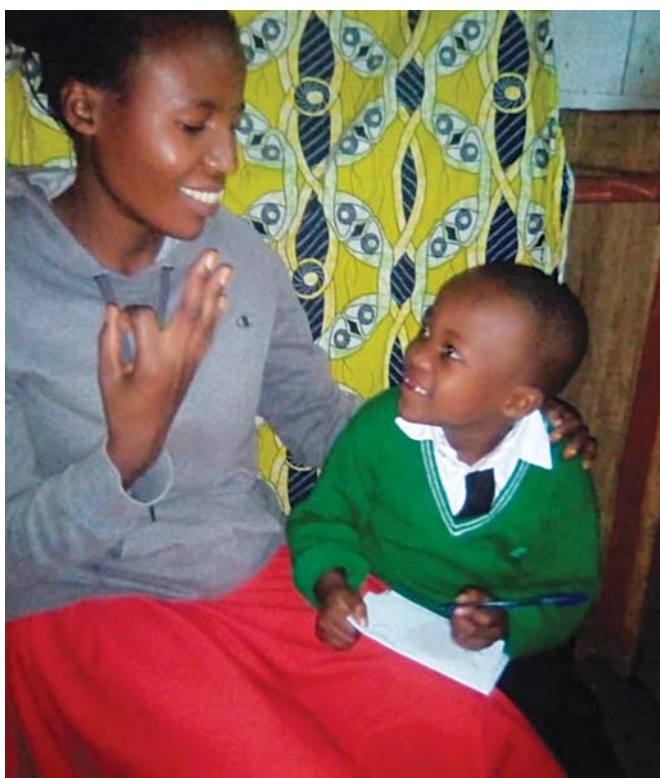
Shema Kunda King Jayden's story is one example of the impact of the personalised interventions implemented at Nyabihu School for the Deaf. He is a 6-year-old Primary One child, who lives in Musanze town (20 kms from the school). He is new at Nyabihu School for the Deaf as he was enrolled in the 2020 school year. He first attended the school with no reading and writing skills at all; his signing was not at standard level. Despite attending the school for only 10 weeks (before Covid-19 forced schools to close down), King's communication has improved and stands at a satisfactory level. Thanks to the sign language training that King's mother also underwent in February, she is able to assist King while doing his school work. It has also been observed that King has improved his numbering and drawing skills thanks to the school work that he has regularly done with his mother's support.

King's mother has been impressed by the knowledge and skills that her child has received from Nyabihu School for the Deaf. She has also been astonished by her boy's capacity to learn so quickly. "I always thought that King's

learning capacity was low or even null due to his disability status, but to be honest King is by far the brightest of all my children at his age." She also added that "It is very encouraging to see how far disabled children can get with the right support." I thank the initiative and everyone who contributes towards this cause. I also urge my peer parents to continue supporting our children in any way that we can, to ensure that our children are able to access all of their human rights so as to reach their full potential in order to fulfill their dreams.

The school has also assisted some of its beneficiaries in mitigating Covid-19's negative consequences, by providing them with food items as well as face masks as a way of ensuring that they keep safe and well during the fight against the virus. So far, we have reached 19 families consisting of 115 beneficiaries. These families were the worst hit of our beneficiaries and one of the families is Basekayubusa Laurence.

Laurence's story is an example of the impact of our outreach support. Laurence is the mother of our Primary 5 student named Hakorimana Patrick. Laurence is a single mother who looks after Patrick and his four siblings. She is a farmer and that's the only source of income that her family has. When the first Covid-19 case was confirmed in Rwanda, Laurence's family, like every other in the country, were supposed to stay at home. From then onwards there was little to nothing that could help Laurence provide for her family. As a result, the family was forced to shift to



King's Mother assisting him while he does a numbering exercise



Laurence receiving her assistance and her son's school work

having one meal per day. Laurence explained "Throughout the lockdown my children would always go to bed hungry, since markets, farming and every other means of our survival were heavily disrupted. I always received exercises and homework from Patrick's school but could barely find time and energy to help him do his school work since I was always busy wondering where my children's next meal would come from. I was not surprised that his teacher always told me that Patrick was not doing his school work well enough because he had very little to no support while doing his work. This, however, is about to change since I will be able to allocate more time to Patrick as a result of having enough food for at least the next six weeks. I thoroughly thank Patrick's school for helping us out with this invaluable support. I also thank them for not only helping Patrick but also his siblings who heavily rely on school

meals and now that all schools are closed many parents including myself are having a very hard time feeding our children during this very trying and unprecedented crisis caused by this devastating pandemic. I pledge to ensure that my son gets the necessary support while doing his school work so as to remain in good learning shape as well as ensuring that he is always safe and protected from any sort of abuse and or neglect".



Louis Ngabo is an experienced teacher of deaf children and young people. He is the founder of Nyabihu School for the Deaf, located in the Western Province of Rwanda. Visit their website for further details:
<https://nyabihucenterforthedeaf.weebly.com/>

BATOD was there representing you...

Between the NEC meetings, members of BATOD attend various meetings that are of particular interest to Teachers of the Deaf. This list is not exhaustive. Your representatives at the meetings listed (as known at the time of writing) included: Paul Simpson, Steph Halder, David Couch, Sue Denny, Helen Devereux Murray, Cathie Finestone, Wendy Martin, Jean McAllister, Conor Mervyn, Emma Parker, Teresa Quail, Tina Wakefield, Nicky Weightman, Stuart Whyte and Marie Wilkinson.

Date	External participants	Purpose of meeting	Venue
July			
20	Northern Ireland Minister	Contact meeting	Zoom
29	NDCS	Regular meeting	Zoom
August			
5	Communication Trust	Regular meeting	Zoom
13	NAHT	Contact meeting	Zoom
14	Voice	Contact meeting	Zoom
24	NSPCC	Contact meeting	
27	NEU	Contact meeting	Zoom
29	NDCS	Regular meeting	Zoom
September			
1	NAATD (National Australian Association of ToDs)	Meeting about the DEI journal	Zoom
3	NDCS and GMB	Meeting about face coverings	Zoom
11	PASAG – Paediatric sub-group of Audiology Services Advisory Group and Scottish Council on Deafness	Regular meeting	MS Teams
17	Ofqual Consultation meeting (VTQ)	Regular Meeting	MS Teams
18	NatSIP Reference group	Regular meeting	Zoom
29	CRIDE	Regular meeting	Zoom
October			
6	NITC (Northern Ireland Teaching Council)	Contact meeting	Zoom
8	University Reading	Research meeting	MS Teams
14	Institute of Apprenticeships	Trailblazer meeting	MS Teams
15	NDCS and NASUWT	Meeting about face coverings	Zoom

Please inform the Co-National Executive Officers, Paul Simpson or Teresa Quail, if you know of any meetings where you feel representation on behalf of Teachers of the Deaf would be of benefit. Although there is no guarantee that BATOD would be able to attend every meeting, situations could be monitored and the interests of ToDs represented.

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