



# RSVP April 2009 Newsletter

## ***Newsletter Summary:***

This month's newsletter is from Janice as Simon is going through a critical period in his medical studies, with exams approaching.

- **2009 bursaries awarded:** Two girls have been awarded bursaries for 2009. The choice this year was very difficult for all those involved as six children are in need of support. RSVP have therefore agreed to try to find a further four sponsors.
- **10k Balmoral fundraising run:** Mr Ajish Varghese had a double joy on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> as his wife gave birth to a healthy baby boy and he completed the 10k on behalf of RSVP. So congratulations all round to the happiest man on the Balmoral run.
- **Donors' lunch on 11 Apr 2009:** RSVP supporters met together in Aberdeen to discuss our progress so far. The feedback was very helpful and will be discussed at the AGM on May 30<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to those who gave up a Saturday afternoon to provide invaluable feedback.
- **Independent inspection report:** Secondary school starter packs to be introduced and funding for desks sought as a result of the inspection report produced by Pastor Emmanuel.
- **New books arrived:** In March the school received the support books provided by RSVP but the text books that the government are providing did not arrive in the first term. However we have had news that they have arrived at the school in time for the second term. We are now just waiting to hear confirmation that these cover all subjects and the ratio of books to children.
- **National primary school test for 2009:** The Rwandan government have announced that there will be national primary school tests in 2009 after all. As yet we don't know what language the test will be in or what it means to those who pass or fail.

## **1) 2009 Bursaries.**

The Rwandan team met with teachers and parents to select two bursary students for 2009. Solange, who features in the RSVP video, having already been awarded a bursary. The selection proved to be very challenging. The group agreed that six families were in need of help but finally agreed on the two families in most desperate need. Sponsors have been provided with the details of the children they have agreed to sponsor.

We believe that all the children have gone back to school for the 2<sup>nd</sup> term, but are awaiting confirmation that the four children who were identified as in need of help have made it. RSVP trustees have discussed the situation and have agreed to seek additional sponsors for the four children. For 2009, only £30 is needed for the 3<sup>rd</sup> term as parents will have paid the 2<sup>nd</sup> term fees. Going forward the commitment is £85 -£115 per annum for the next five years. The exact cost is dependent on the school. If you would be willing to sponsor one of these children please contact our treasurer Drew on [drew@rsvpcharity.org.co.uk](mailto:drew@rsvpcharity.org.co.uk) or call him (after 6 p.m.) on 01224 483 644.

The children have now completed the first term at secondary school and have sat their first term exams, scoring between 56% and 74.4%. One has passed all subjects, two have failed one subject and three have failed two subjects.

This is a good start and this year we have agreed to increase our support by providing holiday revision classes in both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and final term breaks. That way the children will get additional support before the final year tests and for any re-sits that they may have. It is worth noting that Anaclet, our top student, had 100% attendance record at last year's holiday revision classes.

## **2) 10k Balmoral Fundraising Run.**

Mr Ajish Varghese completed his 10k run in an hour, raising £290 to date for RSVP.

However those weren't the most important statistics of the day for Ajish, as his wife gave birth to healthy baby boy that morning. RSVP send our congratulations to Ajish and his wife in what turned out to be an exciting and eventful day.



### **3) Donors' Lunch on 11 Apr 2009.**

RSVP supporters met together in Aberdeen to discuss our progress so far. The group were presented with a detailed Project Progress Report from May 2007 to February 2009. This included:

- [Project report – May 07 – Feb 09](#)
- [Core Policies](#)
- [Strategic Plan](#)
- A draft of the accounts and Trustees reports for 2008.

The discussion and feedback was very helpful and a number of the suggestions made are now being looked into by RSVP. Initially we have started looking at options for expanding HIV education and teacher training. All suggestions will be reviewed at the AGM on May 30<sup>th</sup>.

RSVP would like to take this opportunity to thank donors for all their support and give particular thanks to those who gave up a Saturday afternoon to provide invaluable feedback.

### **4) Independent Inspection Report.**

In February this year Pastor Emmanuel visited the school to carry out an impromptu inspection. He produced a detailed report and highlighted a number of issues for RSVP and it's stakeholders to consider. This month we have addressed two of the issues that he highlighted.

In his report from his visit to one of our sponsored children he said "This child's poverty stands out. He does not even wear shoes. He also doesn't have school uniform. He needs at least 12,000 RFW (~£15) to buy what he needs." On discussing this issue on one of our regular teleconferences it was agreed that this was a real issue, with the potential to affect a child's performance at school if they feel awkward, out of place or in any way inferior to their peers. Therefore RSVP intends to introduce Starter Packs for bursaried children. These packs will contain some essential clothing, personal hygiene and educational items. This will be done on an Ad-Hoc basis this year but will be a standardised pack as of next year.

The second point we are looking to address is "They sit on church benches and use their knees as tables when writing. This has a very bad outcome on younger children because they will never be able to know how to write properly." When questioned about this on the telephone he felt strongly enough to suggest it would be better to stop meals for a month or a whole term to save for the school desks. In total the school are short of 140 desks for primary 1 to 3 children. The trustees have agreed to source funding for 100 desks, with the parents paying for a further 20 and the church that owns the school the final 20. A promising funding source has been identified and we hope to be awarded a grant for the desks in July.

Further impromptu inspections are planned for later this year.

## **5) New Books Arrive.**

Pictured below are the support books provided by RSVP in March of 2009. RSVP have only budgeted for support materials this year as text books are to be supplied by the Rwandan Government. However the books that the government are providing did not arrive in the first term.

The good news is that they have arrived at the school in time for the second term. We are now just waiting to hear confirmation that these cover all subjects and the ratio of books to children. So you will be hearing more about books next month.



## **6) National Primary School test for 2009.**

In April the Minister of Education announced on national radio that primary school tests will go ahead this year. As yet we don't know what language the test will be in or what it means to those who pass or fail. An additional challenge has been the lack of books covering the new curriculum.

The uncertainty, rapid changes in Government policy and lack of books has undoubtedly had an affect on the progress of children this year. Therefore the provision of Saturday revision lessons may be essential for P6 pupils this year. This is not in RSVPs current budget and so the provision will be dependent on obtaining sufficient funds to cover the costs. As the project expands and has increasing impact so does the cost. The overall budget for RSVP for 2009 will be approximately £14,000 (excluding the cost of desks described above). To expand the school meals programme and introduce the additional programmes currently under discussion will require a budget of about £31,000 in 2010 (to be discussed at the AGM). This number is a huge challenge for a small charity. For more information read the [Strategic Plan](#) section of our recent progress report.

On a positive note we have agreed that the teacher's incentive scheme will continue to be paid using the formula that we have previously used, based on national test results. The amount is calculated as 40,000 RFW (£50) for first 20 pupils going in boarding school and 4,000 RFW (£5) for each additional pupil. The sum is then divided across the teaching staff.