

January 2016

Umwaka Musha Muhire as they say – Happy New Year!

I arrived back very early in January to the sunshine and smiles I now think of when I think about the project. For some reason the term in the state schools was not to begin until February this year meaning the children would have been out of class for more than three months so I was anxious to get them back in at least for lunch to begin with.

The older children slowly drifted in as news of my arrival got round, but before the very new children started to arrive I was in for a very special welcome – a belated birthday treat from some of the mothers, who arrived with Fanta and cake, singing together, making speeches and presenting me with a lovely framed photograph as a gift and finishing with some dances together – so lovely, I felt very honoured.



So good to see everyone and catch up on the news. I had been away a long time.

We actually started the Nursery term on Wednesday January 13th and after a couple of weeks most children were in school and registered. As ever, we have far more children on our waiting list than we can accommodate and it is so difficult to say no. Our sewing ladies worked very hard to make new uniforms for everyone, many, as you can see from the pictures, made to last a while....



We have 70 new children including two young refugees from Burundi, whose families have some horrific stories to tell. They are safe now here with us for a while. Staff are now very experienced in dealing with new starters and it was relatively easy with very few tears, the children soon settled down and were eager to play with all the new things they had never seen before and get to know each other.

We said a sad but excited goodbye to our secondary students over the first weekend in February. We are now supporting 29 students in secondary, thanks to the generosity of their personal sponsors. We cannot do that without individual sponsors. On their behalf I say a huge thank you; it means so much to us.

Before they left some of them were given the VIP treatment by our dance troupe. Everyone enjoyed that morning and I hope some of those smaller ones watching are inspired to join the dance group as more of our dance stars have left us. I hope they will join secondary school dance troupes and that I will see some of them at the end of term celebrations in their new schools.



And then off they went. They are going to several different schools. Happily most of them will be with friends from here, others are scattered far and wide.



We wish them well; we know they will do us, their sponsors and their families proud.

Lastly, I received an immediate response to my observations about the food prices here in Kigali and that I had noticed how thin some of the children had become. Two individual people and the 'Fishes group' immediately donated money to buy bread to go with the porridge in the mornings for this year. A primary school is also raising funds for us so we will be able to continue into next year also.

There were squeals of delight from the children when they received their dry bread roll with their porridge that first morning. I couldn't help thinking of what reception a similar gesture might receive in a school in the UK. We say a huge thank you for our bread!



Thank you very, very much indeed for all your support, kindness and generosity, we cannot do anything without you, whether through your donations, voluntary work here in Kigali, or organising and running fundraising events in your country wherever you are. Every little action, however small, is significant and contributes to the future well-being of these children and their families.

Yesterday we had a meeting with parents and from their comments I know they are deeply grateful and more than aware of the chance they have been given. All parents in the world strive to give their children a good start in life and we are helping many to do that here.

I wish you the best of things during 2016

We are doing OK here and hope for a good year too.

Meg