

STUDENTS' HUMBLING EXPERIENCE

Shaftesbury School students and staff visited Rwanda in April as part of an ongoing exchange with the Excel Bilingual School.

Here the students give their heartfelt responses to their experiences:

George: "I am still in awe of the Rwandan people and how, after an atrocious and unforgettable genocide, they are rebuilding their nation with an amazing and positive outlook on life".

"If we could just grab hold onto a snippet of their positivity and desire for change, we could not only help transform our local community but also provide the means and support for Rwanda to prosper."

Eric: "The visits to the memorial sites really brought home the reason why we were there; it was an incredibly harrowing and yet strangely enriching experience".

Tim: "Visiting the school and actually teaching students, hit home the impact that a group of students could have just by listening and caring."

"It was clear that all the money raised for Msaada goes into innovative sustainable projects which help their road to

recovery".

Chantelle: "Giving a water bottle to children and watching their expression was such an eye-opener; it made me appreciate what I have."

"This was an uplifting and incredible experience that I will never forget."

"My emotions changed throughout the trip from sadness at the pain the people endured to joy when working in the school."

Tom: "The mixture of emotions experienced on the trip were intense from the moving experience of Nyarabuye church to the joy of the happy, smiling faces at the school."

"At the end of the service, we were mobbed by villagers all wanting to shake our hands, hug us and say thank you for visiting them; this was a humbling experience."

John: "There was also the sorrow of watching so many children missing out on the opportunity of education."

"Just the thought that I earn more in a week than it costs to send a child to school for a year is terrible."

"The opportunity has opened my eyes and changed me as a person; it does not matter now that I don't have what some others do."

Ramblers to walk distance from UK to Rwanda

THE head of sixth form at Shaftesbury School, Mike Hayes, has appealed for support for his upcoming Ramble for Rwanda.

Mike is hoping that the total distance walked by staff and students from the school during the Ramble on July 10 will equal the distance from the UK to Rwanda.

Mike has set up a special fundraising page at: www.justgiving.com/mikehayes1

"Please sponsor me now to undertake the walk and help raise funds to improve education and training in Rwanda, especially in the Excel School in Rwamagana," Mike said this week.

"Our dream is that all the students in Rwanda

look as happy as the one below! We hope that every student and member of staff in the school will be walking a distance of 5 miles each - if everyone makes it and we add the distances together, we'll have walked to Rwanda! We will also have raised over £10,000!"



Shaftesbury School students, Chantelle and George, wonder how they are going to get the balloon back

Total funds sent to projects to date:

£148,274

A Rwanda Diary

Photographer Sally Page shares her thoughts and images after a visit to Msaada's projects in Rwamagana

WOULD Rwanda be safe?
Would the food make me ill?
Would I be able to cope with what I saw there?

I have to confess, as someone who has never been to Africa, these were some of the thoughts going through my head as I travelled to Rwanda to visit the Msaada projects.

What I found was a truly beautiful country (it is known as the land of a thousand hills), an exceptionally warm welcome from the people we encountered in the projects and surrounding countryside, and some of the best fruit and soup I have tasted in years.

Were there parts of the journey that were hard? I certainly found the scale of the poverty humbling. Rwanda is a densely populated country with very basic subsistence farming and for some who cannot dig because of illness or lack of land the prospects are bleak. However, people just get on with their lives, walking or bicycling to collect water, passing the time of day with neighbours as they go. And what impressed me enormously was the pride people took in their homes.

Basic mud houses are swept and clean, whilst others have created tiny gardens in the red dusty earth. Interestingly the Rwandan government has banned plastic bags (as one traveller found at customs when his whisky was returned but his bag confiscated!), so real effort is being made to keep the country free of non biodegradable rubbish.

There were, of course, moments of great sadness during the trip.

Visiting the genocide memorial in the capital Kigali leaves you shaken and at a loss to understand how these people, who are working so hard at reconciliation, can overcome such



personal
grief and
suffering.

And yet there are so many examples of people helping others – stretching out a hand, often in very simple ways to help each other. It made me think that the name Msaada (which I can only just pronounce ...try emsarda and you

will be about right!) is a good name for this charity.

Msaada is a Swahili word for help, but it is a specific sort of help, it is the help you give someone when they can't quite climb a hill and you reach out to pull them up, or when you offer to carry someone's burden as they cross a river.

This Msaada sort of help is what I saw in action when I visited the projects. The scale of the poverty may be frightening, the trauma these people are dealing with unimaginable, but I saw that by working with Rwandans in simple but effective ways a charity really could help a people to help themselves. And that left me with such good memories of Rwanda; the friends I had made, the beautiful children who had sung for us and the clear evidence that the money that is raised by all the Msaada supporters is making a difference.

An important part of the fund raising is to ensure that these children can stay at school. But there are many other projects Msaada would like to help with, such as a new building to enable the children to have lunch at school, rather than walking miles home at midday



“Good friends, beautiful children, great memories and making a difference”

Msaada was established with the support of
journalist and broadcaster



Fergal Keane
Msaada president

OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

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Msaada is a UK Registered Charity Number 1111819

Gift aid

I want Msaada to treat the enclosed donation of

£

as a Gift Aid donation

Please make cheques payable to Msaada

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Fundraising Round-up

We are pleased to report an upturn in fundraising activities for Msaada. It has been encouraging to see the surge in volunteer energy and sheer determination by the public to support the work the charity is doing in Rwanda.

Schools have organised concerts, discos and fashion shows to great effect. Broadchalke Primary School, Chafyn Grove, Corfe Hills, St Mary's Shaftesbury, Semley Primary School, Shaftesbury School, Stowe School and Talbot Heath all deserve a huge THANK YOU for all their tremendous efforts.

The 'Bee my Honey' fundraiser held in Salisbury Cathedral School on Valentine's Day was a wonderful evening. The concert of piano trios by Beethoven and Arensky was given by Salisbury-based musicians, Nicholas Walker, piano, Daphne Moody, violin, and Muriel Daniels, cello, in the former Bishop's Drawing Room. Guests then enjoyed a gourmet three-course dinner by candlelight, prepared by Helen Bevan and her team of volunteer helpers, in the school dining room.

An "Msaada at Mosimann's" lunch was hosted by David Zackheim, a vice president of Msaada where guests were entertained by sports commentator, Garry Richardson.

The Eberle Quartet gave a stunning recital of music by Haydn and Mendelssohn and contemporary works by Helen Porter and Barry Fergusson in the Farrington Hall at Port Regis School.

Another excellent example of community volunteer energy at its best was the Msaada Munch held in Bishopstone Village Hall, masterminded by Olive Moody. The generosity of all who attended and contributed to this wonderful social occasion helped raise significant funds. Other events were held in Birmingham, Epsom, Fordingbridge and Northampton.

The total raised was nearly £29,000 for which we extend grateful thanks to all our supporters.

Forthcoming fundraising events include: A friends' and vice presidents' lunch will be held at The Angel Inn, Hindon, on Friday 17 July, where the guest speaker will be Alex Best. An African benefit evening is planned for Thursday 6 August in The Quarterhouse, Folkestone. Finally, golfers please note, on Friday 2 October we will be holding a Golf Day at Salisbury and South Wilts Golf Club. For further information please telephone 07147 837877 or visit www.msaada.org

Please donate now

It's now really easy to donate to Msaada on-line with Justgiving. Payments are secure, your money reaches the charity quickly and, if you are a tax payer, it is possible to Gift Aid your donation to benefit Msaada even further. Visit www.justgiving.com/msaada and follow the instructions online to make a donation.

Challenge 2009

Thinking of taking on a challenge in 2009? Going for a walk or cycle ride, climbing a mountain, running a marathon, losing weight, cutting your hair off or giving up booze for Lent? Please consider taking the opportunity to raise some vital sponsorship for Msaada. You can create your own Justgiving web page at www.justgiving.com/msaada (follow the Raise Money link) then email your friends and colleagues for their support and watch the sponsorship pour in! As well as challenges, Msaada Justgiving web pages can also be created to receive donations in lieu of gifts for weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, Christenings and memorials.

Please telephone 01747 837877 for further information.

Support Msaada as you shop online

You can help raise funds for Msaada – at no cost to you – every time you shop online at Easyfundraising with stores such as NEXT, Argos, Amazon, HMV, John Lewis, M&S, Toys'R'Us, DELL, Dixons, Expedia or Debenhams.

Msaada will receive up to 15% from every purchase you make!

Please click on www.easyfundraising.org.uk/msaada to register your own account.