



# Shyira Trust

Registered Charity Number 1118979

## Developments in Shyira, June 2012

Recently we have had several reports of developments in Rwanda that in some way must impact on the work of the Shyira Trust. We had some knowledge of the developments, but were not able to comprehensively understand what was happening, nor the effect on the work of the Trust. Therefore two trustees, Alan Powell and Allan Hobson decided that they should visit Rwanda to see how our work needs to adapt to changes. The remainder of this document is their report to Trust members and other people with an interest in Rwanda.

We left Formby early in the morning of 17 May for a two week visit. Travelling with us was Marie Claire who had left Rwanda 12 years ago, and who wanted to take her son, Ethan, to meet her mother and other family members. We were privileged to witness a joyful reunion in Kigali.

After an over night stay in Kigali we set off in Anthony's pick-up for Musanze, previously called Ruhengeri, and Shyira. The drive to the North-West from Kigali is quite spectacular as it passes over hills and along valleys. Unfortunately exceptionally heavy monsoon rain had affected the road, with landslides causing several partial blockages and, at one point, a total blockage that had to be moved before we could proceed.

As we approached Musanze Anthony received a phone call to say that the sister of one of his Groupe Scolaire students had been washed away by flood water. She was the second person to die in his archdeaconry due to the weather. It was fortunate that we planned to stay in Musanze overnight, for the road to Shyira was impassable.

In Musanze on this and one other visit we would meet with several people, friends old and new. These included Caleb and Louise, Ambrose who is a nurse at Shyira and



Floods as we near Musanze.

has been to Formby, Emmanuel who came here last year, and who introduced us to his family, Bishop John and Bishop Mbanda who has taken over as Bishop of Shyira.

The following day we were told that the road up Shyira hill was blocked. The only way to get to Shyira was to climb the 1,200 feet from Vunga. We decided that we would make the climb, or our visit would be wasted.

## Schools and sponsorship

We met with 61 sponsored students from Groupe Scolaire. As we talked there was a repeated message we were asked to bring back to Formby. It was simple but heartfelt—"Thank you."

These young people are being given an opportunity by their sponsors, and are determined to do the best they can to show their gratitude to sponsors and to enhance their own lives.



Sponsored students at Groupe Scolaire.

Why doesn't my sponsor write to me? About half the children had letters from their sponsors and those who didn't were quite upset. Please, if you sponsor a child, consider sending a brief letter. Just address it: Childs name, Groupe Scolaire de Shyira, BP 42, Musanze, Rwanda.

We knew of a change in the education system, and that it would affect our sponsorship scheme, but we did not fully understand the changes. Even in Rwanda when visiting schools it took some time to resolve the issues.

Historically it has been required that secondary school students must board. The reasons are simple—students can be in an environment where there is electricity in the evening, and so are able to study late—it normally goes dark in Rwanda at about 6.30pm. Also students in school are protected from parents requiring them to work.

However, boarding schools cost money to attend, and most people are very poor.

The government of Rwanda has introduced an experiment in which one third of schools are attended by day pupils, and two thirds of schools are attended by boarders. Groupe Scolaire is to become a day school for the duration of the experiment. It will take only students who live within walking distance of the school.

The government pay staff salaries and will give the school 5,000 francs, about £5, for each day student. They then expect secondary education to be free. However, that is an inadequate level of funding for the school to maintain its reputation for providing a good standard of education and therefore in consultation with parents it has been agreed that there will be a 15,000 fee for each term. The fee will pay for health insurance, paper, school infrastructure and vehicle and a salary enhancement for teachers. In addition every student has to pay fees for national examinations and to purchase school uniform

Taking everything into account we can sponsor day students for £62.50 per year. That includes £1 to cover expenses incurred by the Trust in managing the scheme.

Groupe Scolaire will take a few boarders—about ten a year. They will be students unable to live at home—orphans who do not have adoptive parents, for example. These children will continue to be eligible for sponsorship at the existing rate of £125 per year.

## **An encounter in Musanze**

“You're from Formby” said the young man as he came up to us in the middle of Musanze’s main shopping street.

“Yes”, we agreed, “but how did you know?”

“I’ve seen you at Groupe Scolaire. I was a sponsored student in 2003 when you visited us. When I left school I went to university and got a degree. Now I’m a teacher. I’m an orphan and without your sponsorship could not be where I am now. You've given me a life clear of poverty. Thank you.”

His sponsor, Carl Norton would have been thrilled by the conversation.

A short while later the young man found us again. He had spoken to his brother who was also sponsored and who had asked him to write a letter for his sponsor. That was done and we brought the letter home.

## **Child headed families.**

Several years ago we started a programme of replacing the homes of child headed families. Shyira had, at the time, 22 such families. So far we have replaced 13 homes,

and one is almost complete. Three of those houses have been rebuilt in the past year. Of the eight remaining homes three need to be rebuilt and 5 repaired.

Homes are always replaced in the style of the surrounding homes. To us they may look basic and uninviting, but anyone meeting with the children can't help but be impressed by their expressions of gratitude. The homes are weatherproof, and the mud bricks are good insulators.



Quite often the children have benefited from animals or furnishing through our alternative gift programme so that they have some comforts in their homes.

In the picture the small boy is from a neighbours house and just wanted to be photographed. The taller boy is called Focus and the house is his. He is 14 years old and in year 5 at primary school. He does not have brothers and sisters, and has been alone since his mother died. The old lady was a friend of his mother and she now cares for Focus.

When we visited the house both Focus and the old lady expressed their gratitude for the house very clearly. To them the house was a place of luxury. They have living and storage areas, and a bedroom each. Focus has a mosquito net above his bed.

The house suffered some damage in the recent storms when part of the gable end collapsed. However, money we have sent will pay the £50 necessary for its repair.

## Health services.

In discussions with several people we were able to build up a picture of the way health is improving in the area covered by Shyira hospital. Malaria is being brought under some kind of control thanks in part to the distribution of free mosquito nets among the population. When we visit we take anti-malaria medication, but the local population don't have that option so it is good to know that a simple thing like a mosquito net can be effective.

HIV is controlled by drugs. There is no cure, but we were told that the drugs have a very positive effect on people's lives, bringing some degree of normality

Our main contribution has been in the area of safe motherhood. In a country where, not long ago, one woman in ten would die in childbirth it is satisfying to report that it is now more than two years since a woman died in childbirth in Shyira hospital. Infant deaths have also reduced, but we have not, so far, been able to get statistics. This improvement comes about because of our funding the rebuilding of the maternity hospital, its equipping by Rotary and subsequently the training of two midwives and safe motherhood work undertaken by Jane Morgan.

The success of the maternity hospital and its staff in reducing death rates has created a problem—more people want to use its services. The result is overcrowding. The hospital has 24 beds but normally has more than 30 patients. When Robinah showed us round there were eight expectant mothers sharing just four beds in the reception area.

It must be 4 years since Caleb told us that he thought a maternity extension necessary, but he had other work on so he said "Not yet." Caleb has now moved to other work in Rwanda, and the hospital has a new director—Dr Emmanuel Bonane. Robinah tells us that the hospital continues to function as before, and she feels the extension to be important.



We had a useful and productive meeting With Dr Emmanuel, and he confirms that it is necessary to add an extension to the maternity building. A grassed area just below the present building is suggested as a possible site for an extension—see the picture. The area is as near flat as anywhere in Shyira.

At present we can only guess at the cost of a new building and we need to be sure of the viability of the chosen site. To help everyone be better informed we suggested to Dr. Emmanuel that plans and estimates should be produced before the end of September, and that possible building work should be broken down into stages to help us manage fund raising.

For now we need to pay for the production of plans and estimates.

## **English teaching and other challenges in schools**

Ever since the Rwandan government decided to make English an official language of the country, and required schools to use it in place of French, many staff in schools have been struggling to teach in a language they have previously never used. Earlier this year Marion Knight spent two months in Shyira working in schools there, with the purpose of helping improve the standard of English.

We are happy to report that the work Marion did in the schools was greatly appreciated. "Can she come again", we were asked on several occasions! For anyone with teaching skills there is an opening for some volunteer work in helping improve the English of people in Shyira's schools.

Quite a lot of staff in the schools of Shyira have inadequate qualifications with some educated only to A-level standard. For their future careers these staff are now working hard to gain higher qualifications. Some study over the weekends in specially developed courses and others are using the school holidays. The problem is that they are often not able to pay the fees.

### **Can you help me with a problem?**

When visiting Shyira we are frequently asked if we can help people with study fees. People ask without real expectation of help, but if you don't ask then you certainly don't get anything. We always try to distance ourselves from such requests by telling people that all help goes through the parish or school, as appropriate.

There have been two specific requests that people here may be interested in supporting because they are from people known to some of us. Gervais, who was here in Formby in March 2011 would value help with his fees for weekend university studies, and Dinah who is known to people who have been to Shyira as the best ever baker of Banana Cake would like help for her granddaughter at university.

To help please use one of our gift envelopes and mark it with either Gervais or Dinah.

### **Parish Council**

It was Saturday morning when we met with some members of the Parish Council. They are the people who oversee, with Anthony, the expenditure of the money we send for project work in Shyira. Speaker-after-speaker emphasized the value they place on the link to St. Luke's and their thanks for the support they get from us.

Bishop Augustin has felt that there has been an over dependence in Shyira on overseas leadership. The people of the parish have felt concerned by the loss of overseas help. We made a particular point of supporting the bishop's position by showing people that they have managed our projects well.



## Children's centre

While not yet complete the Children's centre is already providing a waterproof environment for children to meet. We witnessed this on a Sunday when something like 300 children congregated in the centre, and the following Saturday when possibly even more children were present. In the horrendous weather we experienced it was good to see the centre used, for on our previous visit the children had met under trees, but only if the weather was dry.

The picture shows children posing for a picture before going into the centre.

Accommodation in the centre consists of a store room, small meeting room, medium meeting room and a large meeting room. The large room is to have a screen that will enable the room to be split into two parts, each the size of the medium room.



The building as it is at present is little more than a shell. It still needs windows to be glazed, ceilings to be installed, the floors and walls, both inside and out, to be skimmed with concrete and the building to be painted. The estimated cost for completing the building is just under £6,000.

When completed the centre will be of tremendous value to the community. It is to provide literacy teaching for parents in the day time and will be a daytime meeting place for MU and other groups. There will be after school activities for children. We just need to raise a further £6,000 to make it all possible.

## Coffee growing

We were not able to visit the main coffee growing area because landslides caused by the heavy rain had blocked the road. That was disappointing because coffee is probably the one crop that can raise living standards sufficiently for the people of Shyira to be taken out of poverty.

The ultimate purpose is to have 50,000 coffee plants because that is calculated to be sufficient. In the short term the plan is to have 8,000 plants and then to review how the management of the project can be organised to ensure long-term sustainability and ensure that income is well used.

There are now 5.2 hectares available for coffee cultivation, and they have been planted with 6,500 plants. A further hectare is available for purchase for about £800 and will allow 1,500 plants to be added, giving the total of 8,000.

The present arrangement is for different groups to take care of sections of the plantation, MU and child headed families for example. The group will take some income from the sale of beans, and some money will go to the parish.

## Moses in Butaka

Recently we have moved away from Shyira to give some help to Moses who is responsible for Butaka parish. Moses was previously in Shyira where he worked as a catechist, or lay minister. With the shortage of ordained clergy in Rwanda due to the losses in the genocide of 1994, Moses was asked to take care of the parish at Butaka.

Travel to Butaka is not easy. The parish is located high on the slopes of volcano Karisimbi and within two miles of the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Turning right off the Musanze to Gisenyi highway the nature of the road becomes immediately obvious. The surface is covered in fairly large lumps of volcanic rock that make the road to Shyira seem smooth! We bumped along for about an hour, eventually arriving at Butaka.

Moses has a church with a congregation of 141 adults and 90 children, but no building. Several former pyrethrum drying sheds had been purchased by the church, for church planting in various parishes but they are now wanted by the government for their original use. The dispute will be resolved in the courts, with, it is expected, compensation paid if the diocese loses ownership of the drying sheds. Moses has identified an alternative site for a church.

The drying sheds are not in a good condition. There is quite a lot of shell damage to the masonry forming the walls, and only one section has a roof and it has several holes. Moses had intended to reroof the section that has a leaky roof, but we feel that it would be better to demolish the whole building and start again. The site is large, and with the present building removed is ready for development as a parish centre.



Moses, in common with other clergy, has not had any pay from the parish or diocese for three months now. We were able to give him a gift for his own use from Trust supporters, and he was very grateful. His wife Marie-Louise is unwell and needs treatment in Kigali and Moses will need to pay.

The DRC, just across the border from Butaka, is a country in conflict. Moses admitted that people in Rwanda do get concerned about possible border crossings by militia, and was happy that the Rwandan army has a strong presence in and around Butaka.

We left Butaka conscious of having met some very poor but faithful Christian people. The outcome of the court case will determine how the parish progresses in the future, and we can't help in any way until the case is settled. Present plans are to replace the roof on part of the pyrethrum shed, but it seems clear to us that something much more radical is needed.

## Support for the Trust

There are a variety of ways that people may support the work of the Trust.

**Through Direct Giving.** We are always happy to receive donations by cash or cheque. Donors can specify how they would like their gift to be used. We have envelopes that will help simplify giving gifts.

**Standing Order.** An easy way of supporting the work of the trust is to donate a small amount each month by standing order.

**On your tax return.** Expecting a tax refund? Why not donate all or part of it to the trust by entering NA U3 1U in the appropriate box on your tax return

**Gift Aid.** If you are a UK tax payer then with your approval the trust can claim a tax refund equivalent to 25% of any gift you give, this at no cost to you.

**Text.** A donation of £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10 may be made to the trust by text. An options exist for gift aiding text donations. To support the Trust, just text the code SHYR01 and the amount, to 70070. So, for instance, if you wanted to donate £5, text **SHYR01 £5** to 70070.

**Through your will.** Why not include the trust in your will?

**Internet search.** Internet search engines earn money from advertising and sponsorship. Why let Google benefit when the money can go to the Shyira Trust? Simply use [www.everyclick.com/shyiratrust](http://www.everyclick.com/shyiratrust) as your search engine for the trust to benefit. You could even save that address as a tab on your browser or as one of your favourites.

**On-line shopping.** Some companies will make a donation to charity each time you shop on-line with them. Go to [www.thegivingmachine.co.uk](http://www.thegivingmachine.co.uk) and register by clicking on “Givers Join” and complete your details, including the Shyira Trust as your charity. Each time you shop on-line go via the Giving Machine website and the trust will get a proportion of the money you spend. There is no cost to you.

**Credit/Debit card donation.** Please visit [www.bmycharity.com/shyiratrust](http://www.bmycharity.com/shyiratrust)

**Alternative gifts.** Stuck for gift ideas for Christmas or birthdays? Take a look at our alternative gift catalogue—it could solve your problem while helping people in Shyira.

**Mobile phones/Printer cartridges.** These items (except Epson cartridges) can be recycled, and the trust can raise money from the recycling. There is a box to receive them in St. Luke’s church, or drop them off at one of the addresses below.

For more information on any of the above please contact one of your trustees or you can email the trust at the address below. The website also contains some information and provides an additional method of contacting us.