

TOGETHER WE RISE

Annual Update 2024

Healing the Heart,
Repairing the World.

Friends of
Handicap
Rwanda

FHR

Year
2023 - 2024

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Rev. Dominique Ndagijimana
Founder & President,
Friends of Handicap in Rwanda (FHR)

“Despite the wounds in Rwanda’s past, today we witness redemptive hope in the eyes of those we serve.”

We are thrilled to share with you the inspiring stories and photos within these pages! Despite the deep wounds in Rwanda’s past, today we are privileged to witness redemptive hope in the eyes of those we serve. Each life touched, each hand extended in care, reminds us that healing is not only possible but present in the hearts of the Rwandan people. The journey has not been easy, but every child who smiles, every family that finds peace, and every community that rises together represents a profound step toward healing the scars of the past. Our work at Friends of Handicap in Rwanda is more than just service; it is about rebuilding lives, renewing faith in humanity, and nurturing the seeds of a brighter future.

This past year has been a testament to resilience, courage, and the unwavering spirit of Rwanda’s people. We are seeing teachers continued to be trained more about deaf and deaf blind education, students continue to study well regardless of their disabilities, many deaf youth are being vocationally trained and empowered, many people are becoming more interested in the impactful work that we are doing. In each project, from empowering students through education to supporting rural communities with sustainable livelihoods, we have seen firsthand that redemption is not an abstract concept. It is alive, growing in the heartbeats of those who refuse to give up, no matter the challenges they face. These good things will continue throughout 2024, by the grace of God and your support!

As we look to the future, we also continue to strengthen what has gone before. This year, we will extend the Charity’s work in the child education sponsorship program, training more teachers about deaf and deaf blind education (teacher’s college), developing an audiology center in one of our schools or a relevant place in Rwanda.

Through the tireless efforts of our team and supporters, we are repairing the world one life at a time, offering not just aid but dignity, not just survival but the promise of a better tomorrow. It is through this shared commitment that we see the full bloom of hope, rising from the ashes of the past and lighting the way for generations to come.

Dominique

Rev. Dominique Ndagijimana
Founder & President,
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Who We Are

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him." *John 9:3*



2023 Financials

2023 Revenue

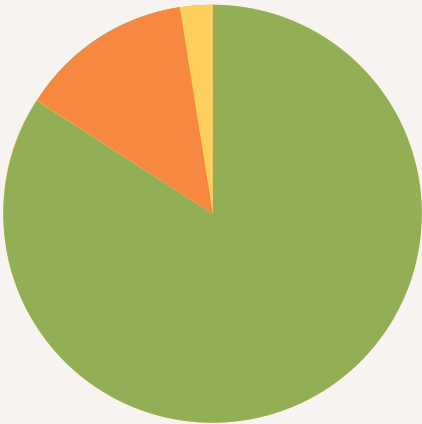
\$78,802

2023 Expenses

\$79,000

Expenses by Percentage

Program Services	89.5%	\$70,705
Management and General	10%	\$7,900
Fundraising	0.5%	\$395



Our Mission

Creating a community in which people with disabilities can grow their talents, share the love of God, and build a future full of opportunities.

Our Vision

Empowering people with disabilities through educational programs, vocational training, and community outreach.

All financial figures cited in this document for fiscal year 2023 are unaudited as of press time. Audited numbers will be available in July 2024.

Kayonza Deaf Blind School

Bee Keeping

In Rwanda's ongoing "Together We Rise" story, beekeeping at Umutara Deaf School has become a vital lifeline for deaf students, thanks to the partnership with **Bees Abroad UK**. Through this vocational course, students gain valuable skills, graduating as confident, trained beekeepers ready to support themselves and their families. For many deaf students, beekeeping is more than a craft; it is a symbol of independence and self-reliance. It is a doorway to opportunity in a world that often overlooks their potential. Through this unique vocational course, students receive hands-on training, honing their skills and developing an expertise that empowers them to thrive both professionally and personally.

Graduates of the beekeeping program are not only well-trained beekeepers, but they also carry with them the pride of knowing they can provide for themselves and their families. Upon graduation, these remarkable young individuals are equipped with essential tools to launch their beekeeping ventures: bee hives, smokers, bee suits, gloves, and knives – the instruments that symbolize their journey from student to skilled beekeeper.



"Since its inception just two years ago, Kayonza Deaf blind School has been a beacon of change and possibility. Despite the fact that deaf blind education is still new and unfamiliar in Rwanda, what once seemed impossible in the eyes of many is now becoming a reality."

Two years ago, Kayonza Deaf blind Centre opened its doors with a vision that many believed was impossible—offering specialized education to deaf blind students in Rwanda, a concept still unfamiliar to most. Yet, this year, we proudly celebrate a remarkable milestone: 17 students have successfully completed their Middle Class and are preparing to enter their final year of Kindergarten, which begins in September 2024.

This progress would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners, especially JICA, whose collaboration enabled us to train three additional teachers in deaf blind education. One of these teachers, **Niyonzima Jean Marie Vianney**, shares his personal testimony after completing the training:

"These training sessions were incredibly important to me, especially as I was the first teacher to join Kayonza Deafblind School after being transferred from Umutara Deaf School. I had very little understanding of deaf blind culture and education. I remember feeling lost, unsure how to teach such unique individuals, as my experience was only with deaf students. But through these training sessions, I learned the power of Tactile Sign Language. Now, I know that teaching deaf blind students requires touch, allowing them to feel the shape of my hands. This approach has completely transformed how I teach, helping me connect with my students in ways I never thought possible."

The dedication of teachers like Niyonzima and the resilience of our students inspire us every day. However, we recognize that there is still much to learn. Deaf blind education remains a new and evolving journey in Rwanda. We earnestly call upon individuals, institutions, and experts in deaf blind education to reach out and offer their support. Any contribution, no matter how small, will profoundly impact the lives of these children and their families.

With each passing day, we witness remarkable progress at Kayonza Deaf blind Centre. Barriers are being broken, perceptions are shifting, and hope is being restored. Kayonza is more than just a school; it is a testament to the unyielding power of resilience, compassion, and the belief that no challenge is too great when we work together.

Special thanks to **DeafReach UK**, we were able to finish the long-awaited main dining hall. Initiated in 2021, this project faced significant delays due to financial constraints. However, with renewed funding from DeafReach in March 2024, construction resumed vigorously, and we are excited to see the hall come to life.

This new facility will provide our students with a dedicated space to enjoy meals, attend school events, and participate in fun activities that foster a sense of community. Transitioning from classroom dining to a designated dining hall is eagerly anticipated by both students and staff, Promising a more organized and enjoyable mealtime experience while improving the overall school atmosphere.





DeafReach Trustee *Trip*

This year, we had the incredible honor of welcoming the DeafReach Trustee group from the UK, led by the inspirational Simone Banks. Their visit to Rwanda was not just a simple tour but a heartfelt mission to see firsthand the impact their ongoing support is having on the deaf and deaf blind communities we serve. During their trip, they visited both Umutara Deaf School and Kayonza Deaf blind School, two institutions where their partnership has been instrumental in transforming the lives of vulnerable students.

Their visit was a reminder of the power of global solidarity and how, even with limited resources, we can make a world of difference in the lives of these children. With the support of organizations like DeafReach, we are not just educating students; we are giving them hope, dignity, and a future filled with possibility.

At Kayonza Deaf blind School, the need is great, and resources are scarce. Yet, thanks to the generosity and compassion of the DeafReach Trustees, they brought with them much-needed resources specifically for our deaf blind students. These resources will go a long way in helping our students learn and grow, despite the unique challenges they face every day.



Elevanie USA *Trip*

Elevanie, **Vice President and Co-Founder of FHR**, recently embarked on a significant journey to Portland, Oregon, where she attended a women's conference with a clear mission: to share the story of Friends of Handicap in Rwanda (FHR) and to showcase the transformative work we are doing for the deaf, deaf blind, and vulnerable children of Rwanda. This trip was more than just a conference; it was an opportunity to shine a light on the resilience, hope, and potential that so many children in Rwanda possess, despite the immense challenges they face.

During her various presentations, Elevanie passionately emphasized the vital importance of deaf and deaf blind education, programs that are reshaping lives at schools like Kayonza Deaf blind Centre and Umutara Deaf School. She highlighted the critical role that the Child Education Sponsorship program plays in breaking the cycle of poverty for countless children in Rwanda.

"In the heart of Rwanda, there are countless children whose potential is stifled by the harsh realities of poverty," Elevanie shared with the audience. "These are children with dreams as vast as the sky, but their circumstances have placed insurmountable obstacles in their paths. Despite their families' best efforts, poverty is a relentless force that traps them. But through our Child Education Sponsorship program, we are able to offer these children a chance—a chance to be liberated from poverty, a chance to dream, and a chance to realize their fullest potential."

The response was overwhelming. Elevanie's words touched the hearts of many, we believe this might open doors to new partnerships and opportunities for support in the New Year.

Invite a speaker *from FHR*

Following Elevanie's impactful presentations, we encourage organizations, schools, and communities to **book a speaker from FHR** to share more about our work in Rwanda. Whether it's a conference, workshop, or special event, hearing firsthand about the challenges and triumphs of our programs can inspire deeper connections and support. By inviting a speaker from FHR, you help amplify the voices of those who are too often unheard and become a vital part of our mission to transform lives through education and empowerment.

To book a speaker or learn more, **please contact us**—we would be honored to share our journey and vision with you.





Special Needs Education

Our Special Needs Education program consists of two special needs education schools under our management, where this were the first program since 2006.



80 students completed their **vocational courses** that we do offer at Umutara Deaf School.



30 primary school students completed their primary level studies with completing the Government primary leaving examination.



60 home visits were conducted by Child Welfare Officers.



20 teachers both at Umutara Deaf School and Kayonza Deaf blind School were trained about deaf education.



Disability Awareness

FHR has been advocating for the rights of children who are deaf and deaf blind disabled, focusing on protecting them from violence and discrimination within families and communities.



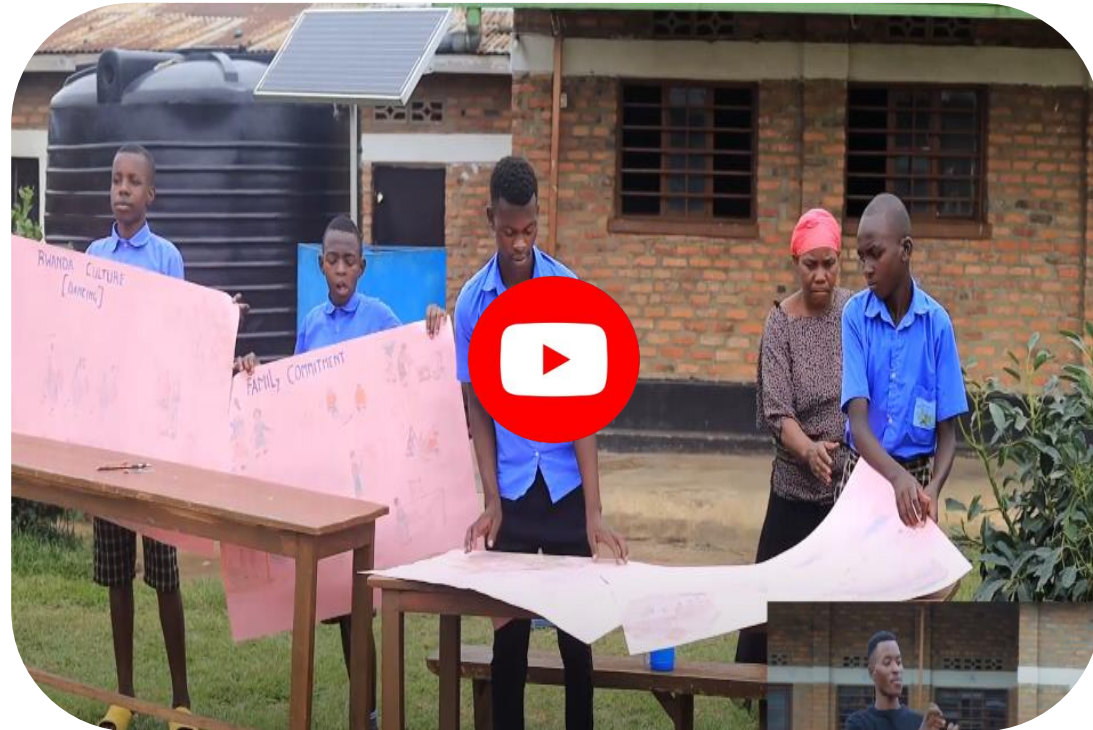
60 home visits were conducted by Child Welfare Officers.



250 parents, medical care practitioners, financial institutions people were trained on how to take care of people who are deaf and deaf blind disabled for a better services to them.



20 student health visits were facilitated by community nurses



Click to watch the *Harmony of Hope Virtual Meals Fundraising Event.*

Child Education Sponsorship

Our educational sponsorship program provides vulnerable children in Rwanda access to education through school fees, scholastic supplies, and support services, empowering them to break free from the cycle of poverty and realize their full potential.



15 Students are currently sponsored in our program.



1 fundraising event took place (*Harmony of Hope Virtual Meals Fundraising Event*)





The story behind *Child Education Sponsorship Program*

In the heart of Rwanda, there are countless children whose potential is stifled by the harsh realities of poverty. These are children with dreams as vast as the sky, but their circumstances have placed insurmountable obstacles in their paths. Despite their families' best efforts, the cycle of poverty is a relentless force that keeps them trapped. Rwanda, a country that has made tremendous strides since the tragic events of the 1994 genocide, still bears the scars of its past. Many families live in rural areas where access to quality education is a luxury they simply cannot afford. The government, though committed to improving education, faces immense challenges due to limited resources and a high demand for basic needs.

For these children, education is not just a pathway to a better life—it's a lifeline. It's the key that can unlock opportunities and break the cycle of poverty that has gripped their families for generations. But the truth is, many of these families cannot afford to keep their children in school. They struggle to provide even the basics like food, shelter, and clothing, let alone school fees, uniforms, and books.

This is where the FHR Child Sponsorship Program steps in. We believe that every child deserves the chance to reach their full potential, regardless of where they were born or the circumstances they were born into. By connecting children with sponsors from around the world, we're able to provide them with the education they desperately need.

You might wonder, "Why should someone living in Poland, USA or any other part of the world sponsor a child in Rwanda? Why can't the families or the government take care of this?" The answer lies in the global community we share. While these children's families are rich in love and resilience, they lack the financial means to support their education. And while the government is working hard to improve the education system, the needs are vast, and the resources are limited.

A sponsorship from someone in Poland, USA or any other part of the world, represents hope. It's a bridge between two worlds—one where the opportunities are abundant and one where they are scarce.

By sponsoring a child, you're not just providing an education; you're investing in a future leader, a future doctor, teacher, or innovator who will contribute to the growth and development of their community and country.

Our program is not just about charity; it's about partnership. It's about recognizing that while we may live in different parts of the world, our humanity connects us. It's about understanding that by lifting one child out of poverty, we're not just changing their life—we're changing the world.

Imagine the impact of your support: a child who once faced a bleak future, now has the chance to go to school, learn, grow, and one day give back to their community. This is the power of sponsorship. It's a ripple effect that starts with one child but can transform entire communities.

In a world where so much divides us, sponsoring a child is a reminder that we can still come together to make a difference. It's a testament to the idea that while we may be separated by distance, we're united by a common purpose: to give every child the chance to thrive.

Give every child a chance to soar!

Dominique





“I want to be an athlete professionally. I really want to go to the Olympics! I have big dreams.”

Said Enock Twiringiyimana student at Umutara Deaf School.

Umutara Deaf School continues to stand as a beacon of hope for deaf children in Rwanda, offering not just education but empowerment, dignity, and the tools for a brighter future. This school is more than just a place of learning—it is a sanctuary where deaf children are given a voice, not through words, but through sign language, love, and understanding.

Every day at Umutara Deaf School, students discover the power of communication, the strength of community, and the beauty of being seen and heard for who they are. Through specialized education and vocational training, they are gaining the skills needed to not only survive but to thrive in a world that too often overlooks their potential.

Our partnership with organizations like Bees Abroad UK has allowed us to introduce innovative programs like beekeeping, giving students the ability to become self-sufficient and contribute to their communities in meaningful ways. These initiatives are changing lives—one student, one hive, one dream at a time.

But there is still so much more to be done. With limited resources, we continue to face challenges, but we also see immense opportunities. Each child at Umutara Deaf School holds within them a future filled with possibility, and with your continued support, we can nurture that potential and help them soar.

Join FHR’s Together We Rise Story

Join us in the coming year as we embark on new projects and continue the vital work of uplifting those who need it most. With your help, we can change lives and build a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

Fund today! The Impact Fund surrounds and supports every area of our work across Rwanda. It’s the best way to come alongside these resilient Deaf, deaf blind children and poor families as well this spring. **Will you join Rwanda’s Together We Rise story today?**

Give online at fhrwanda.org/give
Or scan the code to learn more.





As we reflect on the incredible milestones achieved this year, we are filled with immense gratitude for the unwavering support of our partners, donors, and the community. Yet, as much as we have accomplished, there is still so much more to do. Each child, each family, and each community we serve represents a new chapter in our shared story of hope, resilience, and transformation.

We invite you to continue walking this journey with us. Your support—whether through donations, partnerships, or simply sharing our mission—makes all the difference. Together, we can give more children the opportunity to dream, to learn, and to thrive.

Join us in the coming year as we embark on new projects and continue the vital work of uplifting those who need it most. With your help, we can change lives and build a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

