



# Yamba Abaana 2020 Christmas Newsletter

**Greetings to all, the supporters of the Rubanda Solidarity Nursery  
and Primary School of SW Uganda!**

Never has your love and support of the school meant more to the children and their families than it has this past year. The year 2020 will go down in history as one of the most challenging ever, affecting virtually all regions, faiths, and cultures of the world. Although sub-Saharan Africa has fared reasonably well so far compared to the industrialized areas of Europe and America, the impact on Uganda has been devastating, especially for the children of our school. As the country went through a prolonged restriction on travel and commerce due to COVID-19 for much of the past 8 months, education in all of Uganda virtually stopped between April and October. Thanks to your generosity earlier this summer, as well as the innovative ideas and relentless hard work by the staff and parents at the Rubanda school, prospects have significantly improved for return of some sense of normalcy in 2021. With your heartfelt contributions, the donors of Yamba Abaana helped preserve a significant part of the school year for all of our students since our last newsletter to you of May 2020.

**Frequent hand washing and wearing masks have been very well accepted as the price for in-person learning.**



Here are some of the key changes and new developments:

1. The nationwide lockdown, across all aspects of Ugandan society, went into effect as of March 20, 2020 and forced all schools in every part of Uganda to close entirely. The ensuing turmoil, not to mention the psychological trauma to the children, was significant as you can imagine. Formal education came to a standstill, all commerce was halted, and fear and food insecurity were rampant. The Board of Yamba Abaana proposed a multi-pronged approach to addressing the immediate and short-term needs of the school and local community. Our May fundraising efforts were amazingly effective. The Board quickly transferred the money raised to the school administration which helped support the staff and teachers through two months of partial salary compensation similar to the stimulus initiative here in the USA.

2. Through the generosity of our donors, we also provided emergency food relief by purchasing locally produced goods for the families of ALL of the children. In total, we sent slightly more than \$12,000, encompassing both the economic and food relief programs. The appreciation of the staff, teachers, and especially the children and their families in Rubanda was truly heartwarming. We at least provided a buffer against the immediate hardships in those crucial first few months.
3. The Board was also involved in the planning and implementation of the “Pandemic Education Fund”. This program allowed for the printing, distribution, subsequent collection, and grading of age specific home learning packets covering all the basic subjects. This was enormously successful with more than 90% of the children completing and returning their work! We provided these home packets through September for all grades. Yamba Abaana was able to underwrite this entire project with more than \$13,000 raised and distributed through all of the late spring and summer months.
4. On October 15, the government of Uganda allowed for partial re-opening of schools to meet the needs of the seventh level (grade) students who desperately needed to resume their completion of Primary School and to prepare for their national exams which are required to advance to secondary school. Currently, 18 students in grade 7 are boarding at the school and enjoying in-class education in a safe and protected environment. Use of masks, hand washing, and distancing are requirements, and the children are loving the personal attention and being together with their classmates again. They will get their Christmas break starting December 18<sup>th</sup> and return January 11 to resume their studies. The national graduation exam will now be held in April 2021.
5. There is every hope that the nursery and primary grades will resume in-person learning at the Rubanda Solidarity School in early 2021. Many factors will have to be considered but there is faith and optimism in the air! If in-person education for the younger kids is not possible, we will reinstitute the home distance learning program we were using up until October.

**The 7th grade is back in class and we so hope 2021 will reunite all of the students.**



**As Peace, our Yamba Abaana representative at the school, said: “Our parents are so appreciative for the care and love shown to them and their kids during this time of COVID-19 by providing study packets and food to the different households. To those that I physically visited they kept showing me how much they are happy. They greatly thank everyone who took part in all these activities.” (November 19, 2020). (Peace is standing in the back)**

Thanks to all the donors who have continued their generous support of the sponsored children throughout this year. Those funds are being held until the children return to school and will be the foundation of reopening. Very few parents and families of the students in Rubanda have had any financial means to pay the school fees and tuition. The support of the Yamba Abaana student sponsors will literally be the lifeline to holding the education and the community of our children together.

During this Christmas season we know that all of you are thinking of the needs of others. We sincerely hope you will include Yamba Abaana in your plans for donation. So far we have made it possible for the school to survive the challenges of the year through your faith, love, and support. Let us start 2021 with renewed hope for continuing the children's education and for easing the burden on those whose needs are so great right now. Any amount you feel you can offer will be most gratefully accepted and appreciated.

May God Bless You for your kindness and generous spirit!

**“Dr Bruce” Murray and the Board of Yamba Abaana USA**

*“Yet you are all still so kind and generous to go beyond your personal challenges and lend a hand to those that are thousands of miles away from your home. Love is amazing. We are so grateful and pledge our prayers and ever-growing friendship. We thank you endlessly for getting us out of the mud. Our challenges became your challenges and your financial support made our burdens lighter.”*

**Sr. Stellamaris Kyasiimire, the School Management Chair. She is one of the original co-founders of Yamba Abaana (“Save the Children”)**

