



Two of our trustees, Glyn and Mary Watkins, were very happy to finally be returning to Rwanda for the first time in two years. The purpose of the trip (which was self-funded) was to meet with the RDOs and to travel around the country to visit the RDOs in their districts and to see them at work with the schools. It was also an opportunity to take out some of the donated kit - 92kg was our luggage allowance. The difficult part was selecting what to take as the lock up where we store our donated kit is full! We prioritised new equipment for the RDOs (thanks to Rhino Global Ltd) and some sets of jerseys for the newly formed teams.



We spent a day with Jean de Dieu Hakizimana our RDO for Gasabo District (Kigali). We observed two sessions before the rain stopped play and we ended up inside the classrooms entertaining the children with some singing and games. The new bibs from Rhino were very popular!



We were delighted to welcome a new member to the team. Evariste is our new RDO for Rwamagana District and our first RDO for Eastern Province. Evariste has been volunteer coach in Rwamagana. He was very happy to receive a new bag packed with equipment from Mary and Ieuan.



We visited the bike shop in Kigali that has agreed a good price for us to buy 9 bikes for the RDOs who had requested them. This will help save both time and money for the RDOs travelling to schools. Donatien tested the bike and gave it a thumbs up!



After a few days in Kigali, we hired a car and headed to Burera district in northern province to visit RDO Assinapold. The scenery was stunning and the roads interesting!!



Despite very limited pitch facilities, Assinapold did a great job with a very enthusiastic class of children. At playtime we were mobbed by the entire school. There is no doubt that Assinapold is made to feel very welcome at the schools in Burera and when he visits a school he stays all day.



We stayed the night in Burera staying at the beautiful Byza Eco Lodge. We were provided with a room but none of the other facilities were open (kitchen/bar) but we were told we could order a take way. A local walked a few miles up the hill to deliver us a couple of bottles of beer and we ordered a pizza that arrived after two hours via moto. It was cold! We were told that it had taken so long because the moto driver thought it was soup and didn't want to spill it!



The following day we drove to Rubavu for a weekend by Lake Kivu at one of our favourite places, the beautiful Inzu Lodge. Ieuan joined us, arriving with the trophy that he was going to present to the joint winners of the Women's Big Ant Sevens tournament from the previous week.



On Sunday we headed to Rusizi, travelling from the top of lake Kivu to the bottom! It was lovely to be back in Rusizi and staying at the Hotel Emeraude. The view over the lake is stunning and the fishermen were busy catching fish and selling them onto the women waiting in the canoes to take them straight to market





We spent a few hours with the ladies of the Isooko co-operative in Rusizi at Tara Primary school who are going to start making tags and belts for the RDOs and schools. We are delighted that we have 'Made in Rwanda' tag belts. They have already made tag belts but now will start recycling old banners to turn them into tags that will be stencilled with the FoRR logo. Mary gave a short demonstration.

The Isooko women's co-operative is a new project established by Donatien (RDO for Huye district) and Mary. The women are making bags and aprons which Mary collected. These will be sold for the benefit of the co-operative. If you are interested – please get in touch! There are many different sizes and colours!



It isn't just the Isooko co-operative making tags and belts in Rwanda. Assinapold has also been making them.



The Rusizi Resilience Women's team arrived at the school on Sunday afternoon to collect their trophy from leuan. The girls were delighted as was their coach and manager, Donatien. The team had been joint winners in the Big Ant 7s tournament and the decision was made to award trophies to both teams – Muhanga Thunders and Resilience.



David is one of our new RDOs who has taken over from Donatien in Rusizi district. He was delighted with his new rucksack, bibs, cones, balls and pump. We watched him in action with ECPS Tara primary and TTC Mururu



Schools in Rwanda all have handwashing facilities in the school and all visitors are encouraged to use them



We left Rusizi and travelled back up the lake to Nyamasheke district which is where we had our last UK volunteer coaches tour in May 2019. We stayed at the Ishara Beach Motel which brought back memories of the tour. We were visiting Frederic who is the RDO who started in Nyamasheke following that tour. Kamanda, our Program Manager joined us in Nyamasheke. We visited two primary schools and a secondary school. Good to see that the Caerleon RFC shirts still going strong!



We left Nyamasheke and travelled to Kamonyi. The journey was long but the views were beautiful. We stayed at a hotel in Kamonyi with views over Kigali.



In Kamonyi District we visited our RDO, Emmanuel, at one of his schools. Once again there were pitch issues. The school has expanded and a new classroom has been built on the playground leaving a small, rocky, steep piece of land next to the toilets for all sports. The headteacher very proudly showed us the trophy that his school had won at the last district tag tournament



One of Mary's former students, from TTC Mururu in 2014, Samuel, who now runs an NGO to help students struggling with school fees and a You Tube TV channel to support up and coming artists asked to interview Mary and Glyn about their work with rugby Rwanda.

The interview can be found here
<https://youtu.be/DRW5SIXIIAI>

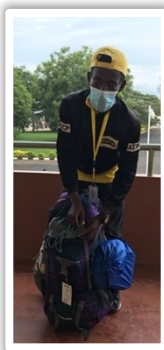


We spent our last few days in Kigali meeting with the Schools Sports Federation, visiting local rugby clubs in Kigali and distributing kit.

Eliezel from the University of Rwanda, Nyagatare campus in eastern province came to collect a new kit from us for his newly formed team, the Nyagatare Bulls. Eliezel was first introduced to rugby by Donatien when he was a student at TTC Mururu in western province. It is great to see rugby spreading across Rwanda.



Our final day in Kigali was spent with the entire team who travelled from all over Rwanda to attend. We started the day at the Rwanda Rugby Federation office distributing kit. All of the RDOs have been given a new rucksack to enable them to carry equipment to the schools. We filled them with jerseys, balls and other equipment.



leuan, Mary and Glyn led the team meeting to discuss the new way of working with schools and our plans for the future.

It was so good to have all the team together and start planning and discussing together. We look forward to seeing our team grow over the coming year.



Many have people have asked us since we came back what the Covid situation is like in Rwanda. Our experience was that Rwanda has handled the pandemic very well. We felt very safe. We had to have a negative PCR test in order to fly out to Rwanda. When we landed at Kigali airport we were tested again (PCR) and had to remain in our hotel until we were informed we had a negative result. Any large meetings or sports gathering require negative lateral flow tests. Mask wearing is compulsory everywhere – inside and outside. We also had to have a negative PCR test in order to leave the country.

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