



CHILDREN OF RWANDA

In Western Rwanda, thousands of children are unable to attend school due to the hidden costs. Children of Rwanda is a Scottish registered NGO that works directly with local schools, enabling these children to return to class and benefit from their universal right to an education.

The Problem: Rwanda is a small landlocked state where a growing population of 12.5 million people share a land a third the size of Scotland (where 5.4 million people live), making it Africa's most densely populated country. The challenges that accompany this population density are felt most in Western Rwanda, the country's poorest district. Here, most families rely on subsidiary farming on small plots of land that are getting smaller with each generation, as parents share land between siblings. With diminishing resources, it is often a near impossible task for families to generate enough income to feed their families and fund the education of their children. According to latest UNESCO figures, nationwide in Rwanda only 58% of students complete primary schooling (UNESCO 2015) and only 36% of secondary school aged children enrol into secondary school (UNESCO, 2016). Without an education, these children find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty, locked into a future of unsustainable subsidiary farming.

Our solution: Research has shown us that the best way of breaking this persisting cycle of poverty is to ensure that children are able to access and benefit from an education. Children of Rwanda does just this by working with local schools to cover the expenses of specific in-need children selected by the community, allowing them to return or remain in school whilst providing access to local health centres for the child and their family. This ensures that the children can go to school, have the right material to follow their classes, and receive the healthcare they need so they can come to school healthy and ready to learn. If we can help an entire generation, we can ensure that this entire community has a future.

This year, with only £15,500, Children of Rwanda enabled 262 children to return or remain in their local schools and provided life-saving health insurance to 1218 individuals. Making sure these children are able to remain in school and benefit from an education has a profound impact on them and the community. Children who attend school are more likely to:



Children who attend school:

- Live healthier lives
- Understand nutrition
 - Improve farming
- Have job opportunities
 - Have healthier children



Girls who attend school tend to:

- Marry later in life
- Have fewer children
- Earn 15–20% more in life for every additional year of secondary schooling



The link between health & education:

- Each year of education reduces girls chances of contracting HIV by 7%
- 200 million school years are lost every year in low-income counties due to poor health

Our story: Children of Rwanda was set up in 2014 by a final year Politics student during a dissertation research trip to Western Rwanda. While there, the striking levels of child poverty and severe malnutrition profoundly affected him.

He began a nutrition programme for a small group of children. This programme progressively filled in the gaps in the children's diet and saw rapid improvements. However, without any support, it was clear that the children would fall back into a cycle of malnutrition after he left the county. Determined to find a long term, sustainable solution, he began consulting with the local community, health centres, schools and local



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government, and learnt that the root cause of the cycle of poverty lay in the inability of the poor families to fund their children's education and health insurance (the only way to access health centres for low income families). Working with local schools and health centres, he created a bursary system by which school fees and health insurance fees could be paid directly to these two institutions allowing at risk children to return to school and granting them, and their families, access to vital health services.

How we work: Four years on, Children of Rwanda has developed good governance through an experienced and competent Board of Trustees, and has become an impact and value led charity through our commitment to do right by our beneficiaries. As an organisation we are committed to safeguarding local markets by locally sourcing everything we provide to the children, respecting Rwandan culture by yielding no influence over the school curriculum, and actively listening and learning from the communities we are involved in. We know that the communities know their needs best, which is why we involve the local community at every level of decision-making. To make this possible, we have developed a local committee of parent-representatives elected from within and by our beneficiary community who help us form our organisation's strategic direction.



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Why is Children of Rwanda the best placed to deliver this?

Our Values: If we are to make a genuine attempt to improve the lives of the children we are trying to help, then it is important that we are helping in the best way. By abiding by the below values, we believe we achieve this.

An approach based on listening: Our approach is based on listening and learning from the communities we are involved with. Our focus and programme have been developed after careful research and involvement from the families, health services and schools in the area.

Avoid promoting dependency: The need for parents to provide for their children is not eliminated but now their efforts can focus on providing nutrition rather than using the little funds they have on education or health insurance that they cannot afford.

Safeguarding Local Markets: We safeguard and contribute to local markets by locally sourcing everything that we provide to the children for their schooling.

Culture: We operate in a way that respects Rwandan culture and traditions, the children return to their local schools and follow the national curriculum over which we yield no influence.

Our Experience: The seven members of the board of Trustees bring a wide range of professional and personal experience to Children of Rwanda, ranging from directorship at Ernst & Young to leading international development organisations such as Play for change. CEO Robbie Macmillan has a Hons in International Relations and Politics and an MSc in NGO Management. He is currently a Programme Manager for Tibet Relief Fund.

Impact: We seek proof that we are helping in the right way by collecting measurable data on the impact we are having and the implications of our actions, activities and presence.

We never stop questioning the way we help.