

READY FOR A CHALLENGE?

Rwanda Aid is seeking two experienced and intrepid teachers / teacher trainers to volunteer to initiate an exciting and innovative teacher training programme in Rwanda, starting either in September 2013 or January 2014.

The details of the programme are set out below, but the volunteers will basically be working for a year in two six month periods in rural South West Rwanda supporting the development and training in two or three schools on a day by day basis. The scheme is sponsored by HSBC Global Education and approved by the Rwandan Ministry of Education. Volunteers benefit from an induction programme in the UK and in Rwanda, and will have the support of experienced UK consultants and Rwanda Aid's Rwandan Education Officer. They will be provided with secure but basic housing, and all living and travel expenses will be met.

Please apply with a handwritten letter of application, curriculum vitae and the names of two referees to David Chaplin, Chief Executive Officer(RA), The Old Cottage, Peasmarsh, East Sussex TN31 6TB (email dcpeasmarsh@hotmail.com, telephone 01797 230439)

Rwanda's education system is considered to be one of the most progressive in Africa. The government recently introduced free compulsory education for the first nine years of school for all Rwandan children with a target of increasing this to twelve years by the end of 2013. With the support of UNICEF there has been a huge expansion of primary schooling and Rwanda now has one of the highest primary school enrolment rates in Africa. The educational opportunity for girls is particularly impressive.

However, there remain some big challenges despite this investment and success: there is a high drop- out rate; the pupil teacher ratio is very high; there are insufficient classrooms; Primary school teachers are often poorly trained and poorly paid; for the first six years of primary schooling there are two shifts a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, placing a heavy strain on teachers; there is often a rigid approach to teaching and a failure to respond to the diverse abilities and needs of all learners; there is a lack of resources: books, stationery, posters, science equipment; there is a failure to develop coherent school development plans and a big burden is placed on resources by the shift from French to English as the official language of instruction

The challenge, as recognised by the Government, is to improve the quality of teaching and learning, with a focus on establishing a better trained and qualified cadre of teachers. In pursuit of this aim, there has been considerable investment in the recruitment and training of new teachers.

However, there is an urgent need to provide more classrooms, better resources and effective in-service training for teachers. This is especially true in rural areas.

VSO recognised this need, and, working closely with Mineduc, has established an in-service teacher training programme which is supported by a VSO volunteer in each of the twenty one districts in Rwanda working closely with the District Education Office.

This programme has been very carefully planned, and teachers who complete the training successfully will achieve Advanced Teacher Status which will attract additional remuneration and career prospects including the possibility of training, monitoring and inspecting roles.

However the scheme does have the following limitations, which particularly apply to more rural schools: most of the training is delivered in short courses during the holidays. Teachers are not always well motivated to attend these and there is only a limited amount that can be covered; VSO volunteers are only able to spend a limited amount of time in schools, especially rural schools, so effective follow-up is difficult.

Rwanda Aid has been working in the districts of Rusizi and Nyamasheke in South West Rwanda since 2008. It has helped to build and equip over thirty classrooms and has provided in-service teacher training, mainly in the form of short courses led by teams of UK teachers.

The founder of Rwanda Aid was a former Headmaster and Ofsted school inspector, and the organisation is supported on a voluntary basis by a number of other teachers and head teachers with extensive experience of delivering effective in-service training. Rwanda Aid also has an experienced and well-qualified Rwandan Education Officer

Rwanda Aid will now pilot a scheme whereby two “residential” trainers support two or three schools in a village for a six month period, working with the VSO scheme and aiming to have at least one teacher from each school achieving Advanced Teacher Status. This way the training will cascade through the District, and then through the country.

Specific benefits of the scheme will include the following:

1. After initial on-site assessment, training will be geared to the specific needs of each school
2. Training will be carried out on a day-to-day basis so that skills can be monitored and reinforced
3. The training will be informed by the particular circumstances of the school
4. Problems and challenges will be dealt with as and when they arise
5. There will be the opportunity for team teaching
6. Training will be supported by resources “in the field”. This will include text books, ICT equipment, stationery, posters, administrative equipment, sports and music equipment.