



May, 2021

Gateko Schoolkids Connect to the World!

Junior high school students in Gateko, including students supported by Shelter Them, have been chosen to take part in a pilot project called the Israel-Rwanda School Biodiversity Program. The goal of the project is to create cooperative student learning and action in conservation and biodiversity in Rwanda and Israel. Working in partnership with the Rogozin School in Israel and the Groupe Scolaire Rugando in Gateko, Shelter Them has been chosen to help to implement the program.

The project will enable students in both countries to learn cooperatively about the vital importance of conserving biodiversity in the world, as well as practical methods to identify habitat for protection to conserve biodiversity in their home country. In the process, students will improve language and communication skills, experience group decision making, learn skills for cross-cultural cooperation, and develop new skills in agriculture and other fields to protect biodiversity. These objectives of the program are aligned with the Government of Rwanda's National Biodiversity and Action Plan 2016, which seeks to increase early awareness of biodiversity through school programs.

An additional benefit for the Gateko community is that the program will fund the necessary materials to run the program, including a proper internet connection, computers, and a smart board for the interactive communication between students in Rwanda and Israel. These improvements will help to improve the longterm educational experience for all students in Gateko.

Shelter Them would like to thank the International Rwanda Youth for Development (IRYD) Canada and This is My Earth (TiME), as well as the Harmony Foundation of Canada for their implementation and funding of this valuable project. Their goal in this project coincides exactly with the goal of Shelter Them – to improve the lives of children in Rwanda through education, in order to achieve for those young people the skills to build for themselves an independent and sustainable future.



Strategic Plan for 2021 – Part 2

In our February newsletter, which is still available to read on our website, www.shelterthem.com, we identified the four strategic goals which Shelter Them has for 2021. In February, we talked about our plans for sponsorship. This month we would like to explain our goals to improve our Gateko community support. Our focus will be on two projects – the sewing and farming cooperatives which Shelter Them helped to establish. Both are now officially recognized by the Rwanda Cooperative Agency.

The sewing cooperative, called Berwa Iwacu, was first established in Kigali to provide our caregivers with marketable skills to achieve independence. Since that time, the co-op has moved to Gateko where



Shelter Them has provided training for 14 members. We have also equipped the group with 10 electric sewing machines. Thanks to that support, Berwa Iwacu won a bid in 2020 to make school uniforms and were authorized to produce COVID-19 masks. Like many businesses, Berwa Iwacu was impacted by the pandemic, but our goal this year is to provide the members with training in bookkeeping, marketing, entrepreneurship, best practices, and budgeting. In addition, we will help the group to rent a larger workshop, so they can increase their membership and expand their product line as

they transition out of the pandemic. Our goal is to strengthen the cooperative so that the members, mostly single mothers, can achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

The second project designed to achieve economic self-sufficiency in the community is Tubeho Neza, the farming and saving cooperative which Shelter Them also established in Gateko, though it is now fully owned and operated by its members. The cooperative is currently comprised of 38 members. Until 2020, Shelter Them supported 12 of those members with food, shelter, and other basic needs, but we no longer provide food to those beneficiaries.



Instead, we have rented land to the cooperative and provided training in business and agricultural practices, so that they can now feed their own families. This year, Shelter Them will assist the members of Tubeho Neza to purchase more land for farming and to construct a building to dry and store their crops, in order to increase their production and profits. A percentage of those profits will go towards expanding their business, and the rest will be shared equally among the members of Tubeho Neza.



Shelter Them staff will continue to liaise with the Rwanda Cooperative Agency and with local authorities to achieve independence and sustainability for our beneficiaries. This approach is consistent with all our activities – to move away from dependence to independence and self-sufficiency. We provide this assistance to the Gateko community because we believe that the children who we support can be successful only if their community is successful. Shelter Them remains committed to achieving permanent change in Rwanda.

15th Annual Shelter Them Gala - Save the Date And Get into Your Denim!

Our annual gala this year is on Sunday, June 6, at 1:00 p.m. EST. Last year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, we held our first virtual gala. Despite the restrictions, it was a great success, in part because our staff and friends in Rwanda were able to attend, in real time! This virtual Zoom gala will be even better. You won't want to miss it!

Our theme this year is Denim and Diamonds, so get out those blue jeans, put on some bling, and join us for the fun. As well as catching up with other Shelter Them supporters and friends, you will hear updates on our work in activities over the past year. You will also be able to get some great cooking ideas from our Chef Recipe Demonstration, and you can sing and dance to live music from Rwanda. So get ready for a fun afternoon, knowing that you will also be supporting the continuing work of Shelter Them in Rwanda.

Your presence will mean so much! The event is free, but you need to reserve your spot. To receive the private meeting link, please RSVP to josephinemurphy@shelterthem.com by May 31st, or call 647-467-6244. All donations will be very welcome. If you can't attend but would still like to help transform lives in Rwanda, you can make your donation on our website at www.shelterthem.com, or call the number above. Everyone will receive a tax receipt for the full amount of your donation. We would not be able to do our work without your continuing generosity and support. Thank you. Now, get out those blue jeans, put on your jewels, and get ready to party!

