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### Buigiri School for the Blind Newsletter March 2013

#### Another good result in the National Examinations, and plans for Braille Textbooks

##### National Examinations result.

In the 2012 National Examinations for pupils graduating from Primary Education, the Buigiri School for the Blind entered 12 pupils. All have passed! A 100% pass rate. This compares favourably with the national pupil pass rate of just 56%.

6 of the Buigiri pupils who have passed are blind and they will all now proceed to the Diocese's Mvumi Secondary School and the special Blind Unit which we set up 4 years ago. There they will receive specialist teaching for their secondary education. The other 6 successful pupils are sighted children and they will go to a local Secondary School. Buigiri School for the Blind was placed 7<sup>th</sup> out of the 110 primary schools in the Region. Another very creditable performance, - again we have outperformed schools where all the pupils are sighted.

##### News of our efforts to equip the School with Textbooks.

The School is convinced it can do even better in the National Examinations. These results have been achieved without the blind pupils and sighted pupils having access to textbooks. The Buigiri School for the Blind does not have any textbooks for its pupils. It is not unique in this respect. This is a problem right across the vast majority of primary schools in Tanzania. Some money is now available to the Tanzania Ministry of Education for the provision of textbooks. The Tanzanian Government has recently received a repayment of 26m GBPs from an international supplier of Air Traffic Control Systems after it was found that a deal with the Tanzanian Government for such a system had been improperly handled by the supplier. So the full contract price had to be refunded. A large part of that refunded money is now being used by the Tanzanian Government so that its Ministry of Education can equip all its primary schools with textbooks.

The main problem we face is in securing Braille textbooks for our blind pupils. We have met with the Deputy Minister of Education who has told us that only 1.2% of the funds which have become available will be set aside for textbooks for disabled pupils in primary schools. That is wholly inadequate to equip the disabled education sector with braille textbooks for blind pupils, and other textbooks for deaf, mute and mentally retarded children. Such funds as may be available for the Buigiri School for the Blind will, at best, only provide Teachers' Guides in braille (the School has 11 blind teachers on the staff) and possibly some standard printed textbooks for the severely visually impaired and sighted pupils. There will be no funds for the more expensive Braille textbooks for the blind pupils.

We know that if we can secure the necessary funds, the Government's Tanzania Braille Printing Press in Dar es Salaam should be able to print Braille textbooks for the Buigiri School for Standard 1 to Standard 7 classes. We will need a total of 1120 Braille textbooks, assuming two copies of each Braille textbook per pupil.



**Diocesan Bishop: The Right Reverend G. Mdimi Mhogolo**

The one spare copy per child is because, over time, Braille text books get worn out by the children's fingers as they pass over the raised Braille characters.

Further, the Deputy Minister of Education has committed that if we can secure such additional funding, the Buigiri School's requirement for Braille textbooks will be given highest priority at the Government's Tanzania Braille Printing Press, as a "thank you" from the Ministry for this additional funding.



The Tanzania Braille Printing Press has the skills and resources needed for this task

Left: The Braille printing press. Not the most modern machine, but highly effective.

Right: Some Teachers' Guides in Braille, already printed.



The average cost of each pupil Braille textbook will be 27\$, - the Braille textbooks often run to 3 volumes of printed Braille sheets. In Tanzania it costs up to 10 x as much to educate a blind pupil as a fully able-bodied pupil. A similar multiplier applies to the cost of Braille textbooks. Hence the significant sums involved. The total sum which the required text books will cost is \$30,000. We hope to find a donor who will help us.

Mr Hosea, the blind Head Teacher of the Buigiri School, - an outstanding man - travelled to Dar es Salaam to meet the management of the Tanzania Braille Printing Press and to review the School's requirements. They have confirmed that, on receipt of an order, they will be able promptly to print and deliver our requirement.

*Finally, we wish to say a big "thank you" to you, our Supporters.*

Whilst the Tanzanian Government's Ministry of Education pays the teachers, the food for the children, and the diesel fuel for the pupils' travel to and fro at the beginning and end of term, everything else must be paid for by the Diocese. *It is only through your support that the Diocese is able to fund the majority of our non-teaching staff, the electricity, water, firewood, transport, and buildings maintenance programs. Your support also funds the Braille paper and Braille equipment which are so essential. Thank you for all you do for the School. We also want to thank all those whose efforts are directed at boosting the School's Trust Fund. This Fund is administered by the Church Mission Society in Oxford, UK. It continues to grow, and is key to the School's long term financial sustainability.*

A handwritten signature in green ink, which appears to read "Rehema Nchimbi".

**Hon. Dr. Rehema Nchimbi, Regional Commissioner, Dodoma  
Chair, Buigiri School for the Blind Project  
Diocesan Bishop: The Right Reverend G. Mdimi Mhogolo**