

CYARUZINGE IRENERO NURSERY CENTER



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ACTIVITIES INFORMATION REPORT 2021

Irerero nursery school is a school which educate kids from vulnerable families and historically marginalized community in Rwanda also known as potters. As the COVID-19 pandemic kept spreading, the historically marginalized community (Batwa community) has been profoundly affected. Schools have been closed for the best part of 2020 and 2021 and when they reopened, they had to follow certain criteria and conditions to ensure the safety of the students and teachers during this pandemic period. Thanks to PSA, Irerero nursery school has been able to fulfill all the required conditions to mitigate the COVID-19 impact while still able to function. As Irerero nursery school continues to support the ECD program in this marginalized and vulnerable community of Cyaruzinge village through the provision of quality education and nutrition support for health improvement, we are always grateful for the collaboration of PSA.

Irerero nursery school interventions

Irerero nursery school has reached a total of 115 students in Cyaruzinge village through provision of ECD program, trainings, education support, sports and entertainment as well as nutrition support.

EDUCATION

Key concerns in ECD in Cyaruzinge community:

Before the intervention of Irerero nursery school, many batwa children and poorest people in Cyaruzinge were not going to school and were living a harsh life on the streets where they often got in trouble with the law. Those who were in school had trouble staying in school due to the age difference between them and their classmates because the batwa children started school at an old age. Through the partnership of PSA, Irerero nursery school was founded and gave the batwa children a chance to have access to ECD training that will facilitate their transition to primary school.

The year 2021, Irerero nursery school has seen an increase in school enrollment from 78 students last year to 115 students this year. 45 students are 3 years old, 30 students are 4 years old, 25 students are 5 years old while the remaining 15 are 6 years old.

Through PSA's donation, we rolled out tailored interventions in education to improve the students' studying experience.

The interventions can be summarily categorized as:

- a) Awareness and capacity building of parents
- b) Payment of teachers' salaries and other necessary fees.
- c) Distribution of school uniforms and school materials.
- d) Distribution of shoes
- f) Buying school furniture and painting the classrooms
- g) Buying toys

- **Awareness and capacity building of parents**

At the beginning of school reopening in Irerero nursery school employed awareness and capacity-building strategies to sensitize parents on the benefits of putting their kids in school. This was achieved through a parent to teachers meeting. Training of teachers and parents about Early Childhood Development and the Rwandan curriculum for Pre-primary school.

The course covered learning through playing, classroom management, timetable, role of the teacher behavior management.



- **Payment of teachers' salaries and other necessary fees**

For the academic year 2021, Irerero nursery school rolled out monthly wages for teachers as well as communication fees.

- **Distribution of school uniforms and school materials**

Irerero nursery school maintained engagement and interest for education through the distribution of school uniforms and school materials. This intervention motivated parents who were on the verge of removing their kids from school. Even the students were motivated as well to show up every day to school as they liked the feel of their new uniforms and the brand-new books that they could not wait to fill with their newly acquired knowledge.



Distribution of shoes and sanitary materials

Irerero nursery school recognizes the importance of hygiene and the need to look smart among school-going Batwa children. Hence, Irerero nursery school bought and distributed shoes and sanitary materials such as toothbrushes, soaps and toothpaste to school-going Batwa children.



- **Buying school furniture**

Irerero nursery school bought tables, and small chairs for the students between five-six years to sit in during class., this improved their concentration and class experience as they did not have to bend at awkward angles that are not good for their backs in order to write. For the younger students between the age of three and four, they were given colorful mats that are interesting for young kids to look at and play on. Irerero also painted the classrooms and put the mural painting to the walls.



- **Buying toys**

A young mind needs stimulation for it to grow and be able to solve complex issues at the appropriate age. Thus Irerero bought toys for these students to play with and improve their cognitive thinking as well as their social skills where they can learn to play with and interact with others as well as share their toys with others hence teaching them empathy.



- **Testimonials and human-interest stories**

Over the course of the 2020-2019 academic year, IRERERO had an impact on school-going children and their families leading to testimonials from IRERERO interventions.

Below is the feedback we received:



“I myself, never went to school and neither did my husband. Our little grandson going to school is something of a miracle for us. It’s like every day we see magic through him. He gives grace in English when it’s time to eat, a language we do not know anything about. He is also so smart, he can count in English and French. He also is very hygienic, every morning he wakes up and brushes his teeth like a white kid, something we don’t do in the village. We are all impressed at home and grateful for what the school is doing for us.” Said Nyirabapfakurera, a member of Batwa community in Cyaruzinge.



Mukankusi, said: “I honestly don’t know how to thank this porridge intervention. Now we know that our children who are in school are well taken care of and won’t be starving when they come home. They get all the necessary nutrients they need to grow well in that porridge. Even when we have nothing for them to eat at home, we do not feel very anxious as before because they at least got porridge at school.”

The school principal of the primary school in Cyaruzinge said “Irerero nursery school is doing wonders for this community. Students who come here after graduating from Irerero are so smart and among the top performers here, which is something that has never been said before about the batwa students.”

Community Health and Development

Key concerns in Community Health and Child Development

A healthy child is a prerequisite for good performance in school. Hence, Irerero nursery school works to understand key community health challenges faced by the Batwa community in such as malnutrition and anemia, and rolls out solutions and interventions across a range of aspects.

The Community Health and Child Development interventions can be summarily categorized as:

- a) Nutrition support through building a school kitchen
- c) Deworming all students

● Nutrition support

Irerero nursery school improves children’s school performance by providing them with porridge to nourish their small bodies that need fuel in order to function well. This intervention also ensures that the children are well nourished hence fighting against malnutrition.

200 Kg of porridge and 100 kg of sugar were used in two months and a half. Roughly in a month 100 kg of porridge and 50 kg of sugar are used.

● Deworming

Deworming kids at school is a nice way to help them concentrate and focus in class. It also boosts their performance as they do not easily get sick and have to miss classes.



Covid-19 mitigation

Irerero nursery school complied with the government instructions for all schools and bought a sink for hand washing that was put in front of the school and the test for testing all children in the morning to know if there is someone who have the fever. This reduces the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus and improved hygiene in the school. Students were also reminded daily to wear

their masks and put them on correctly. Parents of the students were also educated and recommended to routinely wash their kid's masks to keep them clean.



Sports and Entertainment (Itorero)

The school started a young children's traditional dancing club where small children from the school are coached by a member of the Batwa community. The children also have formed a team where they practice and compete with other children from different schools. This has built a good relationship with other schools and fostered good relationships between the batwa and the outside community, chipping away at the usual stigma that is commonly associated with the batwa people.

Therefore, Kwizera singing and dancing group has performed in the different events, this is helps the group to make the network and to be known on the market and people can hire them to the ceremonies.





Lessons learned

- Children respond better to their peers when they are not hungry
- Performance improves when the parents are involved in their children's education
- School enrollment increased when the kitchen program started
- The dancing club cemented the relationship of the batwa community and their neighbors

Challenges

- It is hard to respect the keeping distance COVID-19 measure because of shortage of space in the class
- No recreation area for the students
- Few teachers compared to the number of students which leads to teachers' work overload and students not getting enough attention
- No continuous professional development of teachers leading to stagnant knowledge

Recommendations

- Build one new classroom
- Create a recreational area/ students' playground
- Provide teachers and parents' continuous professional training
- Increase the number of teachers
- Strengthen and support the entertainment culture