



Rural Africa Children's Education Trust

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Girl Power comes to Mfuma thanks to Mercy!

Mercy E. Peter, part of the RACET team since 2019, is now Head of the new IT Centre at Mfuma School. She is also our Student Liaison Officer, in charge of the safeguarding and well-being of all our female RACET students at both secondary school and university.

In 2018, prior to Mercy's arrival, only six students at Mfuma School sat the WAEC (Secondary School Leaving Exam). All of them did so with the help of RACET, but, of the six, there was only one girl. Fast forward to 2021, and we now have 44 Mfuma students registered to take their WAEC exam, 22 of which are girls.

This turnaround reflects a combination of factors. The new IT Centre set up in 2020 with help from BFSS has been crucial, but so has Mercy's influence.

Mercy is a wonderful role model for female students, having graduated from university with a degree in Chemistry and now working in education to uplift others. She is quick to point out that much of her work involves changing local attitudes towards educating girls. In an area where farming families are the norm, education for boys has traditionally been a greater priority than for girls. Mercy spends some of her time visiting the villages to convince parents to let their girls come to school, instead of being kept at home to farm, do chores all day, or get married at an early age.

Visit the RACET website at www.racet.org and share your thoughts with us at secretary@racet.org

For information about donations and other queries by phone, contact Mary Ann Perasso on 01959 522337



Mercy Peter, shown here with secondary girls at Ntrigom School after they receive their sanitary towels for the term. Mercy is RACET's Head of IT Centre at Mfuma School, in addition to being our Student Liaison Officer across all three schools. She has been instrumental in improving the number of girls successfully finishing secondary school.

Her strategy is working as the number of girls enrolled at Mfuma School has increased.

Mercy recognises that RACET's decision to provide drinking water, a toilet block, and sanitary towels to female students has been instrumental in keeping girls in school regularly. In addition, she teaches them about personal hygiene and runs a course each term called Understanding My Body. But Mercy gives her female students further life skills to help them succeed in a challenging environment: she teaches them about appropriate relationships between female and male students, female students and male teachers (to ensure the girls are aware of boundaries, their rights, and what constitutes harassment), and even includes Self Defence as part of the programme.

Mercy says the most rewarding aspect of her work is direct interaction with her students. She inspires them to aim higher in life, to dare to dream and to follow through with hard work to achieve it. But she is also there to support them in their challenges, too, sometimes with things as basic as chronic hunger. She is pleased that the recent addition of more female staff at the school as facilitated by RACET has meant a more visible demonstration of the benefits of educating women and their contribution to the well-being of the community.

Thank you, Mercy, for your amazing impact on behalf of RACET!

Introducing the VIN Club Bursary



In the Autumn of 2019, the VIN Club (*Vires In Numeris* or “Strength in Numbers”), based in the UK, raised an amazing £15,166 for RACET with a superb fundraising initiative. In addition to sponsoring two of our university students, VIN Club provided RACET with the means to establish the **VIN Club Bursary**.

With this Bursary, over a five year period, RACET is assisting an additional 150 students to complete their secondary school education by paying for the leaving exam for top students and providing essential textbooks to all senior secondary students.

The WAEC (secondary school leaving exam) is a disproportionately expensive external exam that is prohibitive for many students coming from the Ntrigom area in Cross River State, and many bright students (girls in particular), are unable to sit the exam because their families can’t afford it. With the VIN Club Bursary, RACET is able to offer 30 top students a year across three schools the opportunity to have their WAEC exam fees paid. This is in addition to the 10 students already having their WAEC fees funded directly by RACET. If they pass their WAEC exam, they will have officially completed their secondary education, making them eligible for better employment opportunities and, in some cases, taking university entrance exams.

Furthermore, the expense of textbooks has been another obstacle for students to overcome. The schools are unable to provide textbooks to their students (or to their teachers, who are often forced to purchase the textbooks for the classes they teach out of their meagre salaries). This long standing lack of resources results in classrooms where not a single student has a textbook, and the lesson is spent copying text off the blackboard into exercise books. Ironically, this situation worsened when RACET started supplying textbooks to our scholarship students, thereby creating a two-tiered scenario of a small group of students with textbooks amongst a larger group without them. Still, too much teaching time was being lost to copying text off the blackboard.

But now, with the help of VIN Club’s fundraising, RACET is improving the quality of education for all secondary students by providing the most expensive textbooks completely free. Predominantly these are the textbooks for Sciences (Physics, Chemistry & Biology), plus Maths and English. Now precious classroom time can be used more productively and students can have their own books to study from in the evenings. Through the VIN Club Bursary, all 271 current senior secondary students across three schools now have the core text books required for the school curriculum.

RACET is grateful to our friends at VIN Club for their wonderful generosity and commitment to our work.



The Vin Club Bursary now enables all senior secondary students to have their own textbooks for Sciences, Maths and English. This takes a lot of financial pressure off families in addition to helping the students have access to the required texts.

Ayo Gbadebo, RACET’s Head of Operations in Nigeria, delights in awarding textbooks and bookbags to one of this year’s RACET scholars.