

When Uwineza Shatini lost her husband in 2023, her life changed overnight. Left alone with two young children and no source of income, the 29-year-old mother struggled to keep her family afloat. Ensuring her children stayed in school became an almost impossible task.

“I had no way out,” Uwineza says. “Without a job, even basic school needs were beyond my reach.”

With support from friends, she was eventually connected to the [Abdallah Kiromba Foundation \(AKF\)](#), a local charity working in partnership with the Zakat Foundation of America. Through the partnership, Uwineza’s first-born daughter received education support, allowing her to return to school.



One of the beneficial pictured above is applauded by AKF for having performed well in class last term

The Charity supports the family not only by covering school fees, but also providing them with learning materials and offering additional family assistance to help meet basic needs.

Eyigena Madina, a widow and beneficiary from Ruhaza Sector in Rubavu District, says she learned about the charity in a simple but meaningful way; after prayers at her local mosque last year. Encouraged by what she heard, she decided to register, not knowing it would soon change her family's situation. Like many widowed mothers in Rubavu District, Madina shoulders full responsibility for her household, balancing small income opportunities with childcare and school needs.

The 35-year-old mother recalls the relief she felt when her second-born child, Mugabo Alphone, was selected to receive support, following in the footsteps of her first daughter. For her, it was more than assistance; it was reassurance.

"I was really struggling to raise school fees for my second-born," she said. "Starting this year, he will receive support, and that eases a heavy burden. It means I can better care for my last two children as well."

She added that the foundation's help has gone beyond education. Last year, the AKF also covered the family's Community-Based Health Insurance (Mutuelle de santé), a gesture she says brought peace of mind during an uncertain time.

With her children's education and health now more secure, Madina noted that she is hopeful the support will give them a better chance to stay in school and plan for the future.

AKF and the Zakat Foundation have supported more than 150 families across 14 districts to ensure children from vulnerable households can attend school. Over the weekend in Rubavu, support reached out to 29 families, six in Musanze, and 64 across Gatsibo and Nyagatare districts.

Last Friday, the foundations began distributing school fees and scholastic materials to 50 children from 35 disadvantaged families in Kigali, Nyanza, Bugesera, Rwamagana, Gicumbi and Ngoma.

Read More: [Charity Support Enables Vulnerable Children to Stay in School](#)



Beneficial's receiving their school requirements before start of school in Rubavu District. All photos by Rwanda Dispatch

Many of the beneficiaries are orphans or children of widows who had dropped out of school due to financial hardship. Distribution in other parts of the Northern and Eastern provinces continued over the weekend.

For Uwineza and other beneficial's, the impact has been life-changing. "My children are no longer sent home or delayed from starting school," she says. "They receive all the school requirements, and as a family, we are supported so they can have meals and reach school on time."

Eight-year-old Vannick Layan Phillep, a pupil at École Jean Paul II De Mbugangali in Rubavu, is among the beneficiaries. According to AKF, his academic performance has improved since receiving support two years ago.

“Life at school has changed,” Layan said. “I eat at school like the others under school feeding program, and I’m no longer sent home because my mum hasn’t paid fees.”

Donati Niyonsaba, President and Legal Secretary of the AKF, said the partnership goes beyond paying school fees.

“We also provide learning materials such as books, pens, pencils and school bags, as well as counselling, to help these children study well and succeed in school.”

He notes that the foundation has expanded its reach, increasing the number of supported children from 100 to 150 this year, with plans to extend support to more districts. AKF works with community leaders to identify eligible children, conducts home visits to assess their circumstances, and follows up closely with schools to monitor attendance and progress.



An AKF officer dressed in green jacket checks the list of parents who receive the benefits in Rubavu District before handing each parent the school requirements.

Beyond education, the foundations also support more than 650 families to enroll in the Community-Based Health Insurance scheme (Mutuelle de Santé), improving access to healthcare. In addition, vulnerable farmers receive livestock such as goats, sheep and cows to support household income and improve agricultural productivity.



Parents are encouraged to actively follow up on their children's progress to ensure they achieve strong academic performance.