

As a new school term begins across Rwanda, the season stirs more anxiety than excitement for many orphans and vulnerable children. The burden of school fees and the lack of basic supplies often make education feel out of reach.

For Scovia Mutamba, a widow raising three children in Kabarole Sector, Gatsibo District that used to be her painful reality.

“After my husband passed away, I didn’t know how I would survive,” she recalled. “I was alone, with nothing—no school fees, not enough food. Every day was a struggle.”

That all changed when she began receiving support through an education program run by the Abdullah Kiromba Foundation, in partnership with the Zakat Foundation of America. Thanks to the program, two of her children now attend Mustard Seed, a private school in Kabarole, with full tuition and scholastic materials covered.



*Scovia Mutamba standing beside her stall at Kabarole market*

“They provide school bags, books, and pay 100% of the school fees,” Mutamba said. “Before each school term begins, I receive a financial support to buy any additional supplies needed.”

Beyond education, the program offers Mutamba a small stipend, which she has used to grow her vegetable business at the local market in Kabarole town.

“Whenever the school support comes, I pay the school requirements and invest the balance into my business,” she explained. “It helps me feed and clothe my children. It keeps my worries away and gives me hope again.”

Mutamba’s story is just one of more than 100 success stories across Rwanda benefiting from this program, now in its second year. The initiative specifically targets orphaned children who have lost their fathers, covering school fees and providing essential materials like textbooks, notebooks, and uniforms—removing the biggest barriers to education.

For Jane Mujawyesu, a widow from Gatoki Village in Kabeza Cell of Gatsibo District, the impact has been equally transformative.

“I have twins, and the foundation supports one of them,” Mujawayesu said. “We are given everything—school fees, books, shoes, and uniforms. When the school term starts, I no longer feel anxious.”

Before the intervention, Mujawayesu’s 15-year old daughter had dropped out of school because the family could not afford the costs. As a widow, Mujawayesu struggled to provide for both children, but today, she beams with pride as both of her twins are back in school.



*Jane Mujawayesu, a widow from Gatoki Village in Gatsibo District with her daughter*

“This support has changed my family’s life,” she said. “Now, every term, my children return to school equipped with all they need, and their studies continue without disruption.”

Beyond financial aid, the program also offers mentorship and life-skills training to help children succeed both inside and outside the classroom. Local leaders work closely with the foundation to identify the most vulnerable families, ensuring the support reaches those who need it most.

“Our support doesn’t end at the classroom door,” said Donath Niyonsaba, president of the Abdullah Kiromba Foundation. “We monitor each child’s progress and encourage them along the way. Our goal is to give these children a real chance at a better future.”

During a recent event distributing school supplies, Niyonsaba urged parents and guardians to remain active in their children’s education.

“We want families to stay engaged and help their children stay focused on their studies,” he said. “When we see healthy, happy children, we know the program is working.”

Looking ahead, the foundation plans to extend its impact by providing families with income-generating livestock such as goats, sheep or chickens—helping build long-term financial resilience alongside education support.

“This is not just about paying school fees,” Niyonsaba emphasized. “It’s about restoring dignity, strengthening families, and opening doors to opportunity.”

As the new academic year unfolds, these children across Rwanda are returning to school not just with books and uniforms—but with renewed hope. And for Scovia Mutamba, that makes all the difference.

“I see my children going to school, dressed well, happy, and ready to learn,” she said. “Now, I can sleep at night knowing their future is no longer lost.”

For mothers like Scovia Mutamba, every pen and notebook packed, every uniform worn, and every smile is a reminder that the future is no longer a distant dream but unfolding right before the children’s eyes.