



2021 Annual Report



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An Open Letter from our Founder

After navigating 2020, a year that brought daily routines to a halt around the world and severely impacted many lives, especially the community we serve in Rwanda, we designated 2021 as a year of recovery. We longed to see light at the end of the storm. As we were navigating uncharted waters, we knew the light was coming: our beacon of strength and hope, a lighthouse. As we reflect on 2021, we wanted to share our anchors that helped us weather this storm: our core pillars of empathy, community, and empowerment.

With the new year ahead, we have so many milestones to celebrate: we've had our first high school graduation, we've made our merchandise available for purchase through company stores such as Cisco, we've navigated supply chain issues with our first shipment arriving in Rwanda in January - with items including jerseys, shorts, and shoes for our children at RAS.

Moving into 2022 and beyond, we remain steadfast in our pursuit to serve as a beacon of hope and support to at-risk and orphaned youth in underdeveloped countries across the world, and we'll continue to spread light across Rwanda and beyond.



Alphonsine Imaniraguha Anderson



PAUSE

2021 allowed us to take a pause and focus on our 3 core principles: empowerment, community, and empathy.

PAUSE

Empowerment

2021 allowed us to take a pause and re-orient ourselves in 3 core principles: empowerment, community, and empathy. We continue to live our principles daily. For our first principle, **Empowerment**, our mission to strengthen and empower vulnerable youth enables us to ensure we are making a lasting impact for years to come. We believe that when you change even one child's life, your impact spans generations. The youth we support often come to us from broken homes. They want to go to school, play sports, and live out their dreams just as any other child would, but they struggle with the lack of food and parental affection and support at home. Our mission is to bridge that socioeconomic gap through basic needs assistance, education, and counseling.

We empower our youth by equipping them with the resources they need to flourish. While they may have been born at a disadvantage, the Rwandan youth are no less deserving of their basic human rights. Our kids are bright: they have goals of being star athletes, engineers, and role models for their younger siblings. They want to make a difference in their communities and contribute to the world.



With food, education, and love, we empower our Rwandan youth to shape their own futures. Food security gives them the strength to chase their dreams. Education equips them with the wisdom to turn those dreams into reality. Love is a reminder that they are worthy and have a place in this world.

Empowerment is about uplifting your neighbor. While many of us are 8,000 miles away, we fight every day to make an appreciable difference in the lives of our neighbors – the Rwandan youth. There have been moments in our lives when we've been uplifted. It's our duty to pay that same benevolence forward. We hope that this creates a domino effect, enabling more Rwandans to empower each other.

PAUSE

Community

Our second principle is **Community**. It takes a village – Rising Above the Storms is a community of people from three countries: the United States, Canada, and Rwanda, all with the same mission in mind.

Every member brings a unique set of skills to the table and makes a significant contribution to our vulnerable youth at the center of our community. People need people, and we are stronger together. This is especially true for the youth we serve in Rwanda; RAS has created an unconventional village for the youth who previously had not known what community may provide.

Most of our youth have lost a parent (either through death or abandonment) and experience poverty at home, resulting in having to live on the streets. Many who come to the Center feel cut off from the world. Social isolation can lead to loneliness, low self-esteem, and other feelings of desperation. During quarantine, we experienced just a taste of what many of these youth have endured for most of their lives. However, at the Center, our youth know they're not alone.

Not only do they have the support of the staff, but they foster healthy peer-to-peer relationships that are crucial to a child's development. They build a sense of camaraderie through sports, learn how to work together, and learn how to support one another through group exercises. They're comforted knowing that we're in this together.



⏸ PAUSE

Empathy

Our third principle, **Empathy**, is a driver for action. Here at RAS, empathy is at the core of our values. As we seek to grow and impact more lives across the globe, we remain steadfast in one key principle: every decision, and every case for change must be made through and with empathy.

A child's unmet needs can lead to feelings of anger, frustration, hopelessness, irritation, sadness, loneliness, and embarrassment. Many of our youth are hurting, and poor choices often arise out of desperation. Our team strives to display compassionate and servant leadership to drive meaningful change in the lives of these youth.

RAS' mission to provide hope and support cannot be done without empathetic leaders and supporters. Our center cannot operate if we fail to try to understand how and why children are facing difficult situations, whether in school or at home. No child is too lost or too far strayed - and our core value of empathy reminds us of this each day.

Through counseling at our center, and through learning about our children's backgrounds, wants, and needs, we are able to build a safe space for them, where they do not fear judgment. We know this is where the real work begins.





REFLECT

Reflecting back on the strides we made throughout 2021 to further our mission.



REFLECT

2021 In Summary

\$102K

**Raised to bring
hope and stability**

47

**Kids with access to
opportunity**

+\$42K

**Increase from
2020**

In 2021, we continued to focus our efforts on our center in Rwanda, where our priority was to make a lasting impact on a country that is still reeling from the aftermath of the genocide against the Tutsi. Eventually, our long-term goal is to scale beyond Rwanda to other developing countries around the world.

To help us reach our goals, our lighthouse shined bright and we saw more donations than ever before. We saw a big increase in revenue year over year, from raising \$60K in 2020 to just over \$100K in 2021! This was driven in large part by our partnership with Westcon Comstor as well as other large individual and recurring donations throughout the year. Additionally, with the donation from Westcon-Comstor Subsaharan Africa through the Comstor Cares Initiative, our computer lab has been expanded - we received 10 additional laptops and a paid computer instructor for a year. Additionally, the grant will also provide a year-long supply of sanitary pads for the girls at our center.

Our increased funding enabled us to almost double the amount of money spent on programs for our kids. Because of this, we were able to significantly enhance our center's computer lab in Rwanda, help over 47 children and their families, and send sports equipment to the center to keep our kids active and involved.

Where We Work

In total, 8 of our kids reside in **Gatenga**, and 39 in **Busanza**. There are 2 students currently residing at the Learning Center for tutoring purposes and to prepare for the state exam.



REFLECT

Program Pillars

Academic Support

We support our children's education by offering after-school programs, and working with their teachers.

Computer Skills

Through our lab, we boost our kids' confidence and curiosity by teaching them essential computer skills.

Emotional Support

We offer counseling sessions to our children and their families for continued emotional support.

Basic Needs Assistance

We provide our children with temporary housing, clean water, meals, clothing, and a safe space for continued education





Major Milestones

Thanks to our partnership with a local Rwandan nonprofit, Amahoro (Peace) Builders, our volunteers, and donors we have:

Our first graduate

Idrissa officially graduated in 2021, and as of March 2022 is embarking on his journey in college on a full scholarship, where he plans to become a mechanical engineer. He wants to be a role model for his younger siblings and make his mother proud.

Delivered our first shipment to Rwanda

This shipment contained \$12K worth of clothes, cleats, and soccer balls that were shared with our community in Rwanda. The children can now spend more time staying active and having fun.

Raised \$350 through our community restaurant fundraisers

RAS is garnering cross-community support in new ways and utilizing these funds across our footprint.

Launched our Salesforce platform

We are now able to track our center's impact via Salesforce, allowing us to better understand and articulate our impact.

New branding

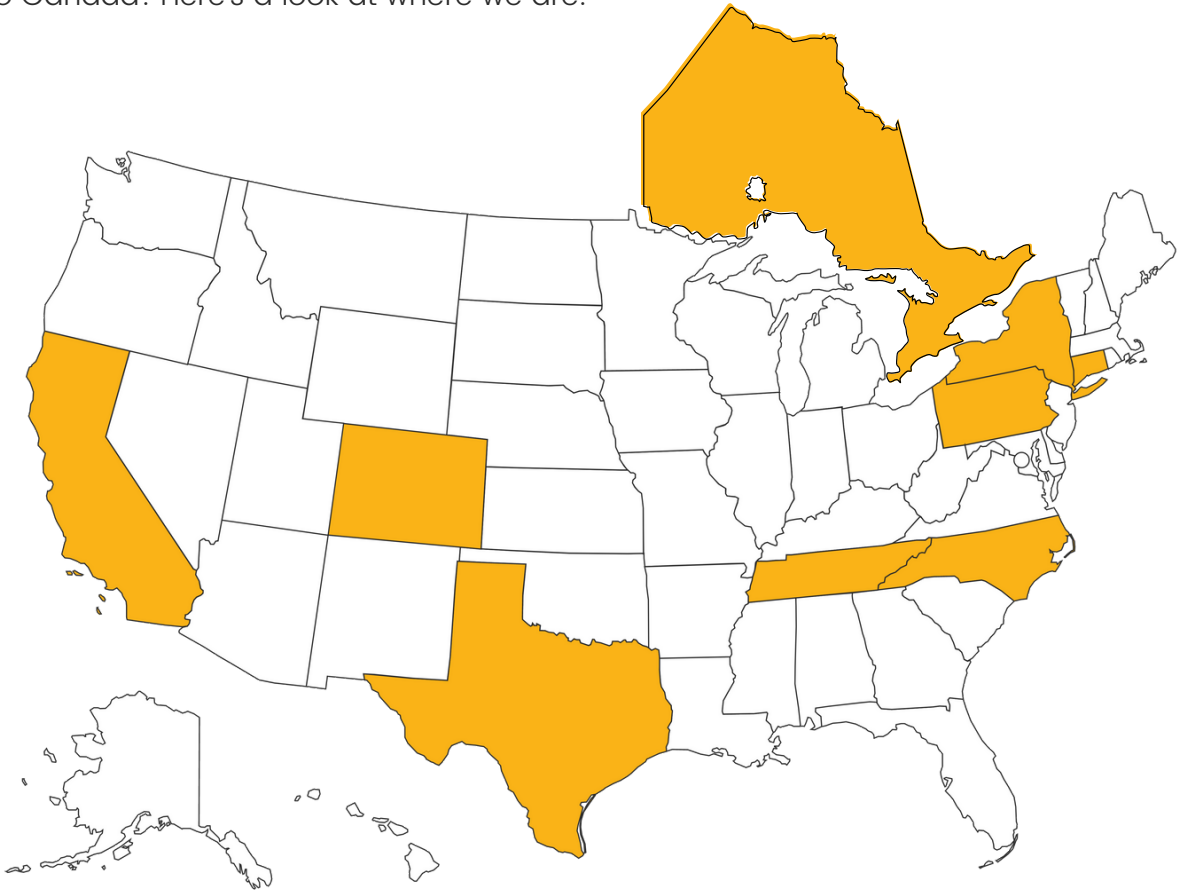
Our volunteers were able to come together and donate their time to make this happen, helping us better tell our story. Our new visual identity is reflected through our website & merchandise, where our supporters and donors can now showcase RAS in their day-to-day lives.



REFLECT

RAS Americas Team

Rising Above the Storms is based in Brentwood, Tennessee, but remote work means our US team and board members are spread across 8 states in the United States, and even into Canada! Here's a look at where we are:



Tennessee, North Carolina, Texas, California, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Colorado, New York + Toronto

12

**Americas based
volunteers**

7

US Board Members

Our Board

Alphonsine Imaniraguha Anderson

Executive Director & Founder

Michele Day

Chief Operating Officer

Devin Hood

Chief Marketing Officer

Luann Kennedy

Chief Financial Officer

Vinay Nichani

Chief Growth Officer

Anisha Sivakumar

Chief Strategy Officer

Tschudy Smith

Chief People Officer





Success Stories

Success Stories

Meet Isaac Byiringiro

We met Isaac in 2018 when he was merely 12 years old. He had been forced onto the streets and had found comfort in various drugs. He was often found sleeping in abandoned buildings across town, alone and afraid. He felt completely disconnected from his family and felt trapped on a path destined for failure.

Since joining RAS, the Center has helped him restore faith in himself and his ability to change his circumstances. He has reconnected with his mother, and his entire community remarks on the transformation he has made since 2018. Isaac credits the Center's counseling for changing his mindset and outlook on life, and for empowering him to dream bigger than he'd ever imagined he could. The Center also provided him with the basics to better perform in school - books, materials, and clothing.

Upon returning to school, Isaac has been recognized as a hard-working student who spends his free time studying and seeking higher learning. He has also been able to return home, where he helps his mother with chores and takes care of his siblings. One day, Isaac hopes to become a professional soccer player and earn a Ph.D.



Success Stories

Meet Itangishaka Nshuti

Itangishaka came to our Center in 2018, feeling lost and unsure of his future. He was facing a life riddled with depression and fear and sought solace in drugs. He was surrounded by a dangerous environment living in the streets of Rwanda, and he dared not dream of a better future for himself.

At age 15, he joined our Center and the Amahoro Builders family. Since then, he has been able to learn critical skills such as learning to read and write in school. Now, after being at the Center for four years, Itangishaka has found new meaning in life – and he dreams of a future where he is able to support his family and become a mechanical engineer.

Each day, he feels immensely grateful to RAS for turning his life around – for reconnecting with his family, for discovering what he is passionate about, and for better equipping himself for a future where he can become anything he wishes.



Success Stories

Meet Assouman Uwimana

Assouman joined the Center in 2018 after receiving an invitation from Amahoro Builders. Prior to joining the Center, he had been a part of a gang in Rwanda – stealing and living in the streets. When he enrolled in the Center, Assouman began counseling sessions. He credits these sessions for helping him leave the streets and the gang he had become involved in at age 12 as well as reuniting him with his family.

The Center paid his entrance fees, allowing him to return to school. After studying at the Center for his national exam, he has now officially qualified for Senior 4, or 10th grade in the United States! He plans to major in Food Processing at EFA Nyagatare. He is currently studying hard and receiving top marks in his classes. His mother is extremely proud and supportive and is thrilled to have him home. One day, Assouman dreams of owning his very own food processing business in Rwanda.





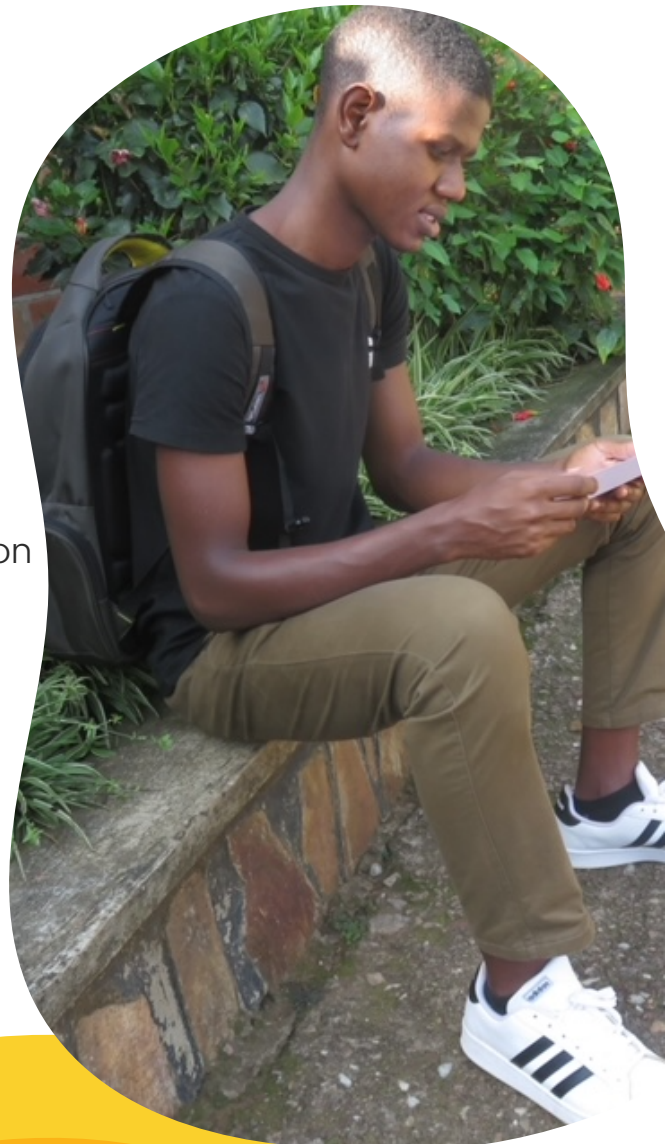
REFLECT

Success Stories

Meet Idrissa Dusengimana, our first graduate!

It is with great excitement that Rising Above the Storms announces its first high school graduate: Idrissa Dusengimana. When we first met Idrissa in January of 2017, life had been anything but easy. He was struggling with the recent loss of his father, and barely had access to basic needs such as food, water, and shelter. He had been forced to drop out of school and was collecting scrap metal to exchange for food to eat.

After joining the Center, Idrissa committed to studying hard and was determined to create a life his father would be proud of. Through the support of our donors and our staff at our Center, Idrissa completed high school - but he didn't stop there. Now 20 years old, Idrissa has officially enrolled in college and began schooling in March 2022 on a full scholarship! He is enrolled in Integrated Polytechnic Regional College in Kigali where he plans to study Advanced Mechatronics Technology. One day, his hope is to work for a large company. He thanks RAS for being a part of his journey, and supporting and believing in him every step of the way.

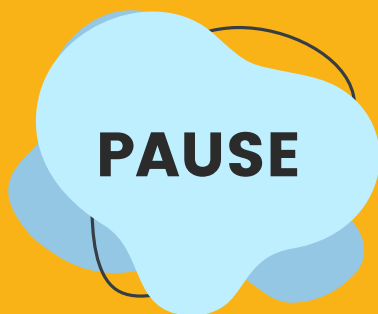




Our Events

With our supporters and volunteers located across the United States and Canada, our Fundraising and Events team has enjoyed the opportunity to plan events unbound by geography. Our first nationwide restaurant day at Panda Express brought in supporters from nine states and raised \$310. With the world reopening, our team is excited to continue working on virtual and hybrid events.

Our volunteers were elated to launch our first annual year-end donation campaign in quarter four, raising over \$3,800. Our “Light at the End of the Storm” campaign introduced our Pause, Reflect, Take Action framework to our volunteers and RAS supporters. This inspired us all to be mindful of how we can better serve RAS and our communities. As we move into 2022 and beyond, we look forward to hosting events and fundraisers in a hybrid capacity, where we can bring together supporters across the globe united around our cause.



2021 Financials

Income Sources

- Partnership with Westcon Comstor
- Bright Funds (corporate matching)
- Marketing Campaigns
- Triangle Community Foundation
- Cisco Matching Gifts Program
- Individual Contributors (Donors)
- Amazon Wish List
- Amazon Smile Program

Expenses

- Rwanda Learning Center Building (Rent)
- Payroll and Taxes (Rwanda Staff)
- Transportation & Utilities
- School Fees
- Computer Lab
- Grocery & Living Expenses
- Sports Equipment
- Administrative Tools (quickbooks - US)
- Marketing & Advertising



Financials

\$102K

in total consolidated revenue in the past fiscal year compared with \$60K in 2020

In 2021, we invested:

- \$60K in the Rwanda Learning Center
- \$4.6K for operating expenses

Net Assets

- 2021: \$78K
- 2020: \$46K



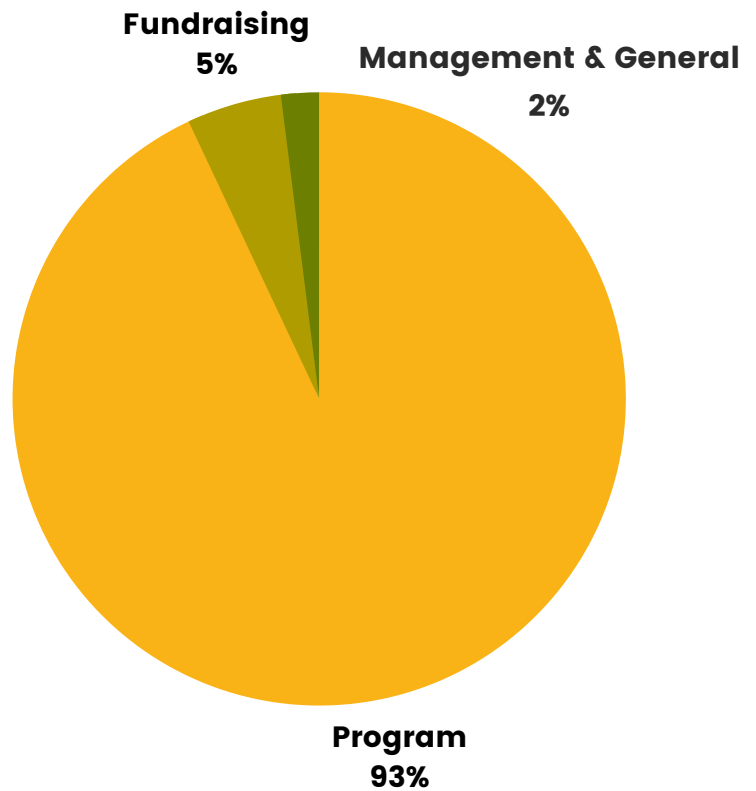
Overall Expense Allocation

\$65,000

Total expenses in 2021

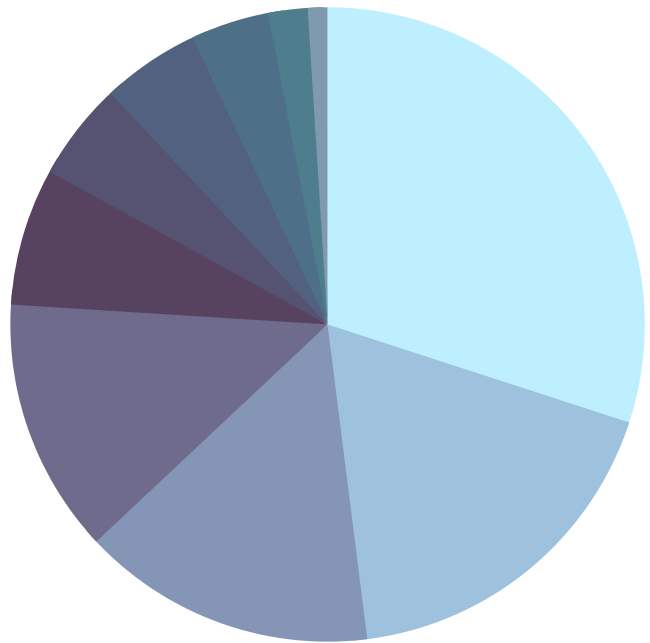
In 2020, we spent

- \$60.4K on program-related expenses
- \$3.5K on fundraising
- \$1.1K on management and general expenses



Allocation of Program Expenses

Payroll	30%
Sports Equipment	18%
Computer Expenses	15%
Taxes	13%
Groceries	7%
Rent	5%
Quarterly School Fees	5%
Transportation	4%
Utilities	2%
Living Expenses	1%



Donor Information

123

Number of donors

\$493

Average Donation

Donor type	Percentage of donors	Average donation
First time	60.3%	\$175
Recurring*	18.5%	\$69
VIP** recurring	13.2%	\$1005
Non-recurring	5.3%	\$70
VIP non-recurring	2.7%	\$925

*at least two quarters in a row

**VIP means one donation over \$500 or total of \$1K over 4 quarters





TAKE ACTION

Now that we've paused and reflected
on 2021, we are ready to take action in
the new year.




TAKE ACTION

Alphonsine's Closing Letter

Looking back, 2021 was a good year for us. Our children in Rwanda braced yet another year through the ups and downs of the pandemic and have proved to be resilient. Although the impacts of the pandemic will linger, we are confident that we have built a strong foundation for our youth to build upon for years to come.

Our first high school graduate just enrolled in college. So many of our kids see him as a role model, and so do we. Through Amahoro (Peace) Builders, our partner on the ground, we have trained staff who truly love and care for the kids we support. At the Center in Rwanda, those kids know they are loved and can count on a warm meal, a place to relax, reenergize and play.

This year, we are also recognizing that a great number of our youth may not graduate high school; more than 50% of our current tally are not further than halfway through completing their schooling. Paid one-on-one tutoring in place helps some, but not everyone. Our goal for 2022 and beyond is to figure out ways to help everyone achieve their potential in school or out of the classroom. Vocational training and trade school is a priority for this coming year as we evaluate our youth's ability and passion, versus the Rwanda job market.

Through our partnership with Weston-Comstor Sub-saharan Africa, we are launching a mentorship program, which is a crucial turning point in helping our kids reach their potential. Mainly Africa-based, we believe that this strategic approach will help our youth create meaningful relationships and allow them to dream. Additionally, having mentors and mentees in the same or similar time zones will help to remove the challenges of timing we encounter with our US-based volunteers. 

TAKE ACTION

Alphonsine's Closing Letter continued

We are also extending our programs to include more vulnerable youth as we expand our education pillar to shape generations to come, and give a chance to those who have excelled in their classes but struggle with financial support. I see my young self in this category too. Luckily, with a full ride from high school to graduate school, I didn't have to worry about tuition. I, however, know that not everyone is as fortunate. More details to come as we finalize this new outreach program to include vulnerable youth with a strong academic ability alongside our rehabilitated youth.

In the end, we aim to empower vulnerable youth, and education comes in very many different forms. We are a safe haven and a beacon of light for our children to believe in themselves and dream big. None of this can happen without the generosity of so many, who walk alongside and help us achieve our goals. I am forever indebted to each and everyone who makes this a reality, and look forward to our lighthouse shining even brighter in 2022.



Rising Above the Storms on social media



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@RisingAboveTheStorms



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Rising Above the Storms





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to RAS via PayPal**



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