Dear Friends,

I am writing to thank all of you for what you have done for the Maranyundo School for Girls and give a brief report of last year. We are very grateful for the many ways you have made a difference, including your visits and all those who came to help with teaching our students and faculty.

Here, the big news of 2012 was our girls ranking number one in the nation on the “O” level exams given to over 1000 schools. Our first class of 2010 set the standard by coming in number three, and then our second class came in number two so our class of 2012 was determined to come in first. For me, the biggest accomplishment for our school is how well our girls have learned to work together as a team, helping one another. As a result every single one of them passed with highest honors. In our school, there are three study prep periods each day. There is no adult in the classroom; the girls maintain discipline themselves and they also organize their discussion prep time so that those who are better in a subject help those who are having difficulty understanding.

I also appreciate that all of our Maranyundo girls come with the desire and potential to perform well but they also come from different backgrounds and different levels of preparation in primary school. Many of our girls are from rural areas where their primary schools lack resources and their homes do not have electricity so that it is hard to study or read at night. This year half of our 180 students could not pay the full amount of our tuition and thanks to our benefactors, they received scholarship help. For a few we were obliged to buy their uniforms, even their shoes and toothpaste. It is the philosophy of the Benebikira Sisters to maintain complete confidentiality concerning who are receiving financial help or who are orphans. Even our teachers do not know. We want our girls when they are at school to all be treated the same so they wear uniforms, have the same haircut and no jewelry.

Our “Old Girls:” We now have three classes who have moved on to secondary schools. In Rwanda, each secondary school offers different combinations of studies and all of our graduates were accepted into the schools of their choice. We have over 60 girls who are at Gashora Girls School, a new American funded School near us, which specializes in Computer and Sciences. The school provided scholarships as needed. For a few girls in other schools we helped them with the aid they needed to attend their schools. This fall our first class will be taking exams for University.

Maranyundo School is now five years old and I am happy to note that most of our cooks, gardeners and cleaners, are with us since we opened. This is also true of many of our teachers who began their teaching careers with us right after graduation from University. To have such a devoted and competent staff is truly a blessing.
Buildings and Farm: We prepared five more acres for planting vegetables and because of the Ruettgers’s garden fund we have an agriculturalist consultant to assist us. Our biggest crops will be ground nuts and soybeans that will provide protein to our girls’ diets. Our orchard is beginning to bear fruit, our rabbits keep multiplying and our four cows had three calves. Our region of Rwanda is very dry and water is expensive so we collect as much rainwater as possible. Last year we installed filters that turn our rainwater into drinking water and we made an irrigation pond for our garden. This all helps to keep food costs down and provide nutritious meals for our students.

Awards: We received certificates from the Ministry of Education, the Province and the District for our first rank in the national exams. Our basketball team came in first in the District finals, bringing home a nice trophy.

Sustainability and Expansion: As we look to the future our challenge is how we can both be a school of excellence and enroll students with limited financial means. Up to now American support of our $225,000 annual operating costs has made this possible and we have seen the results. We expect to increase tuition for those who can pay and to find more revenue generating projects. Our parent committee will also be developing fundraising. In time our graduates will be in a position to provide scholarship help just as they had received it.

I am also working closely on plans for expansion to three more classes so that we are a complete high school. The first phase will be building a large multipurpose hall, which will also be useful to the community and provide revenue for the school. This is almost ready to be built and again I want to thank those in the Maranyundo Initiative who contributed to its funding.

Finally, I cannot forget to speak of Hon. Aloisea Inyumba who was the foundation stone for the Maranyundo School. She was determined to have a school of excellence so that poor girls would have the opportunity to attend and it was she who selected Bugesera as its site. She continued to guide us and to be near the girls until her untimely death in December 2012.

I send you greetings from our students, teaching and non teaching staff and Sisters at Maranyundo Girls School. Our gratitude is a permanent prayer for our benefactors.

Sincerely,

Sister M. Juvenal
Headmistress