

# Read up on charity

STUDENTS at a Kent university have been collecting disused textbooks from secondary schools to send to pupils in Africa.

The charity READ International, which was founded by Rob Wilson from Tunbridge Wells while he was studying at Nottingham University, is a student-led project with 17 branches across the UK.

Louise Phillips, communications leader for READ at the University of Kent, said the volunteers were about a third of the way to meeting their target of 22,000 text books by

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June, and had raised £2,500 of the £7,500 needed to cover the costs of shipping the collection to Tanzania.

The conservation student said: "Each book project covers a different region in Tanzania, ours is Mongoro.

"They have got a very closely related syllabus, the main problem is that they are aiming to increase the number of students but the Government does not have the provision



to satisfy the demand. Without our intervention by 2010 the ratio of textbooks to children will worsen from 1:5 to 1:15."

The students run regular book collections around secondary schools and Miss Phillips urged more schools to come forward and take part.

Asked why she chose to get involved with the project, the 22-year-old said: "I was looking to do some volunteering and I thought this was ideal. It is so important, it's addressing education and that is the best way to alleviate poverty.

"It is cost effective and it is getting students to do it so there are low overheads. It works really well."

During Student Volunteering week, February 23 to March 2, volunteers are taking part in Britain's Biggest Book Drive from which READ International aims to raise £17,000 across all its projects at different universities and collect 34,000 textbooks.

Socially responsible company Better World Books is selling novels collected by READ and giving the charity half of the profits.

Miss Phillips said collection boxes had already been set up around the university's Canterbury campus for students to deposit their disused books, including university



**DEMAND:** Tanzania's syllabus is similar to that of the UK, but schools cannot afford to buy enough text books

level text books that are not of use in Tanzania and novels.

She added: "It is a system that improves access to education in Tanzania whilst promoting global citizenship, recycling, social enterprise and volunteering in the UK through the presentations that we give to donating schools."

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