



# ROKO 20 ACADEMY

September 2019 Newsletter

**Roko 20 Academy  
Kambirwa  
Murang'a**

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## As we go from strength to strength...

A strong management team and a stable and united organization; a controlled budget; and children on task and in progress; these are some of the advances made this year and it is continuing.

This progress, because it is a progress, is not the result of chance, but the fruit of a strong commitment; first that of the management team of the school, which during this time has completely redesigned the operation of the school; that of the teaching team, too, which has stabilized and entered the

project; that of the volunteers, who bring us their enthusiasm and their ideas; but also that of all of you, who support us, and who, through your support (financial or otherwise), have allowed us to move forward.



## To learn is to change ....



Applying our school motto 'To learn is to change...' we are forging ahead with implementing Item 2 of our itemized 5 step plan of change which concentrates on improving teaching methods.

2020 will bring with it improvements in many areas, with the main focus being on Item 2.

We explain more about this in our inside report about the new Competency Based Cur-

riculum which has been rolled out in Kenya.

Roko 20 Academy is looking forward to a bright future with significant change.

# School Initiatives of 2019

2019 saw a flurry of initiatives of all kinds, aimed at improving the comfort of children, and reducing the environmental footprint of the school.

## Classroom insulation

The first, and perhaps the most important, initiative was to double the class ceiling to reinforce the thermal insulation. This is important because the roofs are made of corrugated sheet metal, which warms up very quickly in the afternoon under the effect of the African sun, and which then radiates heat on the heads of students (and teachers), making their concentration difficult.

The simple solution was to nail plywood planks just under the roof; the result was immediate, with a reduction of several degrees of heat in the classes that were equipped.

We now have Teachers and pupils working in a more comfortable environment and increasing the ability to perform.



## Installation of efficient stoves

Meals are prepared in the school kitchen. The fuel used for cooking is, as is very often the case in Kenya, wood, the intensive use of which for food cooking is a major contributor to



deforestation.

Thanks to the financial support of American missionaries, the school was able to acquire efficient stoves. The result: a wood consumption divided by two, and a reduced environmental footprint.

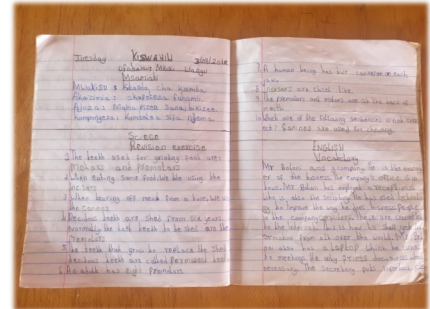
## Exercise Books

It was a simple idea at the beginning: reduce to 2 the number of class exercise books used by the children and to engage everyone to make these exercise books examples of clarity, care, and cleanliness.

A banal idea, apparently, so commonplace that one wonders what's the use of talking about it. But in fact, it's a small revolution.

Last year, children did not have 2, but up to 10 notebooks for the older ones (one per subject).

Then, inevitably, they confused them with each other; lessons were delayed; They had no time to take care of them, busy as they were to go from



one book to another and often the exercise books were found in disrepair; the school could not afford to buy 500 books of good quality.

Since the beginning of the year, radical change: 2 exercise books in all and for all (but of good quality); precise rules, displayed in classrooms, for the keeping of exercise books; and a commitment from everyone (including Rachel, the cook, who has the essential responsibility of keeping clean the towels used by children to dry their hands after washing them!)

And, 6 months after the launch of the project, exercise books are more attractive, better kept and (relatively) clean, such that children are proud to show to their parents; and a real commitment from teachers.

A small step, then, but a symbol for the school.



## Achievements



### Athletics

A good effort was made by all who participated in the Handball Games.

We are grateful to have Teacher Shem on our Roko 20 team. His dedication to improving sport at our school last term



resulted in many qualifiers in the Sub-County games.

Congratulations to our two class 5 pupils, Catherine and Esther, who won a place on the Handball team and participated up to County level.



Beatrice, Class 3 runs like the wind, and is County Level material. Despite the

heat and difficult conditions she ran 4.5 kms. We know that with our support she will achieve her goal of winning.

### Music and Drama

We reached County level in the Music Festival with Pre-primary pupils coming third place in poem recital.

### Debating Team

The commitment from one of our teachers to the practice of Debate has led the way forward for five other schools in the zone to follow suit and there is now stiff competition to win.

Each term we hold three debates against local schools and our pupils are now becoming confident in putting their case forward.



## School Educational Trip

This year we decided to separate the school trips for lower and upper primary



classes to ensure our pupils had valuable experiences, lasting memories and strong academic

benefits.

Pre-school and Class 1 paid a visit to Blue Post Hotel, a complex spread over a 32 acre piece of land and sits between two rivers and two natural waterfalls.

Here pupils were able to walk amongst nature and wild animals in the Hotel's animal park.

From there we drove a short distance to Maxland Juja Hotel where we stopped for a picnic lunch before trying out the rides at the Funfair and a dip in the Hotel's paddling pool.



Upper primary classes visited Mwea Irrigation Scheme where pupils consolidated their knowledge of irrigation with a tour of the rice fields.



This was followed by lunch at Sun City Hotel, a dip in the pool and lots of fun at the adventure playground.





# The New Competency Based Curriculum (CBC)

Kenya has reformed its education system. For the first time in 32 years it has changed its curriculum from pre-school all the way through to high school.

The old 8-4-4 system was very academic and examination oriented and the curriculum overloaded. Most schools couldn't equip their pupils with practical skills and teachers weren't sufficiently trained.

The system wasn't providing flexible education pathways important for identifying and nurturing learners' aptitudes, talents and interests early enough to prepare them for the world of work and career progression.

## The new Competency Based Curriculum

The long awaited Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) was rolled out in January 2019.

Focusing less on content but more on

ty and imagination, which are at the heart of the new system.

The move towards child centered teaching now engages learners in an exciting process of discovery, of exploration and of knowledge. It has embedded the principles of differentiated learning to take care of the different abilities and interests of each and every learner.

With the new CBC system there is de-emphasis on summative assessment. Previous openers, mid-term and end-term exams cut into valuable time available for teaching and learning. CBC addressed the problem of too much testing at very short intervals and replaced it with formative assessment for learning.

An interesting introduction to the Curriculum known as Community Service

Learning (CSL) allows students to gain practical experience and apply their academic knowledge and skills to help find solutions to specific issues in society.

The new CBC is a big step forward as it requires a completely different teaching approach focused mainly on enquiry based learning.

This is perfectly in line with our commitment to provide a quality education for our pupils using improved methods of teaching. It also could not have come at a better time as we are hard at work introducing 'Item 2 - improving pedagogy' of our 5 step plan for implementation in January 2020.

So we are right on target, our teachers have received the required Ministry of Education training and are embracing this new system. Roko 20 will supplement Ministry training with our own in-house child centred teaching training.



Grade 3 using hand made tools to clean the Market

acquisition of competencies such as critical thinking and problem solving, creativity-

Iris aged 7 and Archie aged 5, both from Wales, came up with the idea to do a sponsored read in order to raise funds for Roko 20 Academy.

They both love reading and said this of their reason for fundraising "We want all children to have the chance to learn and read lots like we do at school".

Close to £400 was raised on their sponsored read with 44 books read between them.

The proceeds went towards buying Assessment Books required for the new **CBC system**.

Grade 3 learners sat their first national assessment last month and these books were essential for recording progress.



What great kids!

# Our Work in Kenya

Education is supposed to be free in Kenya but in reality that is not the case and children are regularly expelled from school until outstanding 'fees' are paid.

It is a daily struggle for parents to put food on the table for their family and we see so many cases in our community of families living without hope and in abject poverty.



The majority of people in the rural villages rely on small scale farming for food and the effects from climate change poses a real threat.

Harvests are destroyed due to shortened rainy seasons or periods of too much rain.

Consider also the high cost of health care to comprehend how so many children might miss out on a decent education.

## HIV

Figures show that knowledge of HIV prevention among young people is increasing. On a national level this is good news.

Despite this on a local level HIV infections in Murang'a County are still high despite efforts made to contain the disease.

## SCHOOLING WITH HIV

People living with HIV in Kenya still face high levels of stigma and discrimination which has the possibility of preventing them accessing HIV services. Stigma in schools is particularly prevalent and there are cases of children are bullied by their peers for being HIV positive.

Early treatment of the disease is so important as it is now manageable and if the correct medication is taken there is no reason why adults and children can't lead long and healthy lives.

At Roko 20 we provide a safe and inclusive environment for children with HIV to learn.

Last week the Community's health and social worker referred a boy's case to us. He is HIV positive. His mother too.

We were told that he was suffering terribly at his school due to the stigma attached to his status. Insensitive Teachers commented publicly that he was HIV positive and peers taunted him and excluded him from play. School life was miserable and he ran away on many occasions. He was falling way behind in schoolwork.

This boy comes from a background of abject poverty. His mother, physically weakened by the disease and poor diet, struggled to provide food and send her son to school.

The social worker explained that the boy was very anxious and as soon as we left him alone he ran out of the school gates, terrified. We managed to calm him down and coaxed him to stay. The following day he arrived at school relaxed and ready to work in class.

This is the start of a better life for him. He has already grown in confidence and with our support will learn the basics he has missed out on and progress quickly.

This is just one child's story of the many we sponsor living with HIV.

## And finally .....

With a school population at an all time high of 103 pupils there are 20 pupils waiting on our list requiring sponsorship.

Help us to help these children and spread the word to friends, family and colleagues about the work we do. If you know anyone who may be interested in sponsoring a child to be educated at Roko 20 Academy please ask them to get in touch with us at [roko20academy@gmail.com](mailto:roko20academy@gmail.com).

We offer two types of sponsorship; **Full and standard**.

**Full sponsorship** at **£28** per month includes the cost of an education, breakfast, mid-day snack, lunch and, in some cases, food before going home, extra curricular activities, a uniform including shoes, rucksack and a rain-jacket, text and exercise books, stationery, basic health costs and examination fees. *(Why not consider sharing full sponsorship with a friend or colleague to keep the cost affordable?)*

The other option is **Standard Sponsorship** at **£18** per month. Here we do not include extra curricular activities. Additionally, there are a few employed parents who can afford our school fees. We set these fees at a low rate so as not to exclude anyone. The reality is that the rate does not cover all the costs associated with their education. Standard sponsorship gives you the opportunity 'top-up' the cost of the full fee.

Monthly contributions are pooled with other donations and used to support the running costs of the school rather than being conveyed exclusively to one child. The amount covers the cost of paying salaries, providing breakfast and lunch, all books, stationeries, uniform, transport and basic healthcare.

We need your help to share this information with friends, family and colleagues to get as many of these children sponsored as we can.

Email [roko20academy@gmail.com](mailto:roko20academy@gmail.com) for further information about setting up a sponsorship today.

**Sponsorship makes a real difference!**