



HEKIMA WALDORF SCHOOL

P.O. BOX 34754

Primary School: Plot no 52 Mikocheni B, Tel. 2771852

Kindergarten: TPDC Estate, Mikocheni, Tel. 2772412.

www.hekimawaldorfschool.comlu.com

It's origins and aspirations

It began in 1996 when two young volunteers came to work in Tanzania. They were both ex-Waldorf students and they impressed the people they were working for and with by their ability to take initiatives and responsibility. They were working for a business consortium owned and run by Tanzanians who were also interested in education. Many discussions followed and the Waldorf Education Trust was set up by the two partners in business plus their wives. These people were Mr. Rashidi Mbuguni, Mr. Richard Nyaulawa, Mrs Gertrude Nyaulawa and Mrs Adeline Mlay who was the wife of Mr. Mbuguni. These four people were the trustees and their object was to promote Waldorf Education in Tanzania. A number of preparatory meetings were held together with other interested parents and that same year the trustees visited the Rudolf Steiner School at Mbagathi, Nairobi, and attended a seminar at a Waldorf School in Cape Town South Africa. This latter visit resulted in a kindergarten teacher from S. Africa agreeing to come to Dar es Salaam to start a Waldorf kindergarten. This first teacher was Fundi Mndendi. The kindergarten opened in January 1997 with about six children. The following year, 1998, Irmgard Wutte, who together with her husband had founded the Rudolf Steiner School in Mbagathi, ten years previously, arrived in Tanzania to take the first class one and the Primary School came into existence.

The school-community during a celebration.

By January 1999 both



Irmgard and Fundi had left the school but it continued to grow. The need to train the teachers was great and already in 1997 a part time training course was set up with the

assistance of Mr. Peter van Alphen from the Centre for Creative Education in Cape town S.A. This programme is still running and is comprised of ten, two week training periods carried out in the school vacations and assignments to be carried out in the class and at home. These assignments are then presented at the next module. This program was meant to train already qualified teachers in the methods and background of Waldorf Education. After two modules had been taught in DSM., this programme was removed to Kenya but the teachers of Hekima still follow the courses, travelling to Nairobi in each vacation until completion. The last phase of the training is being mentored in the classroom by an experienced Waldorf teacher.

In the years between 1998 and 2003 the school had many ups and downs with a fluctuating number of pupils and a relatively high turnover of teachers and other staff members. This situation has now stabilised. There are 140 children in the primary school and about 30 in the kindergarten. The teaching staff feels secure and five have already completed the ten modules in Nairobi. A third will complete in December of this year. Very few teachers have left the school since 2003 and of



Playing Children in the Kindergarten those few one has gone on to further training in S. Africa. This one is under contract to return after completion of the degree course he is following. The training received in Nairobi is also supplemented by a school program whereby teachers who have successfully completed the Nairobi training are sent to a Waldorf school in an English speaking environment for six weeks in order to gain further experience. So far four teachers have been to England or S. Africa for this purpose and a fifth will go as soon as funds have been raised. Five of the teachers have also attended International Pedagogical Conferences in Germany and Switzerland.

Over the years and up to January 2003 the school had been visited by experienced Waldorf teachers from abroad who have done training and mentoring on the spot. Because there was little continuity, with one notable exception, this sometimes produced a little confusion but on the whole the effect has been a positive one. The exception was Rolf Zeldenthuis from the Netherlands who came more than once and endeavoured to mentor during the periods that he was away by setting up a system of reporting and distance learning. He also started work on the adaptation of the Tanzanian syllabus so that the Waldorf and the National syllabus could be integrated. Mrs Mlay also did valuable work in this field. The integration is essential since Tanzanian law requires schools to follow the National syllabus as a condition of Registration. Since 2003 Mrs Peta Spierings has been mentoring and coordinating at the school, preparing the teachers to take

over the running of the school themselves. She was able to hand over the running of the school to the College of Teachers at the end of 2008 but has continued to come for periods of mentoring and other pedagogical guidance. As far as the organisation of the school is concerned There is now an enlarged Waldorf Education Trust consisting of eight trustees. This Trust operates under its original constitution and its aims and objectives have not changed. It is the Trust which owns the land at Goba and the buildings it will carry. There is a Board of Directors composed of parents elected by class parents to represent them and certain members of the teaching faculty. The body responsible for all pedagogical matters and for the day to day running of the school is the College of Teachers.

In the meantime another Waldorf initiative has come into being in Tanzania. The new school is situated in Arusha and was started by one of our own teachers who has since left us in order to devote more time to the running of this school. At present the new initiative is a kindergarten only but the intention is that it should also grow into a primary school eventually. About twenty of our older children have also visited an organic farm close to Mafinga in Iringa region. The owner is a Swedish national married to a Tanzanian and in addition to their farm they do a lot of work with the orphans in the surrounding villages. They wish to start a Waldorf kindergarten for these orphans and our children went to help with the building. He wants to open the school in January 2010.

With regard to the future there are a number of points which need attention. After ten years of existence the school still has only a temporary registration. This is because although it does now own land at Goba just outside Dar es Salaam, thanks to a generous interest free loan from Germany, it has not yet been able to raise sufficient money to erect all of



The first stones for the new school-buildings.
the buildings which are now an additional requirement for registration. This problem is assuming very large proportions because the school is being threatened with closure. Building has now begun and the foundations of the buildings comprising phase 1 have been laid. It is now hoped that the school will be able to move in March 2010 when the lease on the present building runs out.

The second point is the necessity of moving into Secondary education. As parent awareness of the benefits of Waldorf Education increases the demand for a follow up is growing. We have already said goodbye to five class 7s.who have all gone to other secondary schools. In order to realise the intentions of the founders of the school secondary education is essential. Only after having been through the whole 14 years of Waldorf

education is there a real possibility that the students will be able to stand in the world as fully responsible, free-thinking individuals who are ready and willing to shoulder their responsibilities in a developing Tanzania.

With both of these points the problem is the financing. The fee structure allows the school to be run from day to day but does not leave a margin for saving against capital expenditure. A very large sum is paid each month in rent which would service a loan if there was the capital in hand to apply for one, but of course that presupposes ownership of other accommodation. Neither parents nor teachers wish the school to become an elitist school so it is essential to keep the fees low enough to give access to the middle income groups. At the same time places are offered to the children of all of the staff without the payment of tuition fees and there is a sponsorship scheme to assist orphans and other needy children to attend our school. Currently there are about 40 children in school on the strength of these two possibilities. In addition there are 11 orphans from a local orphanage. These are areas in which the school would like to increase its input.

The new school site up at Goba offers other opportunities for expansion and development. It is a twelve acre site with ample space to develop a small farm as well as all of the buildings required for schools catering for children up to and including secondary school. The total development plan encompasses workshops, vegetable gardens, playing fields, a conference centre and hostel accommodation for children from class 4 upwards. It is intended that the school be the focal point of a community comprising initially pupils, parents and teachers together with all other staff members most of whom would also be parents. In preparation for these other activities we have already made a start with a project for keeping goats and another for keeping chickens, and the small school garden we have at present produces some of the vegetables that we use in school. It is essential that we find ways and means of generating income over and above the fees that are charged. Hekima is a non-profit making Trust and all of the funding coming into the school is expended on the running costs of the school. A recent development is also looking to the future. A Saturday club has been started to which parents can bring their children. Extra curricular activities are then arranged for the children that come. At the same time parents are invited stay and discuss matters relating to the school. If parents remain the children are included free of charge but if parents choose merely to drop their children off they must pay a small fee for the privilege. These meetings with parents are proving quite useful and the time can also be used for class meetings and PTA meetings. We are actively searching for ways and means of involving our parents in a more meaningful way in the development of our school.

Peta Spierings

28th October 2009

