

## **A new beginning for the secondary school (was Giraffe Education Centre, GEC)**

### **Background**

GEC was founded in 2012, when our small 'Neema' Secondary School moved from the top floor of Tumaini school to its new site in Ruai, in the countryside to the East of the city. In 2016 the school was transferred from being directly managed by Giraffe, to being managed by the local 'Elimu Trust', formed of a group of 3 long-standing partners of the Giraffe Project. The school grew to 141 students in 4 classes, but with space and facilities stretched to their limit, it became imperative to look for a longer-term solution.

### **The merger**

In March 2021 the last group of Form 4 students took their national leaving exams (the KCSE) on the old GEC site, which was then closed, and will be sold. In May, **GEC and ByGrace High School merged to become a new school**, ByGrace-Elimu High School (BGE) on the original ByGrace site in the suburb of Ngong on the West side of Nairobi.



ByGrace CBO charity was founded by **Stephen and Rosemary Mbogo**. In 2006, Richard and Denise visited their home which they had converted into an orphanage for children with HIV/AIDS. The project grew to include a primary and secondary school, serving both highly disadvantaged children and fee-paying students. Rosemary is also the founder of **Tumaini School**.

The merger of the two schools brings together a long-standing partnership sharing a common vision and purpose, whilst rationalising some of our processes and consolidating resources. Perhaps most importantly, it allows for the expansion necessary to accommodate the **new Kenyan curriculum**, which is currently working its way through the primary years. **From 2023, secondary school will start at year 7** (age 12) instead of the current year 9, creating 6 years of secondary school instead of 4. The old GEC site would not have been able to accommodate this. The new curriculum also allows multiple programmes to run in parallel. In other words, the school will be able to run an **academic stream alongside a more technical or professional programme**, which will offer a better fit for some of our students than the traditional route.



Currently the school is taking up to 250 students in 8 classes. Extensive buildings for classrooms, labs and boarding facilities have been provided by the ByGrace CBO. Extra dormitories required by the arrival of the students from GEC were mostly funded by the ByGrace CBO, with Giraffe Project donating €16,000 (£13,700) which was about 60% of the cost of 30 new toilets and showers, with all the associated pipework, septic tank and solar water heating.

Ngong is in the hills in a cooler region than Ruai, where GEC was, and the students have found that a challenge, but they comment on the spacious dormitories, classrooms, playing fields, indoor games spaces, large dining hall and abundant cold and hot water! The buildings are not finished, but they will suffice until there is more money available. Below is an extract from a letter from one of the students.

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*The displacement of our school have affected us positively, even though the weather around here is so cold but we will soon acclimatise with the atmospheric conditions. The new school's physical appearance is more idyllic as compared to that of our previous school. The school is located in a spacious area which makes it look bigger, as compared to our previous school. In this school, there are new sports that we were never used to such as table tennis, and basketball which have created a wide field for those who are talented in those fields to expose them out. I'm really feeling more thrilled to be in my new school because everything seems to be better here.*



## Other infrastructure projects

**Green Pastures:** This year the Giraffe Project funded the construction of a new 3-storey classroom block at Green Pastures school (pictures below). We also financed hand-washing stations, masks and other materials to comply with the new COVIDs rules, the re-tiling and refurbishing of existing toilets, and a large batch of textbooks for the new curriculum.



**Tumaini:** At Tumaini School Giraffe funded important works involving a completely new roof, renovation of the top floor classrooms (picture below), and the installation of additional toilets.



## Computer projects

One aspect of the new curriculum in Kenya is a strong push towards IT. Thanks to some generous donations, Giraffe Project has been able to fund new computer labs at Tumaini, Green Pastures and BGE. Each school will have 60 refurbished laptop computers, connected to 3 servers which will store apps and learning materials provided by the Ministry of Education. Internet is not required for the system to function, though

connection can be made in future if this is deemed practical. The system is already in place at Tumaini, and the other schools will receive theirs in the coming weeks.

## Higher Education Programme

We currently support 34 students at universities and 29 at colleges. Some are waiting for their final results and will be moving on in the coming months. 18 students who finished secondary school in March have applied for places in Higher Education, and are hoping for Giraffe Project sponsorships. We are waiting to hear if they are accepted by universities and colleges. If they are, then they will start their courses in September.

The pictures show the students making their [applications in one of Tumaini School's new computer labs](#).



Students on our [Higher Education Programme](#) (colleges and universities) are also being [loaned a laptop](#) for the duration of their studies, and on completion they will be allowed to keep it. During lockdown most HE institutions turned to some form of distance learning and so this became an absolute necessity for our students.

## The Organisation

In recent months we have been able to streamline aspects of our organisation, thanks to the gift of [Office 365 from Microsoft](#) and our new [database from MySchool](#), both without charge. We also took the step of outsourcing our accounting in Europe to Caladine Ltd.

In Kenya, [Japheth Mutinda](#) continues in a more active role as our local representative. During the lockdown we gave up the office we were renting, and the two ladies, [Fridah](#) and [Liz](#), continue for the time being to work from home, as well as spending time in the schools. Fridah oversees the Higher Education programme and works with Treasurer Richard to manage the Kenyan accounts. Liz is responsible for the sponsorship programme in the three schools.

## Sponsorships

Sponsorship levels have remained fairly stable, in spite of all the difficulties posed by the pandemic. [We are extremely grateful to all our sponsors and donors](#) who have kept the schools running and the students learning. During the shutdown, funds were sent to the schools to keep the teachers in place, fund additional materials such as photocopies and mobile phones for communication with students, and provide food parcels in lieu of school meals (see pictures from Green Pastures below). The primary schools received the students on a rotation basis to collect assignments and deliver work, but contact with the secondary students proved more difficult, and often impossible. In October 2020 a limited number of classes were invited back, and in January 2021 schools returned as normal. However, as 2 terms of 2020 were effectively lost, the Kenyan government has inserted a 4<sup>th</sup> term into 2021 and again in 2022, squeezing holidays to a minimum. They will be starting a [new school year in August](#), with a new intake to BGE Form 1.



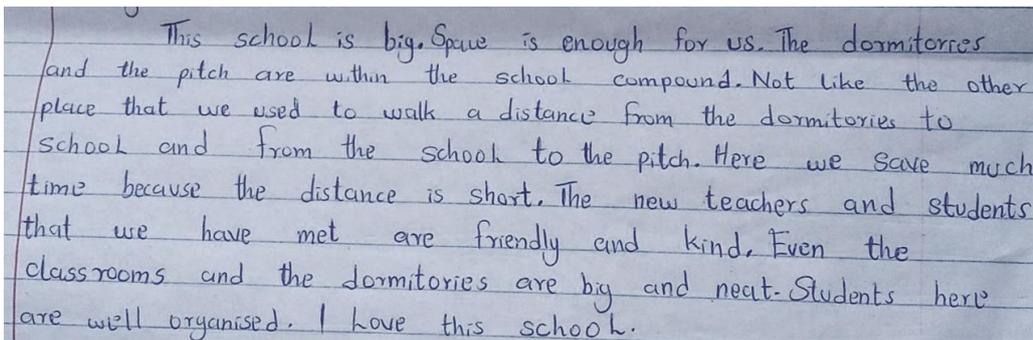
All the schools rely not only on Giraffe Project sponsorships, but also on fee-paying students, and the pandemic has thrown many families into financial hardship. Many cannot now pay the fees, and the schools then struggle to meet their obligations and pay their teachers. We can mitigate this to some extent if we can support some of these children, so please tell your friends about us! Regular income, either as a [sponsorship](#) or a [donation into the education fund](#), will help meet the needs.

**Thank you is not a big enough word! Your donations are changing lives!**

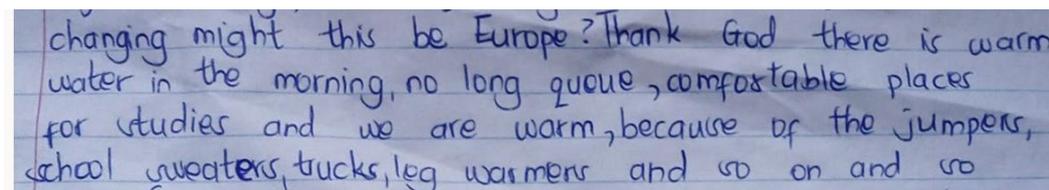
Denise, on behalf of the team in Europe and Kenya

Some additional extracts from BGE students' letters:

*The school is big. There is enough space for us. The dormitories and the pitch are within the school compound. Not like the other place that we used to walk a distance from the dormitories to school and from the school to the pitch. Here we save much time because the distance is short. The new teachers and students that we have met are friendly and kind. Even the classrooms and dormitories are big and neat. Students here are well organised. I love this school.*



*Thank God there is warm water in the morning, no long queue, comfortable places for studies and we are warm, because of the jumpers, school sweaters, tracks, leg warmers and so on...*



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