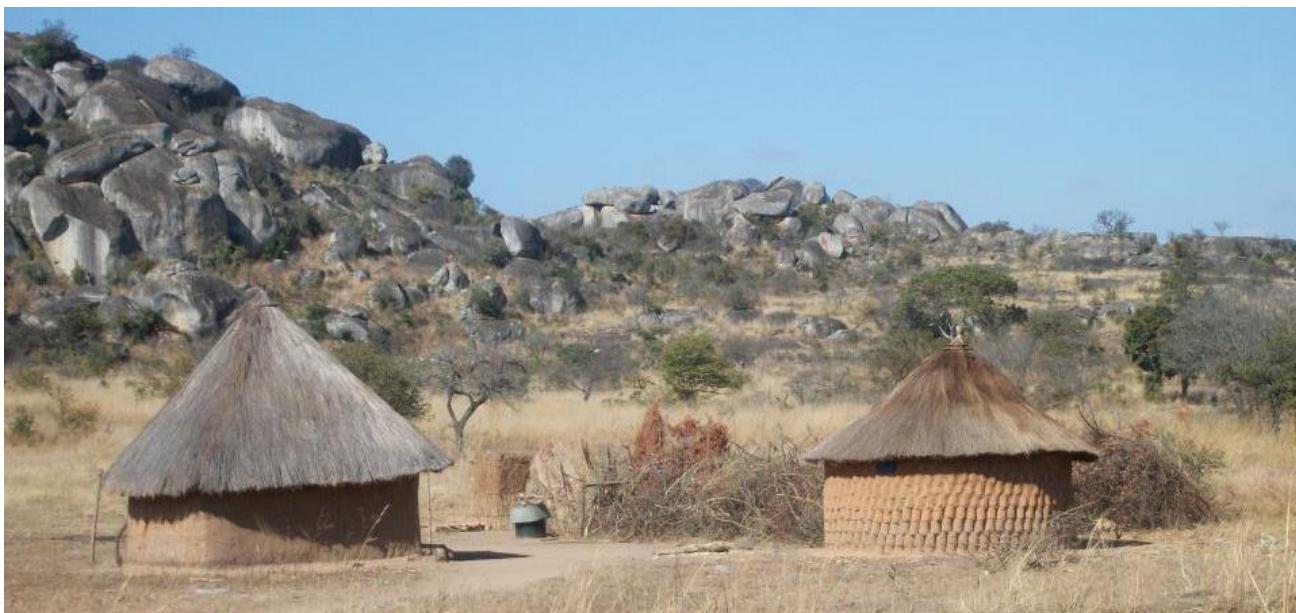


## Waldorf Education in East Africa – Looking back and looking ahead

Silviah Kagendo Njagi



We have been privileged in East Africa to have had a worldwide support and network as the Waldorf movement was set up and grew since 1989. We are grateful to all those who have been our light as we slowly but surely found our way and grounded Anthroposophy in the East African region.

Currently, we have had an explosion in the growth of Waldorf Schools and Initiatives all over East Africa. The Rudolf Steiner School Mbagathi, The Nairobi Waldorf School and The Hekima Waldorf School in Dar es Salaam continue to shine the way for the upcoming Waldorf Initiatives in the region.

Among them is the Creative Education Foundation in Zanzibar; Iringa Waldorf Initiative in Arusha, The Federation for Free Education Initiatives Schools and Kindergartens in Uganda, The Nairobi Woodlands School in Nairobi, The Kakuma Refugee Camp Waldorf Project in Turkana, Kenya, The Nanyuki Waldorf Initiative, the Kitale Waldorf Initiative, the Rusinga Waldorf Initiative, and Jipe Moyo School in Rabai to mention but a few.

In September 2016 the Kileleshwa Waldorf Kindergarten moved to new premises in Lavington Nairobi and is now called the Waldorf Kindergarten Lavington-Mageta Road.

The Nanyuki Waldorf Initiative at the base of Mt Kenya opened its doors on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, 2018.

In general all the schools and Initiatives continue to thrive and grow as more and more families now recognize the Waldorf methods that support the child's innate, natural growth and development processes.

State Education in Kenya, starting this year, will change to a formative assessment, with an arts-and practical-subjects- imbued curriculum, which has boosted the appeal of Waldorf kindergartens in the region.



The Waldorf Curriculum has also been submitted to the Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development for approval as a government recognized curriculum.

### **Training, Teacher Development and Mentoring**

With the growth of Steiner/Waldorf Kindergartens in East Africa, teacher development becomes even more vital as we strive to strengthen and develop the quality of Waldorf Early Childhood Education.

Ann Sharfman continues to be a strong pillar in the inspiration of quality. She has been able to visit the main Waldorf /Steiner kindergartens, mentoring teachers. Ann is also involved in training kindergarten teachers who can take on the teacher training at the East African Teacher Training Center. Sustainability is a major goal in the continuity of this quality Waldorf Education that has been created.

In terms of mentoring , the main challenge is that experienced teachers are often teaching and taking time away from their own school or work station to travel to various parts of East Africa to do mentoring assessments and support, which can be difficult.

Schools have found the creative way of peer mentorship and support where the experienced teachers within a kindergarten support the upcoming teachers in Waldorf Education. The other creative possibility has been making use of the differing school calendar dates between the kindergartens that follow a January to December academic year and those that follow a September to August one. This gives room for experienced teachers to travel across the country and support each other in the mentoring and growth process of Waldorf kindergarten teachers. This requires resources for both Ann Sharfman to travel into the East Africa region and for the experienced teachers to travel during holidays to other parts of East Africa and mentor others.

It is for this reason that we are grateful to the full support that IASWECE has graciously given us in the years since the inception of Waldorf Education in East Africa and also in the latter years as we undergo a transition to East African leadership in the training and mentorship of teachers. The Friends of Waldorf Germany, GLS-Germany, Sanduko a Ndege in Denmark, and the IHF in the Netherlands have also been instrumental in this process and for that we are grateful.

### **A great future ahead**

With the state curricula in the region recognizing the need for arts and practical subjects in the development of young children, the Waldorf Curriculum being close to approval by the government and the awareness of Waldorf education constantly growing, the need for teacher training and mentoring will continue to grow. The theme we have taken on in East Africa to celebrate 100 years of Waldorf Education in the world and 30 years of the Waldorf movement in East Africa is that of **tree planting**.

As we plant new seedlings and nurture them to growth for a balanced ecosystem, we also aim to be “servants of the light, endowed with strength” in bringing up “young human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction in their lives”, as per Rudolf Steiner’s wishes and inspiration, many years ago!

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