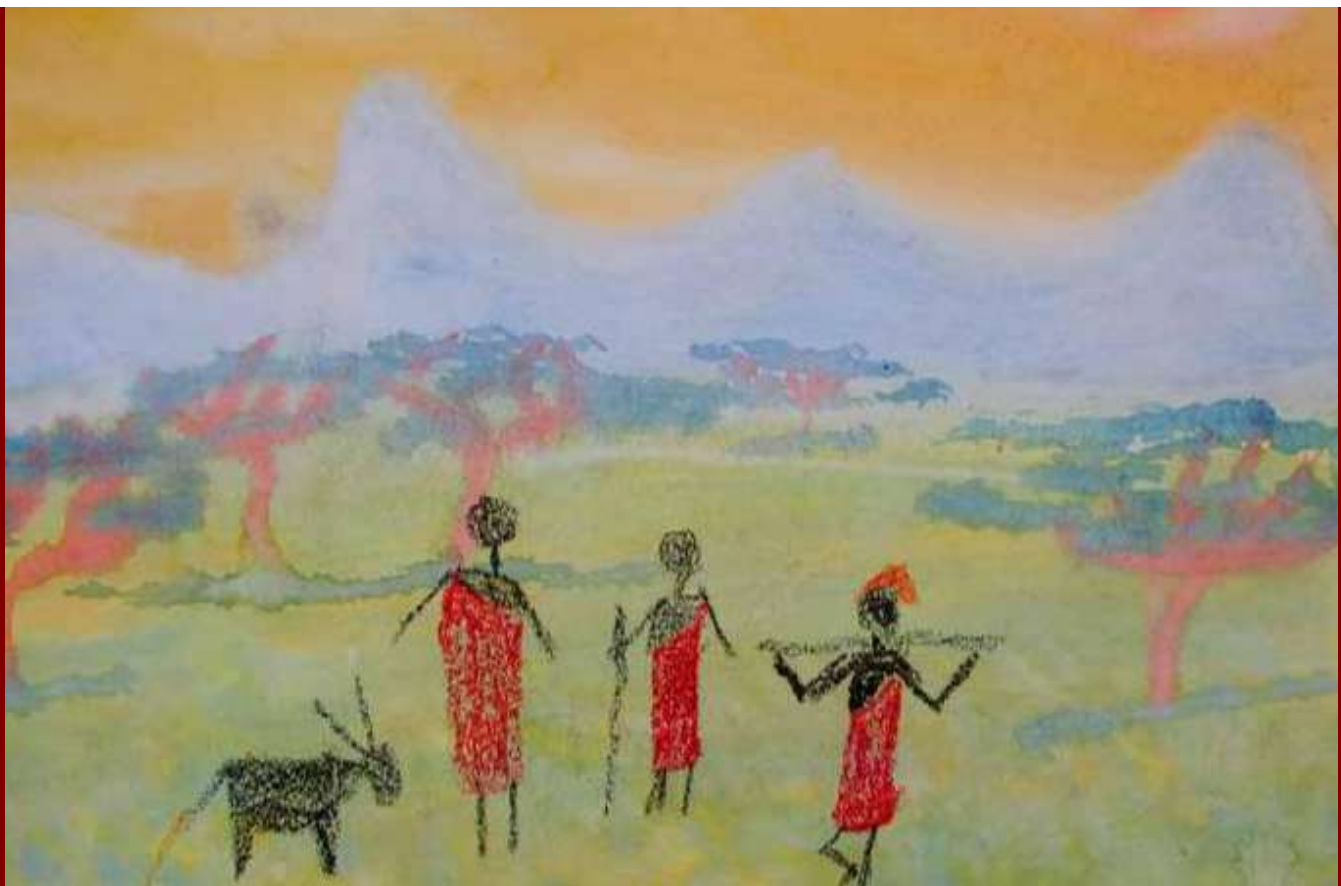


# Rudolf Steiner School Mbagathi Nairobi



Out on the ancient plains of Africa, trod for eons by wild animals, the 'Mother School of East Africa' was born – The Rudolf Steiner School Mbagathi near Nairobi. Its roots went down and slowly penetrated the hard black cotton soil. Year after year it has grown into a strong foundation for a whole Steiner/Waldorf School development in East Africa with schools, kindergartens and smaller initiatives in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, even spreading to Zanzibar and Madagascar.





The acacia trees still hold their place on the landscape and the weaverbirds maintain their home in these special trees. Still the sound of the lions, hyenas and the calling frogs echo through the night. At the same time the school is required to embrace modern Africa with the heavily loaded flights crossing overhead and descending to the international airport 'Jomo Kenyatta' located a short distance away. The mobile-antennae are lighting the night sky as private houses and restaurants are popping up on the plains.

Year after year the dusty Maasai Lodge Road has been full of happy school children in their brick brown uniforms on their way to the school each morning, some walking the long way to school, others coming from the surrounding areas in one of the two school buses. Many of the children come from the nearest suburb of Rongai where they live in homes made of iron sheets or grey square housing blocks placed in the middle of a busy life full of cows, goats, old cars and people selling vegetables, cokes and second-hand clothes from small shops and kiosks. At the school gate the original, simple sign 'Rudolf Steiner School' is still there.

Inside the school gate and up the long drive you immediately enter the heart of the school; buildings and surroundings express the creativity and warmth of the place and the community. You meet the lively children who proudly welcome you to their school. You meet the busy teachers and the whole support staff carrying their responsibilities in their departments – office, kitchen, farm and boarding. Here we have the 'Mother School' of East Africa with all its activities.

It is an important and significant centre for the whole development of the Steiner/Waldorf School movement in East Africa.



### AIM

The Mother School of East Africa started in 1989 and from the beginning the school has taken on the huge task of supporting underprivileged children; this means very poor children and families. This strong aim and focus has shaped the school throughout its existence. It is the very core idea of the school.



Over the years it has created a group of dedicated co-workers and also a network of all the supporters, funding organizations and sponsors spreading out to Europe and to other parts of the world. This unique commitment to support underprivileged children has also meant an ongoing struggle to find a financial basis for the school, since the majority of the families are unable to pay the school fees. The school therefore is and has always been dependent on donations and sponsor-income coming from abroad. It has been an ongoing challenge; but it has also had a very positive effect through extensive co-operation between cultures, lands and continents bringing a quality of global connectedness to the school.

Most of the children come from families where poverty affects many aspects of their lives; many are orphans. Food, clothing and school fees are daily struggles, and fear of a future in poverty with no real hope for change is a major hindrance. Families live with AIDS, alcohol and drug abuse. A lack of infrastructure, such as a fresh water supply, electricity and sanitation, creates unacceptable living conditions for the families but particularly for the children.

Alongside this there are now a growing number of fee-paying parents, who are attracted by the education and support the aim of the school. We welcome children to the school from different religious backgrounds.

### **Primary School and Kindergarten**

The Steiner School offers these children a supporting, creative and academically strong education, which has a significant impact on individual destinies and life opportunities.



The whole school has 325 children with 75 children in the kindergarten and 250 children in primary. The teachers are trained both in the Kenyan system and Steiner-Waldorf. There are four beautiful kindergarten groups with highly trained and caring teachers. Two groups are for children below four years and the other two for children between four and six years. There are classes 1 to 9 in the primary, and class teachers remain with their class from class 1 to 8. The class 9 is a year for the exam class where children sit their Primary Certificate exam allowing the youth to proceed smoothly to a secondary school somewhere else.

As a unique pedagogical offering, every Friday the Christian service takes place for primary children. This service was given by Rudolf Steiner to the first Rudolf Steiner School in Stuttgart. It has a strong moral grounding for the children and the school.

### **Kitchen and farm**

The school farm has been developed recently into a biodynamic farm. This impulse has been cultivated as an example for development in East Africa. Help is given by biodynamic farmers from Europe. When

you walk around the school compound you come to a green oasis of healthy vegetables for the school kitchen; creating such abundance is a huge challenge on the dry African landscape. The garden is developed with a water drip system and care from the farmer. The garden provides healthy meals for all the children which are in contrast to their home provisions where the struggle for food is ever present. In addition, the children get healthy fresh milk from our little herd of cows.

### **Boarding**

On the compound there is a large boarding facility, full to capacity with 121 children, and many of them are orphans. A large number are in difficult life situations without close family members to care for them. In this large home with children from 2 1/2 up to 15 years, they really find a new 'family', which protects and cares for their soul needs. After school and over the weekends the children can feel happy with the joy of playing together on the compound with simple toys they have made themselves such as 'cars' made of old wires and tin cans. There are four boarding parents carrying this huge task with much love and energy.



### **The School Community**

The experience of warmth and peace is felt when you enter the school. This welcoming atmosphere is mainly felt because of the human activities from dedicated and active employees from all the different work areas.

All departments are important for carrying the whole school: the office workers, the cooks in the kitchen, the school bus drivers, the cleaners, the farmers, the maintenance, those working on the compound, boarding parents and not least the watchmen. Our faithful watchmen protect the school day and night. Some staff lives on the compound, which makes for a feeling of home. Very often some of the small huts on the compound house our many guests; it could be mentors, volunteers, or friends coming frequently to help, all from abroad.



Whole groups of young volunteers from Europe, mainly Germany, have done their practical here helping with larger school projects.

### **In-House Teacher Training**

A very important and crucial activity for many years is the 'Steiner/Waldorf Teacher Training' for the whole of East Africa, that is, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Modules take place three times a year during school holidays when the large boarding house accommodates the 50 to 60 teacher trainees. This Teacher Training has been extremely successful with its colourful and creative approach to education. It has been organized and led by experienced and gifted trainers coming mainly from the Centre for Creative Education in South Africa. It has meant that the Steiner/Waldorf Schools are

carried by gifted and enthusiastic local young teachers who have grasped the idea and the future of this education. The training program has been possible due to the foresight of funders from Europe and can be possible in the future through worldwide support.

## Related Activities

### East African Committee

Over the years the school has maintained an ongoing striving for cooperation, which has strengthened and supported the Waldorf development in East Africa. One of the achievements has been to develop an unifying organ for cooperation between the East African Waldorf initiatives. This 'East African Association Committee' was formed in 2005 and has its base in the 'Mother School'. The committee usually meets three times a year with representatives from the three East African countries. This committee takes on important work like the future strategy for the development of Steiner/Waldorf Education in East Africa.

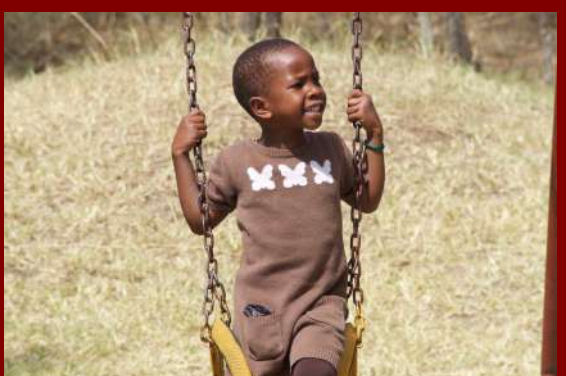
## Conferences and Workshops

From the beginning the lively conferences and workshops for Steiner/Waldorf initiatives have been taking place in the Mother School. Teachers from all the Steiner/Waldorf schools in East Africa have met over two or three days for conferences, sharing inspiration and experiences from the pedagogical area, and learning more and more about this special education for the good of the children in East Africa.

The school has been the founder and carrier of the anthroposophical conferences, which have been deepening the work with the Study of Man given by Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Steiner/Waldorf education. These conferences take place every three years in the school.

Conferences are planned in cooperation with local and international colleagues. This working together between cultures gives the conferences a mood of human oneness and a feeling of building a global future together.







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