Dear Friends of Dignitas,

I am thrilled to have joined Dignitas as the new Executive Director. In August 2016, I arrived in Nairobi and immersed myself in the community by taking Swahili lessons and teaching at a local orphanage. As I became familiar with the local education system, I saw firsthand the challenge of teaching in under-resourced classrooms. I was struck by the educators, who were relentless in their pursuit of more for their students. On a daily basis, they give their all to provide access to education for the children in their communities. Dignitas’ educators constantly seek to improve their practice in order to provide students with transformational educational opportunities. I am honored to be leading an organization that has many achievements over the last nine years.

In 2016, 44 educators from our Leadership Training Institute graduated after a multi-year partnership with Dignitas. Analysis of these educators showed substantial improvement in maintaining effective and positive relationship with students, collaborating with other school staff, and demonstrating reflective practice and self-awareness. Another accomplishment last year was the piloting of some new personal leadership trainings and techniques, including the introduction of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which are discussed further on page 10.

Finally, I look forward to getting to know you, the supporters that make Dignitas’ work possible. I welcome your questions and comments. I invite you to join me on my journey at Dignitas by following me on Twitter @EdPioneerSarah or following us on facebook, twitter, or instagram. Please continue to be partners in our mission to develop leaders who will transform opportunities for the next generation.

Sincerely,

Sarah Carta Samuel
Every child deserves an excellent education.

The bustling urban capital of Kenya, Nairobi, is a dynamic city in which 60% of the population live in one of the 200 informal settlements with minimal access to government (or public) schools. These marginalized, yet enterprising communities have self-organized and established low-cost community schools where perseverance is high but resources and access to teacher training are scarce.

At Dignitas, we empower educators to transform these community schools through leadership training, instructional and leadership coaching, and infrastructure support. Founded in 2008, Dignitas has been working alongside Kenyan educators and leaders for the past nine years.
Mission

To empower educators by developing leaders who will transform opportunities for the next generation.
How One Director Created a Thriving School of Leaders

Zeal Covenant Academy is located in Kawangware, an informal settlement 15 kilometers west of the heart of bustling Nairobi. Kawangware has a population of over 133,000 people of which over 65% are children and youth. Residents face numerous challenges due to high rates of extreme poverty and exclusion. Public healthcare and education facilities are overstretched, safe drinking water is scarce and water and airborne diseases abound. It was in this environment that Evelyn Mmbone was trying to keep Zeal Covenant Academy running for her 245 students, 10 teachers, and their families.

Evelyne’s biggest struggles were a lack of trained teachers, high teacher turnover, and limited resources. When we first met Evelyne in 2013, Zeal Covenant Academy scored below the novice level for school performance. Evelyne was dismayed that the school didn’t meet even the basic minimum standard for school performance and was eager to attend the Leadership Training Institute (LTI) to see how Zeal Covenant could improve.

During LTI, Evelyne learned the importance of role delegation. When she changed the school’s staffing structure and explained the distinction in roles, teachers quickly embraced sharing administrative responsibilities like attending to student welfare or managing the student lunch program. Teachers without additional roles could concentrate solely on teaching.

Teachers at Zeal Covenant Academy are motivated by the collaborative nature of their work today. On her end, Evelyne spends less time checking teachers’ documents and more focusing on professional development, conducting classroom observations, and demonstrating lessons for new teachers. Evelyne says of all her teachers: “They no longer find problems isolating; they always have support to find solutions.”

Since partnering with Dignitas in 2014, Zeal Covenant has maintained high level scores on annual assessments. From 2014 to 2016, Zeal Covenant improved from a baseline of 32% (pre-novice) in the area of School Culture & Climate domain to a remarkable 82% (advanced). In just two years, Zeal Covenant Academy leapt to an overall proficient level in 2016.
Committed to their Communities

Compassionate Growth Mindset Successful Careers

Creative Collaborative Ambitious Problem Solvers

Mutual Respect Joyful Self-Efficacy

Engaged Citizens

Excellent Communicators

Love of Learning

Resilient Growth Mindset

Committed to their Communities

Skilled in Math and Literacy

Knowledgeable

Smart Critical Thinkers

Self-Advocates

Increased Capacity to Learn
Vision

Dignitas envisions a world where schools are a vibrant place for all children to develop the skills and strength of character to thrive and succeed.
In 2016, Dignitas launched a new intervention to support educator development and collaboration. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) empower participants as both leaders and learners to collectively design and iterate solutions to improve student achievement. This year, educators from eight partner schools met monthly. Here are some of the ways PLCs have impacted our leaders and schools in 2016:

• **Teacher Edward**: He used to make his own lesson plans and “didn’t want to share.” Now, not only are his lesson plans better after working with his peers, but he is a better teacher and leader. “And I feel happier, too!”

• **Teachers Phanice and Isaiah**: Phanice shares, “Isaiah is superior in title, gender, tribe. I really thought it would be impossible to give my boss feedback, but I learned that I could!” Isaiah chips in, “Phanice has a lot to contribute. We have both really humbled ourselves and it has allowed us to improve.”

• **Head Teachers Patrick and Phillip**: When Patrick’s co-leader went on maternity leave, he felt overwhelmed. He reached out to his colleague from Dignitas training and two days later, Phillip responded with resources for exam prep materials. Because they were part of a cohort, Patrick and Phillip were able to share their teaching practices and build leadership not only within schools but across schools.

• **School Founder Elizabeth**: She credits the concept of PLCs to her latest innovation in school finance. Each school in Elizabeth’s PLC provides $50 USD per term and the group together decides who should be the rotating beneficiary of the pot.

**The Power of Leaders Collaborating**

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

-Margaret Mead
I joined the school in 2011 as a class one (1st grade) teacher with a lot of struggle. While I was certified to teach primary school, all my teaching practice was in upper primary grades. Handling the young learners was a big challenge, as they were 45 in the class and I did not have the experience with this age group.

In 2012, I joined a partnership with Dignitas. This is when my transformation as a teacher began. I learned to be professional, how to relate with parents, and keep financial and administrative records – things my teacher training in college did not provide. Performance in my class improved from a mean of 45% to a mean of 80% in the End of Term examination by the second year. In addition to being great for the students, this boosted the parents’ confidence and ownership in my school. After working with Dignitas, I was awarded Best Teacher and was promoted to be in charge of academics. The next year, I was promoted to Deputy Head Teacher and promoted the next year to Head Teacher.”

“The first day I met Lillian, she was frenzied, overwhelmed, and disengaged. After 6 months of coaching she is still as busy as ever, but there’s a clarity, calmness and confidence in her. Her leadership is broader and deeper.” – Rebecca Crook, Lilian’s Dignitas Coach

I’m currently a Dignitas Fellow. I’m able to observe my colleagues (they also observe me) in class, provide space for reflection and give descriptive feedback. I use thinking tools to assess my gaps, my students, and coaches. I have also become a better listener, moving from crossing my arms while listening to actively listening with my body, heart, and mind.

Most importantly, our students are learning because our adults are learning! I have set up systems and provided opportunities for our teacher leaders to constantly improve their practice. One of the best changes we have made as a result of our partnership with Dignitas has been the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).* We want our students to be lifelong learners; we as teachers should have the same mindset!

*Learn more about PLCs on page 7 to the left.
The Dottie Scholarship Program provides young women from marginalized communities the opportunity to attend a high-quality secondary school and develop as leaders and role models in their community.

Since 2011, Dignitas has supported 49 female scholars to pursue secondary education. In 2016, Dignitas selected 11 additional young women to become Dottie Scholars. The program includes three main components: Academic Support, Leadership Development Training, and Community Service Projects.

All of our young women have done well in school and graduated from secondary school or are on track to graduate at the end of their four years. Many of our scholars have gone on to university after they graduate.

The Dottie Scholarship Program is funded by generous individuals who have earmarked their donations for this special program. If you are interested in supporting a Dottie Scholar(s), please indicate this when you make your donation.

Dottie Scholarships

Scholar Spotlight

Elizabeth Matilda is the first born in her family and a natural leader. For primary school, she attended one of Dignitas’ partner schools. Now she studies at St. Ann’s, where she is a member of the handball team and President of the Nature Club. She is also the lead coordinator of the 39 Dottie Scholars supported by Dignitas and its partners. Elizabeth recognizes the significance of her scholarship both for her own academic career and her family’s ability to provide for her younger brothers.

Through the leadership training provided by Dignitas, Elizabeth said she, “learned how to share and give back to the community, knowing who I am and my potential, learning about the future and to respect myself as a woman. I now know that my background does not determine my future. I need to do everything according to my capability and work hard and I will achieve my dreams. I always put my trust in God because I know that He has a future for me. I will continue to work hard and show the world that everybody can do it; it doesn’t matter who you are, where you are from, which family you are from, if you are a girl or a boy, we can all achieve our purpose in life.”

Tailored for Education

Since 2012, Dignitas has partnered with Tailored for Education to distribute uniforms in partner schools. In 2016, 1,286 students from Alpha Glory School, Excel Primary School, and Light Christian Centre received new uniforms. The uniform distribution program also enables parents to come together and contribute towards other school needs. Parents cumulatively contributed KSH 109,250 ($1,061 USD) which was used to purchase textbooks and furniture for students.
2016 By The Numbers

Partnered with 24 schools in 5 communities to improve the quality of education and provide students and educators with more opportunities.

Impacted 8,830 students including:
- 1,286 uniforms distributed
- 35 scholarships to secondary school

Trained 126 educators by providing:
- 430 hours of personalized coaching
- 150 hours of training
- 44 educators graduated
**Financial Summary for 2016**

Total Income: $378,669

Income Breakdown:

- **Institutional Donors**
- **Individual Donors**
- **Reserves**

Total Expenses: $378,669

Expenses Breakdown:

- **Programs**
- **Quality**
- **Stakeholder Engagement**
- **Administration**
- **Development**
Thank you to our gracious, committed donors for all your support this past year! Our work with schools, educators, students, and communities is only possible with your continued support.

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Support Our Work

• **$25** – New uniform and sturdy shoes for primary school children in a low-income community.

• **$50** – New uniform + cap & gown for an educator who has successfully completed our intensive two-year educator training program.

• **$150** – New uniform, cap & gown + books, materials, and transportation for a rising educator to attend Dignitas trainings.

• **$300** – New uniform, gap & gown, books & materials + individualized one-on-one coaching for a rising educator.

Donate online: dignitasproject.org/donate
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