2019 Annual Report

Every school a vibrant place for children to thrive and succeed.

DIGNITAS
dignity through education
Dear Friends,

Greetings! I did not imagine that I would be writing this message to you from my new makeshift ‘home office’, with schools closed globally, and significant complexities added to our work.

First and foremost, it is our hope that you and your loved ones are safe and well, despite these tumultuous times.

2019 seems like a lifetime ago, but we have done our best to recall the highlights to share them with you here. It was a busy and inspiring year for the Dignitas team. We covered a lot of ground, and hope to give you a glimpse of that here.

You may remember that our strategy for 2018 was G.I.V.E. (Grow, Influence, Value, Engage). As the team approached 2019, our strong feeling was that this remained relevant, and we simply revised it slightly to make G.I.V.E.S. – Grow, Impact, Value, Evidence and Sustain. The critical addition of SUSTAIN was to ensure that we continue to deliver on the other four elements (Grow, Impact, Value and Evidence) over the longer term, for the sake of our partners, schools, and most of all, learners. Finally, the addition of Evidence was to make explicit our desire to contribute to the narratives around school improvement, school leadership, and the needs of children in underserved communities.

2019 was a significant stage in our growth journey, our team worked with 5 times as many school partners in 2019 as we did in 2018. This was an opportunity for the team to test many elements of scale, all the time reflecting on efficiencies, meaningful impact, and quality of programming.

In 2019, Dignitas partnered with 130 schools; approximately 70 Community schools and 60 government schools. The large number of government schools was new territory for our team, and something that called us to be strategic and think deeply about impact, and the sustainability of that impact. Almost 400 School and Teacher Leaders benefitted from our innovative training and coaching, impacting the learning of more than 34,000 children, a huge step towards our 2022 goal of 300,000.

Dignitas continued to collaborate with a number of partners in 2019. We hosted an evaluation team from American University, implemented programming in partnership with Global School Leaders, Africa Educational Trust, Flying Kites and Safari Collection. We also had a keen focus on learning, another of our core values. We participated in an Acumen Accelerator, presented our work at CIES and Global Schools Forum’s Annual Meeting, and participated in ALforEd Gathering, Education Evidence for Action and much more.

We continued our exciting engagement with the World Innovation Summit for Education, particularly the ALLIN initiative (Agile Leadership for Learning). ALLIN made Dignitas the subject of a ground breaking case study considering School Leadership in the Global South. We were very excited to be shortlisted as one of fifteen global finalists for the 2019 WISE Awards, which recognize successful innovations that address global educational challenges. We were also proud to be featured in HundrED’s 2020 Global Collection of the world’s most inspiring education innovations.
Whilst this report is focused on 2019, I do want to let you know that we are working with our partner schools on a response to COVID19 and resultant school closures. We recognize that these school closures result in significant risk for children and families in marginalized communities, and we will give you a brief glance into how we intend to work for the well-being and protection of the children in our partner school communities.

Whilst many elements of our work are currently being disrupted, the commitment to our mission and vision remains our laser focus and our constant grounding. Our vision is a world in which every child has the opportunity to gain the skills and strength of character to thrive and succeed. We remain resolute in the call to see this vision realized, no matter the circumstances.

Thank you to each and every person who makes the Dignitas story possible. For those who donate, who volunteer, who counsel, who partner and who are sold out to our vision – we are deeply grateful. Thank you!

We wish you all the best for 2020 – stay safe, stay well, and stay inspired!

Best Wishes,

Deborah
Strategy 2019-2021

**GROW**
Prepare, partner for, and pursue growth. Engage community, government and other stakeholders as an integral part of that growth.

**IMPACT**
Ensure that all our work is impactful, and therefore meaningful, in ensuring schools are places for children to thrive and succeed.

**VALUE**
Our impact is only sustainable if it is affordable. Ensure effectiveness and efficiency, apply innovative thinking and design.

**EVIDENCE**
Build and share a credible body of evidence that speaks to the role of school leaders and teacher leaders, the potential of learners, and their right to thrive. Leverage evidence to drive influence and build a strong organizational profile.

**SUSTAIN**
Ensure systems are in place for long term organizational health, and sustainable financial health. Be a place for team members to learn, thrive, achieve and grow.

DIGNITAS
Equity through education
Every child deserves an excellent education.

Children are not leaving school with the skills and competencies they need to thrive.

At Dignitas, we empower educators to transform their schools through leadership development and instructional coaching so that their schools become vibrant places of learning where all children thrive and succeed.

The Leadership Academy empowers educators and school leaders to take charge of transforming their schools though professional development.

Professional Development Workshops equip educators with the mindsets, tools and techniques they need to ensure all children thrive.

Coaches provide individualized, classroom based mentoring and support for the growth and development of educators.

Professional Learning Communities help educators to routinize sustainable reflective practice towards whole school improvement.

Alumni Association enables ongoing learning and growth, including support for the professional development of peers, whilst driving systemic change.

34,000 Students
400 Educators
130 Schools
Nairobi, Laikipia North, Nyandarua, Nyeri

Empowering educators to improve:
- Instructional Leadership
- Learner Engagement
- Classroom Culture
Our Journey So Far

2008  Dignitas founded

2011-2017  71 Schools, 613 Educators, 23,000 Learners

2018  30 Schools, 115 Educators, 10,500 Learners

2019  130 Schools, 400 Educators, 34,000 Learners

Nairobi, Kiambu, Nyandarua, Nyeri, Laikipia
"I coached a school leader who teaches Grade 2 and believed she could never teach without using a cane. After several coaching sessions, I have seen her setting up discipline plans together with her students and becoming intentional about building positive relationships with them. She now advocates for "no canes while teaching" at her school!"

**Samantha, School Support Manager**

"One teacher that I coached, one who had never been trained was able to turn things around and develop a growth mindset that enabled him to sustain and rebuild his school which was on the verge of collapse. This teacher previously held no position of authority in school. He is now the school headteacher."

**Mercy, Senior Leadership Coach**

"Teacher Robert of Chrisko Education Center used to talk throughout the lesson, except when he asked a few questions. Learners were disengaged. He also used to teach while looking down, and some learners would take advantage and misbehave. After Dignitas’ training and coaching, he started engaging his learners through group work, turn and talk, and peer teaching, and was aware of learner behavior in class. Learners now enjoy his lessons and exam results showed that the performance of his learners had improved greatly."

**Peris, Curriculum Manager**

"When I first observed the teacher in class, he dominated the lesson, the pupils were lectured throughout a Math lesson. The only point they were engaged was after the lesson had ended when the teacher left assignments to be completed by the learners. I was happy to see a very engaged class where learners actively took part in learning barely four months of the teacher being part of our training and coaching."

**Valary, Leadership Coach**

"School Leader Purity, a director of Angels of Mercy School in Huruma shared that after applying the Dignitas training, she experienced 100% retention of teachers and higher student enrollment in January, something she has not experienced for the last 7 years and was very energizing."

**Justus, Leadership Coach**
Stawisha Instructional Leadership Institute

Despite positive progress on access to schooling (Kenya has a Net Enrollment Rate of 91%) there are glaring gaps in the quality of education:
- Only 30% of Class 3 children can do Class 2 work
- Only 33% of teachers can assess student ability
- Only 39% of teachers can adequately prepare lesson plans
- 26% of Kenyan youth are unemployed, lacking the necessary skills (double the global average)
- 2018: The World Bank declared a ‘global learning crisis’ because children are in school but not learning

Dignitas designed Stawisha Instructional Leadership Institute in response.

According to the Kenya Education Sector Report (KESR), Kenyan classrooms are characterized by individual seat work and dominated by teacher-centered activities. Moreover, learners are rarely encouraged to participate in lessons, question new material, expand their reasoning, and collaborate with peers, skills which are central to obtaining the 21st Century skills and competencies needed to succeed in a global world. These challenges are magnified for learners from low economic backgrounds, urban informal settlements, and Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL).

An external evaluation of Dignitas' work in 2018 revealed three critical levers that impact on student learning. Stawisha 2019 was designed to equip school leadership teams to understand and leverage these three – Instructional Leadership, Classroom Culture, and Learner Engagement. This aligns well with Kenya's new Competency Based Curriculum, and the team designed the framework below to demonstrate the strategies that, when applied at a classroom level, can help nurture the necessary competencies in learners (Page 10).

There were four exciting areas of growth as the team implemented Stawisha 2019 with 69 School Partners from Nairobi's informal settlements:
Why Stawisha Instructional Leadership Institute?

- Teachers provide opportunities for student autonomy (taking initiative, independent work).
- Increased positive interaction between teachers and students.

- Teachers create and maintain learner safe spaces.
- Teacher develops student goals and differentiates them based on student ability

- Teachers use effective questioning techniques
- Teachers use engaging student-centered instructional methodologies and pedagogical practices to deliver lessons.

- Students actively engage and participate throughout lessons.

- Students are goal-oriented and committed to personal achievement.

- Students interrogate and apply new knowledge.

- Students demonstrate increased curiosity and self-efficacy.

- Students collaborate and communicate.
Dignitas Leadership Coaches used Classroom Observation Tools to track positive shifts in classroom practice. The Stawisha Instructional Leadership Institute tools were designed to allow Coaches to observe changes in Teacher Practice and Learner Practice in response (See framework detailed above). *It should be noted that the endline data collection exercise could not be concluded due to COVID19 school closures. Scores for those included were significantly higher, and had data collection been completed the trajectory was towards a higher average competency gain.*

Dignitas saw steady competency gains across the cohort, and these reflected clearly on student gains.

"Coaching has built will, skill, knowledge, and capacity because it has gone deep where no professional development has gone before. Today I can testify that I and the teachers trained by Dignitas are showing growth in intellect, behaviors, practices, beliefs, and values as educators. Coaching has created a relationship where teachers are feeling cared for especially by school leadership, and are therefore able to access and implement new knowledge. As a coach you have enabled conditions in which deep reflection and learning are taking place, where teachers are taking risks to change their practice, where powerful conversations can take place, and where growth is recognized and celebrated. Children are also testifying to this." Teacher Boniface, Ark Education Centre, Nairobi
A primary area of learning during the implementation of this pilot program was the partnership with Laikipia North Sub-County, in which we were privileged to work with County Education Officers. This offered insight as to the alignment of Ustadi with Kenya’s new Competency Based Curriculum, efforts to appraise and professionally develop teachers and the national education strategy.

We are extremely grateful to the distinguished individuals who served on the Advisory Board for this initiative.
Ustadi Impact 2019

Dignitas recorded steady gains in School Leader Mindsets and Perceptions.

I am always open to and value feedback from my teachers

Baseline

Endline

0 20 40 60 80

% of School Leaders

I always ensure measures to remedy the weakness in teaching are discussed with the teachers

Baseline

Endline

0 20 40 60 80

% of School Leaders

I always establish a development or training plan to address weaknesses

Baseline

Endline

0 5 10 15 20 25

% of School Leaders

The Dignitas team used classroom observations to track demonstrable shifts in teacher practice, seeking to observe specific techniques teachers were using to engage students. A glance at the 27 APBET schools shows the following gains:

Teacher plans for varied activities and matches them to individual learner abilities.

Baseline

Endline

0 10 20 30 40 50

% of Teachers

Teacher checks for student understanding during the lesson using formative assessment techniques

Baseline

Endline

0 25 50 75 100

% of Teachers

Ustadi also focused on key leadership practices that are documented to impact on student achievement, and saw steady gains across the cohort in the frequency and quality of these practices.

Conducting School Walkthroughs

Baseline

Endline

0 20 40 60 80

% of School Leaders

Conducting Lesson Observations

Baseline

Endline

0 25 50 75

% of School Leaders

Giving Effective Feedback to Teachers

Baseline

Endline

0 25 50 75 100

% of School Leaders

Ustadi Phase Two will be committed to sharing these findings with other education sector stakeholders as we seek to understand further how to integrate these learnings into our vision of ensuring every child has the opportunity to gain the skills and strength of character they need to thrive and succeed.
Wezesha Projects 2019

Tailored for Education

At Dignitas we believe that learning has the power to unlock human potential and that every child no matter their background deserves an opportunity to access quality education. Dignitas partner, Tailored for Education (TFE), is increasing opportunity for children to thrive by providing school uniforms. In 2019, 4,045 uniforms were distributed through this partnership. Dignitas ties uniform distribution to parental engagement. Since 2013, this program has helped community schools meet some of their most pressing needs. School leaders collaborate with parents and agree to individual contributions ranging from Ksh1-300 (USD1–3). Dignitas then oversees implementation of projects funded by parents’ contributions. In 2019, projects ranged from textbooks to lockers, chairs, desks, water tanks, classroom repairs, and games items.

Many school leaders have praised this initiative and have started to think broadly on ways they could engage their parents more. At Zeal Covenant Academy, the school management has adopted this strategy to help them deal with the challenge of collecting school fees. Any parent who is unable to raise school fees in cash has the option to pay in-kind by offering their services to the school. Parents are able to offer carpentry, painting, repairs service or supply food items required by the school.

Dottie Scholars

The Dottie Scholars program was launched in 2011 to provide high performing girls with the opportunity to attend a high-quality secondary school. Since inception, a total of 68 girls have been supported through this scholarship program. In 2019 we had a cohort of 31 scholars supported by our partners, Women Leaders in Action. In addition to schooling, the scholarship enables the girls to participate in Leadership Development Training throughout the year. In April 2019 the theme of this training was ‘Women and the World’ and in August 'Communication That Changes the World.' The scholars have been practicing all they have learned through community service-learning projects. A highlight of the year was the celebration of Form Fours who graduated.

As they transitioned from high school, it was great news to learn that nine out of eleven managed a minimum grade of C+ and above, which entitles them to university admission with government sponsorship. Dottie Scholars continued to dominate in their final exams with the school’s top performer who scored a B+ being Victoria Mbithe. Victoria also served as the School Captain and received many praises for her consistency in maintaining a high level of discipline for four years.

“If I could find a way to transform my community, I would try as much as possible to eradicate poverty. Poverty increases homelessness with many children living in the streets. ... These people in other circumstances would have been productive and helped in community development.” – Sarah, Dottie Scholar
Meet the Dignitas Coaches

"I am always inspired by School Leaders who reflect on their lessons and clearly see the strategies they are doing well and how they can refine these strategies further. Such a school leader shows intrinsic motivation to improve themselves even after the Dignitas partnership. I somehow feel my work is done. Being a coach is one of the most fulfilling ventures because I get to influence a teacher, who is a major transformation agent of the nation and world at large."

Victoria, Leadership Coach

"I did not like teaching it at first, but a lot changed after interacting with students! Seeing School leaders empowered and confident in their roles as leaders and change makers, and seeing happy, motivated students actively participating in classroom activities motivates me as a coach. Our work can be hard sometimes but very rewarding especially when we see both students and teachers feeling safe and enjoying school."

Samantha, School Support Manager

"Growing up, I was surrounded by marking schemes, learners’ books and teachers’ records of work. Having both parents as teachers quickly got me interested. Becoming a teacher coach was guided by a reflection of my own personal endeavor to be an effective teacher. A month into my work at Dignitas I realized I could achieve this, but most importantly, move out of my silo and help other teachers embrace quality too."

Mercy, Senior Leadership Coach

"After tutoring in a Teacher training college and observing the kind of teachers we were producing; (they could not apply what they were learning practically) I felt there was something amiss. That’s when I applied for vacancies that exposed me to best teaching practices and I got interested in building teachers. Today I am happy the teachers I train and coach are equipped with all the knowledge and skills to enable them prosper and be successful."

Justus, Leadership Coach

"Seeing milestones achieved by the teachers that I coach motivates me because I know it has a direct impact on learners. The fact that I coach many teachers means that I reach more learners than if I were in the classroom teaching. Finally, hearing positive stories of change and growth from teachers themselves motivates me to coach."

Peris, Curriculum Manager

"I am passionate about helping teachers focus on the best classroom practices to bring the most out of the learners. Witnessing transformation from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches to learning, and seeing School Leaders receptive to feedback and reflective practice is inspirational."

Valary, Leadership Coach

"I am always inspired by School Leaders who reflect on their lessons and clearly see the strategies they are doing well and how they can refine these strategies further. Such a school leader shows intrinsic motivation to improve themselves even after the Dignitas partnership. I somehow feel my work is done. Being a coach is one of the most fulfilling ventures because I get to influence a teacher, who is a major transformation agent of the nation and world at large."

Victoria, Leadership Coach
Partnerships

In line with our strategy we have sought to establish mutually valuable partnerships that allow us to share insights, contribute to a broader narrative promoting the importance of School Leadership and establish pathways to growth.

RELI has been a valuable network for Dignitas. RELI convenes approximately 60 organizations from across East Africa, all of whom are focused on improving learning outcomes for the region’s most vulnerable children, to create unique learning opportunities.

RELI has opened up a number of conversations with the Kenyan government that are important for Dignitas’ work, and have included the opportunity for Dignitas to represent education actors in a variety of forums.

Dignitas has offered thought leadership on critical matters, and ensured School Leadership is on RELI’s agenda.

Early in 2018, Dignitas began a conversation with Global School Leaders (GSL); an entity that curates and contextualizes best practices in school leadership globally to meet the distinct demands placed on school systems in the developing world. Recognizing meaningful synergies across the work of both entities, Dignitas established a formal partnership with GSL to create and implement programming in Kenya in 2019. This creates opportunities for learning and development across teams, as well as an opportunity to bring more partners and funders together around a shared agenda.

Dignitas officially joined Global Schools Forum towards the end of 2018. Global Schools Forum offers Dignitas the opportunity to engage with a community of practitioners and funders seeking to positively impact the education sector. Dignitas also hosted a webinar for members on the subject of ‘Reflective Practice for School Leaders’ earlier in 2018.

Dignitas has been pleased to benefit from partnership with AfID (Accountants for International Development) who have supported the organization to review and improve financial management procedures and practices, as well as building the capacity of Dignitas financial management staff.

Dignitas has also been privileged to be an active member of WISE: ALLIN (World Innovation Summit for Education: Agile Leadership for Learning), and Kenya’s EDPCG (Education Development Partners Consultative Group). Each of these have afforded Dignitas the opportunity to present our work and impact to wide audiences of scholars, practitioners and government stakeholders.
Since 2018, we’ve had 13 generous donors who have chosen to Adopt a School and walk this important journey with a school leadership team to ensure learners thrive and succeed.

Through the 'Adopt a School' program we seek to connect community schools with the kindness of friends and supporters. In 2019, Dignitas held the first Adopt a School event, organized and facilitated by board members. The event was intended to bring together Adopt a School partners and donors to learn more about the impact they are helping to create, and hear new goals that the organization hopes to achieve.

This was also a great opportunity for them to meet some of the school leaders and students that they support. The school leaders shared their passion to become change-agents for their schools and communities.

Adopt a School donors have lots of opportunities to get 'hands-on' with school visits, newsletters, and volunteer experience. It's a great way to get more involved with the community, get to know a school team, and really make a difference!

Every Adopt a School donation helps to ensure that hundreds of children have the opportunity to reach their potential. Dignitas equips teachers and school leaders for the delivery of quality education to ensure all children gain the skills and strength of character they need to thrive and succeed.

For just KSh 300,000 (USD3,000) you can support a Dignitas partner school for an entire year. Just KSh 1,000 (USD10) per student will enable them to learn. Make a difference today!
Financial Summary 2019

Income
- Partnerships 77%
- Reserves 19%
- Individual 2%
- Institutional 2%

Expenditure
- Programs 68%
- Learning and Evaluation 7%
- Nawiri Programs 8%
- Management and Administration 12%
- Communication and Stakeholder Engagement 5%

Total Income: Ksh 71,843,000
Total Expenditure: Ksh 56,196,000

Board of Trustees and Directors
- Dr C. S. Sheth
- Dr Paresh Devani
- Smita Sanghrajka
- Steve Kariithi
- Atia Yahya
- Timothy Slade
- Joseph Kahenya
- Tiffany Cheng Nyaggah
- Bobby Lee
- Min Tak
2020 Goals

- Develop digital training and coaching for educators
- Diversify income streams for sustainability
- Build organizational profile
- Engage with government as key partners
- Build great partnerships with like-minded organizations

- Develop initiatives that allow students in partner schools to thrive
- Deliver high quality programming across all school partnerships
- Grow networks for learning and sharing
- Strengthen Dignitas Alumni Association

- Focus on efficiency and effectiveness
- Leverage digital offering for cost-effective impact

- Ensure all key stakeholders are co-creators and co-owners of evidence
- Leverage internal and external reporting to build a strong narrative of what works for children
- Strengthen data collection and analysis

- Maintain strong financial and organisational management
- Streamline processes for efficiency and effectiveness in season of growth
- Build the capacity Dignitas team to deliver on a vision of growth
Dignitas’ Response to COVID19

Leaders of Learning: Community Champions of Well-Being and Learning

According to UNESCO more than 160 countries have implemented nationwide school closures, impacting over 87% of world’s student population. 60% of Nairobi’s population is marginalized in urban informal settlements, up to 63% of whom typically do not access government schooling for their children. These children and their families are excluded from basic government services such as health, sanitation and education, putting them at significant risk. Dignitas has always held that School Leaders are pillars of our communities; not just leading schools, but communities. Dignitas would like to equip, empower and support our School Leaders as new Leaders of Learning for the current global crisis.

As a result of our 300 school partnerships, Dignitas has communities of School Leaders and Teacher Leaders already working in some of the most marginalised communities.

Schools close without warning. Dignitas identifies a critical need to ensure children continue to thrive & succeed.

Dignitas School Leaders & Teachers already have an important set of competencies in instructional leadership & learner engagement.

Dignitas equips School Leaders & Teachers with new, critical competencies & support so that they can support children’s well-being & learning at home.

Be part of a powerful solution for the most marginalized children!

With your support our partner schools can continue to support children’s well-being and learning throughout the COVID19 crisis.

- $72 allows us to support one household for 6 months - $12/month
- $36 allows us to support one child for 6 months - $6/month
- $1400 allows one Leader of Learning to support 20 households for 6 months

Children from the most marginalized communities have their well-being and learning protected so that they can continue to thrive and succeed.

Log onto www.dignitasproject.org to support our emergency appeal!
Join us in 2020 to be part of the transformation! Volunteer, donate or partner with us to help every child reach their potential.

Thank you!