Dignitas is a leading education development organization. We use an innovative training and coaching approach to empower schools and educators in marginalized communities to transform students’ opportunities.

“It’s about teaching smart not hard. Teaching is now fun. It is enjoyable since my relationship with students is better.”

(Dignitas Stawisha Fellow, School Leader)
Dear Friends,

It was with great excitement that I accepted the invitation to lead Dignitas, as Executive Director, in October 2017. From my first meeting with Tiffany (Co-Founder and Former Executive Director) to my engagement with the wider team since, I have been inspired by the impact of Dignitas and enthused about the potential for 2018 and beyond.

My experience developing and leading various programs across Kenya has cemented my belief that quality education is key to ending poverty and injustice, and to transforming families and communities. My personal passion for seeing children in marginalized communities access opportunities to thrive, and Dignitas’ vision to ensure children receive a quality education in order to develop the skills and strength of character to succeed, are well aligned.

The resilience and capacity of the Dignitas’ team has repeatedly impressed me. Despite the leadership transitions in 2017, the team were able to implement all program activities and ensure progress stayed on track. As a result, in 2017, Dignitas partnered with 40 schools, trained 116 educators and impacted 12,412 children. I have been impressed by Dignitas’ focus on empowering educators and the clarity with which the entire team pursues the vision of ensuring all children reach their potential.

This clear focus sets the agenda for 2018 and really, our next decade of work. We are committed to reaching 300,000 children by 2022 and are collaborating with others to make this happen. My focus is to build strategic partnerships that complement our work and exponentially increase our impact. A priority for now is to secure working partnerships with the government, like-minded non-profits, and other educational organizations. In addition, to achieve our ambitious impact goals, we recognize that we need to be innovative. Innovation is one of our core organizational values and, in a recent team retreat, was defined as “tactics, plus feedback, plus creativity.” I love this definition and look forward to applying it in 2018.
As an organization we are keen to understand our impact so that we make evidence based program decisions and can be sure to sustain the quality of our work during this ambitious phase of growth. As 2017 drew to a close, we engaged renowned researchers to investigate the impact of our work on student learning and achievement. We are excited to see what this investigation reveals in 2018 and will be sure to keep you up to date. As we consider growth, it is really important for the entire team, including our partners, to have confidence in our program model and impact.

I would like to thank you for all your ongoing support and partnership with Dignitas through 2017. It has been a privilege to get to know some of you over the last few months and I look forward to speaking with more of you in due course. Please do reach out if you’d like to know more about our strategy, program, impact or team.

Thank you for being a partner in transformation! Together we can ensure more children receive an education that will give them the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Best wishes,

Deborah Kimathí
Executive Director

"I’ve really changed as a teacher. I didn’t understand why we should have objectives in our teaching. I used to just teach but I couldn’t know or understand what my pupils learned. Now I tell them what they need to achieve at the end of the lesson and we review if they got the objectives at the end of the day... I used to have pupils, the low achievers, and I did not know how to support them... But with the knowledge I got ...the mean score has really improved.”

(Teacher Phanice, Excel School)
Our Vision: We imagine a world where schools are a vibrant place for all children to develop the skills and strength of character to thrive and succeed.

“Dignitas training has impacted on me positively. Before the training I used to have a fixed mindset but nowadays I have a growth mindset. I used to ignore pupils with special needs, but nowadays I know it is possible for them to perform. I’ve been able to develop team work and I can engage the team to help me.”

(Calvince, Brightburn Education Centre)
Dear Friends,

As we reflect on our journey with Dignitas since its founding in 2008, we find ourselves profoundly grateful for your partnership as it has allowed us to impact thousands of children and families in Kenya. In 2017, we continued to reach out to schools in the poorest areas of the country with a world-class leadership program designed to transform teaching and student learning outcomes. Our focus on improving education quality has ignited a movement among the hundreds of school leaders we partner with because they know what they do every day, in every classroom, for every child truly matters.

In 2017, we also welcomed Executive Director Deborah Kimathi, a seasoned leader whose passion, skill, and commitment to advancing equity is just what is needed to move Dignitas into its next decade. In addition to bringing a strategic mindset to the work, Deborah has worked together with Dignitas’ leadership team to outline a bold vision for how we can expand our unique influence and impact across the region and further still, to other global communities.

We hope you share in our pride for the work that has been accomplished in the past year, but also our sense of urgency for the work that lies ahead. Millions of children around the world are in great need of teachers and school leaders who will champion their whole development. That’s where we – Dignitas’ team and your support – come in. Our collective future depends on the next generation being equipped to think critically, solve problems, and provide moral leadership in every sector, community, and country. We will be able to accomplish so much more together with your continued support.

Thank you for walking with us in 2017.

In partnership,

Tiffany Cheng Nyaggah (Co-Founder),
On Behalf of the Board of Trustees and Directors
Our Impact in 2017

- 40 Partner Schools
- 12,412 Students
- 116 School Leaders
- 92 Hours of Professional Development
- 490 Coaching Hours

87% of students said they could achieve a goal if they worked hard.

82% of students believe they will graduate from secondary school.

Students taught by Dignitas-trained teachers outscored their peers in non-Dignitas classrooms. Comparison using pre- and post-assessments found that students in Dignitas classrooms showed a 44% increase in academic growth during the course of a lesson, whilst students in non-Dignitas classrooms experienced a 15% increase.
In 2017, with the launch of Stawisha, we turned our program focus to School Leaders, recognizing those in both formal and informal positions of authority. Our work to date has proven that these School Leaders, as educators in positions of influence, can drive positive schoolwide change and improvement. Stawisha is designed to ensure that these School Leaders are equipped with the mindsets, skills and tools to deliver quality education to every child. The stories below highlight some of the impact of Stawisha so far.

Teacher Rubai (Kanyorosha Self-Help Group), is not a trained teacher. This negatively affected her self-esteem, and contribution to school improvement. After the first Stawisha Summit, where she learned about collaborative leadership, techniques to engage students, and self-efficacy, Teacher Rubai went back to school feeling empowered.

As a result, she is supporting other teachers at her school by sharing the new knowledge she has gained. She allows them to observe her in class so that they can also learn. She also feels more confident to participate in school wide discussions and contribute in staff meetings.
After the Professional Development Workshop on Special Needs, the Stawisha fellows at Luminous School were enlightened about different learning abilities of students.

Teacher Rahab now uses a lot of learner-centered approaches like grouping students, having them work in pairs, and practical work in every lesson.

Rahab relates much better with her students and shows more concern for their progress and after-school life. She praises them for good work, and for effort, and she encourages those who are struggling.

“My focus has shifted from completing the syllabus to how students are learning, I’m taking care of learners with different abilities.”

(Teacher Rahab)

92% of students know they can ask a teacher for help when they don’t understand

89% of students feel happy in class
Teacher Lucy (Kabiria Cornerstone Centre) has begun using ‘No Opt Out’ technique which ensures the participation of all learners, particularly those who typically don’t try or struggle to contribute. Her students, especially Class 4 girls, started gaining confidence, to the extent that the other students in the school noticed. After a debating club session, Class 5 students asked, “Why are Class 4 girls no longer shy?” The technique helped Teacher Lucy’s students to believe in themselves and their abilities.

81% of students feel that their teacher cares about the students

When Felistus joined the Dignitas program, she had a big challenge controlling her younger learners. Her class was noisy and chaotic. In one of the Stawisha training sessions, she learned how to create procedures and routines to help her manage her classroom which completely transformed her class.

Her School Director noticed this, encouraged her and gave her the mandate to make school wide procedures and routines. She did this, and soon learners across the school were following procedures and routines which set high standards of behavior as the norm across the school.
"I will never tire of saying that our partnership with Dignitas is the best thing that ever happened to our school, Riruta Jubilee Academy. In fact, I feel born again as a teacher because of the impact! The other teachers in this school echo my sentiments. My old habits are gone...I am no longer the most feared teacher but now the most approachable teacher! The application of Adult Learning Principles has reduced conflict with staff – as teachers we now give each other feedback, and I have increased emotional intelligence to deal with this properly. I have embraced delegation, and as a result, I am no longer tired and irritable. I have gained the trust of my colleagues and the school management.”

One of the most significant areas of impact in Riruta Jubilee Academy has been in the school discipline policy and its implementation. Teacher Nicholas and his colleagues noted that Dignitas’ vision was to ensure schools are a vibrant place where all children develop skills, and strength of character to thrive and succeed. They recognized the need to write school rules using positive language, to stop the use of corporal punishment, and to engage children and teachers to draft a School Discipline Plan. “We have rewards and consequences that are suggested by the children which has ensured the students are responsible and accountable to each other.”

“I am now more effective as a teacher. I am able to deliver my lesson plans because I write the objectives on the wall, use formative assessments to check for understanding, and use new teaching techniques that I learned in Stawisha.” (Teacher Nicholas)
Milkah 'Dottie' Okayo was born and raised in Mathare, one of the communities in which Dignitas works. She is remembered as a compassionate teacher who loved children, and a community leader who sought to improve lives. Dignitas started awarding Dottie Scholarships in 2011 to provide high-achieving girls the opportunity to gain quality secondary education.

In 2017, 10 new Dottie Scholars were added to the program, bringing the total to 56 since 2011. Stephanie was one of the new scholars.

Stephanie scored well in her exams and, when she met with our team, her confidence and ability were outstanding. Through the Leadership Development Training conducted by Dignitas, she has continued to excel and learn important skills that will enable her to succeed in life.

“Joining Dottie Scholarship was the best thing that happened to me. It is the opportunity of a lifetime where one’s school fees are fully paid. I have to work hard and build my life. I really want to become a journalist in future, and I am working towards this goal.”

In partnership with Tailored for Education, Dignitas has distributed 7,079 uniforms to children in partner schools, restoring their dignity and making a positive impact in their families. In 2017, 1,715 uniforms were distributed.

As with any infrastructure support offered through Dignitas, parents are engaged to invest alongside us as important stakeholders in the education of their children. This has been a fruitful process, empowering parents to contribute to the development of their schools. Schools have fostered this initiative to drive positive change.

At MCO Joy, there wasn't enough furniture for teachers and students, with 4 students sharing 1 desk, which made learning difficult. This initiative saw parents contribute funds so that the school could purchase 50 desks and 11 teachers’ tables for the classrooms.
Building Our Team

The following staff joined our team in senior management positions in 2017.

Deborah Kimathi | Executive Director
Deborah's 15 year international development career has laid a strong foundation for her new role at Dignitas. Deborah is excited about working with the Dignitas team to grow program impact and, as a result, transform the educational experience of children throughout Kenya and beyond.

Leah Anyanwu | Program and Evaluation Director
Leah has a wealth of experience as an educator, instructional coach and team leader. Leah believes that education is a civil right and that all children deserve the chance to realize their dreams. At Dignitas, she spearheads the development of the teacher training curriculum, and catalyzes long-term, sustainable growth by tracking effectiveness and accountability.

Roselynn Awili | Program Manager
Roselynn is a seasoned instructional coach and an educational manager with more than six years of knowledge and practical experience. At Dignitas, Roselynn supports government engagement, program implementation, and oversees Leadership Coaches in their work with partner schools. She believes that leadership involves pursuing excellence and making a difference.
Looking Forward to 2018

**GROW:** Pilot strategies for growth that will allow identification of the most efficient, and effective route(s) to scale.

**INFLUENCE:** Build an organizational profile around core narrative of student impact

**VALUE:** Manage costs to drive Value for Money, and ensure long term feasibility of programs.

**ENGAGE:** Codify engagement pathways, and all relevant frameworks, curriculum, resources, and evaluation tools.

Please be part of the transformation!

We would love for you to continue to walk with us into 2018. Please consider donating to our work, or get in touch to explore other ways you can support us. By partnering with Dignitas, you will be part of the solution for thousands of children who deserve to thrive.

Don’t miss out!

2018 will see the launch of our 10th anniversary celebrations! There will be special opportunities to get involved, to give, and to learn more about the work of Dignitas.
Board of Trustees and Directors
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Tiffany Cheng Nyaggah
Dr Paresh Devani
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