Greetings!

**Eco-rated facilities supporting local education in Kenya**

Nelson Mandela once said “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world”. His quote above resonates with what many in the society have believed in and continue to do so. It is for this reason that governments all over the world work hard to provide their citizens with education and Kenya is no exception. Unfortunately, so many challenges exist that need to be addressed to meet the above objective. These include: poor academic results, high drop-out rate, early pregnancies and marriages, drug and substance abuse, inadequate learning facilities and materials among others.

Many eco-rated facilities have stepped up to these challenges and are contributing to the development of education in Kenya especially in rural areas. This week, we will highlight some of these contributions as a way of inspiring other facilities to support local schools in one way or another.

**Infrastructural support**

Most schools in rural areas are strained in terms of adequate infrastructure to support learning. These infrastructure include: classrooms, libraries, laboratories, dormitories and lavatories among others. Overcrowded classrooms, leaking roofs, poor furniture, poor drainage, open walls and inadequate toilets paint the picture of the situation in some schools.
In Solio, Nyeri region, Charles Wickham Honi Primary School before 2016 was in conditions as the one we have described for you. Further, the exam results were poor, the school-drop out was high and added to the already ‘very tough’ conditions the cold weather in this region made learning unbearable. Solio Lodge through the Safari Collection found it necessary to intervene, so that this situation could be reversed and students are able to enjoy learning again. They did a complete refurbishment of the entire school. In addition, new textbooks were provided to students, so that each of them had a new set of textbooks for every subject. The illustrations below will depict for you the school condition before and after refurbishment.
Provision of water treatment plants

Drinking contaminated water and poor sanitation have been linked to diseases such as cholera, diarrhea and typhoid among others. In the Maasai Mara region, Sanctuary Olonana has improved access to drinking water in 34 local primary schools, by providing water filters. The project is aimed at reducing the incidence of diseases in children. In October 2018, the Eco-rating team had the rare opportunity during the Eco-rating Audit of Sanctuary Olonana to visit Enkererri Primary School and see this great initiative first hand. We were very lucky to learn and understand how the system works. It operates using a system of carbon filters and filaments, with minimal maintenance and no use of energy. The illustration below depicts a Life straw filter in use at the time of our visit.

Provision of food to students

There is wide consensus that proper nutrition is important to childhood academic performance. In Westgate Community Conservancy, pupils in local primary schools had inadequate access to proper nutrition prior to 2016. This led to poor academic performance and school drop-outs. Thanks to the intervention of Sasaab Lodge through the Safari Collection, the Young Minds Programme was initiated to provide food for children in the local schools, so that the dwindling academic performance could be reversed. This programme is currently supporting 9 schools, with approximate population of students benefiting being 1100. Each day, the students are
provided with a healthy nutritious lunch to meet their needs. For some this might be the only meal they have, and parents have therefore been provided with an incentive to send their children to school.

Besides these options, you can also consider providing bursaries to needy students who may not be able to afford school fees, so that they can fulfill their dreams of acquiring education.

It is our belief that you have been able to draw inspiration from these experiences that we have shared with you through this article, and you will be able to support education in your local area. Through the support that you will provide, you will be opening for the pupils/ children a world full of opportunities and possibilities that possibly they could not have had!