

REDEEMED GOSPEL ACADEMY- MOMBASA

Report #K26

SURVEY

Our survey of 3964 Kenyans identified Redeemed Gospel Academy as having a unique impact. Only eight other organizations received more nominations for being the most influential – with three of these being large international organizations (Compassion International, Red Cross, World Vision) and others not Christian (Faulu Kenya). It was rated highly for training leaders (3.69 on a 4-point scale).

ABSTRACT

Redeemed Academy is a school founded by the Redeemed Gospel Church in Ukunda, Mombasa. Its primary purpose is to provide quality education at a low cost for the local community. The church also has a ‘hunger’ to reach the unreached, and so they use the school as one of the tools to do so. They have 350 students with diverse family backgrounds, although a majority are Digo, and also have a diverse staff. The students come from different religious backgrounds even though the school is located in a heavily Islamic community. Nevertheless, they still strive to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ. They currently have a school that ranges from kindergarten to high school and are in the process of building a college. Their strategic plan for the future includes having a school of ministry to train leaders who will impact Kenya and the world.

HISTORY

The founder of this school is Bishop John Bosco Wahinya. He is the presiding bishop of the Redeemed Gospel Church South Coast region and also currently sits on the board of leadership in the Redeemed Gospel Church International. He founded the school in the year 1996 with only two classes: KG 1 and KG2, which are nursery classes. In the following years, there was the introduction of class one and from there it grew to class 8 (USA grade 9). In 2001, the school had its first class 8 (USA grade 9) candidates sitting for their KCPE and then they had the vision of beginning a secondary school. In 2004, the school introduced the first form one, and now the school provides education until the fourth form level (USA grade 12).

The reason as to why Redeemed Academy was founded is that Bishop Bosco had a vision of reaching the Digo community. The motto of the Redeemed Gospel Church in Diani is “Reaching the Unreached,” so at that particular time, the Digo community was classified under the unreached community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. So he had this burden in him that he would want to reach them and in so doing, he planted a church here. But he realized that the elderly were very radical especially in Islam and so reaching them was harder. He had a vision that if he could start a school, he would be able to bring up children who first and foremost understood Christianity and with time he would be able to impact them and be able to give them access to the Word of God as they grew with it.

They have reached milestones such as having a population of 350 children in the school with 70% of those children being Muslim. So far, they also have not offered Muslim Religious Education but stuck with Christian Religious Education in the curriculum.

MISSION/VISION

The Redeemed Gospel Academy has one mission and one purpose. It is to: offer quality education to all children regardless of their race, religion, or socio-economic background. They also seek to make sure that children can access quality education that will give them the ability to face the challenges before them in life. They equip them for future for them to be able to be people who are holistically developed while also propagating the kingdom of God in these children. They want them to grow up knowing that there is a God who watches over them and will require an account from them. So as they grow up, so they need to be accountable for their actions.

They have children from different religions and denominations. They have Muslim children and in the past have had some Hindu students as well. They currently have students from the Redeemed Gospel, Catholic, AIC and other denominations. The school is ethnically diverse, but the majority of the students are Digo. They also have children from parents who came to work on the Coast, so they instruct children from the various provinces in Kenya.

They have many things they do as a school because they are very dedicated to their work. They offer quality education because they believe that a child has a right to it. The headmistress of the school says that their teachers always go to class with that information at the back of their mind that whatever they are going to do there needs to relate to offering quality education to the child. They also ensure that they create a conducive environment for the child to develop recognizing that the child has a right to express himself or herself freely in classes without feeling like they are being intimidated. The school has put it clearly to the teachers that when they go to class, they ought to create a child-friendly environment

At the school, there is no corporal punishment for any student. When it comes to the issues of correction they try very hard to instill in their teachers that they need to talk to the children and correct these children by making them understand where they are going wrong and, therefore, counsel them accordingly. Corporal punishment is outlawed in Kenya as it is against the laws of protecting the children in the country, so the school administration tries very hard not to allow any teacher to use a cane on the children. But the school considers itself 'very' particular about discipline and seeks to instill the sense that discipline is for the child's benefit. According to the headmistress, if they were to use corporal punishment on a child, if the child were to transfer to a different school where corporal punishment was not used, it would be very hard for that child to be disciplined.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WITH SIMILAR FOCUS/MISSION

The school is similar to that of Word of Life in the same province. They hold the same principles of giving quality education but also caring for the students' spiritual lives. But they are different from Word of Life in that Word of Life is a ministry that is international in scope with its

headquarters in the United States. They also run the school by hiring people from other Word of Life ministries who come in and take charge. Redeemed Academy is under the leadership of Bishop Bosco, who oversees the church and the school.

CURRENT LEADER

The leader of The Redeemed Academy is Bishop Bosco Wahinya, who began the Redeemed Gospel Church of Ukunda in December 1993. Before that time, he had been working under Archbishop Arthur Kitonga at the headquarters of Redeemed Gospel Church at Huruma, Nairobi. From there, he worked under Bishop Lai at Mombasa Jesus Celebration Ministry, which is under the ministry of Redeemed Gospel Church (RGC). He then got the vision to open a church at Ukunda in 1993, and he was the pastor for quite some time. Then he was promoted to be a reverend and later was consecrated in the office of the bishop on 4th of May 2013 to be the bishop of RGC, the south coast region.

BOARD STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

The school director is Bishop Bosco, who is assisted by his wife Revered Patricia Bosco who serves as the co-director. There is also a school administrator, a male, who helps run the school in conjunction with the help of the senior deacons. The majority of the board is male, as all the senior deacons are male. But they come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The Bishop is Kikuyu, but the two pastors under him are Luhya. The school administrator is a Kamba

The strengths of the board according to the principal are that each and every one of them is talented in different areas of leadership. There are those who are gifted in leadership, others in implementing policies, which are brought forward by the director. The principal stated that the leaders on the school board complement each other in terms of leadership.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & LEADERSHIP

The principle of the school has been a teacher at this school since 1997, which according to her shows dedication. She is a Kamba and says that she sought to grow herself educationally. Her strengths are that she has not limited herself educationally and has a hunger to educate herself to the highest level and maybe someday become a university lecturer. She also heads the science panel of the school, which is made up of the teachers who teach Science.

Her deputy is Kisii, and he heads the Social Studies and English panels. The senior teacher is also a male teacher, and he is the head of the Kiswahili panel. They have other teachers, for example, the mathematics class 8 teacher is a male Kamba teacher, and he heads the Mathematics Panel. The head of the Christian Religion education panel is male. In total, they have nine female teachers and six male teachers from kindergarten to 8th grade.

According to the principal of the school, the strengths of the staff are that all of them are very dedicated to their work. They are also using female teachers to encourage girls about classes that are traditionally thought of as harder for girls such as math and science. In her view, having female teachers teach math and science challenges and motivates the girls.

In leadership succession, if something happens to the principal, the deputy principle is fully capable of taking over. If something happens to both of them, there are senior teachers who are capable of taking over. They have teachers who have been there for more than a decade and they 'know how the school is supposed to run.' When teachers leave the school, they often go to start their own schools. According to the principal, the time she has had in office has given her experience and should she leave the Redeemed Academy, she will not go out to search for a job. She reckoned that she has gathered enough experience that she would prefer just to open her own school. She said that the school really tries to create better teachers and better leaders for tomorrow.

BOARD AND STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

SKIPPED

STAKEHOLDERS

The stakeholders in this school include the teachers, the parents and the pupils in this school. They have some students who are sponsored, so the external donors are also stakeholders in this school. The church leaders are also stakeholders in the school because they have been charged with the duty to shepherd the teachers who are in charge of the children.

FINANCES & OTHER RESOURCES

SKIPPED

PARTNERSHIPS/LINKS

The Redeemed Gospel Academy partners with the Free Pentecost Church in education issues. Sponsors from the church come in to view the facilities and the progress the children are making. They normally have meetings with Word of Life and host each other for seminars and workshops. They also work with the Catholic Church at one of their schools (St. Joseph) and interact with them. They are open to working with other organizations especially those that propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They have not worked with many non-Christian organizations, but they are open to those that will not undermine their work with the children. So far they have worked with the Diani Abstinence Club, which is an organization by non-Christian youth that supports abstinence until marriage. They also have worked with Teen's Watch, which educates children on the issues of alcohol and drugs. They also have partnered with Children of Africa, which is an organization that sponsors children regardless of their religious background. This organization also has a training college and invited Redeemed Academy to bring their students to go to that college. They have also worked with the Kenya Red Cross and have a very active club in the school. They also have an active club under the Kenya Wildlife Society. They have also ventured into the world of social awareness and partnered with different individuals to reduce the stigma on different ailments. In 2011, they had a lady who came in to sensitize the community on issues

pertaining to autism. In 2013, they had the Kenya Epileptic Society educate their students on epilepsy. They are open to working with non-Christian organizations that add value to the growing child.

SWOT: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

According to the grade school principal, their biggest strength is in understanding their students. They have been able to get through to their students by being available for them, not over-emphasizing on the academics but also showing them that they are very much concerned with their welfare as a whole. So their students can talk about what they are going through because they know their teachers are there for them. Additionally, as a Christian academy, they wish to make their students aware of the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, they do not forget that there is also freedom of worship in this country and have made provisions for Muslim children to exercise their religion. They do not have a room dedicated to them as a mosque, but the Muslim children can use their classroom should they need to pray. They cannot deny children the opportunity to pray because they try to make them appreciate diversity. The principal said that if they are hostile to the child's religion, the child might retaliate and become hostile to the teacher's religion. So they try and show the students that they appreciate them for who they are and allow Christ's love to win them over. They do not impose Christianity on them, so during midday prayers, children will stand at the back of the class praying. They will not be ashamed because they have been taught to respect each other's religions. According to the principal, the logic behind this is that tomorrow if this child who was praying unashamedly in class becomes a leader, he will be able to respect the religions of others. He will note that it doesn't mean that we all have to have a like mind and if we have diverse minds then we should respect each other's opinions.

At the Redeemed Gospel Academy, the principal identified one of their weaknesses stems largely from having personnel leave the school. They have teachers who have moved to the government sector because of financial constraints at the school or for the teachers' upward mobility. Teachers seek permanence that the government can provide, but according to the principal, this really affects the children, especially if they have already been attached to the teacher who moves. The school has not yet found a way to retain their teachers, but this has not really been affecting their staffing because they are able to find replacements quickly and so they are bearing with it for now.

The school is located in an Islamic community, and this is a key challenge. Initially, they faced hostility from the community because they thought that the Christian church was going to come and tear the Islamic bond asunder and turn the children against their elders. The school came under constant attacks in 1997, 1998, and 2000 ethnic clashes. At that time, they only had six children in the school. But they stuck with it and were able to break into the community and not discriminate against them. They tried hard to ensure that the children excelled in diverse fields, and soon the top students from the region came from Redeemed Academy, and they were also Muslim.

As those students excelled, the community became more open to the school, and they were able to overcome the challenge of people looking at them skeptically. The bishop also tries to

overcome these challenges by working with the local leaders and opening up a line of communication so they can address different concerns that they are having. In July 2012, he was at a meeting where all the local leaders were deliberating on issues that affect the county. He was the only Christian leader who represented the local Christian community. They believe that so far they have been able to break down the barrier separating Muslims and Christians that Muslim children can feel free to come to school in a hijab.

The other challenge is the poverty level in the area that hinders parents from paying school fees. Not many parents can offer quality education to their children because of the poverty levels in the area. The school has been heavily affected by it because they have students who perform very well, but cannot afford to stay in the school. The principal felt that it was very hard for them as a Christian school to send needy children away. They have been trying to overcome that by sponsoring such needy children but still the need is greater than the resources. Currently, they have 20 boys in the high school who are on soccer scholarships. They also have sponsored two sisters whose parents died from HIV/AIDS and had no one to take care of them even though they are good students.

There is also the challenge of tourism being affected by the Al Shabaab terrorists in the area. Tourism has been destabilized, and most of the parents in the area rely on it for employment. But even when tourism thrives, it contributes to a lifestyle of prostitution and drugs, which affects the students by luring them to that lifestyle. They try to overcome this challenge by educating the children on drugs and alcohol and also classroom knowledge so that they do not have to turn to that lifestyle to make ends meet. They protect the girl child from prostitution and the boy child from drug peddlers and barons who have been using children to bring drugs into schools. By having the teachers interact with the children on a deep level, they can be able to detect if something is different about the child and the child will be more open to talking about it.

IMPACT/SUCCESS/ASSESSMENT

They have been able to take their students to some of the most prominent national high schools in Kenya. Their first boy (Eliud Simayu) to sit for the high school qualifying test in 2002 was able to secure admission to Mang'u high school, which is one of the top tier boy schools. The following year, they had four boys going to national schools. And every year after that they have had at least one boy go to a national school. In 2003, they had their first girl to go to a top girl's national school. They have also had students in national advertising campaigns, representing brands. There is a tendency in some Kenyan primary schools where schools try and 'poach' bright students for the national exam to boost the school's mean score. However, the Redeemed Gospel Academy's top students, for the most part, started out in academy's kindergarten.

They have had very good students come out of the program such as Kevin Nzai who got a mean score of an A in the high school completion national exam. They also have had a girl, Joyce Mwai, who scored a mean score of A-. Eliud Simayu attained a mean score of A- and was accepted into the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and is doing civil engineering and architecture. He came back to the school and is currently working on the building plans for their future college. Their successful graduates often return to the school to speak with the students and inspire them to follow the good examples of the school's alumni.

TRAINING/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In Kenya, there is only one body that can credibly certify teachers and it is the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC). It is the examining body that vets the teachers after a 2-year mandatory course. The school takes in teachers who have undergone this course, and after they are accepted into the school, they are urged to continue their education. Teachers are encouraged to take training courses during the school holidays. Kindergarten teachers do not have to stay in their position, and if they get qualified, they are free to move up to different ages. The training is available at a local university, which is ably equipping teachers to have skills that are needed for them to better themselves. They have developed a culture of allowing teachers to go for further authentic training in institutions that have been mandated to do them in the country.

PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Previously, the school had a computer college but did away with it when the demand for the school was greater. So they are using those computers with the children now, but technology is advancing at a rate where the computers will soon be out of date. They would like the students to be competitive on the job market, and that would include being up to date with technological development. They also hope in the future to have printing services and printed resources.

FUTURE

The principal said that the bishop has ‘a very big vision for the school.’ He started the school to reach the community and also to be able to offer the children in the community quality education at a very low cost. Redeemed Academy is currently the cheapest academy in the area and also runs a secondary school. Their focus right now is building a tertiary college and a school of ministry to train leaders to be able to impact the unchurched. They have ‘no problem with imparting knowledge’ and they are not too concerned if a person goes and duplicates the principles of Redeemed Academy in another area.

The issue of training leaders is very important to them, and they seek to train spiritual leaders who are able to not only affect the spiritual world but also to affect the entire world. They are now in the process of building a 4-story structure that will house their college. They would like to offer: accounts training, secretarial, and a computer college. With time, they also hope to house a university there and a school of ministry, but for now, they are putting up the structures they can put in place to achieve their vision.

REPORT PREPARATION INFORMATION

Peninah Kimiri and David Ngaruiya prepared this report. David Ngaruiya interviewed Elizabeth Musila on August 6th, 2013.