The School on the Hill Brings Hope to the Children of Kasarini Primary

This inspirational story began in September 2017. One of Storymoja Festival’s 2017 visiting artists, Turk Pipkin (an American film maker, actor, award winning author and founder of Nobility project), delivered a film workshop at Brookhouse-Runda Campus. He shared films about the exciting school library projects he has undertaken at the Aberdares in Nyeri County. His visit inspired the school management and students to support Kasarini primary, a neighboring school barely 100M from their school, to get a library. The magnitude of the project did not sink at first but both the students and head teacher were excited. They settled on a collaborative approach to drive this this student-led project.

Kasarini is a 66-year old public primary school with a population of 600 pupils. The unkempt compound, old scattered and dilapidated classrooms, ragged walls plus broken desks tell a familiar story that most public school can identify with. Most pupils come from the catchment area of Kithogoro slum. This is a settlement located on Kigwa Road off Kiambu Road, in Westlands Kitusuru location, Karura Sub-location. Residents mainly work in the nearby coffee plantations; others are domestic workers in the nearby leafy suburbs while others are casual laborers in construction sites. Due to the extreme level of poverty, most children often survive on one meal a day that is offered through the schools’ feeding programme. This is the main incentive that keeps majority of them in school.

This library project officially kicked on 8th November 2018 to mark the beginning of this years’ service learning week at Brookhouse. Year 4 students came up with creative fundraising ideas and the first was a lemonade sale. In order to master more inspiration and get an idea of the physical space, fourteen year 4 students visited Kasarini on Friday, 26 January 2018. One could tell that they were in very unfamiliar territory,
totally different from what they were used to. After a while, they seemed to blend very well with the pupils at Kasarini primary. They sat comfortably on the broken wooden desks, and held shared reading and storytelling sessions.

The testimonials from Kasarini primary school highlight a real struggle to understand and master the main language/s of instruction. Most children can barely read and write and it is no wonder they register poor scores in National examinations. The general lack of books and in particular, a library means that the students don’t have access to storybooks and supplementary reading materials to read. Consequently, they are very disadvantaged and set out to fail from the onset. The library facility will be a welcome relief that will open a world of unlimited possibilities and opportunities for the children. Since storybooks are language textbooks, we believe that once the library is fully equipped, there will be a significant improvement in their creativity, critical thinking, confidence, reading and writing skills.

The star for Kasarini primary will soon shine bright. They will witness a dark, empty and depressing room transform into a beautiful, well stocked library space with lots of exciting books and reading materials. Lots of book lovers will be born and nurtured here. And guess what? The story will not end here….

Brookhouse will run one of a kind book drive in March during the Book Week where children will not only celebrate literature and reading but also mobilize books for Kasarini library. The two schools will host joint book clubs, which will provide an excellent avenue for their students to feast on books, exchange ideas, and conduct shared reading lessons. The two schools will organize exchange programs for librarians to encourage sharing of insights and learning that will ensure the sustainability of the Kasarini library.

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