

RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL MBAGATHI NAIROBI BIODYNAMIC FARM, ITS WORKERS' EXPERIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The School and Environment

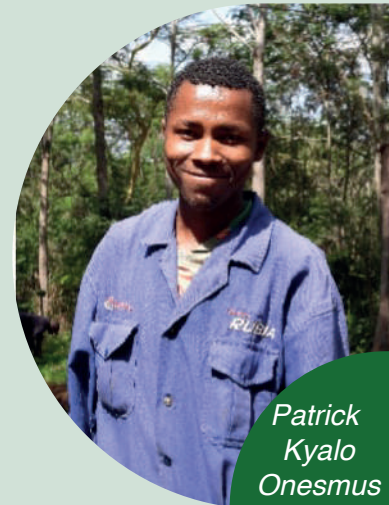
Rudolf Steiner School Mbagathi Nairobi, Kenya in East Africa is a special place and has been for the past 30 years. Special because of its capacity to educate needy children in the society using the Waldorf system of education and special too because of its bio-dynamic / organic farm that protects the environment in a highly sustainable approach. The fact that this farm has fed the children and the staff for many years now is evidence of success. Despite the dry climate owing to its geographical location, it has stood the test of time and managed to work around climate change. Drip irrigation system has made it sustainable and the biodynamic / organic approach ensures that no synthetic chemicals are used for farming, and our nominee is a key member of the team making this possible.



School's Farm

One Worker's Story

Farmers here are so much attached to protect the environment and fight climate change in the unique farm. It is unique because there is no use of herbicides or pesticides. Patrick Kyalo Onesmus is one such farmer. The 25 years old husband and a father of one boy has an undeniable passion for his work in the farm. Born in Kitui County found in Eastern part of Kenya among 3 brothers and six sisters, he was able to identify his passion at a young age. He has always loved the environment and was eager to care for it by looking after his father's farm. He was happy to join secondary school and quickly identified agriculture as his favorite subject because it gave him an opportunity to get in touch with the soil, water, air and the environment areas.



Patrick Kyalo Onesmus

After completion of his high school education, he had a strong urge to follow his passion. He requested his father to connect him with any farm he knew. Luck was on his side as his father was working as a casual watchman in the school. He was introduced to the school farm and since that day, each day has become a chance for him to contribute towards improving the farm and the environment as a whole albeit in his own small way. It has many other benefits such as being the means through which children are fed with the much needed healthy meals.

Listening to him explaining about his daily tasks gives you an impression of someone who thinks highly of his job in the farm even if he has been around herefor only one year.

He reports to work early in the morning and goes directly to the cowshed. Together with his co-workers, he has the joy of responsibility of over 10 adult cows and 2 calves. He cleans the cowshed, feeds the cows and before long it is the afternoon and he has to do the milking. He has learnt the skill of working with each cow even the ones that pose a challenge.

Where there is love everything is possible. He loves them and feeds them to ensure that he can comfortably do the milking. His favourite cow is "Golden Brown". Don't we all love a little cooperation? Golden is calm and cooperative.



Milking a cow

He explains how it is a good thing to be able to grow one's own hay on the compound and only buy it when there is a prolonged drought. Protein supplements are also bought such as dairy meal and molasses. This good feeding ensures that maximum amount of milk is produced by the cows.

When the cows are settled, he has another favorite task. This time he rushes to the farm and does some digging/cultivation. However, he is also happy to weed, plant and harvest and do whatever is needed of him.

It was very interesting and admirable to listen to him talking about how he helped a cow calf a few days ago. It takes responsibility and experience to help a cow. That must have spelt COURAGE in capital letters. As he finished narrating his experience, he brightens up and we draw in to listen to him more keenly. He mentions how he feels fulfilled and proud seeing the children enjoy their food that he has participated in growing. He also tells of how working among his fellow workers has promoted his morale due to the strong culture and good teamwork. As the interview ends, we all want to be farmers at RSSMN farm where he is a role model for our children who undertake gardening classes. The young man will have a long life ahead of him and fortunately for our environment today, he will have time to impact his generation and even the next in regard to protecting the environment sustainably.

The Contribution of Bio-dynamic / Organic Practices to Environmental Protection

Together with his fellow workmates, Patrick Kyalo Onesmus is looking forward to gaining more knowledge and interaction with the bio-dynamic / organic way of caring for the environment, as he is passionate to further develop his skills. Currently, Patricks main focus has been to utilize the biodynamic / organic practices in the farm that are key in protecting the environment:

These biodynamic / organic farming practices significantly reduce emissions by use of compost and animal matter, and utilizing everything that is around and leftover. The practices also arrest carbon dioxide and draw it down from the atmosphere and into the ground soil.

Crop rotation is one way that helps in producing a healthy harvest.



Farm Workers

The practices carried out by Patrick and the farmer team make soil very healthy and hence production of healthy food. Patrick works hard and contributes towards environmental protection and sustainability by protecting the soil through avoidance of use of chemicals in the farm. He works with nature and not against it by ensuring that beneficial local organisms and insects are not killed during application of pesticides and herbicides. These good organisms assist in maintenance of natural mechanisms for creation of healthy nutrients in the plants that humans and animals consume for good health.

Patrick and his colleagues choose sustainable techniques like crop rotation, controlled grazing, animal and compost manure to improve the soil in the farm. Practices that encourage use of fertilizers, synthetic chemicals, antibiotics and growth hormones do not help in creation of healthy balance in the environment.

By use of bio-dynamic / organic farming practices, Patrick and his colleagues ensure that water pollution in the environment is on minimum levels. By avoiding use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides there are no chances of any of these pollutants dissolving and flowing into surrounding water supplies. Actually, nitrates and phosphates accumulate in the water causing algal blooms which in turn cause reduced oxygen supply in the water and hence affect biodiversity in the water supplies.

Patrick protects the environment by protecting pollinators such as bees. The farm has many of them and so does it have butterflies and beetles. They are not at any risk from the effects of synthetic herbicides and pesticides use since it's a bio-dynamic /organic farm. Pollinators are very important contributors to growing of crops such as onions, carrots and berries and others which in the farm. The farm is a very healthy habitat and hence pollinators survive and thrive very well.

By the fact that our farm and the kitchen are on the same compound, it means that food is grown and consumed locally. This in a great way reduces emissions into the environment through avoidance of transport. Pollution is therefore cut down in a sustainable way.

The irrigation system done in our farm is powered by solar system. This is an economical, natural and sustainable power source that ensures reduced emissions into the environment.

It is therefore clear that Patrick and his colleagues are contributing largely to environmental protection and sustainability for a better world for generations to come. Biodynamic practices are holistic in nature since they do not work against nature but for it.

