

Greetings and welcome to VICODEC News for mid-year 2021. The year started with a lot of hope in January as the children came back to school after almost a whole year of being at home due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. They were excited to be back and so were we. This was the second term of the academic year 2020. The year 2021 and 2022 will have four (4) school terms to help cover the two lost terms in 2020 due to the pandemic that led to the indefinite closure of schools. In the month of March, the children took a seven-week break to allow for the candidates to sit for their national exams. After the break, the children opened school for the third term in May and they are super excited to be back again to school since they will be graduating to the next class at the end of this term in July. The VICODEC Technical Training Institute (VTTI) students are also back. We received numerous new students who will benefit with both technical skills courses and computer programs. We continue to appreciate your continued support to all VICODEC programs!



YUNIKE NYABOKE'S STORY OF HOPE, RESILIENCE AND TRIUMPH

In the year 2013, Yunike Nyaboke started her educational journey at VICODEC School in class 1. She yearned for a good education and sought to be on top of her class. Her mother is a single parent and does menial jobs for her family's upkeep. Despite some of the barriers she faced, Yunike has been a top student in her class ever since she joined school. She was supported by VICODEC social workers whom recommended she enroll in the sponsorship program, which allowed her to be in school throughout. Her mother has also been her greatest mentor.



In her final national examination, Yunike performed excellently and topped her class with straight As. She attributes her success to hard work, determination and discipline. "I always pushed myself to become the best, for I wanted nothing less but success," she says. "Academics has been my way of shining because through it, is my pathway to a bright future. VICODEC has always been a great support for me in my primary education through the sponsorship program. I thank my sponsor Greg for the support over the years; I hope I have made you proud. It doesn't matter what your background is, you can always shine in whatever you purpose to achieve."

Yunike is among 32 students in her class who are in the sponsorship program and ready to transit to high school in July 2021. It's a hearty congratulations to our Top student for the academic year 2020 and the rest of the students who did exemplary well in their national exams.

The sponsorship program is indeed impacting the lives of so many children and families. The direct benefits of sponsorship include acquiring quality education, school uniforms, medical care and family support.

GET INVOLVED IN VICODEC PROGRAMS

~ VICODEC Child Sponsorship Program \$300 per child yearly.

~ Feed a child for \$50 for a year.

~VICODEC's General Fund
(Open to any amount)

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

There's an African proverb that says, "If you want to go, walk alone; if you want to go far, walk together."



That belief is lived in the work of educators and social workers at VICODEC—and also the team of Kenya Works, a nonprofit registered in the U.S. with programs on the ground throughout 32 Kenyan counties, working to overcome poverty and tackle key human rights issues. In partnership, Kenya Works and VICODEC aim to achieve one thing—bringing great relief to Kenyan communities. The teams exchange ideas, make plans, and take on the day-to-day work together, even sharing an office space. It's this kind of collaboration that eliminates obstacles and powers communities. You may recognize the name Kenya Works because it's the organization that receives your sponsorship dollars and donation. Kenya Works then distributes the dollars to your student ensuring their educational and holistic support. In addition to providing scholarships

to vulnerable children, Kenya Works has a number of other programs focused on human rights, ending period poverty, growing partnerships deep within communities, providing feeding programs and building school infrastructure. Learn more about Kenya Works' programs at www.kenyaworks.org.

THE ALTERNATIVE RITE OF PASSAGE PROGRAM

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all schools in Kenya were closed in 2020. With extra time at home, girls were exposed to so many challenges—the major one being teenage pregnancy. A report recently released by National Council on Population and Development (NCPD) shows that two out of five teenagers in Kenya are either young mothers or are pregnant. Since the pandemic hit, 20,828 girls between the ages 10-14 have become mothers, while 24,106 girls ages 15-19 are either pregnant or mothers already. In Kajiado County, where VICODEC is based, the teenage pregnancies that were reported in 2020 were 1,523. As shared in the previous article, VICODEC is supported by Kenya Works, a nonprofit with a mission to empower Kenyans in vulnerable circumstances.



The partnership between the two organizations is crucial in the effort to reach children and families and educate on matters such as gender-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), period poverty and menstrual management, sexual abuse, child domestic labor, drugs and substance abuse, and child marriage.

Transition of girls from childhood to teenager is a very important stage of initiation in their lives, which is referred to as a rite of passage. Traditionally, different communities had their own different ways of initiating girls to womanhood. In African communities, they were using female genital mutilation (FGM) (cutting), body piercing, scarification (putting marks on the face), and the plucking of teeth, to name a few. Today, some of these traditions were outlawed by the government because they are harmful to the health and well-being of girls.

After completion of class 8 the girl child is expected to receive life coping skills to prepare her on what to expect when she transits to secondary school. While boys receive training and mentorship that prepares them on how to behave after the rite of passage from childhood into adulthood, young girls are not often equipped with knowledge on how to navigate the challenges that come with growth and maturity. To fill this gap VICODEC, offers Alternative Rite of Passage programs for girls ages 13-16 to equip them with life coping skills and basic technical skills. The program also aims at promoting education and the elimination of the harmful traditions that are being practiced even after being outlawed by the government, such as early and forced marriages and FGM.

The program is normally held during the long school break. After several trainings, they are awarded with certificates and graduate to be peer educators!