

The school of Our Lady of the Apostles in Rwaza: a model school¹

The school is situated in natural surroundings conducive to the blossoming of life and all its ecological dimensions; they form part of our daily life. Humanity seems to have a symbiotic relationship with nature and with everyday life; we find ourselves continually challenged to comply with the demands of development for an elementary survival and to suggest concrete actions in our environment to improve the things which are not helping the quality life with regard to the basic needs of the human race² (**water, food, living conditions, energy, sun, air...**)

How in this context, through education, do we form an ecological conscience?

When it is a question of damage to our environment on planet earth as well as the question of climate change, and to the loss of biodiversity, of resources and local life, the sense of responsibility differs, depending on whether one lives in an industrial country or in the south.

However, humanity is exposed to certain natural risks and the infrastructures are exposed to natural catastrophes. (climate change, erratic seasons, prolonged droughts, flooding, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions)

The school has always wanted, in a modest way, to struggle against deforestation, harmful for nature and for humanity, struggle to eliminate erosion by making radical terraces. (the school is situated at a height of 2000 m.) There is also the political will to protect the environment and to manage the forests responsibly.

The Biogas³ project: a project for a healthier and better life

It is in this framework that a project was being thought about in 2004, and since 2006 this project is working in the school. Taking account of the assets already in place; a two hectare property, cattle breeding, a community of 600 people, of whom 500 are young people who follow courses with scientific options. (Maths-physics-chemistry; Maths-physics-geography; Physics-chemistry-biology)

The concrete actions are written down in the strategic plan of the school (exercise 2008-2013) and are based on the texts of the General Chapter of the Religious of the Assumption in 2012.

³⁵ 17 **Intellectual formation and awakening of the psychological conscience.**

1 Rwanda is made up of 30 districts and the Minister of National Education has chosen two schools per district commonly called 'excellent schools or model schools'. Among the various criteria used for the choices there are:- excellence from the academic point of view, infrastructure In accordance with legal norms, and innovations

2 The 500 young people are in a boarding school situation which offers them all favourable conditions for learning. They are therefore in school day and night except for the holidays (9-12 months.) This big community does what it can to improve the environment.

3 Biogas rests on a universal reaction to the recycling of natural waste. Three families of bacteria live in symbiosis in an anaerobic setting, that is to say that they are deprived of air and oxygen, giving off methane and carbonic gas from waste organic matter. The principle of biogas is to raise up these bacteria so that the emissions of combustible gas may be picked up.

- Explore through film a truth which disturbs so as to increase knowledge of the relationships between people and nature and to realise the impact of human activity on the environment and on the planet.
- To increase the awareness of the direct impact of the actions which we have taken on the environment, deforestation and bush fires.
- Awakening our consciences with regard to the things we buy or consume.
- Release the psychological curb on prejudices surrounding industrial waste and make the community aware of the benefits for people and for clearing up the environment.

³⁵/₁₇ **Strengthen the impact which the school has by:**

- The production of a biological fertilizer which has potential for agronomy.
- The production of ecological energy to counteract air and water pollution.
- The display of our innovations and the welcome to other schools when they have their class walks.
- Community work (upkeep of the road which leads to us (1 km) laying out of the garden, flower pots, care of the buildings and surroundings).
- Our contribution to the well-being of the staff and students (meals, boarding) and our responsibility for the care of goods that are for their use.
- Our contribution to the well-being of our local people by buying and using local produce.
- Setting up a purification system and treatment of water thanks to the emissions of ultra- violet rays
- Setting up an association of poor women by the offer of land, fertilizer from biogas so they can cultivate and their produce can be bought by the establishment so that their condition of life is improved.

³⁵/₁₇ **Concrete actions and responsibilities for the vulnerable people around us.**

“Live simply so that others may simply live” (Ghandi)

- We have taken care of 15 vulnerable people: with the collaboration of the local council
- We have identified people who are isolated & without resources: every Movement of Catholic Action, and each of our 12 classes takes care of one poor person, that is to say that they visit them in their homes each week-end and supply their basic needs (food, clothing, toiletries) they do the housework and tidy up the surroundings. They contribute to the
- Mutual Health Society for a few very vulnerable families
- Make the students more aware of the respect & dignity due to each one in the community (the poor, the handicapped, the orphans) in collaboration with the student section of Caritas, which the students have joined & established: contributions from the parents are managed by a team.

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