



This report is a short summary of the activities of Rainbows4Children in the year 2021. More details on any specific issue are available by contacting Max & Kathryn Robinson at info@rainbows4children.org

Project Progress - Nicolas Robinson School

1. The current situation and the Nicolas Robinson School

On 4th November 2020, war broke out in the region between the Ethiopian National Government with Amhara region and Eritrea, against the Tigray Defence Forces of the Tigray region. At the end of 2020, The City of Mekele was occupied by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops and movement through the city was very dangerous for its citizens. Rainbows4children and the Nicolas Robinson School are non-political organisations, and so no comment will be made on the situation.

The Ethiopian and Eritrean troops remained in the city until the end of June 2021. Then the Tigray Defence Force and the Regional government leaders re-entered the city. The regional government resumed control of Mekele and much of the Tigray regional state, but then the Ethiopian Government imposed a blockade on the Tigray state. No food, fuel, cash was allowed to enter the region. Phone, internet services and all external electricity supply was cut off. All banking services were blocked.

Many Internally Displaced Persons were living in government school compounds (not at the Nicolas Robinson School). For this reason the regional bureau of education had to find a solution for accommodating these persons before schools could reopen. All schools whether private or government are administered on such decisions by the regional bureau of education. It is expected now that education will resume in early February 2022.



Green compound, primary school English zone in use at lunchtime Walls used for teaching, KG

2. Building and equipment installed during 2020

In 2021, sponsored by a German Foundation, 8 solar panels were installed on the roof of one of the school service buildings to provide electricity during the many power cuts in the region. Due to the ongoing blockade on the region, the supply of electricity is very poor, as it is only the electricity that is generated in the region that can be used. The school staff were helped in the installation by a lecturer from Mekele University Department of Electrical Engineering.

3. Students and performance

In the school year 2021-22 education was disrupted by the war. Some students who lived near the school would visit and use the facilities, but in the main, there was no education possible. While the city was occupied by Ethiopian government forces the administration tried to re-start schooling, but there was a lot of fear from parents to have many children in one place. The Tigray regional government took over again at the beginning of July 2021 and announced a plan to start education in early February 2022 for students from kindergarten to grade 6. In the last quarter of 2021 there will drone attacks in Mekele which caused a lot of security concerns. In early 2022 these ceased and at the time of this report the school is the students. It is estimated that about 1,000 students will attend school.

The aim will be to catch up on missed classes from 2020, 2021 and 2022.



Grade 10 in class

KG learning by play

IT classes start at grade 1

4. **Nicolas College**

The College has been closed since Covid and then the war. The director resigned in 2021 and went to pursue further education overseas. A replacement has not been recruited until there is a chance to return to normal operations.

The facilities, especially the food preparation areas, have been used to feed the children at the school. The ICT facility has continued to be used for the training of our teachers and some of the older students, whenever there is electricity. When peace returns, the chance to train young people to start their own businesses will be extremely important.

5. **Sponsorship programme**

Background: Previously about 250-300 students were sponsored by the EFFORT group of companies. This group uses its profits for the benefit of the people of Tigray, especially those from families who have disabilities. Most of their business were destroyed during the fighting and there is no chance for them to re-open. A lot of damage and looting occurred, and it will be many years before profitability will be restored. Rainbows4children has found sponsors to help these children finish their education.

By the end of 2021, 750 students were sponsored to go to school through the Rainbows4Children sponsorship programme thus giving them a chance that their families could not otherwise afford. In addition, 61 sponsored school students are also now sponsored in their university studies, after they left the school. We still need 200-300 more sponsors, as many families have been impoverished by the war.

6. **Leadership of the Nicolas Robinson School in the Community.**

The Nicolas Robinson School is rated the top-quality School in the Tigray region. This is based on the quality of teaching, its services and facilities and its operations and interaction with the community.

In the report of 2020, the leadership of the School during Covid and the locust invasion was reported.

During 2021, the city of Mekele experienced 6 months occupation of soldiers from the Federal Government of Ethiopia, and 6 months of blockade when no food, fuel, phone services (neither landline nor mobile) and no internet connection was allowed. Furthermore, the only electricity in the region was that powered by generators (requiring fuel) and that generated from the Tekeze dam in Tigray. Finally, no banking services were possible from outside of the region, however after a few months, local banks set up paper transactions for transfers between local bank accounts.

The school led in the community in several ways:

They organised feeding programmes for the children to ensure they all got one meal per day.

They organised health checks for the children and sought advice from the local paediatric doctors.

They installed solar panels on the roof of a building in the school to power computers, a printer etc.



They started growing vegetables and started a cooperation with the local Bureau of Agriculture to look at training in the community. This project was started at the end of 2021 and will be reported full in 2022.

7. Supplementary food programme

Started in 2011, the supplementary food programme continued for all students at the school. Every day the students are given extra food to provide better nutrition (protein, vitamins) in the form of eggs, banana, milk, orange or other seasonal fruit. This program continues to pay dividends in the form of better health - especially elimination of anaemia, skin ailments and better levels of concentration and learning in class. When the school was closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this programme was temporarily halted. However, food was provided to families experiencing financial difficult and food shortages. Since the blockade on the region we have fed any student who comes to the school in need of food. Also, we have supplied bags of flour and oil to any family who is struggling for food. When school re-starts in February 2022, ALL children who attend will be given one meal every day.



School children enjoying a meal in the Nicolas College



mother and daughter collecting flour for their home

8. Volunteers

During 2021 no volunteers could visit the school, due to the on-going war and then blockade on the region.

9. Care for the Whole Child

The school's student welfare director ensures the welfare of all the students in the school and she also provides home counselling when needed. Our school nurse assists us in many of these and related issues. We operate a "special fund" to cope with emergency care for critical cases and also to support families and our students who are experiencing difficulties in their lives at home. The successful intervention to save a young student diagnosed with leukaemia in 2014 was one success of the fund and our supporters.

10. Fund raising activities in 2021

Our annual Swiss fundraiser raised about CHF 46,700. This is the primary single fund-raising event of Rainbows4children. This is much-reduced from previous years as it was an online event, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The charity shop in Stade, Germany (sales of second-hand clothes and household items) closed, but they have kept their German registered foundation active to enable German taxpayers to make donations through them and benefit from tax deductions.



II. Legal and accounting

The statements of the 2021 accounts for the UK Foundation and Swiss registered foundations will be submitted to the appropriate governing authorities after being audited.

The trustees of both foundations during 2021 were:-

Switzerland: Richard Max Robinson, Kathryn Robinson, Jean-Paul Rigaudeau.

UK: Paul Reynolds, Philip Stockbridge, George Potts, Kathryn Robinson, Richard Max Robinson.

Reported by:

Kathryn Robinson

20.01.2022