Rainbows4Children Milestones

2003 - Max & Kathryn visit Mekele, meet the Tigray Disabled Veteran's Association, and decide to build a kindergarten for the children of the disabled veterans



2004 – Laying of the corner stone of the kindergarten and work begins





2005 – The kindergarten opens for 4 classes, with 40 children in each





2006 – the kindergarten is extended to 6 classes, capacity is a total of 240 children. The playground is built in memory of Laura Wolf.







2007 – Work starts on the primary school, ground floor. In September the first 80 children join in grade 1



2008 – The first and second floors are added to the primary school, giving a total of 14 classrooms. Some are used as service rooms; for a library, staff room, pedagogy. The kindergarten is landscaped to give a grassy playing area.



2009 – Work begins on the primary school staff building, but completion delayed by cement shortages. The first water tank at the school is built holding 50,000 litres. Later refinements will be made. Kindergarten playground landscaping is improved.



2010 – Kindergarten guard hut built. Complete the staff building in the primary school. Build the 4th floor of the primary school



2011 – build kindergarten eating room, start work on library and music room for primary school. Build wall around secondary/high school land.



2012 – finish primary library and music room, build Secondary/High School classroom block (8 classes) laboratories (IT, chemistry, physics, biology),2 student toilet blocks



2013 –Equip laboratories of secondary/high school with furniture, landscaping of primary school with hard surface sports area. Football field for secondary/high school. Staff building for the secondary/high school.



2014 – we built staff toilets for the secondary/high school using the successful dry latrine process again. A second block of classrooms was built for grades 11 and 12.




2015 – landscaping around the classrooms and the staff room was completed to keep the compound clean and dry. Landscaping with the addition of many trees and bushes continues to keep a green compound. A donor enabled us to add 4 workshops for the training of practical subjects to get the students who do not go to university into work quickly and effectively.





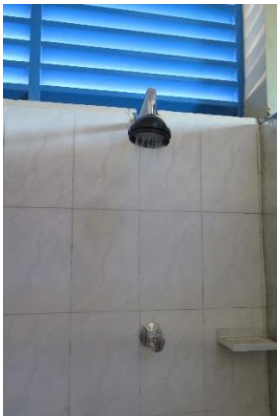

2016: A practical training block for cooking, sewing and practical technical skills has been constructed. Rooms for first aid, a girls room and pedagogy and a store were added as well as showers for the secondary school boys and girls. A water cleaning system, to take water from a well on the land and convert it to drinking quality water for the showers and for the students to use, was installed.



First aid rooms



the water cleaning unit



The new showers



Filling the store



Preparing the reed bed filtration



The training workshops

2017: the training workshops were equipped for the start of hospitality training in February 2017. The first course was food preparation and then serving at table was added for the second group. We were assisted by the Dutch training organisation PUM who helped train our trainers. During the summer work started on cleaning and clearing land for a running track (80m) and other sports facilities as well as tidying areas for more landscaping and tidying the campus.









Students in the new food preparation training workshop





Landscaping the road leading to the running track, work in progress, July 2017





Completed sports work in December

2018: landscaping work and small site improvements were made in all schools. In addition the KG toilets were renovated as they are now more than 15 years old.








Landscaping in the primary school




Landscaping in the secondary school

2019: ICT training for adults has started with a trial in March 2019 and a course for teachers was run in the summer vacation. Entrepreneurship training started in May 2019 and a second successful intensive course was run by PUM in November 2019. A traditional house has been built as a cosy break-out area to encourage spoken English. In the staff café area, a traditional coffee house is now used to entertain guests and celebrate special occasions and the café area has been extended.




ICT training for adults (school teachers) *opening ceremony, English place*

Greening of the compound continues and we are improving the access to water and electricity throughout the school. On an academic level the school continues to be assessed as the highest quality school in Tigrai and our students continue to apply for opportunities in further education overseas. In 2017 and 2019 students were sent to United World College in Thailand and Hong Kong, to study for IB. In 2019 we placed our first student at African Leadership Academy. Our second student joined in 2020. All with full scholarships. Our students continue to apply for these opportunities in 2020 and beyond.



Traditional coffee area



The primary school now has mature trees



Our scholarship students

2020: The year started with ambitious plans for further developments at the school. Under consideration were a STEM centre (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths). Also we started the investigation of the installation of solar panels for the provision of constant electricity of more critical classrooms and facilities in the school. During the late spring we worked with Mekele University volunteers as well as the Mekele Institute of Plant technology to plant seedling trees and bamboo to grow at the school, as part of a re-greening project. Other areas were set up for growing vegetables, eventually for sale to the staff and community. To help this project, REST (Relief Society of Tigray) donated and installed a borehole on the site for the school.



Vegetable production

Coronavirus – in line with all schools in Ethiopia, students had to study from home from March 17th, 2020. Teachers provided classwork and parents collected it and returned with the students work and

tests. After a break for the summer, plans started for a slow return to school. In October, grades 8 and 12, who important exams to complete, returned to school.

October – our science team led the fight against the locust invasion in Tigray. They did a wonderful job and managed to help save the crops of many local farmers through the production of a natural pesticide.

November – sadly conflict started in the region of Tigray. All contact with Mekele and the school was lost from 4th November to 14th December. The staff and students have faced many challenges during these 6 weeks, with a shortage of food, water, electricity. Banks were closed and normal life completely disrupted.



Testing pesticide in the fight against locusts



Handing out class work when school closed through Covid.

December 2020 – our students from ALA and UWC have been accepted at colleges in the US, to start in the summer of 2021.

2021: The students suffered from the ongoing civil war for the whole year. It was impossible to re-start school, although students could be supported with some learning materials when they applied to the school. The primary focus was to ensure the school community had access to food and we conducted health checks. We were supported to install solar panels at the school to enable the staff to use computers and printers during the frequent and extended power cuts in the city of Mekele.



A few solar panels provide power to staff and services



a student and her mother collect food from school

2022: School classes re-started for students from Kindergarten to Grade 6. The classes continued for 6 months and the city was bombed again. IN November 2022 the Pretoria Agreement for the Cessation of Hostilities was signed, attaches on the city stopped and plans were made to resume school.

2023: School resumed at the end of February 2023. The Nicolas Robinson School was one a the very few schools that was able to open at this time. As part of our commitment to the community we welcomed an extra 400 students who lived near the school to join the school on a temporary basis.

We concentrated on numeracy and literacy in the first instance. We also conducted health checks on all the students as they returned to school. Those in poor condition have been given extra food and meals prepared by our cooking staff. The students and staff worked together through the summer to help them catch up. As a result, 2 year-groups passed grade 8 regional exams (100% pass rate) and one group of grade 12 students graduated in October. Here we had a 97% pass rate (the Ethiopian National average is 3.5% for 2022 and 2023). These grade 12 students all enrolled in University in December. 2023

Kathryn and Max returned to visit the school in June and November 2023.



Kathryn and Max welcomed



primary classroom



traditional dance festival

2024

Renovation work started and the kindergarten was improved with colourful paintings, the kindergarten is once again a lively and welcoming space.

Excellent results continued again with 144 grade 12 students taking university entrance exams and achieving 140 passes to university (98%). All our grade 8 students also passed the regional exam and are promoted to grade 9.

We are moving ahead positively with education at all levels and helping all the students catch up on their lost education.

We are now confident to open the Nicolas College and help students who do not want to attend university find alternative ways to support themselves and learn about business. The first courses start in January 2025.



Decorating the KG



Beautiful gardens (KG)



preparing for college start-up

2025

College courses re-started successfully with more than 100 students graduating from short courses in IT, entrepreneurship and cooking/hospitality. Landscaping work was completed in the high school.



College cooking class



High school landscaping



Kindergarten morning assembly

2026

Nicolas Robinson School evaluated as the top-quality school in the state of Tigray by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. This status has continued for 20 years.

100% success in the regional exams for grade 8 students and 100% success in the national exams for Grade 12 students, meaning ALL the students can progress to university. (The Ethiopian national result is a 12% pass in Grade 12).

NRS lunched a new school logo in 2026. The new motto reflects the ambition of the school to provide the very best quality education.
Education – Providing knowledge, access, and lifelong learning opportunities
Empower – Enabling individuals and institutions with skills and confidence
Elevate – Raising standards, systems, and outcomes
Excel – Striving for measurable impact and continuous improvement
These principles shape everything we do — from our programs and partnerships to how we communicate and present ourselves to the world.

Nicolas Robinson School
Educate • Empower • Elevate • Excel