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# Climate Change at the International School of Kenya

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**ABSTRACT** This article is about the efforts of Students for the Environment, which operates at the International School of Kenya. It discusses their past successes, their current plans and what they hope for the future. It includes their operations, as well as the impact they have been able to have on their school community. It also introduces some of the ways they plan to positively affect their environment, mitigate negative impacts on their environment and how it contributes to climate change.

Climate change is a big problem in the world, whose effects are felt globally, and everyone has had it impact their lives. Here in Kenya, one of the things that climate change has started to affect is the weather patterns, which has had a negative effect on the people. At the International School of Kenya (ISK), we have Students for the Environment (SFE), a club that works towards environmental preservation in the community. We also want to educate people about the effects of climate change and how they can help. Our main focus is on making administrative changes at the school. This entails changing the manner in which ISK interacts with its environment, and working to lessen the school's environmental impact.

SFE has already made big strides. A recent achievement was getting rid of single-use plastic-lined paper cups provided in the canteen and replacing them with glass mugs that are available to borrow. Many students were inspired to bring their own mugs to school, and many more are becoming increasingly aware of the effect these single-use plastics have on the environment. Last year, in 2019, SFE also had a competition to design a 'single-use-plastic-free' logo, which will be used henceforth in ISK's efforts to become a single-use-plastic-free campus. We wanted a unifying symbol to represent our goal, and a simple way to spread awareness of our target. It works both to further our environmental cause at the school and support our single-use-plastic-free

campus initiative. We are continuing to work towards this goal and getting closer to accomplishing it.

One of the most recent successes that SFE was able to achieve was at our International Day celebration. We set up a system to avoid the majority of the plastic waste that is typically seen during this event. SFE implemented a plate rental system, which included utensils and glasses. There was also an incentive to bring in one's own plates and cutlery, as members of SFE baked cookies to hand out as a reward for bringing in personal containers. Both of these systems reduced the large amount of plastic waste that is usually produced by the event. It also served as a trial for next year's International Day, which will have to be single-use-plastic-free. The success of the International Day initiative also helped SFE gain more recognition from our community.

Another huge success was changing the school board's policy on environmentalism. We noticed that the previous policy was vague and didn't address any specific areas of climate change, or commit ISK to change in terms of climate change. A small subcommittee was formed within SFE called the Plastic-Free Committee, and the members involved created a new policy, which aims to address climate change issues. We were able to include carbon offsetting in the board's policy, as well as committing ISK to go carbon-neutral. Going carbon-neutral means that ISK's carbon footprint will be zero, either through zero carbon dioxide emissions or compensation for emissions through offsetting. This is an objective that we recently developed because this is the most effective way that ISK can reduce its carbon footprint and reduce its contributions to climate change.

We had plans for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year and what we were going to do about more climate change awareness at ISK. However, because of the unprecedented closure of our school (as a result of the rapidly spreading pandemic), we have had to change many of our goals. The Middle School SFE club had planned for assemblies and information sessions on 22 April (Earth Day), which unfortunately have been abandoned in light of the current situation. Our future single-use-plastic-free deadline may have to be shifted or changed. It has been very challenging to work around our new circumstances, but we are still brainstorming on different ways to engage with our community and keep the club going.

One small positive about our situation is that not all of our plans have been cancelled. We have a lot of projects that we are working on, and many of them will fit an extended deadline. One such project is our continued correspondence with a local food and beverage company. Since the beginning of the year 2020, we have been working with them to find a mutually beneficial method for them to go plastic-free at ISK. We are planning to work with them so they can expand this policy to all of their operations.

Similarly, an important target that we intend to accomplish is to draft a correspondence to our International Schools of Southern and Eastern Africa (ISSEA) sessions on campus. We want to have a cohesive communication to send out to all participants in ISSEA extracurricular activities on our campus.

This will ensure that everyone attending understands the restrictions of our single-use-plastic-free campus. This is also meant to inspire other ISSEA schools to follow our example.

Another big project that we have been working on in 2020 has been carbon offsetting through tree-planting. This falls in line with the new board policy we implemented. The policy has committed ISK to become a carbon-neutral school, with no specific timeline in place. But we believe that our work on carbon offsetting will help ISK reach this goal sooner. Working on these projects is still possible during these trying times, and it allows us to stay optimistic for the coming year.

Our biggest hope for the future is to become a carbon-neutral school. It is a huge undertaking for us, but we feel this is the most effective way we can affect the climate crisis and make a big change. This will take a lot of effort, and a lot of time, but we remain optimistic that we can achieve this goal very soon. The club is still finding ways to adapt to the new situation, and adjusting our ideas to fit a limited scope of action. We are looking forward to implementing new initiatives at the school in 2021. The future of SFE looks bright, and our development as a club continues.

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