

**Title: The Sing'isi Village After-School Program at The Hopeful School**  
**School: Wheaton College, MA**  
**Student Information: Ashley Mott and Caitlin O'Connor (USA)**

"To listen not merely with ears but with the full attention of the heart and soul is to truly care. The founders Mr. and Mrs. Thompson Akyoo and teacher Gebriel Williams opened the Hopeful English School on September 15th, 2005 to serve the community of Sing'isi free of charge. In Tanzania, primary school is taught in Kiswahili, but all secondary school subjects are taught in English. The Hopeful School teaches English at all levels to prepare its students for a successful transition from primary to secondary school and into the world beyond." -The Mission of The Hopeful School, Sing'isi Village, Arusha Tanzania

### **Project Summary:**

In Sing'isi Village, Tanzania, Thompson and Janet Akyoo founded a true peace initiative in 2005. The Hopeful School was the recipient of a Project For Peace grant that was used to expand and promote the program during the summer of 2007. With these funds the goals of the project were to construct a classroom, buy additional learning materials, establish an art and pen pal program for the students and fund the salaries of the teacher. The Hopeful School is an arena of empowerment for the youths of Sing'isi Village, a place where they are able to enrich their education through the support of this program.

Together, in the after-school program at The Hopeful School, students practice conversational English skills as well as reading and writing to allow for a successful transition to secondary school. A unique aspect of the program that serves to enrich student's experiences is the artistic component. Each day at the beginning of class students gather together to sing joyful songs that unite them as a class and as a community. The Project for Peace grant introduced a visual arts program where students created insightful displays of their home community over the summer. A multidimensional facet of the art program involved the children on Nantucket Island in Massachusetts, as these children too created imaginative art works alongside their global partners in Tanzania. Additionally, these groups of students established a friendship through the Internet. Once a month, students exchanged letters in the form of e-mails and shared aspects of their homes and lives with one another creating lasting memories and incentives for future cross-cultural sharing. The Internet and art program have become a permanent component of The Hopeful School curriculum enabling students to continue creating and sharing within the global context.

### **Project Results:**

Our initial aspirations of the project were accomplished during the two months we spent in Tanzania. The project is an ongoing endeavor that will continue to benefit from additional funding. Presently, we are fund-raising to ensure the school's economic sustainability by selling reproductions of the student's art as greeting cards. The goals of the project were accomplished with the help and support of the program teacher, Gebriel Williams and founder, Thompson Akyoo.

A significant aspect of the learning experience involved considering implications that aid projects and other volunteer experiences have on the countries and communities receiving the assistance. Though, we clearly see the positive as well as the importance associated with this

type of work, there also remains another side that is often not considered. This other angle of perception illuminates how these projects often work to hold the larger, oppressive, power structures in place by continuing a dependent relationship and reinforcing this dichotomy. In order to be effective, this nature of work must continue but ways must also be found to simultaneously address these sources of inequality.

Given this reality, it was often difficult to figure out the most productive way to approach this project. Overall, because we were working together with a community school that was already established, collaboration between the teachers and us was possible. This previous connection greatly aided the overall outcome of the program and allowed us to carry out a successful and lasting program with the students and teacher of The Hopeful School.

### **Implications:**

The Hopeful School will serve the communities, providing children with the educational opportunities necessary to reach their full potential. In building a peaceful world, the importance of inspiring children to be motivated and involved global citizens cultivates a future of peace. Through education, cultural sharing and art, the program instills values of peace and learning. Mahatma Gandhi, one of the world's greatest peacemakers once said, "Poverty is the worst form of violence" and through education children can escape the injustices of poverty. By creating a space where children have the opportunity to learn while fostering intercultural understanding, together the children of Sing'isi and Nantucket hold the promise for future generations of peace.

