

Name of Project: Matumaini ya Baadaye (Swahili for “*Hope for the Future*”)

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Project Summary: Our goal is to teach computer skills to the students at the Faraja Primary School for Disabled Children in Tanzania, Africa. Such skills will make the children more independent, self confident, and competitive both in school and when they are ready to seek employment. The children attending Faraja all have physical disabilities, and in rural areas of Tanzania they are frequently discriminated against and ostracized. The Faraja School already provides a safe and nurturing environment for children in kindergarten through 7th grade (K-7) and it is our plan to enhance some of their existing programs. We will bring four laptops fully equipped with computer programs, and we will work with the children and train their teachers in order to make our project self-sustaining. In addition, we plan to connect, via the internet, the Faraja students with physically handicapped children from the John Archer School in Harford County, Maryland. Through video messaging, emails and letters the children will exchange cultural experiences and make friends with their peers across the globe.

Background: Previously under German and then British rule, Tanganyika, in East Africa, became independent on December 9, 1961, joined with Zanzibar, and in 1964 became the United Republic of Tanzania. Shortly after independence, Tanzania embraced socialist economic policies (ujamaa) that aimed to achieve greater equality but caused a major decline in the economy. In the 1980s, the country moved towards economic liberalism which reduced government control over the economy in favor of private sector involvement. Nevertheless, Tanzania remains one of the poorest countries in the world (number 199 in the world poverty rankings). According to the World Health Organization, Tanzania has a total population of 47,783,000 with a life expectancy of 60 years and a GDP per capita of \$1,560. The official languages are Swahili and English. Currently, most Tanzanians do not have access to health care, only 44 % of the rural population has access to drinking water, and 7.4% have access to sanitation facilities. The literacy rate is at a low of 67.8%. The average fertility rate is 5 children, and both maternal and infant mortality rates are very high. Maternal malnutrition and poor health conditions contribute to low birth weight, which results in a high incidence of physical and mental problems at birth.

Conditions for children with disabilities are far worse than for other children born into poverty. They are seen as different, omens of evil, and even possessed by the devil. Many are considered useless and unworthy of care, love, shelter, or food. Their families view them as a burden and thus not worthy of education or healthcare. In 2009, Tanzania signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which includes equal treatment, respect, and access to resources for those with physical disabilities.

The Faraja Fund Foundation was established in 2001 by Don and Joann Tolmie of the United States to fund and support the Faraja Primary School for Disabled Children in Northern Tanzania. It is one of two such schools in the country. Faraja Primary School is a boarding school that provides a healthy and caring educational environment. It currently accommodates 85 children from all over Tanzania who live, eat, work and learn together as they prepare for a better future. They learn English (Swahili is their primary language, but graduation exams are offered in English), farming techniques suited to their abilities, animal husbandry, singing, and limited computer skills. Faraja School graduates rank in the upper 2% of primary school graduates in the country and successfully move on to secondary or vocational schools.

Project Description and Objectives: As expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we believe that all people with disabilities should be given equal treatment, should be respected, and should have access to education, health care and jobs. Through our project at the Faraja Primary School, we would like to make a small contribution to this broad goal. The school is funded by donations and partnerships with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and the Faraja Fund Foundation, now chaired by David Tolmie, the son of founders Don and Joann Tolmie of North Carolina. Faraja currently has two outdated computers that are used to teach the children how to type and write letters.

Our primary objectives are: (1) To introduce computer skills to disabled children at Faraja. (In developed nations, computer technology is helping children and adults have skills for day to day living, compensate for their disabilities and enable them to be competitive in the workplace.). We would like the children to learn to work with Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, and PowerPoint presentations. These computer skills will build on their preexisting knowledge of typing and will help them in their studies and in their later employment. We both have many years of experience working with children and understand what is necessary to make sure the children learn while having fun. Our leadership and interpersonal skills will also prove helpful when we have open dialogues with the children. (2) To train the teachers how to use the computer programs so that they can instruct future students. (3) To donate four laptop computers to the Faraja Primary School. (4) To create a cross-cultural virtual friendship between the Faraja School and the John Archer School in Harford County, Maryland. This virtual link will also teach geography, culture and mutual understanding by having the schools exchange videos via email and Skype.

Expected Outcomes Through our project we hope to (1) teach the children of Faraja Primary School various office skills which could translate into jobs, (2) promote their self-worth and self-sufficiency, (3) empower them to escape poverty, (4) create cross-cultural friendships between Faraja Primary School and John Archer School, (5) and train Faraja educators to teach computer skills after our departure.

Plan of Action:

February–April: Keep in direct contact with the Faraja Primary School and John Archer School to learn more about the children’s disabilities and how best to teach computer skills. Begin discussing virtual connection between Faraja and John Archer.

May-June: Continue contact with Faraja Primary School and create detailed lesson plans.

July (1st-14th): Prepare the materials and organize final details of the project.

July 15th-16th: Arrive in Kilimanjaro Airport, Tanzania.

July 16th-31st: Get acquainted with the children and community. Begin teaching the children and their teachers how to use the laptop computers and Microsoft Office programs. Show the children how to use a video maker and Skype so they can send videos to John Archer.

August: Continue computer program instruction. Devote time to photography and, with the help of the Faraja teachers, record the songs of the talented Faraja children.

Once we return to the United States, we will submit our project report. We will present our project to the Notre Dame community during Notre Dame Research Day and at other occasions. We will also publicize the ties between the Faraja School and the John Archer School to see whether other similar connections can be established across continents between schools for children with disabilities.