

The Tumaini (Hope) Learning and Development Center for Orphan Girls  
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<http://hopetumaini.blogspot.com>

#### SECTION I:

The goals of The Tumaini Learning and Development Center were to create a permanent ECD (Early Childhood Development) classroom that nurtures lifelong learning and the cognitive development of orphans and vulnerable children undergoing remedial education at The Katito Hope School in Katito, rural Western Kenya, as well as to promote the importance of play in childhood development through the construction of a recycled tire playground. The project aimed to increase learning outcomes of students in the ECD nursery class and enrollment at The Katito Hope School.

Additional fundraising efforts that contributed to The Tumaini Project included a partnership with Grace Community Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania building an adjacent classroom to The Tumaini Learning and Development Center and a sewing project with a widowed tailor to raise money for additional construction funds and maintenance of the playground. The sewing project has been underway since August 2014 and has made \$1,180 in sales revenue, with a portion going towards fundraising efforts.

Currently in The Katito Hope School, there are about twenty children enrolled in the ECD class that have benefited from the construction of The Tumaini Learning and Development Center classroom. The Tumaini classroom is larger than the makeshift iron sheet classes built temporarily in January 2014 and has a maximum occupancy of 35 students. The construction of the recycled playground, moreover, aims to increase enrollment in the ECD class to the building's maximum occupancy. Increasing enrollment in the ECD class is crucial to the long-term sustainability of The Katito Hope School. Currently there are 65 children enrolled in the school who are mostly orphans sponsored through The House of Hope Sponsorship program. In June and July, the self-help group organization was running over budget trying to provide for teachers' salaries at the school. Increasing the enrollment of non-orphan children in the school is not only necessary to lessen the strain of the organization's budgetary expenses and sustain the growth of the school into the future but also in decreasing the stigma that orphaned and vulnerable children face achieved by attending classes in a supportive learning environment alongside their peers. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 The Katito Hope School was officially registered as a private school under the Kenyan government with a maximum occupancy of 250 students.

Building the recycled playground shortly after the registration of the school with the government is instrumental in increasing enrollment of the school into the future, as The Katito Hope School is the only school in the town with a playground. Four paid construction workers built a seesaw that seats four children, a recycled tire wall, and a recycled tire swing set that seats six for children who had never played on a playground before. Before the construction of the playground, the older children in the school would play football during recess time outside on a dusty field. I noticed that the younger children in the lower level classes could not keep up with the older children in these games and sat outside their classrooms during recess time. Giving these younger children an interactive play space was rewarding.

The Tumaini Learning and Development Center and adjacent Class 1 classroom were the first permanent classrooms built at The Katito Hope School. The Davis project, however, is only the beginning of a long-term construction project to replace temporary, makeshift classrooms with permanent brick classrooms for all class levels, two through seven, at the school. Building permanent classrooms is crucial for safety purposes and government standards. Between January and June, four children were admitted at the House of Hope clinic for sutures after cutting themselves on the metal sidings of the makeshift iron sheet classrooms. Building several classrooms at the school is a demanding project but can be sustained through a business project like The Tumaini Sewing Project, or a large donor fund.

While my Davis project had a special focus on empowering orphaned girls living at the House of Hope Children's Center who attend remedial classes at The Katito Hope School, I recognized many of the struggles girls in the community face in their education. Early marriage and sexual violence were

amongst the issues that came to light during “The Day of The African Child” World Vision event held at The House of Hope compound on June 16<sup>th</sup>. The theme of the event, “a child-friendly, quality, free and compulsory education for all children in Africa,” commemorated the importance of the education of children in memory of the Soweto massacre during the apartheid in South Africa.

While the implementation of The Tumaini Learning and Development Center was largely successful, there were unanticipated difficulties in the beginning of the project. Initially, \$2,000 of the grant funding was taken up in US tax dollars. As a result, the funds to paint the interior and exterior of the building, as well as equipping the interior of the Learning Center with chairs and desks were cut short. Moreover, the funding to build the interactive tire sand pit and outdoor classroom arrangement as originally proposed in the budget was cut short. Even so, there was a poor location for the outdoor classroom arrangement with little to no shade around the school, as well limited funds to build a sheltered arrangement. Additionally, transferring money to Kenya proved difficult, as Western Union would not transfer more than \$5,000 due to fraudulent concerns. If cashing a check in the bank, it would have taken more than a month to receive the money in my bank account. In the end, I wired the grant money with a \$25.67 processing fee.

There was a minor language barrier, since the people in the community of Katito mostly spoke their mother tongue, Luo, and the national language, Swahili. I took an intermediate level Swahili class in Nairobi last summer, which proved very helpful in communicating with the children in The Katito Hope School. Learning Luo for the past two summers while living in the village of Kandaria with David Okong’o, The House of Hope Director, and communicating with people in the village who only spoke Luo was also helpful and challenged me to culturally appreciate the people of Katito and Kandaria as well. Another unanticipated difficulty was becoming ill during my project two weeks prior to the construction completion. I had to stay at David Okong’o’s house for close to a week to recuperate, thus missing my role of supervising the building’s construction. Being ill abroad is never a pleasant experience. However, it challenged me to work harder to achieve my project goals and to develop a heart for the orphans in The Katito Hope School who experience ill health on a day-to-day basis.

Another unanticipated difficulty was that the timing of the Katito Cares Clean up Day and Teacher Internship Training Program did not resonate with the current elementary state of the school. However, these programs may be implemented in the future once more students are enrolled in the school and teachers are hired. Both programs fit into the future vision of The Katito Hope School. The Davis project challenged me to think long-term about the implications for peace in this community.

As a side project, which was not originally proposed in my Davis report, David Okong’o and I distributed sanitary pads at schools in Katito, as many girls miss school during menstruation since they cannot afford sanitary pads. David and I are planning a sanitary pad distribution program at The Katito Hope School to empower girls that are currently in the younger classes but will be in the upper level middle school classes in the future.

## SECTION II:

Peace is not merely the absence of struggle but a mindset attained in the midst of struggle through hope. Without hope, orphaned children experiencing social and physical ills cannot see, dream, and live beyond their circumstances and come to know peace. Hope is a tool of agency for empowerment. The Tumaini Learning and Development Center Davis Project kick started The Tumaini (Hope) Project with a long-term vision to empower orphan girls in Katito, Kenya. In the short-term, The Tumaini Learning Center gives children in the nursery class at The Katito Hope School a safe and supportive learning environment. A quality-learning environment is crucial to the success of The Katito Hope School, as all children currently in the school are undergoing remedial education and need peace of mind to get their studies up to the appropriate grade level. In the long-term, The Tumaini Learning and Development Center will serve as a foundation for The Katito Hope School, helping to educate the youngest students and build a base for a successful education in the future.

The Tumaini (Hope) Learning and Development Center project has enlarged my perception of the social inequalities orphans and vulnerable children face which are perpetuated by lack of opportunity and access to adequate remedial educational services. The Davis Project has challenged me to apply my educational background having been through remedial education at a young age, as well as life

experiences, to advocate on behalf of the cognitive, physical, and developmental needs of orphans and vulnerable children in Kenya.



Building the roof of The Tumaini Learning and Development Center and adjacent Class 1 classroom

Students at the Katito Hope School enjoying the newly built tire wall





Part of the ECD class singing a song during the dedication of the Center