

## **TANZANIA AND THE COMMUNITY OF NYAMUSWA**

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Lying just south of the equator, the United Republic of Tanzania is East Africa's largest country. It is noted for its national parks, tradition of free elections, cultural diversity, peacefulness, big game, and the island of Zanzibar.

Formed in 1964 by the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, Tanzania covers approximately 365,000 square miles, roughly twice the size of California. With an estimated population of 43.8 million in 2009, Tanzania is home to 128 distinct tribes, the most famous of which is the Maasai. Tanzania's population has been estimated to consist of roughly one-third each Muslims, Christians and traditional religions.

Kiswahili is the national language in Tanzania, though each of the 128 different tribes also has its own language and English is used as the language of instruction in secondary schools, universities and higher courts.

Tanzania is one of the poorest countries of the world. Average yearly income is approximately \$520 and a third of the population makes less than \$1 per day. Tanzanians have a life expectancy of 50 years. There is a high infant mortality rate (one in seven children die before the age of five) and malaria and HIV/AIDS are the major causes of death respectively for children and adults. The economy is strongly based on agriculture with significant contributions by tourism and natural resources such as gold and natural gas and the production of light consumer goods.

Tanzania is ecologically very diverse. The northeast of the country is mountainous and includes Africa's highest mountain, Mt. Kilimanjaro. The eastern coast of the country borders on the Indian Ocean and is hot and humid year round. In the north and west Tanzania borders Africa's Great Lakes: Lake Victoria which is Africa's largest lake and Lake Tanganyika which is Africa's deepest. The central part of the country is characterized by a large plateau with plains and farmland. Southern Tanzania is known for its high hills and cooler climate. Tanzania's rainy season is typically from March-May with a shorter rainy period in late October to early December.

Politically, there are 26 regions in Tanzania which are divided into 98 districts. The largest city is Dar es Salaam located on the Indian Ocean coast and its capital is Dodoma located in the central region of the country.

**PROJECTZAWADI** operates mainly in two areas of the Mara Region in the remote northeastern part of Tanzania. Nyamuswa is the capitol of the Chamriho District and the largest village in this area with a population of approximately 6,000 people. Your sponsored student lives in Nyamuswa or one of the 29 smaller villages surrounding it. Nyamuswa is located approximately 22 miles east of Lake Victoria; the city of Musoma is 41 miles to the north and to the east lays the great plains of the Serengeti. This area is also just south of Butiama, the birthplace of Tanzania's first President, Julius Nyerere. **PROJECTZAWADI** has also recently expanded to Mugumu, a town of approximately 12,000 located 75 miles to the east of Nyamuswa in the Serengeti District.

## MAP OF TANZANIA AND THE NYAMUSWA AREA



## THE TANZANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Tanzania Education System is based on the British System of education. The full course of study is 13 years long – seven years of primary school (Standards 1-7) and six years of secondary school (Forms 1-6). The school year begins in January and runs to November with a semester break in June.

In the communities where PROJECTZAWADI works, children often start school late or miss some years. It is common to have students as old as nine or ten starting Standard 1 and to have students as old as 14-17 in primary school. While primary education is free, the cost of the compulsory school uniforms and school supplies means that many families cannot afford to send all of their children to school.

The conditions of the rural primary schools are often difficult. Virtually every primary school in Nyamuswa has a shortage of classrooms, desks, textbooks, teachers and teachers' housing. It is quite common for students to sit on a dirt floor for their lessons, not to have textbooks, and to see a teacher in their classrooms for only a fraction of the day. In order to address some of these issues,

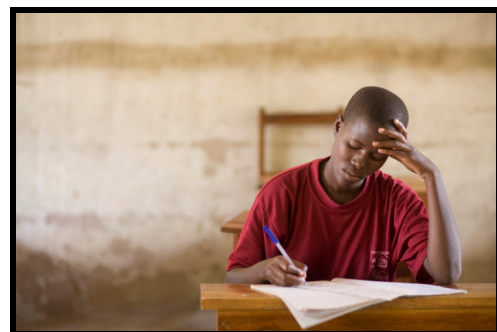
**PROJECTZAWADI** has set up a program of Guardian Teachers and counselors who help our children overcome these problems as much as possible. **PROJECTZAWADI** also tries to build at least one classroom or teacher's house a year at one of its participating primary or secondary schools.

Upon completing Standard 7, all students take a national exam in nine subjects. In order to continue their studies, students must pass in five subjects. Students may be selected for a local secondary school or, if they do very well on the exams, they may be placed at a more elite secondary school which can be located quite far from the student's home and require boarding during the school year. Since the costs of attending secondary school are so much higher than primary school, many students know that even if they are selected for secondary school that their families will not be able to afford to send them. Additionally, while primary school is taught in Tanzania's national language of Kiswahili, secondary school is taught in English. The quality of English instruction is often very poor, especially in rural areas like Nyamuswa, and for many students it is a third language, behind the tribal language used at home and Kiswahili. This creates challenges for students because at the secondary school level they are expected to do all of their classroom learning through English instruction and textbooks.

Secondary school is divided into two parts: Ordinary Level and Advanced Level (commonly referred to as O-level and A-level). Conditions at the secondary school level are a step up from the primary schools but many of the same shortages of desks, textbooks, and teachers housing still exists, though they are less extreme. O-level consists of Forms 1-4. At the end of Form 4 all students take another national exam in nine subjects. Again they must pass in five subjects to receive the Certificate of Secondary Education and continue on to the A-level. Since many secondary schools only go through the O-level, this often involves switching to another school for the remaining two years of studies (Forms 5 and 6). Upon completion of Form 6, a final national Advanced Certificate Exam determines if they qualify to continue their studies at the university level.

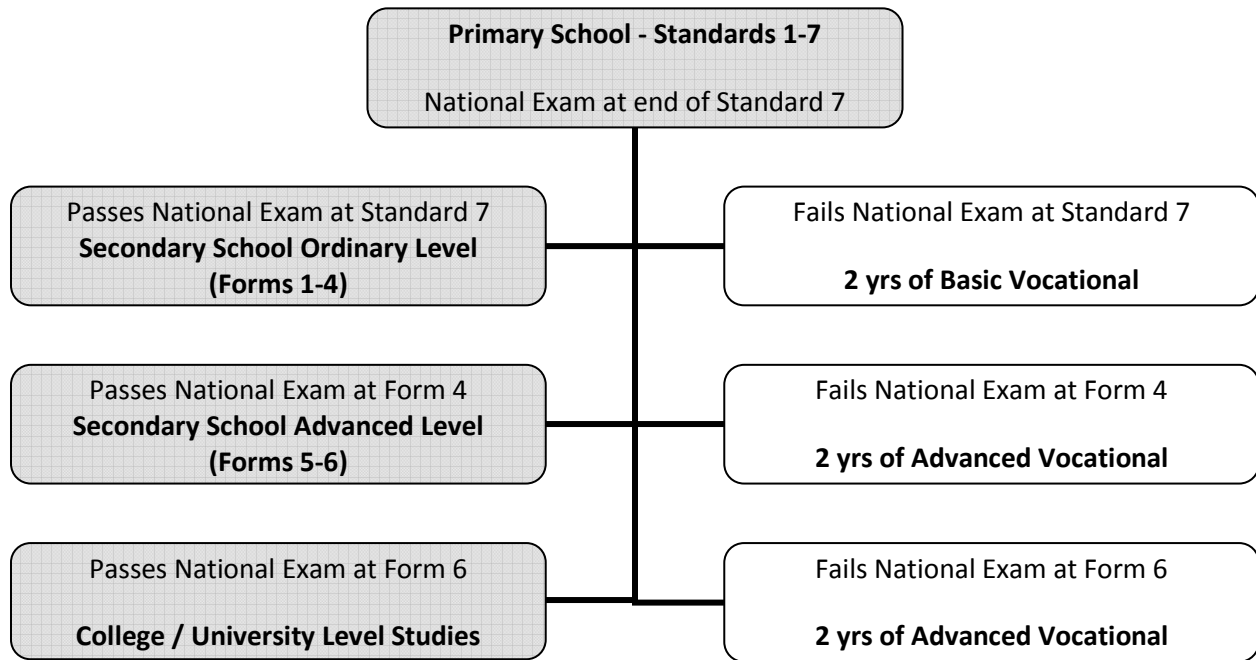
Nationally, less than 2% of students who enter primary school will successfully complete secondary school and qualify for university education. At each step in the national exam process, a significant number of students do not pass. **PROJECTZAWADI** works with its students who don't pass to pursue an appropriate level of vocational education or job training to provide life and career skills. Most vocational programs are two to three years in length. Upon successful completion of a vocational program, **PROJECTZAWADI** helps its graduates get started in their chosen career or trade.

**PROJECTZAWADI** pays all expenses for students selected for secondary school and university and assists the others to pursue vocational training. **PROJECTZAWADI's** commitment is to helping its students to become self-reliant.



## EDUCATIONAL LEVELS FLOW CHART

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## PROJECTZAWADI'S HISTORY OF INVOLVEMENT

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As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nyamuswa, Tanzania from 1993 to 1995, PROJECTZAWADI's founder, Brian Singer, decided to help a family of four orphaned children with school supplies, clothing and food. Without his help, it was very unlikely that they would be able to attend school. After completing his Peace Corps service, Brian returned to the USA and continued sending some limited support to these children. In July 2000, he was able to return for a visit to Tanzania and decided to place two of the boys in a top-quality boarding school.

*"When the principal told me the cost, I knew there was no way I could afford to put them in school. I asked him if I could give him \$100 immediately and send the remainder when I returned to the US. He readily agreed but I wondered where I would get the rest of the money. When I returned home, I wrote a letter to friends and family requesting donations and very soon I had more money than necessary! It was time to prepare to sponsor more children, but I needed help." --Brian Singer*

So PROJECTZAWADI was born! The first tasks for the new organization were to form a strong Board of Directors and apply for 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt status from the IRS. The Board then set about defining a mission, refining the program model and raising more funds.

PROJECTZAWADI's mission is to provide educational opportunities within a nurturing environment to orphaned and other vulnerable children in Tanzania so that they become self-reliant and active members of their communities. It operates with three guiding principles:

- Every child deserves an education
- Children belong with a family in their community
- Local communities know best what is needed for students to succeed.

In keeping with these principles, PROJECTZAWADI began a partnership with a local non-profit called Zinduka. Zinduka was formed by a dedicated group of Tanzanians - all residents of the rural and isolated village of Nyamuswa. They started Zinduka because of their belief that the vast majority of the international funds donated to Tanzania never reach the rural areas. From a humble start, Zinduka can now point to the following community initiatives in which it has taken a key role:

- Working with PROJECTZAWADI to sponsor more than 300 students
- The construction of several classrooms, a teacher's house, and a dormitory
- A new medical clinic
- A mosquito net campaign to prevent the spread of malaria
- An HIV/AIDS awareness program
- A micro-business loan program
- A new water tank for Nyamuswa

Throughout this growth process, PROJECTZAWADI has provided funds for Zinduka board members to strengthen their skills in English, bookkeeping and computers.

In 2006, PROJECTZAWADI expanded, at the request of a Quaker group, to the town of Mugumu, about 75 miles east of Nyamuswa. The Quaker group had been doing work in Mugumu and was attracted by PROJECTZAWADI's model and achievements. In line with the belief that reliable local partners are an essential element of success, PROJECTZAWADI helped establish a community organization there called Okoa. Through the joint efforts of the Quakers, Okoa and PROJECTZAWADI currently 125 students are sponsored in Mugumu.

PROJECTZAWADI is proud of its work in Tanzania and is working to help even more students. PROJECTZAWADI students, who were once at a great disadvantage to their peers, are now able to compete on equal footing in the classroom and on national exams.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR SPONSORED STUDENT**

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Sponsored children are asked to write to you at least once a year. This yearly letter will consist of an age-appropriate note directly from the student, a translation of that note, and/or a drawing from the student. A current photograph and an update on the student's progress and other PROJECTZAWADI activities in the community will also be included.

Communication with your sponsored child requires some level of patience. In most of the schools, the only means of transportation are by foot and bicycle with mail being delivered sporadically. You are welcome to write to your sponsored student and indeed they are probably very curious about you and your life. The children most often like to hear about your family members, your work and your normal daily activities. Feel free to write as much or as little as you like. The children especially appreciate photos of you and your family.

Letters may be sent directly to our partner organization at the address below. **Please ensure that your student's first and last name and their school are indicated prominently on your letter.** Your letter will then be translated by Zinduka staff and delivered to the student at their school:

**Zinduka DIF  
Attn: PROJECTZAWADI  
PO Box 422  
Bunda, Tanzania  
EAST AFRICA**



Some sponsors have asked about sending gifts but this is discouraged for a number of reasons. It can create discord and hurt feelings among the students when some of them receive gifts from their sponsors and others do not. Also, the postal system in Tanzania is not always reliable. Some packages never arrive at their destination, arrive opened or with items missing or damaged, or have customs fees that the families find difficult to pay in order to receive the package.

A good gift alternative is to make a donation to **PROJECTZAWADI** in your sponsored child's name. These donations will be dedicated to help fund needed improvements to the infrastructure and resources directly at your sponsored child's school and in that way can be a gift to your student and all of his or her schoolmates. If, however, you still wish to send individual gift items to your student, please be sure that the package is small, light and has only low-cost contents (i.e. stickers, coloring books, candy, etc.) with a total value of under \$20. Never send money directly to your student.



*All photos courtesy of Mark Tuschman Photography*