

NEWSLETTER

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VEGA EDUCATION FUND



www.vegaeducation.org



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OUR VISION

A quality educational system that is fully accessible to all, regardless of income level or location.

OUR MISSION

To provide opportunities for quality secondary education to academically promising, disadvantaged students in developing countries, beginning with Tanzania.

In celebration of International Women's Day, March 8, 2023, we are dedicating this newsletter to stories and information regarding girls' education.



International Women's Day

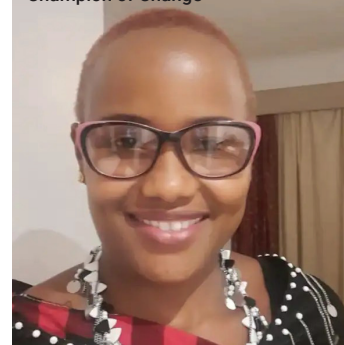
FIGHTING FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION IN THE MAASAI TRIBE

In Tanzania, many young girls are robbed of the opportunity to pursue an education. In the Maasai tribe in particular, the practice of 'matrimonial slavery' prohibits most girls from attending school for fear that they may gain independence. Mesha Pius Singolyo, an educated Maasai woman, has been recognized as Tanzania's national Champion for Change in 2022 for her fight against child marriage and for girls' education within her tribe.

Mesha made it her goal to help as many young girls out of matrimonial slavery as she could, after she heard of a 12-year-old girl named Sooi who was beaten to death by her father after running away from her 30-year-old husband a few days after their marriage. While Sooi's mother wished for her not to marry, she had no say in the matter. Sooi's father felt it was best for his daughter to be married, and Sooi's mother had no way to help her daughter. This story is not uncommon within the Maasai tribe and the practice of child marriage generally.

"I heard this story when I was young, but I was scarred so much and resolved in my heart to fight against this vice," Mesha said. After winning the fight for her own education, Mesha founded the project My

Mesha Pius Singolyo, an activist against child marriage, is the recipient of Tanzania's 2022 Champion of Change



My Life, My Dream with aims to prevent teenage pregnancies and physical, sexual, and emotional violence towards girls. She engages girls in schools to build up their confidence, self-awareness, and biological awareness. "If a girl becomes pregnant before the age of 18, she is at much



Mesha with some of her students

higher risk of getting married off and becoming pregnant again,” Mesha says. Given 64% of Maasai girls near Arusha, Tanzania, where Mesha was born, drop out of school due to child marriage and pregnancy, Mesha believes that education is often the only tool that can protect young girls in her tribe from this cycle.

“I don’t have much resources to provide for all girls in need of boarding schools. In recognition of that, I’ve been working with my friends to raise a sum of money for buying educational materials like books, pens, and mattresses for the girls every year,” Mesha says. So far, Mesha has been able to send 55 girls to school, 32 of which are rescued from matrimonial slavery, and 6 of whom are young mothers.

“I’m grateful to see young girls I’ve supported become a flourishing seed planted in fertile soil. [Vega Education loves this reference, as Vega means ‘fertile meadow’]. Some have gone on to post-secondary, others are working, and several are in high school and primary schools. All are good ambassadors by creating awareness to the community about harmful norms against girl children” Mesha says.

Vega Education became aware of the need for Maasai girl sponsorships through a personal connection to Mesha by one of our board members. We have responded by working to raise additional funds to sponsor four girls for the current school year. We have yet to raise \$2,700 more to cover their fees for the year - if you or a family member/friend are interested in helping out, please have them visit the Donate page on our website. Vegaeducation.org

NYABISE’S STORY



Nyabise is in her last year of high school as a Vega sponsored student. Her mother is very poor, and she struggles to meet all the basic needs of her seven children. There have been times where the family has only had one meal a day. When Nyabise visits home she is expected to help her mother by collecting firewood, fetching water, and doing household chores. In Tanzania, daughters are expected to take on the responsibility of caring for their household, making it nearly impossible for girls to succeed in school while living at home. This is one of the driving factors that led Vega Education to partner with boarding schools. Although Nyabise wants to help her family, her teachers have recommended that she go home only for brief visits so that she can sufficiently devote herself to her studies. While quitting school might help her family in the short term, completing high school is an investment which will help her family in the long term and ensure a stable escape from the cycle of generational poverty. Nyabise is the first in her family to go to high school. One of her younger sisters has been inspired by her older sister’s hard work and dedication, and she too has expressed an interest in going to high school and has asked Vega Education to consider sponsoring her as well.

GERTRUDE’S STORY



When Gertrude was in primary school, she scored very high on her final examinations. Due to her outstanding marks, she was given the opportunity to study at one of ten competitive

government-run boarding schools which would cover all her needs so long as the school fees were paid. Gertrude’s single mother worked hard to pay the fees required by the school, but when COVID-19 hit, her mother began to struggle financially. She could no longer afford to send Gertrude to this school, and began desperately approaching anyone she could think of to help her with the fees for the following year.

This is how she found KidzCare who, after seeing Gertrude’s outstanding primary school marks, was happy to present her case to Vega Education for the opportunity to become a sponsored student. Gertrude has been able to continue attending the boarding school and excels in her studies.

There is no greater pillar of stability than a strong, free, and educated woman – Angelia Jolie -

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