

# NEWSLETTER

January 2022



## VEGA EDUCATION FUND



[www.vegaeducation.org](http://www.vegaeducation.org)

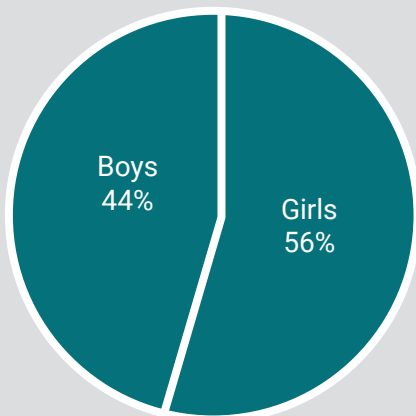


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## TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: 36

Girls: 20 (56%)

Boys: 16 (44%)



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the new Tanzanian school year has just begun, we are happy to announce that we were able to add 11 new students to our total sponsored high school students, for a total of 36! To our new sponsors who made this possible, thank you and welcome! We hope you find these newsletters informative and inspiring as you learn about the lives of these students and the country they live in. While Tanzania is beautiful and has much to offer, a good education is unattainable for the poorest children. Only 32% of kids go to high school, a statistic that largely excludes children from low income families...and girls.

Due to cultural norms, girls' education is not prioritized and therefore most girls are bound for a life of poverty, unable to contribute to supporting their families with much needed income. The cycle repeats itself, as families often must choose which of their children they can afford to send to school and free from helping out on the small, non-mechanized (labour intensive) family farm. With each new generation finding themselves in the same desperate situation, it's always the girls who lose out.

As we look ahead to International Women's Day on March 8, it seemed fitting to dedicate this issue of our newsletter to 'educating girls'. We have an all-girls lineup for student stories, and you can read about the education gender gap in Tanzania to learn why it's harder for girls to go to school.

I am also happy to announce that Vega Education has decided to raise its target for percentage of girl students from 50% to 60%. In this newsletter you'll learn why this is an ambitious target, but we believe in it and will work hard with our partners to achieve it.

Sincerely,

Leah Katerberg  
President



“There is no greater pillar of stability than a strong, free, and educated woman.” ~Angelina Jolie

## 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.



If we are going to see real development in the world then our best investment is WOMEN!  
~Desmond Tutu



## THE EDUCATION GENDER GAP

In Tanzania, the high school enrolment rate is 32% and even lower for girls (see chart). Cultural norms dictate that education is not valuable for girls – that they do not need an education to be what is considered a successful woman in society. Expectations for women include getting married and having children, but all too often girls are married as teens and begin having children right away. The chart shows that nearly 25% of girls aged 15-19 in Tanzania are married and not in school. In fact, Tanzania very recently lifted a law that prohibited girls from continuing school (or returning to it) if they were married,

pregnant, or had children. This is a huge step forward for the future of girls in the country, but other factors still need to be addressed.

Because girls are not expected to contribute significantly to providing (for themselves or their families), they are less likely to be invested in by their parents. If the family can only afford to send one child to school, it will not be a girl. If more help on the family farm is required, it will likely be a girl who is pulled from school. Girls' health and wellbeing is generally less valued, and therefore they are less likely to perform well in primary school than boys.

This is why Vega Education is raising our target to 60% girls receiving sponsorships. When we started 3 years ago we knew that even 50% girls would be a difficult target, but thanks to the hard work of our partners we are already at 56%. Raising the target certainly makes it more challenging, but we think it's worth it!

As we look forward to International Women's Day (March 8), know that as Vega Education sponsors, you are making a sure investment in the future women of Tanzania.

WORLD BANK 2019				
	Malawi	Mozambique	Tanzania	Zambia
Girls aged 15–19 by schooling and marriage status, Percent				
In school, not married, ages 15–16	31.4	23.2	19.7	31.0
In school, not married, ages 17–19	21.3	15.3	14.6	24.0
Out of school, not married, ages 15–16	7.3	11.0	17.7	8.3
Married, not in school, any age	25.2	36.6	24.2	17.2
Out of school, not married 17–19 years	13.4	9.9	23.6	18.9
Married and in school, any age	1.5	3.9	0.2	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

## MEET TWO OF OUR NEW STUDENTS



### FARAJA

This bright young lady comes from a very poor family of subsistence farmers

in a village that doesn't yet have running water. At KidzCare Primary School she worked very hard for a place in Vega Education's scholarship program. Her mother sees it as a miracle that KidzCare came to their village, and that now her child finally has a chance.

In her Pre Form 1 (a two month course to prepare students to enter secondary school) exams, Faraja was FIRST in her class of 72 students. She is excited and ready to start walking down the path towards her bright future. Go Faraja!



### MARGARET

Margaret was born in a small farming village in Northern Tanzania. When she was five her parents divorced and her mother left Margaret and her three older brothers with her father and moved away. Margaret's father stayed with her for about six months and then left as well, taking the boys with him and putting Margaret in the care of an aunt in the village. Her aunt had a small plot of land where she grew vegetables for food, selling a small surplus at the local market.

Life was harsh in the village, and it wasn't long before another aunt from Arusha (a large city near Kilimanjaro) offered to take Margaret to live with her. There, she was able to focus on school and complete grade 8 with good marks. In August, however, this aunt passed away and Margaret was moved back

to the village, having no other options. Village elders immediately reached out to Panda Elimu Bora, one of Vega Education's partners, who is known in the village for the good work they do supporting students.

After interviewing village elders and going through Margaret's school records, it was clear that she met our sponsorship criteria. In Nov/Dec she was able to attend and complete the Pre Form 1 program with very good final results. Margaret is very grateful for being selected for the sponsorship and looks forward to working hard and making new friends.

# HEALTHCARE COVERAGE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Maria was first sponsored by Vega Education last year. She did well in school during her first few months, but over time her marks began to drop. Our partner responded by ensuring she received extra tutoring support, included in the sponsorship fee, but still Maria continued to struggle. Upon asking Maria a few questions our partner learned that she suffered from pain in her stomach area, and she had not been to see a doctor about it. The pain was getting worse.

Immediately, arrangements were made for Maria to be seen by a doctor at one of the large hospitals in the city. She was diagnosed with a significantly herniated bellybutton, and surgery was scheduled for her upcoming school break (Nov/Dec). Maria has now recovered from the surgery and is able to focus on her studies once more.

This is a nice story, but what it's really about is health insurance: something we easily take for granted in a country like Canada. In Tanzania, health insurance is not expensive by our standards, but it is not freely provided by the

government and is out of reach for most families living in the village, barely able to provide food and shelter for their children. Maria comes from such a village, where her parents do their best to cultivate the small family plot with maize and beans to feed their seven children. They keep a handful of goats and cows as well, to supplement the family income. Providing this kind of simple operation for their daughter so she could stay in school and avoid further complications from the injury is not an option for parents who are doing all they can just to keep their children fed.

National Health Insurance is included in Vega Education's sponsorship fee. We know that kids need to be healthy in order to thrive in school, and that injury and illness are just a part of life. A small investment (less than \$50 a year per student) ensures that the 'health' barrier is largely removed for our kids.

We wish Maria the best in this new school year!



**Maria – healthy, happy, and ready to go back to school**

