

# NEWSLETTER

January 2023



## VEGA EDUCATION FUND



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

Whoever wants to reach a distant goal must take small steps.

Saul Bellow

## VEGA EDUCATION'S FIRST GROUP OF STUDENTS ENTERS THEIR LAST YEAR

The 2023 school year is a very exciting one for Vega Education. That's because it will be our fourth year operating as a charity, which means our first group of sponsored students will be in their last year of high school! We have learned so much since we started, like how to work with local authorities and teachers to ensure the students we select come from poor families and are academically strong; the importance of sending students on a two-month 'intro to high school' course to get them acclimatized and ready for success; the value of encouraging parents to contribute whatever they are able, so they have a stake in their child's success; and the right kind of health insurance our students need so they are fully covered for any type of care and treatment.

One is to continue high school for another two years. This system mirrors the British secondary system: the first four years are called O level and the last two are called A level. If a student is doing well at O level, we always encourage them to continue on to A level. An A level graduate has more options in terms of post-secondary education, including university, while an O level graduate can go to college or enter the workforce.

In Tanzania, while quality is lacking in government O level high schools, A level schools offer a quality education, as the focus is to prepare these students to enter local universities. English language instruction is sufficiently strong, as well as academics. While these schools are not free, the fees are drastically lower than the private high schools Vega Education sends students to for their first four years. Busanya, Vega Education's first sponsored student (before we were an official charity), who is now in medical school, did his O level education at one of our partner private schools, then went on to complete his A level at a government boarding school.

Our partners will work closely with all year 4 students this coming year to determine what path makes the most sense for them in 2024, and support them in any applications required.

What lies ahead for these future graduates? In the Tanzanian school system, there are a number of options for students who have completed four



Vega Education's first cohort



# DR. JUDITH VISITS MWANZA

"I had a unique opportunity in September to travel to Tanzania and visit Vega Education's work in Mwanza, where I was able to see and interact with students, teachers, and administrators to help better understand the educational environment, students' struggles and successes. Given the covid situation, it was my first trip back to my home country, Tanzania, in a while. Since retiring from teaching high school here in Ontario and completing my PhD, my goal has been to use my time and energy to help the people of Tanzania however I am able.

I visited both secondary schools in Mwanza where sponsored students attend. The first, Messa Secondary School, has a student population of about 1,000 students and approximately 100 staff members. The principal and the school Manager led a school tour. I was able to see classrooms, laboratories, the health unit, school cafeteria, student dormitories,

teachers' lounge, school library and the large yard for sports activities. I then met with our sponsored students in the library and we talked about their schoolwork and progress. The second school, Yusta Secondary School, is a new school for Vega, with our first group of year 1 students placed there only this year. While the students are doing well, the school seems to have much less to offer, and following my trip, through discussion with the Vega board, we decided to transfer these students to Messa for their second year.

I had some organic discussions with a number of teachers as well, and we were able to share ideas on how best to advance the students' success in school. I was also able to meet with local government authorities, who are aware of Vega Education's program and the partner with we work in Mwanza (Panda Elimu Bora). They wanted us to know they are extremely

thankful for this work, and consider it to be a positive model for other local education-focused charities to emulate."

*By Dr. Judith Lyander, Vega Education Fund board member*



## HELLO FROM MARCO



Marco is a 17-year-old hard working, grade-A student who is determined to pursue a career in medicine. Marco was born at a camp for people living with leprosy in Bukumbi, Mwanza. By the time he turned 4 years old, both of his parents had passed away from leprosy and he came into the care of his grandparents who also lived in the camp.

Despite challenges in his upbringing, Marco was able to complete his elementary school education and performed very well in the final exam. His headmaster contacted the Regional Social Service office asking for extra support for Marco's secondary education. The Regional Social Service office approached Panda Elimu Bora, one of Vega's partners, in the hopes that Marco could be considered for sponsorship. He was selected, and began attending Messa Secondary School in 2020.

Marco continues to work hard and is excited to make his dreams of studying medicine a reality.

## MEET FURAHA



Furaha is a hard-working student now in Form 3. He excels in mathematics and enjoys his life at boarding school. When he was very young, his father passed away, leaving his mother as his sole provider. His mother sent him to a Kidzcare preschool when he was 4 years old,

however, he was absent many days in his early education. A staff member at Kidzcare told Furaha's mother about how a child's education is like a brick wall, with each brick representing a day that the child is in school. If the child misses many days, the wall is left with holes throughout it. This makes for an unstable wall. Furaha's mother never forgot that metaphor and since then she made sure to send Furaha to school every day no matter how hard life got for them. She is very grateful to Vega Education for allowing her son to continue on to high school, giving him the kind of life she could not have.