

# 2024 Annual Report



**Our mission is to  
invest in sustainable  
community-identified  
educational improvements  
for youth, especially girls,  
in the Rural Mara region.**





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## "Angalia kilicho muhimu"

This is a Swahili expression that translates to "look at what is important."

I am writing this in May 2025 after USAID has been dismantled, and the US administration seems to be abandoning relationships with Tanzania and other African countries. Your generous support as a donor has never been more important than now. Together, we are providing girls and boys in one of the most disadvantaged regions of Tanzania the life-changing gift of a better education. Thanks to the compassion of our donors, more girls and boys now have the chance to pursue their education and reach their full potential.

After weathering the pandemic, 2024 was an important transitional year for TDS. We realized that we needed to take stock and refocus our efforts. After much review and discussion, the TDS board developed a solid plan that will leverage and enhance our current assets in the Madaraka Nyerere Library and Community Resource Center (LCRC), our 4H Career Pathways and Willmann Scholars programs.

To maximize our resources for enhancing our programs in Tanzania, we have decided not to hire another executive director after Eric Hill returned to teaching. Instead, the TDS Board has transformed into a working board with each member using their unique skills and insights to help raise funds, evaluate progress, manage scholarships, and communicate with our donors and other stakeholders. Board members have stepped up to this challenge and are enthusiastically taking over the many tasks that now need to be done.

Our refocusing is helping our current programs to develop in exciting new directions. The Early Childhood Learning and Pre-primary Reading programs will soon begin including English language learning. We plan to purchase more books in English and Swahili so children are exposed to both languages. The 4-H Career Pathways program will connect the gardens with science classrooms to enhance STEM learning. The Madaraka Nyerere Library and Community Resource Center (LCRC) has launched reading circles in primary and secondary schools to enhance English language learning and to promote a reading culture among students and their families. This annual report provides much detail about these projects. We hope that you will be assured that TDS and our Tanzania partners are improving education for youth, especially girls, in the rural Mara region.



Finally, I am pleased to announce that after a several year hiatus, we are planning another fund-raiser climb up Mount Kilimanjaro in June, 2026. This is a wonderful opportunity to experience the natural beauty of Tanzania and to visit and support the TDS programs. If you are interested, now is the time to let us know and to start planning.

Peace,  
*Kurt Thurmaier*  
Volunteer, Donor, and President





## **A Place to Grow and Thrive:**

How the Willman Scholarship Program Works and Helps Girls

### **What does the program do?**

This program provides gifted girls who are from economically disadvantaged families with a full scholarship to attend secondary boarding schools. Girls who attend boarding schools in Tanzania have been shown to have a much higher likelihood of completing secondary school. Without a scholarship, most of these girls would face numerous challenges like attending schools that lack proper educational resources, responsibilities that distract from their studies, and long walks to school where they are at risk for being attacked or abused.

### **How are girls recruited?**

Because there are always more girls than scholarships, recruitment, and selection are critical. The recruitment team includes the Chairman of The Library and Community Resource Center (LCRC) Steering Committee (Mr. Madaraka Nyerere, advisor), LCRC staff and head teachers from various Musoma Rural District primary schools. The head teachers identify at least three students from their schools considering academics, discipline, motivation, and a lack of economic means to attend private school. LCRC staff conduct screening exams on the primary subjects and interviews measuring confidence, readiness, self-efficacy, future goals and career aspirations. The LCRC director meets the parents of the selected students to explain the scholarship expectations, validate need and select school options - either Nyegina secondary school or ACT-Bunda Girls Secondary School. Based on the budget for scholarships, the girls are selected by rank score.



## What are the successful outcomes?

A total of 69 girls have been Willmann Scholarship recipients since its inauguration in January 2019, and 30 of those have graduated. Thirty-nine girls are currently enrolled. The scholarship recipients' performance compares favorably with other students who come from an economically capable environment and have received a good foundational education. Their success has encouraged other students from disadvantaged backgrounds to be assertive in their studies. The Bukwaya community, a collection of villages in the Mara region, is starting to see the importance of educating girls.

## How does TDS use its generous donations?

TDS arranges financial support by recruiting sponsors who will commit to funding all four years of secondary school. We want to assure that each student can complete her training. The fee is \$900 per year and includes tuition, room and board (in a dormitory), feminine hygiene products, and some school supplies. The girls also have a membership to the LCRC library and computer lab.

## How are the students supported in Tanzania?

Joyce Masso, the LCRC director, advises the girls, conducts some training sessions, monitors the girls' progress in school, intervenes with parents, and encourages correspondence with sponsors. Occasionally, the girls have health issues (e.g. need eyeglasses or have sickle cell disease) and need extra help.



Candidates for the scholarship program participate in an entrance exam as part of the process to determine eligibility.



Scholarship recipients take advantage of the computer lab at Nyegina Secondary School, something not typically available at public schools.





## **What do the girls think about the program?**

The scholarship girls are encouraged to correspond with sponsors, although the internet connection has not been stable. Their letters provide insights into their challenges and aspirations for the future. They work hard, enjoy their studies, and return home during breaks to help their families. Excerpts from girls' letters to their sponsors on the next page reveal their joy and appreciation for being able to participate in the program.

## **What is the future of the program?**

The success of this program is due to our generous donors and these highly motivated girls. We look forward to continuing the program and to following the success of the girls.



Scholarship recipients pose at their graduation with Joyce Masso, Director of the LCRC and coordinator of the scholarship program.





# Messages from the scholars

"I feel happy to know about many things of computer and I tell my friends who are studying at government school that now I know to use computer they are also happy and they want me to teach them. My parents also they see changes to me because of using computer and I pass my examinations."



Willmann Scholars volunteering to read to young children in the pre-primary reading program.

**"I thanks God who brought you in my life because you give me this scholarship and I am studying in private school. I have peace because I am not walking many miles every day to go to school. I am in boarding and I have enough time to study and learn many things from teachers and my fellow students because we are coming from different tribes. My tribe is Wakwaya and I can speak my tribe language. Therefore, my first language is Kikwaya, my second language is Kiswahili and my third language is English but I am still learning in order to speak and write it well."**

**"I like to share with you about my future dream which is to be a nurse. I study all ten subjects, but there are subjects I just love them more like English, Biology, Chemistry, Geography and Basic mathematics. Also computer that make me to know different things about the world and I thank you for brought us the computers and internet."**

"I am writing to send you greetings and thanks for being my sponsor from form one to form four. It is a big sacrifice that you have done, since paying a school fee for someone whom You don't know and you never meet with me, needs a person with heart for help other people. If you would not be you I would never reach here I am."

**"Because of your support, I learnt many things which helped me, not only about studies but also about life skills such as how to dig, how to manage time, how to prepare my future, how to live with others."**

"When I am at school I like to engage in agricultural activities like planting vegetables which help us to get balanced diet for our health. Also we have planted fruits like banana, pawpaw and cucumber in order to get good health."



Girls at Nyegina Secondary School, including scholarship recipients, study for exams in the LCRC.





# Transforming Education and Opportunity:

The Impact of the 4H Career Pathways Program 2024

## How does the program engage students?

The 4H Career Pathways (4HCP) program is a groundbreaking initiative operating in Musoma Rural District, Tanzania, that connects classroom theory with real-world learning. Supported by Tanzania Development Support (TDS), this program strengthens extracurricular clubs in four secondary schools (Etaro, Nyegina, Mkirira, and Mkono) and four primary schools (Nyegina A, Nyegina B, Mkirira A, and Mkirira B), engaging over 600 students each year in hands-on learning, career exploration, and essential life skills development. At the heart of the program are vibrant school gardens—student-managed plots that serve as both outdoor classrooms and practical business ventures. Teachers and school leaders report that access to garden-grown vegetables has helped ease food insecurity and improve class attendance and concentration.

Since its launch, the 4HCP program has impacted more than 2,000 students by fostering self-reliance, leadership, and financial literacy—essential traits for youth in underserved rural communities. Its overarching mission is to support community-identified educational improvements, especially for girls, empowering young people to break the cycle of poverty and pursue their dreams with confidence. The program prepares students not only to seek employment but also to become future job creators.



Kagina Zongoli, an agricultural expert, instructs a student at Nyegina Secondary School on how to prepare the correct measurements for spacing between seedlings





Students at Mkono Secondary School show the hand soap that they made during a club activity

## What are the club projects?

The gardens teach sustainable agriculture, nutrition, and responsibility, while supplementing school meals and providing surplus produce that students often sell or bring home to support their families.

Developed with support from Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, the Career Pathways side of the 4HCP program offers a wide range of club-based projects in **entrepreneurship, information and communications technology (ICT), environmental conservation, healthcare, leadership skills, engineering, and the arts.** Activities such as liquid soap-making, vegetable gardening, tree planting, jewelry making, and peer-led cooking projects are conducted outside regular school hours, allowing students to apply what they've learned in class to real-world situations and deepen their understanding of the careers that are available in the region.

## How do TDS donations support the program?

TDS supports the salary of Mr. John Kuboja, the 4HCP Coordinator, stipends for teachers who manage school clubs, and supplies for club activities. In response to the need for improved learning infrastructure, the program — through TDS — partnered with the Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT) to install a 25-computer lab at Etaro Secondary School in 2024, providing students with critical digital skills. It also addressed water access challenges by supporting the construction of four water tanks in three Mkirira schools and at Etaro Secondary School. These tanks, especially during the rainy season, support school gardens and improve hygiene facilities. These efforts have contributed to better academic performance, improved student attendance, and a reduction in dropouts among girls, particularly those previously affected by early pregnancies and menstrual health challenges.



Students at Etaro Secondary School build computers using Raspberry Pi kits with guidance from Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology faculty and students



Students at Nyegina Primary School learn to weave mats using recycled materials for a club activity.

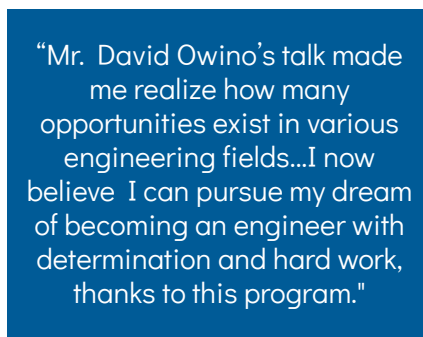


## What are the program's outcomes?

According to the program's evaluation team, 85% of participating students report increased motivation and 70% show academic improvement in science-related subjects. Parents and teachers consistently highlight positive changes in students' confidence, discipline, and future aspirations. A student from Etaro Secondary School reflected: "Through 4H, I have learned how to grow food, manage a business, and even teach my parents new methods at home. I now want to become an agricultural engineer."

This quote captures what the program does best—empowering youth with the skills and confidence to pursue their goals. It has proven particularly transformative for students from economically challenged backgrounds, offering them a practical pathway toward economic independence and further education.

## What are some other comments from students about the 4HCP program?





## A Vibrant and Growing Center for Learning:

The Impact of the Library and Community Resource Center

### How many books are in the LCRC collection now?

The book collection at the Madaraka Nyerere Library and Community Resource Center (LCRC) continues to grow and is now an astounding 40,000 books! That includes 1,300 books that are in Kiswahili. That is the largest collection of Kiswahili books in any community library in Tanzania!

### How many people are using the library?

Membership at the LCRC continues to grow, with 254 students now registered and taking advantage of the facility regularly. During school hours, the LCRC is open to students at both Nyegina Secondary School and Nyegina Primary Schools, totaling more than 1,000 students across the schools. Primary school students will often use their recess periods to peruse picture books. Staff also continued to reach out to the community, and in 2024 a group of farmers operating a co-operative began to make regular visits to take advantage of a number of books on agriculture.



Librarian Moses Deogratius talks to students during a study session in the LCRC.





Week days at the LCRC are crowded, with nearly 100 children participating in morning and afternoon early reading program sessions.

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The early reading program students look a little more official in 2024 with matching uniforms. They're ready for primary school!

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## **Are early reading programs beginning to show impacts?**

After five years, students who participated in the initial years of the early reading program are now in primary school and showing positive outcomes. In 2024, the 40 kindergartners who participated in the program all moved on to grade 1! There were also 17 students at Nyegina primary schools who participated in a remedial program and all successfully advanced to the next grade.

## **What other support did TDS provide to the LCRC in 2024?**

It has now been 12 years since the first stones were laid for the LCRC foundation. Although the building was designed to withstand the elements, regular maintenance is important to maintain the quality of the buildings. In 2024, TDS funded some roof repairs and the replacement of batteries that are charged by solar panels and used to power lights in the evenings.



Another major book purchase in 2024 is being cataloged by Librarian Moses Deogratius.

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# **Strengthening Impact Through Evaluation:**

TDS's Emerging Approach

## **Why is there a focus on evaluation?**

At Tanzania Development Support (TDS), our commitment to community-led, sustainable change is deeply rooted in continuous learning and improvement. As we look ahead, a renewed focus on evaluation is helping us better understand the impact of our programs and strengthen the support we provide to young people—especially girls—in rural Mara, Tanzania.

In 2024, the TDS Board established an Evaluation Committee to lead a 12-month initiative aimed at building a more structured and intentional evaluation practice across our key programs. These include the 4H Career Pathways program, the Willmann Scholarship Fund, and the Library and Community Resource Center (LCRC). Through this work, we aim to bring greater clarity and consistency to how we measure outcomes, gather feedback, and act on what we learn.

## **How are we doing evaluation?**

Our approach centers around a few core pillars: developing simple but effective evaluation frameworks, implementing easy-to-use data collection tools, and ensuring regular check-ins and learning moments across the organization. For instance, we're creating pre- and post-program evaluation questionnaires that give students a voice in sharing what they've learned and how they feel about their experience. We're also working to document success stories, track student progress over time, and collect input from local partners and stakeholders.





Exam scores at Etaro Secondary School improved in 2024, with students participating in a computer science section of the exam for the first time. This was possible thanks to the computers funded by TDS.

## What is our goal?

We're not just collecting data for the sake of it—our goal is to ensure these insights lead to meaningful improvements. That's why we're embedding monthly committee meetings into our routine, where we review findings, monitor progress, and refine our strategies in partnership with our in-country team.

Ultimately, this emerging evaluation practice allows us to stay closely aligned with the needs of the communities we serve and remain accountable to the donors, partners, and families who believe in our mission. It's a step forward in ensuring every dollar, every hour, and every effort we invest truly helps young people in rural Tanzania achieve their full potential.



Board members, Jason Michnick and Edith Njuguna, during a visit to Mkono Secondary School. These visits are an important part of the evaluation process.



4H Career Pathways teachers meet to discuss evaluation strategies for the program that go beyond simple measures of participation.



# 2024 Financial Summary

The financial position of TDS remained strong in 2024. The financial statements show that we raised about \$103,000, almost all of it (90%) from individual contributions from our generous donors. The major fundraising events included the annual TDS yard sale in DeKalb and a Water Walk for Girls at West Aurora High School.

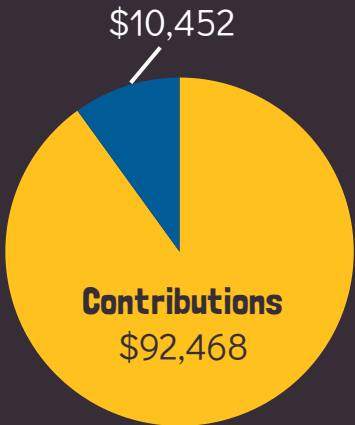
Grants to fund our projects in Tanzania account for 74% of our expenditures. Of this, about \$35,000 supported the M. Nyerere Library and Community Resource Center (LCRC) and its activities, including the computer lab and early reading programs for pre-K and early primary students. Over \$30,000 supported the 41 Willmann Scholars in 2024, including uniforms and mattresses for new students and sanitary pads for all the girls. The 4HCP program was awarded about \$12,000 to support the coordinator and his transportation to 4HCP schools, teacher stipends for after school club activities, transportation for guest speakers, and garden supplies.

The board’s strategic plan going forward includes terminating the Executive Director position (\$25,000) to apply more funds to our projects. This puts a substantial burden on our volunteer board members to liaise with our Tanzanian partners for troubleshooting, program evaluation, and especially fundraising (which was a primary duty of the Executive Director). The compassion our donors have for our projects is matched by the compassionate determination of our volunteer board to make 2025 an even more successful year for the girls and boys we care so much about in Tanzania.

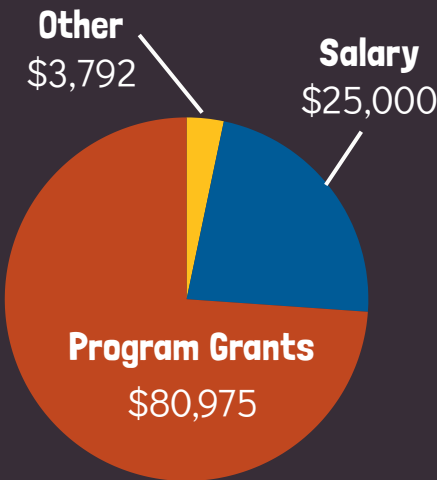
2024 Financial Position	
Beginning Balance	\$ 51,824
Revenue	\$102,920
Expenses	\$109,767
End Balance	\$ 44,977
Change in Net Position	\$ (6,847)

## REVENUES

Events, Earned Income, Misc.



## EXPENSES





# Thank you to all those who supported us financially in 2024.

Pamela Anderson
Sarah Anderson
Robin Andrews
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John M Armour
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Amanda Kryszak

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