



Alternatives
4 children

Kamitei, Tanzania

www.kamitei.org

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INTRODUCTION

Kamitei provides support to the education of children in rural areas of Tanzania. We focus on scholarships for exceptionally talented students, the Eagles Scholarships, allowing them to continue their education and studies in Arusha at a high-quality boarding school. We currently have 46 students in this program.

We also support the general level of education in government schools, our Community Education Improvement Program. This effort is not aimed at individual students, but rather at the quality of education offered to all students in the communities we support. In total, these activities benefit 3,500 children and their families in four communities, supporting eight primary schools and two secondary schools. Teachers are coached and trained on a monthly basis by a Tanzanian teacher who has experience in high-quality private schools with modern, interactive education approaches. We also offer shorter scholarships for vocational education to selected motivated students from these communities, leading to direct, improved employment prospects.

How does Alternatives 4 Children help?

A4C has supported the growth of the scholarship program since 2013. A4C donated EUR 15,000 in 2015. The reasons A4C is a good match with Kamitei is that we share the same belief in the power and effectiveness of “grass roots” charity, where the good work is done in and with local communities by mostly volunteers on a small scale and who are very much personally involved. We also share the ambition to really measure and evaluate the impact of what we are doing in the real world, rather than just sticking to a pre-defined set of policy criteria that may be very thoughtful in theory, but do not always work in practice.



The Eagle scholarships

The Eagle Scholarship Program supports exceptionally high potential students for the country's best secondary schools. The selected students (5-6 per year out of hundreds of candidates) are therefore transferred from the local secondary school to a top-rated English curriculum boarding school in Arusha, and after mostly one year of settling in, they pretty much all become top quartile performers in their class, which is very impressive given their disadvantaged backgrounds and the very competitive environment. We grant 5-6 new scholarship every year. We expect many of these students to become (in)formal community leaders after they graduate and to be of great benefit for the wider community. In general, the students in the Eagle Scholarship students continue to perform exceptionally well. The drop-out rate has also been very low.

The Community scholarships

The Community scholarships is a very different type of scholarship, offering a two-year vocational training to ambitious students who are more suited for vocational education, such as becoming a teacher or tour guide. More than 80% of these students find a decent paid job within 2 years after graduation and can build livelihoods for their families which are substantially above the average in rural Tanzania (70% is the generally accepted benchmark for successful scholarship programs). Kamitei aims to offer 3-6 such Community scholarships every year.

For the community wide educational support, we see steady increase in the results (i.e. test scores) over the years, meaning the average level of education is indeed rising. This is in large part the result of improved teaching methods: as a result of our regular teacher training we see things change in a positive way in the classrooms. It is important to realise that most of these teachers have not had any training since they became teacher, and their teaching methods are very outdated and ineffective compared to Western standards. Teachers we train realize more and more that they themselves make the difference! Teachers are also adapting to the level of the students instead of following the books they use. The initiatives to create a nice and inspiring classroom are proof of that.

Regarding health, this is also something we try to improve as part of the process. Because of our frequent visits to the schools we can give support on an individual level concerning health where needed. Kamitei brought two students to the hospital this year and accompanied them in their visits to doctors related to fungi problems.



Case studies

A good example of our successful scholarship approach is the performance of some of the Maasai candidates in the community scholarship program. Mkuta from Irkeepus, who graduated with us in 2015, got himself a well-paid job as a tour guide with a high-end camp near the Ngorongoro. And Kimolo and Leiyo from Oltukai from Oltukai were awarded internships by TANAPA during their studies thanks to their outstanding wilderness knowledge.

Our successes in the primary school program is best evidenced by the annual exam results, which have steadily improved over the past five years. Reasons for the improvement are the use by teachers of more participatory teaching methods and the use of teaching aids, often through creative use of local materials. As shown in the following photos, sticks and bottle caps can be of good use to make children familiar with abstract mathematical concepts.

Conclusion

We continue to be every pleased with how well our Eagles Scholarship students perform, demonstrating that many of the most talented kids in poor rural communities can indeed become top performers academically if given the chance. We intend to grow this scholarship program, as the impact on the individual is so very clear.

For the community program, this is now a well-established partnership with the communities and has been running for more than a decade (a crucial part of the deal is that the communities also contribute to the annual education improvement budget, we do not believe in “free” aide). Although the benefits and impact are harder to measure, we want to continue as we still believe that the benefit of just being able to read, write and do maths properly is significant for every single child and eventually for their family and the wider community. All small steps, but together they really can make a difference.

