



Madaraka Nyerere Library and Community Resource Center

PROJECT OVERVIEW

 **Tanzania**
Development Support



PROJECT HISTORY

In 2006, leaders of a Tanzanian NGO called UMABU adopted a strategic plan that prioritized the establishment of a facility that would become a "kituo cha maarifa" (center for learning) for the surrounding area. The facility was envisioned to provide access to educational resources for the roughly quarter of a million residents living in the area along the shores of Lake Victoria.

In 2008, Tanzania Development Support began working with UMABU on the construction of a girls' dormitory at a boarding school in a village in the area called Nyegina. As construction of the dorm was nearing completion, the two organizations agreed to take on the construction of the facility contemplated in UMABU's strategic plan.

Two volunteers from the Chicago chapter of Architecture for Humanity traveled with TDS in 2011 to meet with community leaders and develop plans for a first of its kind facility in the Mara region. Construction officially began in 2012 on what is now known as the Madaraka Nyerere Library and Community Resource Center. Also known as the "LCRC", the facility was named in honor of longtime TDS friend and youngest son of Tanzania's first president.

Construction of the LCRC buildings were completed in 2016, but still needed to be filled with resources. The shelves were first filled with textbooks that were donated on behalf of the adjacent schools and the facility was primarily used by students at the primary and secondary schools in Nyegina.

That changed in 2019 when more than 5,000 books in English and Swahili were delivered to the LCRC and infrastructure was also installed to provide the LCRC with its own dedicated internet connection. The facility is now poised to be a true 21st Century center for learning.



About the LCRC Facility

The LCRC was built adjacent to Nyegina Secondary and Nyegina Primary Schools. In total, there are about 1,500 students that attend the three schools. The location was chosen both for its proximity to the three schools and its location at a crossroads that connects the Village of Nyegina to three other neighboring villages.

The facility includes three separate buildings that were designed with asymmetric roofs to maximize natural light and airflow into the buildings. This was purposefully done to create an environment that is conducive to learning. The main building is the library building that includes a lobby with comfortable chairs, tables for students to study, a children's area with a wheelchair accessible ramp, and a secure room for book reserves and staff to work. The second building includes a community seminar room and teacher resource center that is equipped with ten computers.

The third building is intended to hold a computer lab and a room for early childhood programming. We are still working to raise money to outfit the computer lab with computers and purchase the furniture and equipment for the pre-primary room.

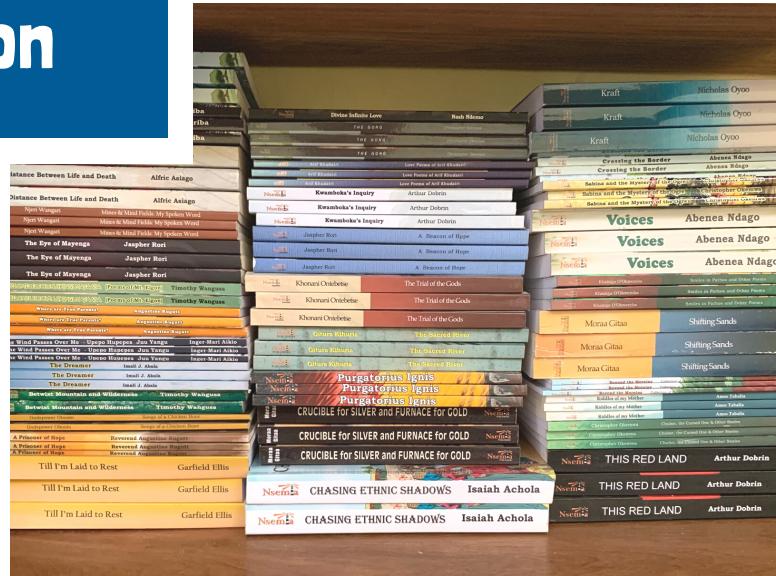


Book Collection

In order to ensure that all residents living in the communities surrounding the library could take advantage of its resources, we worked with a Tanzanian NGO called Soma Book Cafe that specializes in literacy programs to carefully curated a list of books that were relevant to all ages and interests.

In May 2019, more than 5,000 books were delivered to the library to be placed into general circulation. All of the books were published locally, and more than 3,500 of the books are written in the national language of Swahili. The availability of books in Swahili was critical since a large portion of adults in rural Tanzania cannot speak or read English.

In addition to the general circulation books, there are also several thousand textbooks that are available to students. There is severe shortage of textbooks in the Mara region, and the ratio of students to textbooks can be as high as 12 to 1 in some schools. Without access to textbooks, students are not able to study outside of the classroom and must rely on rote memorization of the content that teachers share with them.



Technology

One of the key components of the vision for the LCRC was that it would be a 21st Century center for learning and include technology that could be used to build student's skills that are important in a digital economy. Technology also presents an opportunity for the LCRC to access a much greater amount of educational resources at a much lower cost than traditional print media.

The LCRC has a dedicated internet connection that is capable of streaming videos and downloading large amounts of data to the local server. The library utilizes a free open-source library management software called Koha to catalog books and track members. Additionally, the LCRC is also running Kolibri, another open-source software that is designed for managing and sharing free educational materials in remote areas of the world. It will be used to bring free educational content from the LCRC to schools that do not have access to power.

Project Sustainability

TDS is a small nonprofit organization and we realize that we cannot support the operations of the LCRC indefinitely. We are also committed to making sure that the LCRC does not close its doors when we are no longer providing financial support for the project. In order to protect the significant investment that our donors have made in the facility, we will be working diligently with LCRC staff and the Library Steering Committee (local leaders) to ensure that the project is sustainable for decades to come.

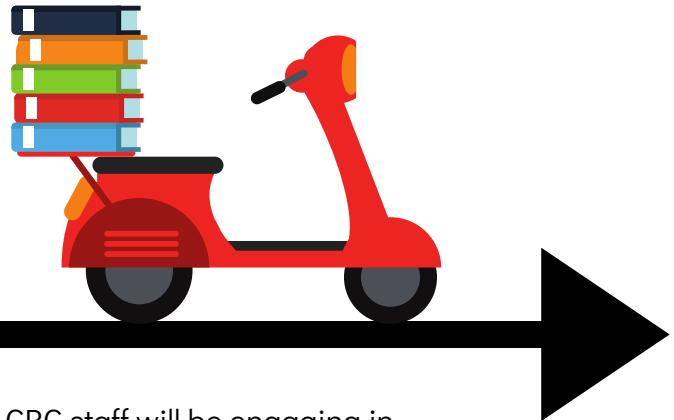
In 2020, we are launching a five-year sustainability plan with our partners. Similar to libraries in the US, the LCRC will require patrons to be members to check out books or use the resources within the library (e.g. computers). The LCRC will also be able to charge modest fees for community groups to use the facility for their own meetings. Our goal is that by the end of 2024, the LCRC will be generating sufficient revenue to cover the costs with operating the facility (staff salaries, utilities, maintenance, etc.).

Although membership fees are modest (between \$5-\$10 year), more than half of the families in rural parts of the Mara region are living on \$2 per day. Additionally, many of the adults did not complete their education and have never been exposed to a facility like the LCRC. A major part of the membership recruitment process is educating the public about the benefits that the LCRC can have on families.

In order to provide the LCRC staff with ample time to educate the public and recruit a sufficient membership base, we have committed to funding the LCRC operations on a five-year sliding scale. In 2020, we will be supporting the LCRC at 100%. In each subsequent year, we will reduce the funding by 20% as the number of paying members increases.



Outreach Programs



In order to reach membership recruitment targets, LCRC staff will be engaging in several outreach programs. The following outreach programs are designed to promote the LCRC to the public and bring resource directly to residents that may not be able to travel to the LCRC.

LCRC AMBASSADORS

Adults and students are eligible to receive a free annual membership to the LCRC in exchange for promoting the library's services. With their memberships, ambassadors can check out books to take back to their village to host reading circles with their families, friends, and neighbors. Ambassadors that recruit new members to the LCRC gain points as part of an ongoing competition. The winners of the competition are then eligible to pick a favorite book from the library to keep for themselves.

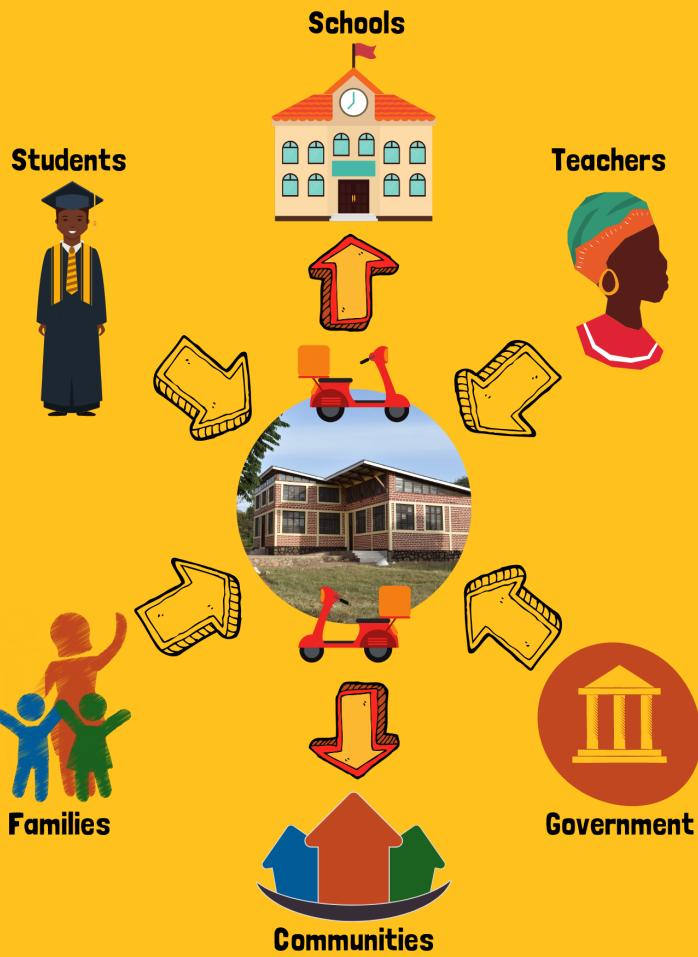
BODA-BODA BOOK-MOBILE

The intended service area of the LCRC is quite large and is about the size of a small county in the US. Although there are more than 250,000 people living in the Musoma Rural District, they are spread out and most lack transportation. In order to reach the more remote villages that can be as far as 20 miles from the LCRC, we propose a program that would allow LCRC staff to use a motorcycle to bring books back and forth from the library. Similar to book mobiles in the US, members in those villages could check out books that librarians bring with them, or place orders for the librarian to bring the next time they are in the village. The name Boda-Boda refers to the local slang term for a motorcycle taxi.

MOBILE LAB

Similar to the Boda-Boda Book Mobile, the Mobile Lab would utilize a motorcycle to bring LCRC resources to schools that do not have power or the internet. Instead of the librarians bringing books to members, the Mobile Lab consists of a small portable server and 10-15 laptops. The portable server is loaded with content using Kolibri (see Technology) and can be accessed by the laptops. The Mobile Lab is completely flexible in the content that can be stored and allows programming to be specialized to the audience that will be using it that day. Each night, the Mobile Lab returns to the LCRC so it can be charged and updated for the next day.

Looking Forward



Together with our local partners, we envision the LCRC as a hub for several programs. It is a place for people and groups to access resources, but also a source for programs like the Mobile Lab that can go out into communities and bring resources leveraging technology.

As we work on stabilizing the LCRC and ensuring its long-term sustainability through building a healthy membership base, we will also be working to develop the next phase that focuses on providing professional development for in-service teachers. The Mara region has a severe shortage of qualified teachers and there is a complete lack of opportunities for teachers to pursue their own education.

Now that the LCRC has been connected to the internet, we envision it becoming a hub for teacher development programs that benefit teacher throughout the entire region. By leveraging technology, teachers and headmasters will be able to collaborate with other teachers and administrators around the world to develop innovative programs that can be implemented in the Mara region. Whether it is distance learning modules, video calls with professors, or using the available technology to develop locally created educational content, there is no shortage of possibilities.

Project MILE (Mara Innovation Lab for Education) is still in a developmental stage and we are seeking teachers, IT professionals, and other volunteers that can contribute time, talent, and money to creating a unique project that will have a substantial impact on education in the Mara region for decades.





How to get Involved

We are currently seeking donors, funding partners, and volunteer fundraisers that are interested in financially supporting the LCRC or its related outreach projects. If you are interested in learning more about how you can support this transformative project, or would like us to give a presentation to your organization, please contact Executive Director, Jason Michnick.

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Donations can be made online by visiting our website www.tdsnfp.org and clicking donate. You can also mail a check to the following address:

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