

# Back to school!



It's that back to school feeling! For Gasica and the teachers at Heroes Community Academy (HCA), there was much excitement at the start of the 2023 school year. Pupil enrollment has increased from 166 children to 268 in just one year! The local community is giving HCA a massive vote of confidence and entrusting their 4- and 5-year-olds to the school. They've seen the wonderful literacy and numeracy skills that young children are acquiring, two years earlier than their counterparts in government schools.

This year HCA will have two Kindergarten classes. This development means that they'll have to build 6 new classrooms by 2028 in order to accommodate everyone. The school already has 30 teachers and support staff. Working with Gasica, Abdulrauf (the headmaster) is focused on keeping teaching standards high. We hope you enjoy reading more about him and his work on pages 7 and 8 of the newsletter.

Phase Two of the infrastructure development is now complete. The school now spreads out into the recently purchased land which is adjacent to the main school. The new area houses two further classrooms, a computer room and an office.

Plans for Phase Three of the school building programme will be launched shortly. With the help of the Orphan Starfish Foundation, Gasica is planning a fund-raising trip to the USA later in 2023.



Zanzibar Learning 4 Life  
Foundation



Heroes  
Community  
Academy (HCA)





# Registration at Heroes Community Academy

A busy day signing up new students for the year ahead!





It's hard to imagine having a baby with Down's syndrome in Zanzibar. There are no support groups, no specialists, no therapies and, due to poor medical knowledge, you might not even have a diagnosis. Add to this, huge social stigma. Sadly, Down's syndrome is often linked with witchcraft or is considered to be a punishment from God. Children with Down's syndrome may be locked away by their family as they're so ashamed. Babies may be abandoned or even killed, and some nurses refusing to touch new-borns from fear.

Gasica always wants to help all children reach their full potential. When he set up Heroes Community Academy (HCA) 3 years ago, he wanted to include children who others discarded. So, once HCA was running efficiently, he was able to set up GasiCare. The objective is to provide "heart-centred education for children with Special Needs. Our mission is to ensure our children live meaningful, educated and respected lives filled with love and trust supported by everyone at the GasiCare Family."

Gasica has a special team of teachers who work as part of GasiCare. At the end of 2022 they visited families in need of help and had the difficult task of choosing 7 children for the first intake. They are mostly from single parent families and aren't able to contribute to HCA. If you would like to help by sponsoring one of these children to reach their full potential, please read Raiyan and Safwaan's stories on the next page or consider making a donation.



Please follow this link  
to make a donation  
<http://bit.ly/3IVGAJi>



## Could you be a hero for Raiyan or Safwaan?

*This is the first time that we're looking for Hero partners to sponsor students with special needs for their academic lifetime at Heroes Community Academy. The cost of sponsorship is \$580 per year. This covers everything the student needs - tuition, books, school uniform and 9 meals a week. The cost is a little more than for most students as these children need medication, help with transport and diapers.*

### Raiyan's story

Raiyan Nahoda Juma is 4 years old and has Down's Syndrome. She is the youngest of 8 children and sadly was rejected by her father a week after she was born. He divorced her mother, Fatma, who didn't have anywhere to go. Fatma was isolated from her community, so she decided to start a new life in Jumbi. She rents a one-bedroom apartment and is trying to find paid employment as well as care for Raiyan.

The local community leader suggested to Gasicare that Raiyan would benefit from attending Heroes Community Academy. They visited the mother and daughter and agreed that Raiyan could reach her maximum potential by attending Heroes Community Academy.

### Safwaan's Story

Like Raiyan, Safwaan is 4 years old and has Down's Syndrome. He is the youngest of 5 children. Last year his father died of diabetes (a common problem in Zanzibar). Raising Safwaan alone is very difficult for his mother as she can't find work but has to feed and educate her family. Early this year, GasiCare was launched with the goal of helping children with Special Needs. The team met Safwaan's mother and agreed to help him and you can imagine how delighted and relieved Ashura was at this news.

**How to become a Hero Partner and help a child become their best self**

If you would like to find out more about sponsoring a child to attend HCA please contact the headmaster on [gastica50@hotmail.com](mailto:gastica50@hotmail.com)

# Making friends with books!



Since 2010, My Book Buddy, a Dutch NGO, has encouraged reading by setting up libraries at schools where the teachers can ensure that maximum numbers of children in a community can benefit. As in many other developing countries, there's no infrastructure for local libraries in Zanzibar. Not surprisingly, the libraries that My Book Buddy has set up are a valued resource. Founder and Chair, Cathy Spierenburg recently visited the island to help set up a new Book Buddy library at Heroes Community Academy.

*"The books are appropriate for the youngest children up to the end of primary school. Each class has a bookcase with enough books in Swahili and English for students to choose a new reading book every week to borrow and take home. The cabinets are made by local carpenters using a basic construction drawing," explains Cathy.*

The generous donation to HCA includes backpacks to protect books during the dusty journey between school and home. The teachers received training that focused on the importance of reading for the development of the child, they were given suggestions for reading-promoting activities and for setting up a simple administrative system.

For more information please visit [www.mybookbuddy.nl](http://www.mybookbuddy.nl)

My Book Buddy operates in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which support the fight against poverty and quality of education as goals.



# The Talent Cup Learning Centre

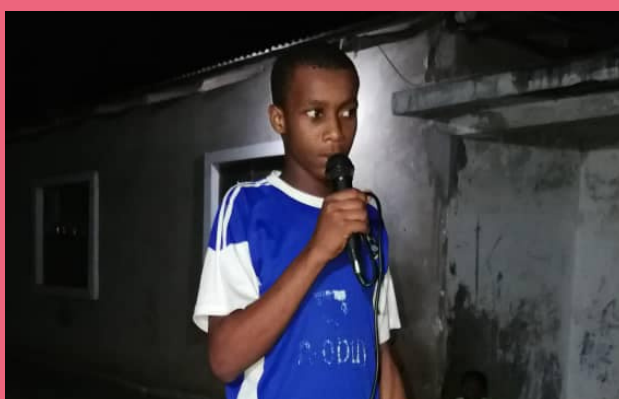
"A wise teacher once told me, shyness is a natural behaviour but it can be removed easily." These words of wisdom come from Van Kintaro, the founder of The Talent Cup Learning Centre.

The objective of The Talent Cup is to help children overcome their fears of speaking up for themselves. Through their hard work, the group sends a message to their community and the wider world that Zanzibar's children want to learn.

Every Wednesday and Saturday evening they run a public speaking programme where students recite poems, sing songs, participate in debate competitions and many other spoken word initiatives. The programme isn't just for young people who attend Zanzibar Learning for Life. 125 students from different parts of the island travel to take part.

"I enjoy meeting children from other parts of the island and learning to express myself," says one of the enthusiastic participants.

The programme is of relevance to some of the darker realities of life for some Zanzibar children. It includes such topics as gender-violence and under-age marriage.



# Meet the headmaster!

IGasica's main focus is fund-raising so that the future of Heroes Community Academy and the after-school club Zanzibar Learning 4 Life Foundation (ZL4LF) can continue to grow and help more young people. He employs a young and dynamic headmaster called Abdulrauf to lead the academic team. Abdulrauf (known as Abdul) is originally from Paje, on the Eastern side of the island.

Abdul has wanted to be a teacher for as long as he can remember. His first love is science and he learnt how to teach science at Zanzibar State University.

Abdul is also a graduate of ZL4LF. He joined Gasica's programme when he was 22 to improve his English. He remembers when Gasica came up with the idea of Heroes Community Academy and he really wanted to get involved.

Apart from being passionate about science, Abdul loves to get the most out of people. His approach to being the headmaster at HCA is to encourage everyone to feel part of the team. Possibly his favourite expression in Swahili is "*pamoja tunafanikisha*" which means "*together we achieve*". Abdul's vision is that HCA will be the best school in Zanzibar and he wants to be central to that dream.





**Heroes Community Academy has 4 core values:**

- Demonstrate commitment to yourself and others
- Make the most of opportunities
- Respect people and places
- Excellence in everything

At Heroes Community Academy, values are both "taught and caught". Everyone (staff and students alike), is taught the school values. But equally important is to see values in action on a daily basis. The leadership team encourages everyone to follow their example. This is a very different approach to teaching in Government schools in Zanzibar where children are beaten for the slightest misdemeanour.

At the start of the new school year, the headmaster led an assembly on the subject of RESPECT. It started with a discussion to make sure all the children understood what it means to respect someone's idea or decision. Everyone drew something that expresses the word RESPECT for them. At the end of the lesson, students presented their work and everyone was so proud of themselves! The headmaster explained how important it is for students to be proud of what they achieve and to respect other people's decisions so that we can be free to be our best selves.





# Graduation



Graduation ceremonies are changing all over the world and Zanzibar is no exception. Now schools across the island celebrate educational milestones such as moving from Kindergarten to Primary 1, leaving Primary school and completing Secondary education. The tradition doesn't take place in Government schools, but schools like Heroes Community Academy want to celebrate achievement with their community of proud relatives, neighbours and sponsors.

Students at HCA work hard to prepare for Graduation Day as it includes a talent show, live performances of dance and sports. They play music and compete for prizes. One of the most hotly contested events are running races - teachers against the parents. and the prizes are always edible...eggs, a chicken and even a goat!





THANK  
YOU

For building  
our  
meeting area!



Brighton Beachside

We really appreciate the support that Rotarians in Zanzibar and around the world have given us over the years.

Currently Rotarians in Brighton are helping us educate students at Heroes Community Academy as well as older students who are attending further education on the island.

**Asante Sana...**  
**that's Thank you in Swahili!**



# Fundraising in Sussex

If you're in Sussex in July, please do come along and support two fund-raising activities.

## **Saturday 8 July**

Car boot sale at Adur recreation ground.

Marshalls required!

## **Saturday 22 July**

"Flower + Water" Open House in Lancing.

Come and enjoy refreshments and art on Lancing beach.

Please contact [ann.dieckmann0@gmail.com](mailto:ann.dieckmann0@gmail.com) for more information



**Brighton Beachside**