



Sakila Sponsorship Program

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Sunrise in the Serengeti National Park, Tanzania East Africa.

By Liz Bailey

While visiting the family of the

girl I sponsor in Sakila, her grandmother said to me, "This is like a dream, but it's not - it's real ..." and that was exactly how I felt. How can I describe the surreal sensation of visiting a land and culture about which you've only read, that then becomes real and tangible to all your senses? It was so much better than I ever imagined, but then so much worse as well.

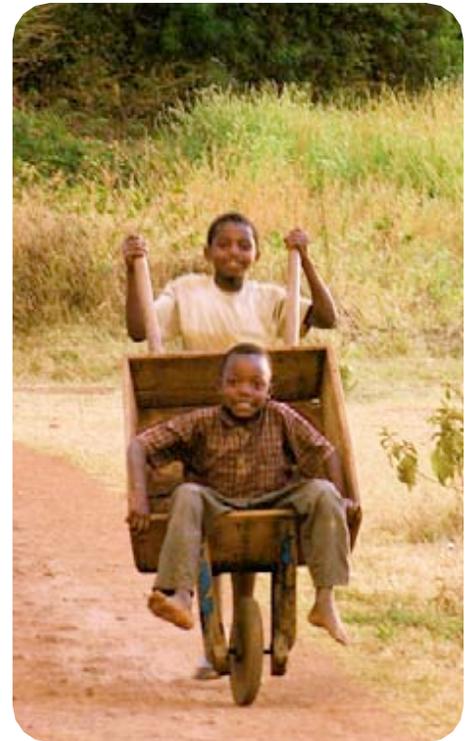
What did I find great about Tanzania? The people! I met people of great faith and great strength, very hardworking people with remarkable character. They were (and are) an inspiration to me.

The country itself is beautiful, with red, iron-rich soil, grasses ranging in color from shades of gold to deep greens, and tropical trees and flowers everywhere. Mt. Kilimanjaro, Mt. Meru and the smaller hills and mountains preside majestically over the region, giving it a familiar feel but reminding me at the same time that I was not at home.

I was blessed to be able to get away for a few days on safari, and I saw animals of

all kinds, numbers, sizes and shapes. For me, the consummate animal lover, that was heavenly! In just four days, I got to see lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and cape buffalo (the "big five"), along with hippo, giraffe, cheetah, zebra, wildebeest, antelope, gazelle, various monkeys, birds and even the elusive eland, now an endangered species, among others. No matter which animals I saw or how many, I never quite got used to the fact that I was actually seeing them in their natural habitat, and that I was the visitor and they were at home. It was an amazing experience, one I will never forget.

What was more difficult to see? Plainly and simply, the lack of resources. Sakila is a village of about 5,000 people, and my best guess is that it covers an area of about 100 square miles. The village is approximately 20 miles away from and in the hills above Arusha, the nearest city of any size. Over the past several years, multiple wells have been drilled in the area, so obtaining water is not as difficult as it



Children riding around in their home-made wheelbarrows.



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once was, but water is still scarce and drought can cost the lives of both humans and animals. Power is scarce, limited to just a few areas. The vast majority of homes don't have power or running water. The transportation is mostly on foot, although donkeys do a task as beasts of burden for the few who can afford them. Houses are very small, very basic structures typically with wood siding, thatch or tin roofs, and dirt floors, and they are made up of two or three rooms that house anywhere from four to 14 people. ("Good" houses are made of local brick and have tin roofs.) bathrooms are mostly holes in the ground surrounded by burlap sacks supported on sticks for privacy. Very few people have any kind of bathing facilities as they don't have the resources to collect and direct the rainwater necessary to fuel them.

Why are there so few resources? Lack of opportunity is the primary reason. Most of the population is rural. The average per capita income in Tanzania is something less than \$400 (that's less than 20 cents per hour for an individual working full time or a little less than \$35 per month). In the poorest countries of Africa, 44% of the population is under the age of 14, and over 65% of the children ages 7 to 14 are working. More than half of those children do and most families do not have the financial resources available to educate their children. Current projections are that in 2015, Africa's poverty rate will remain over 38 percent. That's staggering...

The good news is, we know that poverty can be reduced by initiating sound policies, by providing better governance, by creat-

ing a good investment climate, and through well-targeted aid. Over the last four years, through those exact efforts, per capita income growth in African has been equal to or exceeded that of the high-income economies in every year. That's amazing!

So what else did I see that was good in Sakila? The school! Sluys-Anderson Primary school is remarkable! Compared to our schools here, it is not noteworthy, but in comparison with other schools I saw, this school is vibrant, alive and growing. Sluys-Anderson Primary school is a model for the concept of "well-targeted aid." In just four years, buildings have been constructed and a campus created supporting grades K-4 (with 80+ students per grade level). As the fourth-graders graduate and move on to fifth grade this year, another building is planned to house those graduates with construction to be completed in time for them to move up in January of 2008. This plan will continue until the school can accommodate and educate grades K-7, completing the Tanzania primary school curriculum. To date, no buildings are incomplete and no grade level is being left behind. All the children in the school are sponsored by individuals like you and me, individuals who believe education everywhere is important. Applicants to the school are screened, and only about 25% of the children who apply are accepted. The acceptance is based upon need, upon family support (to help ensure success), and only one child per family typically accepted in order to spread the opportunity among the greatest number of families.

Imagine how hard it would be if you had to choose only one of your children to be educated, knowing that the others would not have the same opportunity. But imagine also what hope that would bring to your family knowing that one among you would have the opportunity to learn to read and write, to learn English and math, to be provided with the chance to move up out of your rural poverty level in a way never possible before! Children walk miles each way every day to attend classes, and no part of the opportunity provided to them is taken for granted.

So what's next? I believe in the school in Sakila and in the people who conceived it and are moving it forward. More than ever before, I am committed to supporting their efforts and to supporting the families of the children in school. Everyone in



**An Elephant in the Lake Manyara National Park
Tanzania - East Africa**

opportunities while learning to make the programs there self-supporting.



**Zebras at a watering hole in the Serengeti National Park
Tanzania, East Africa**

the village has need, but by targeting the families of the children in school first, that base of support can be developed and those families can, in turn, help move aid outward from their small circle. The dream exists of creating a high school next, allowing the 7th graders to move onward and upward once they have completed primary school. Those high school students can then conceivably create a tutoring program for the younger children, thereby sharing their knowledge and confirming it at the same time by teaching others. And those that graduate high school and move on in life can take part in a program to give back to the community, helping to provide more