Dear friends and supporters,

More than two months have already passed since the last newsletter. Unbelievable how the year is going by whilst every day we are going forward a little bit in the TUNAWZA workshop. “Polepole ndiyo mwendo.” is what the Tanzanians say. “Good things take time.” And that seems to be true. The development of our students shows us again and again that things can move forward with patience and insistence, but everyone develops in their own time. Every day some small steps and when you look back after a while, you will be amazed how far you have already come.

A lot has happened within the walls of our workshop since January. Even though the working, painting and repairing has not been finished we have become quite organised. (Nearly) everything has its place and our students are also finding their way.

The garden is a place where a thousand things are waiting to be done. The tomato and pepper harvest was a true success regarding the quantity. We have harvested approximately 100 kg of tomatoes but unfortunately the price for tomatoes was very low as there were a lot of them for sale at all the markets. But anyhow, our most important goal was that our students were involved in all the aspects of growing the fruit from sewing to harvesting and they also learned how to grow tomatoes. And we have reached that goal. Our youths were able to sell tomatoes and peppers at a small stall outside our door which motivated them again to deal with calculations - schooling the practical way.
We have noticed that our students learn more effectively by doing and trying than by listening and passive teaching as it is common in the schools over here. The principle of learning within a context and involving all senses is a very considered one in European teaching methods especially in special needs education. However in Tanzania it demands great changes in the thinking of the teachers to teach the students as individuals and via learning by doing. A school like ours where different crafts are taught offers endless opportunities for praxis orientated learning with all senses. This is undoubtedly the reason that some of our students are making such astonishing progress with practical abilities.

Kulwa for instance, a girl with a mental disability, has been here for the first few months without joining in much. Now she knows the routines of the workshop quite well and has learned a number of simply tasks. She can now clean on her own (and does this with great dedication), set the table, wash the dishes, harvest tomatoes, collect rubbish from the garden and help cleaning vegetables.

Since the beginning of July, Ruth a young woman with Down syndrome has joined our group. She is already moving around within TUNAWEZA with great confidence and with her friendly manner she is an enrichment for our group. Up to now Ruth has been helping in the kitchen and wants to learn sewing.

The kitchen in general is a working area which is very well liked by all. Three weeks ago our students were given the opportunity to cook for a group of guests for the very first time. That was a very exciting day. A group of home economy students from Würzburg, Mwanza's twin town, were visiting VETA, a vocational school in Mwanza. During their stay they had also planned a visit to TUNAWEZA. That was a big opportunity for us at TUNAWEZA to show what our students can do and we therefore invited the guests from Würzburg together with the teachers and students from VETA to an African lunch.
The preparations began on the day before: planning the menu, writing a shopping list, going to the market with the whole group and buying mountains of food. The next day everyone arrived very early in the morning and was busy preparing everything: spring cleaning the TUNAWEZA workshop, cutting vegetables, cleaning the rice, preparing the fish, heating the charcoal oven, frying the meat, cooking the pilau in a huge pot on an open fire in the garden. Absolutely everyone was very involved. Who is going to get the refreshments? And is there more firewood? What, no one had thought of more firewood? It was a very stressful morning but once the food was on the table and the guest seemed to like it, everybody was really proud and also a little surprised: We have achieved that! There was great joy regarding the presents from our guests: trainers and a flashing biro for everyone. What a great day! Thank you very much to VETA and the guests from Würzburg for visiting us.

The following weekend provided an opportunity to repeat this experience. The guests from Würzburg had planned a visit to the museum of sukuma culture and suggested that we join them with our students. The sukuma are the native tribe of the Mwanza region and in addition to a guided museum tour there was a chance to watch a display of traditional dances. We were able to take four of our students on this spontaneous day out and once again realised how good it is for the self confidence of our students to take part in such activities. People with a mental disability in public - that is not yet a reality in Tanzania.
We have also experienced a lot of openness and the willingness to cooperate somewhere else completely. The carpenter who built our workshop furniture has declared that he is willing to take on one of our students with a learning disability in his workshop. We at TUNAWEZA assist with this first trial of integration in a working environment outside our protected workshop and are available for advice for the carpenter and our student Regan.

Some of our other students were very motivated by the chance of maybe one day also getting the opportunity to find work with a craftsman. But until then they have still some way to go, every day a few small steps...

Our next project that is due to start is to do batik. Thanks to support from the Brücke foundation we have been able to buy the necessary accessories and have already had test run. The first brightly yellow cloths are waiting to be worked on. Because batik involves working with chemicals and hot wax this project needs careful introduction and well thought about working structures in order to avoid accidents. Before we are able to start working with several students the teachers will be trained.

We also require a shady working area in the garden for our batik work. It is for this reason that we are planning a covered working area next to the outer kitchen. The roof supports are already in place and the floor has been laid. We hope to finish this building project within the next weeks.
The sewing project is going very well too. The requests for patchwork quilts and bags are so huge that we have trouble producing enough. Sometimes it is not so easy to accommodate both, lessons and production. Last week we were able to buy a new embroidery sewing machine, the buttons and little wheels of which are still being investigated by the teachers.

TUNAWEZA is not only a place which offers the opportunity to learn something new every day for the youths, even we as staff are continuously learning new things and grow with the challenges.

Tunaweza e.V.
At the end some more news from our support group in Germany. Tunaweza e.V. has been registered and has now its own account. Donations to TUNAWEZA can now be made to:

Tunaweza e.V.
VR Bank Nürnberg
Kt.-Nr. 2585820
BLZ : 760 606 18

It is still possible to support our work by sending money to the account of the M.W.A .N .Z .A . e.V. in Würzburg.

Thank you very much for all the help received so far which makes our work for and with young disabled people in Mwanza possible.

Until the next newsletter, kind regards from

the TUNAWEZA team.