



## About TUSONGE

Tusonge is a Swahili word that means "Let's move forward together". The Tanzanian NGO TUSONGE works in line with this guiding principle as it supports and empowers marginalized groups in grassroots communities in the Kilimanjaro Region. TUSONGE's mission is to enable disadvantaged women, men, youth and people with disabilities (PWDs) "to create prosperity, health, freedom and contribute to a vibrant and sustainable economy" (Mission Statement). The organization's objectives of economic empowerment of marginalized groups and the promotion of equality are realized through a participatory and holistic rights-based empowerment process that includes among other things entrepreneurship and business innovation as well awareness raising for human rights.

# NGUVUYETU END OF YEAR SPECIAL EDITION INCLUSIVE BUILDING FOR LEARNING AND INTERACTING FREELY

OCTOBER -DECEMBER 2023

ISSN 2799-2012 ONLINE  
ISSN 2799-2020 PRINTED

## IDEA OF THE TUSONGE LEARNING CENTRE

Large parts of Tanzania's population are engaged in small-scale farming. Their livelihood strategies are limited to subsistence farming and small businesses. Women are often poorly educated and have insufficient knowledge about entrepreneurship, quality control, value creation or marketing. Knowledge about environmental and resource conservation is almost non-existent, despite the increasing threat of climate change. Therefore, micro-entrepreneurs - especially women and youth - are supported by TUSONGE through capacity building to acquire the necessary knowledge and thus support their efforts towards economic development.



In Tanzania, the majority of infrastructure and public facilities are not designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities. They are not inclusive. For example, access to buildings is often very limited for people using wheelchairs due to many barriers such as stairs and narrow doors. In addition, the perception of people with disabilities in the society is oftentimes shaped by traditional mindsets and stigmatisation. The assumption that disability is a curse is still widespread - especially in communities with a strong sense of tradition. TUSONGE is advocating for the rights of PWD through networking and linking partner organisations. TUSONGE also supports the establishment and activities of advocacy groups so that people with disabilities are able to fight for their rights with a strong voice.

Since TUSONGE's foundation in 2011 the organisation has been growing steadily. Its original office was not sufficient as it did not provide enough space for exchange and collaborative work in teams. In addition, TUSONGE's ambition to give marginalized groups like PWD equal access to knowledge, exchange, networking and learning could not be realized in its previous location. For these reasons an inclusive learning centre was planned in which the micro-entrepreneurs have the opportunity for exchange and learning - especially in practical terms. In the outdoor area of the new learning centre demonstration fields were set up to illustrate and practically test agricultural methods such as the production and use of organic fertiliser and the establishment of simple, resource-saving irrigation systems. A covered outdoor training area for 50-60 people and a seminar room for around 25 people inside the building are used for exchange meetings and accompanying training and events. By moving into its own building in 2020, TUSONGE no longer has to pay office rent or spend time and money on renting event or seminar rooms for trainings and meetings with target groups.



## DESCRIPTION OF THE TUSONGE LEARNING CENTRE

The Tusonge Learning Centre is located in Moshi, a city in northern Tanzania, south of Mount Kilimanjaro and close to the Kenyan border. The city has about 180,000 inhabitants. The centre is surrounded by scattered development on the edge of the city centre, accessible by public transport (bus line) and car via the nearby national highway. The pentagonal plot measures ~ 2,800 m<sup>2</sup>. In its centre, an existing U-shaped, single-story building of about 330 m<sup>2</sup> was modernized. The open space around the building provides room for a covered seminar area, agricultural demonstration areas and a driveway with parking.

The building was fundamentally modernized. In addition to demolition work, it was planned to renew windows and doors, redivide interior walls, renew screed, flooring, suspended ceilings, plumbing fixtures and wall tiles, repair the metal roof and exterior plaster and apply new paint (interior & exterior). Rain gutters and a water reserve tank were installed. A temporary roofing for trainings outside and chicken coop for poultry keeping (demonstration farming) were newly constructed on the property.

## PROCESS OF PLANNING AND MODERNIZATION

The cooperation for the development and implementation of the TUSONGE construction project was based on a partnership approach.

The purchase and modernization were financed mainly by subsidies (German federal funds), but also partly by TUSONGE's own contributions (see above). Throughout the development, planning and implementation process, TUSONGE was the buyer, builder and decision-maker. TUSONGE conducted the basic evaluation for the purchase of the new property together with a local architect they had commissioned. The planning was carried out by the local architect in coordination with TUSONGE. In principle, Tanzanian building standards were applied.

However, each step was accompanied by international building consultants to ensure compliance with building criteria of the funding agencies and minimum standards according to the principle of superiority:

Either the Tanzanian or the German building code was applied, depending on the strictness. This applied, for example, to the implementation of measures to create barrier-free access, but also to health and safety. Further criteria were needs-baseness, cost-benefit ratio, fair tenders, climate adaptation, durable and maintenance friendly construction, low import of building materials and strengthening of the local economy.

Quantities and costs were determined by a locally based Quantity Surveyor. TUSONGE & the local architect assumed the responsibilities of the tendering process. Execution was done by a local construction company and construction supervision was also done by the local architect. The international construction consultancy carried out monitoring & control via videos, photos and reports. TUSONGE is now the owner of the building with full responsibility. The running costs of the building after commissioning are in the responsibility of TUSONGE as well. Therefore, TUSONGE uses the fees of the seminar participants as income.

## ACCESSIBILITY OF THE TUSONGE LEARNING CENTRE

TUSONGE paid particular attention to converting the centre into an inclusive building. The building is intended for independent use by people with disabilities. The staircase at the entrance was supplemented by a ramp with a low gradient to ensure barrier-free access for people with walking impairments and wheel-chairs. Covered parking spaces were created at the foot of the ramp to enable wheelchair users to get into their cars without getting wet during the rainy season. The entrance, the rooms in the building and the covered seminar area outside are accessible without thresholds. A barrier-free toilet was also realized by providing sufficient space for movement and support handles. TUSONGE also established tools and equipment that make it easier for people with disabilities to use the centre, such as wheelchairs and lifting equipment. They also recently designed play equipment that is specially adapted to the needs of children with disabilities.

## OUTCOMES

The centre has become a well frequented place for many groups and individual users. The newly formed women and girls' group, a platform for women and girls with disabilities in the Kilimanjaro region for instance, meets on a monthly basis in the building free of charge to discuss its strategies. Usually, one TUSONGE staff accompanies these meetings to support the women and girls in their strategic planning and thereby increase the impact of their activities.

In general, since TUSONGE moved into the new place, the number of beneficiaries participating in trainings and workshops has increased.

Another effect associated with the move to the new building is the increased visibility of TUSONGE. Since the move, TUSONGE is actively sharing stories and pictures about its activities in the centre on several social media platforms. "Now people know where to find us", says Aginatha Rutazaa the Executive Director of TUSONGE proudly. With the increased publicity TUSONGE also attracted more support and collaborations with other Non-profits increased. For instance, the Action on Disability Development (ADD) organisation from Dar es Salaam became aware of TUSONGE and visited the centre. Over time, the exchange became more intensive and eventually, the two organisations realised a networking platform together.

Even people who are not the direct target group of TUSONGE are curious to learn more about the activities and are eager to visit the centre. They are especially interested in the demonstration fields and the poultry pen and also want to learn about agricultural practices.

In addition, TUSONGE receives many requests from other organisations to use the seminar rooms in the centre. Many of these requests have to be refused as the rooms are usually at maximum capacity.



## LESSON LEARNED

In general, moving into its new premises is a huge success story for TUSONGE. The inclusive building and surroundings enable people with disabilities to participate in workshops and other activities offered in the centre. Users of the centre - people with and without disabilities - highly appreciate the accessibility of the building.

Through its increased visibility, TUSONGE was also able to intensify its lobbying activities, especially for current human rights issues in the Kilimanjaro region. Nonetheless, there are always things to improve: One of the main target groups of TUSONGE are women with disabilities. Many women bring their children to the centre when they have a meeting or a workshop. Some but not all of the children accompanying their mothers have disabilities. TUSONGE always welcomes these little visitors. The parents are sensitized about the demands towards an inclusive environment and the children can play and learn from each other. However, the centre is not fully equipped to provide a stimulating environment for the youngest visitors. At the moment, TUSONGE is establishing an outside playground and play area inside the building.

In addition, some levelling measures need to be realised in the backyard of the property. The pavement is not smooth enough in certain parts so they are currently not easily accessible for people using a wheelchair.

As explained above, with its increased popularity TUSONGE is welcoming more and more guests and visitors. Some of them, especially the ones who arrive from far away, stay longer. Unfortunately, hostels and hotels near TUSONGE are not inclusive and are therefore difficult to use for guests with disabilities. An inclusive BnB to accommodate three to five guests with disabilities is a wish that staff still have for the TUSONGE Learning Centre.

Our special gratitude for our funding partners



Follow us on  Tusonge CDO