

Norwegian Friends of Tuleeni

The first time we met her was in May 2006 when we visited Moshi, a town in the Northern part of Tanzania. According to the Tanzanian tradition, she introduces herself to us as Mama Neema, because her first child was named Neema. Her “real” name is Flaria Felix Faraji. As she is now *mama* for many more children, she prefers to use the name Mama Faraji.

At our first meeting, she told us about her job as a primary school teacher and about her children at home. When she mentioned that she actually took care of 14 children in addition to her own children, we thought that couldn't be possible. “Why not come and visit us at home?” she asked with a big smile. We had become curious, to us this woman seemed to be so friendly and interesting, and we accepted her invitation. That same afternoon two of the children, Helen and Felix, us, but we understood that we should follow them. came to our hotel to pick us up. They didn't say a lot, we guess they were not



Mama Faraji welcomes us to her home, May 2006.

much used to speaking English to foreigners like us. We followed them to a suburb of Moshi called Rau. And there she was, the school teacher we had met on our way to town the same morning. She welcomed us into her little house where she lived with her husband, father in law and 18 children. This was the start of our friendship

Mama Faraji told us about the children who were now in her care after having lost both or one of their parents or caretakers to fatal diseases. She had no support from the government, and people who promised to help her if she took care of the children, might bring a bag of rice, but then stopped. She was obviously distressed about the difficult situation she and the children were in. She never asked us for money, but we understood that our contribution could make a huge difference for her and the children. We decided that we wanted to help her in some or another way, and it was such a blessing to be able to help and make a difference there and then. On our return to Norway, we managed to collect and send off a load of children's clothes we had got from the compassionate and generous owner of a clothing shop in Trondheim together with some we had bought ourselves.

On our return home in Norway, we couldn't keep quiet and shared the story about this fantastic woman and the children she took care of. Many were deeply moved and wished to contribute too. We were overwhelmed by the positive responses we received from so many. Friends, neighbours,

family, colleagues, unknown people who read an interview of one of us in the newspaper, and even some of our students, all joined the growing group who wished to help Mama Faraji and the children. Even family and friends in The Netherlands and Germany have generously contributed. Since the end of 2006 we have managed to send money on a regular basis, all based on the gifts from people who want to support Mama Faraji and the children. Some businesses and other work places have contributed to support the orphanage by collecting the money otherwise given as a Christmas present to the staff. A rock band held a concert in Trondheim to collect money as well. Some people contribute on a monthly basis, while others give a contribution once a year, or just now and then.



A visit to the book store in Moshi: buying books for the children of Tuleeni with money donated by Friends of Tuleeni in Norway

We have been so fortunate that we have had the opportunity to travel to Moshi a few times during the past years. This has given us the chance to see how much impact the Norwegian contributions have. By now, many more orphans have come under the care of Mama Faraji, and she is “mama” for more than 100 children, all organized legally as a foundation named Tuleeni Children’s Home.

Mama Faraji always says that taking care of children is not just a matter of a home, food and clothes. Most important of all is to give the children love and a future. Therefore, the children’s education is so important for her, from kindergarten all the way to vocational and higher education, all based on their interests and abilities. As teachers ourselves, we couldn’t agree more. When we shared these thoughts with colleagues one of the first years, many agreed to contribute so that Mama Faraji would be able to buy some used computers to enable the children to become computer literate, or at least have some experience with using computers. Even in a poor country like Tanzania, computer literacy is important! A laptop that was bought with the money donated by teachers in Trondheim even became the start of a remarkable career for one of the children in particular. He managed to learn quite quickly how to use a computer. Soon this young boy took the laptop to a local internet café to learn how to set up a web page. With this knowledge, he managed to start his own little business in web service for local companies. Today, ten years later, he runs his own very successful company in the tourist business. His company has created valuable work places in a country where unemployment is high. Some of the children of Tuleeni Children’s Home with the right skills and talents have got either job training or a permanent job in the company, and the orphanage has got an important local supporter. The donations from Norwegian Friends of Tuleeni really have had and still have an impact!

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Ready for planting maize and bean seeds. From 2008, Tuleeni Children’s Home has rented this piece of land with a part of the donations from Norwegian Friends of Tuleeni. Nearly half of all maize and beans consumed in the Children’s home is grown here.

During the past twelve years, we have been able to send money every month to Tuleeni Children’s Home, thanks to the donations from all Norwegian Friends of Tuleeni. Every donated “krone/NOK” goes directly to Tuleeni. There are no fees and administration costs, nothing gets lost. Recently, Mama Faraji told us that the contributions from

Norway are the most important funding they have to cover the daily running costs of Tuleeni Children's Home in Rau. The donations even allow them to cover a substantial part of some of the children's education. The amount we are able to send to Tuleeni varies a bit from month to month, with a nice maximum in December/January (!) every year. Mama Faraji has told us how valuable it is for her planning to know that there will come some money from Norway every month, it has allowed her to plan. Perhaps the most valuable effect is the fact that she knows that this is something that will last. Therefore, for us this has become more and more important. We know that there are other people who support Tuleeni as well, and Mama Faraji is very happy for all donations she receives. But single donations cannot be counted on when planning for longer terms. Therefore, sustainability is our vision for organizing and canalizing the donations given from the Norwegian Friends of Tuleeni. This way Mama Faraji and her co-workers at Tuleeni Children's Home can count on a secure yearly contribution and plan a future for the children.