

LEARNING TO READ AT THE FISH MARKET IN TANZANIA

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"Never hesitate to learn! Its the way to get past ignorance..."

(Student at the fish market)

From July to November 2016, nearly twenty people regularly attended a class to learn how to read and write Swahili. The class was located in the heart of a Fish Market, in the board of administration meeting room. Thanks to their support, three afternoons a week, two teachers from the Ilala Education District facilitated the class. The students experienced a new adult education method called "Ndiyo Ninaweza" ("Yes I Can").



The success of the class showed that anyone can learn, no matter what their age, if the conditions are right. The fish market provided a location that was close to both home and work. The students in the class were adults and young people, all of whom had not had the opportunity to go to primary school. In a way, they had to be willing to go back to being children in order to learn how to read and write. The students had to have an open mind and push aside the shame that they sometimes feel. This took a lot of courage and self-confidence.



Graduation ceremony.



The students explained that their main reason for wanting to read and write was to find

better work and improve their lives. They added, however,

"It's a question of dignity. I will be recognised as a human being just like anyone else. I can understand my rights better".

What the students experienced together went beyond a simple literacy class. They got to know one another and formed a community. Students looked forward to seeing their classmates every week. Some assisted with preparing lessons and teaching materials or helped set up chairs for the class. One of the youngest students said,

"We feel like a family, really. We meet together, we chat, we help out the student who sits next to us. If someone misses a class we help that person to catch up. We try to make progress together as a group."

Graduation day was a proud moment for all the students, and an inspiration to other people to give the class a try.

See also the [story of Jenifa](#), who talks about her journey of learning to read in STOP Poverty's "[1001 Stories of Change](#)".