



## On behalf of the Board,

Another year passed with many different expectations, ranging from complete freedom to travel again to complete lock-down. Now almost two years later after the first Corona cases it is clear that no one escapes direct or indirect consequences. In Tanzania we especially notice that we have not received any visitors from the Netherlands at Camp Holland for almost two years now. Medical students and volunteers in various projects in Dodoma in particular are not able to come at the moment and as a result our Deaf School is missing out on a lot of support funding. Fortunately, EOTAS Foundation has been able to set aside some money in recent years, but this is not an endless source. Almost all extra activities have now come to a standstill, so that we can at least continue to pay the salary of child care and educational staff. Together with you, we all hope that everything goes back to "normal" soon, so that deaf children can continue to go to school. Without support and EOTAS, there is no care for the children, as a result of which more than 100 deaf children cannot attend school and therefore miss out on their education and opportunities for the future. We cannot let the children become the victims of adult problems in this world. Your financial support is most welcome to keep the school going!

*Robin van Donkersgoed*



## A broken arm for a deaf child is double the trouble.



Some children go through life without (fortunately) any serious problems, while other children face many challenges. Abdulshakiri broke his left arm for the first time in 2020 while playing with his classmates at school. Thanks to good cooperation between his parents and the EOTAS Foundation, his arm was able to be put back in order and he was able to fully recover. Unfortunately, he broke his arm again last September while playing outside with other children and fell badly again. It was impossible for the deaf and crying Abdushakiri, who was in great pain, to explain to his mother, who is also deaf, what had happened, because now he could not use his hands for sign language. His arm is now usable again, but has not recovered well and has become shorter. If a deaf child breaks an arm, it not only hurts a lot, but communication with parents and the rest of their social circle is immediately blocked.

## Our children are participating in a book festival of the Dodoma Library



This year the school received an invitation from the Municipal Library to participate in a multi-day book festival, together with a number of other schools. The purpose of this festival was to encourage children to read books for fun and to understand that books are not just for learning. In addition, the children were given the opportunity to meet each other under different circumstances than what they are normally used to at school.

The program was divided over five days with different activities. Our deaf students had the opportunity to show how deaf children can read and translate into sign language at the same time. This surprised many people who attended this festival because many people in Tanzania don't know yet that deaf children can read or even understand the words. In addition, the children could participate in discussions based on texts from a book and there was also the opportunity for sports and games. On the last day there was a national presentation, where our children received prizes from the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education. Our Deaf School also received an award for overall good performance. The children received notebooks, rulers, ink pens, pencils, paint colours and erasers and a certificate of participation.



## Change in the EOTAS board in the Netherlands

Last October there was a change of board members. Rob Timmer has resigned after six years and Monique Bekker has taken his place. Rob, the Eotas board would like to thank you very much for your commitment and involvement!

### Farewell word from Rob Timmer

In this article, Rob says goodbye to Eotas and welcomes Monique Bekker to the board: First let me introduce myself: my name is Rob Timmer. I have worked in deaf education all my life. An exciting life. Teaching a great audience. Teaching at a time when a lot of changes have taken place in the deaf world: from the development of sign language to the use of the cochlear implant. After almost 25 years I ended up at the A.G. Bellschool, a secondary school for deaf students in Amsterdam.

There I worked with you, Monique Bekker. You told me about your wanderings and your life. About Tanzania and the life you led there. Working with deaf children in a completely different culture. Also about the creation of a school for deaf children in Dodoma, which was set up by Robin van Donkersgoed with the laying of first stone in 2005.

In 2015 you asked me if I wanted to take a seat on the board of the Eotas foundation. You asked me this,



because we often discussed the development possibilities of deaf children together. You knew about my passion for the amazing opportunities that deaf preschoolers already have. What deaf preschoolers can learn through play. And that this vision would be welcome for the teaching staff in Dodoma.

You organized a project at the A.G.Bell School that brought in a lot of money for the school in Dodoma AND you arranged for me to go to Dodoma. What I saw there: tribute to Robin: what a go-getter; what a beautiful school; what an organization; but also: what wonderful children. There I tried to make clear to the teaching staff what the possibilities are for deaf children. However, a cultural shift will still have to be made. That's just the way it is!

Due to retirement and other matters, I have decided to resign from my board position.

**Monique**, you have decided to take over this position.

There is no better person: you speak the languages: sign language, Swahili and a few more, but above all: you breathe Tanzania and your affection for the focus group is enormous. Furthermore, nobody has to teach you anything about the culture and working method there, which differs enormously from ours. All skills you need and can use well.

Good luck to all and keep up with what you're doing.

**Greetings, Rob Timmer.**



### **In the spotlight: The ladies at the office.**

The office is the beating heart of the school, as that is where all administrative and financial matters are handled by Hawa Ramadhani and Neema Mwegoha. They have been Robin's loyal forces and right hands for years. Time to put them in the spotlight!

**Hawa and Neema, can you tell us about your childhood and how you ended up with Robin?**

**Neema:** My full name is Neema Rose Jackson Mwegoha. I was born on September 2, 1988, and raised in Dodoma. There I went to primary school and secondary education, where I did VWO. After that I worked for a Chinese company as a warehouse employee for a year and I was also an ambassador for Airtel, a mobile phone company for a year.



I then followed a secretary course in Tabora where I obtained my diploma in December 2012. In January 2013 I started at Eotas, where I was introduced by Ganana Kamwela, who already worked for Robin.

**Hawa:** I was interested in computers from childhood. I went to school at the deaf unit in Kigwe (a village outside of Dodoma); that place became my home because my own family didn't understand deafness. I had an aunt who was a social worker and she brought me to Kigwe. When I was in the fourth grade (group 6) I first met Robin. He set up an extracurricular practical program such as a school garden, a computer

course, electricity and carpentry. I have participated in all kinds of things, but one part has become my hobby: that is the computer. The computer helps me with accounting and also to save money for my life with my own family. Now I do the bookkeeping in the Eotas office, using the computer! Through Robin I gained experience in accounting and in dealing with sponsors from the Netherlands.



**How are you trained for the work you do? You are both handy with the computer, you do the financial administration, you communicate with many different people and not everyone cooperates with you. Still you are doing well. How do you think that comes?**

**Neema:** It was indeed difficult in the beginning, although I had already taken a computer course for two years. But the practical experience I gained at Eotas made it easier. During the secretary training we already learned how to deal with different types of people, which has helped me a lot in the work I do now. I am a calm person by nature, which also comes in handy when dealing with different people and situations.

**Hawa:** I was trained in Robin's practical program. I also learned life skills from him and I also did a secretary course in Tabora, where I obtained computer and secretary certificates. I can now connect a computer, diagnose and solve problems. Sometimes I still need Robin for that.

In the financial administration I keep an eye on the budgets, I help draw up budgets, I make suggestions for improvements and I make the payments that Robin has approved. I also keep track of the daily expenses which I accurately account for with receipts. The balance must be in order!

I can communicate well with everyone who comes into the office. I ask what is needed and I help with that. Sometimes people don't cooperate, but they don't get the needed money until they follow our rules.

## Can you give an example of a typical working day?

**Neema:** we write a lot of reports, such as for the Liliane Foundation (MB). This is a big part of our job because we have to keep track of each child's progress, the stories, the details and of course the pictures.

**Hawa:** I make the monthly payments of the salaries, I make budgets, I keep track of the rental income of the tenants at Camp Holland, I do bank transfers; in short, everything that has to do with money!

## What's the best thing about your job?

**Neema:** Almost everything. I can say that this is my dream job. Working with deaf children has also taught me sign language, a language that few people master.

**Hawa:** My favourite part is managing Kmymoney (a new free accounting program in Tanzania; MB).

## What are the challenges?

**Neema:** The challenges lie in all that is good. Working with government officials can be very challenging. They don't always want to communicate with us and especially when we need information, it can be very difficult to get it.

**Hawa:** Some people don't stick to the budget. They just want money without a plan and without wanting to justify it. Of course you can't. Even for emergencies, we want to see a budget or a cost estimate. We work according to plan. Always.



*EOTAS organizes regular meetings so that parents and deaf children can learn sign language together.*

## Robin officially retired last year, but he is still very active in school. How will you go on without him in the future?

**Neema:** This is a bitter pill to swallow. It's impossible for me to say Eotas or Dodoma school for the deaf without also saying Robin. I suppose we have to be flexible if we have to go on without Robin. We will continue to work in his way, as we are used to. We continue with the work, even if it is not 100 % in order, as it always is with him.

**Hawa:** We will continue without Robin, because we have a board and also a Memorandum of Understanding between Eotas and the government. We have a board in Tanzania and in the Netherlands.

## What are your dreams for the future? Professional and personal?

**Neema:** Professionally I want to master everything I do at work and personally I want to be successful in so many different ways!

**Hawa:** Accounting and everything that has to do with my work!

*Monique Bekker*



*Thanks to sponsorship, volunteers and our staff in Tanzania, another group of deaf children has succeeded.*

### Dear friends and donors,

Time to look ahead to 2022. What will the coming year bring us all? A few years ago, we almost automatically assumed that the new year would be a continuation of the current year. No one was really prepared for big changes. The world has changed enormously in the past few years and there is really nothing to predict for the coming year. Our round world can turn in all directions. One thing is clear; with a little adjustment we will get through the difficult times. If there's one thing I learned in Tanzania, it's that life can be very unpredictable and there is little certainty from day to day, even though we all live on the same planet. It would be nice if we can continue to support the weakest among us in the coming year, because they have no safety net to get through. Let's work together to do something together for the education of deaf children in Tanzania and all over this world.

If you have opportunities to sponsor one or more children, you can let us know via the email below and we will provide you with all the necessary information. You can also support our school with a donation through our website:

<https://eotasfoundation.org/doneren/>

I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2022.

*Robin van Donkersgoed (robindonkersgoed @ yahoo.co.uk )*

#### **Info:**

For more information about sponsoring deaf children, please contact::

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or Nienke Munting:

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or visit our website:  
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