

**SPEECH BY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF
TANZANIA TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, H.E. OMBENI SEFUE,
AT A RECEPTION FOR BOOKS FOR AFRICA, UNIVERSITY OF
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Executive Director, Books For Africa;**

Chairman and Members of the Board for Books For Africa;

Books For Africa Donors and Partners;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure, and I feel truly honored, to be with you all this morning for what I consider one of the most worthy causes one can associate with – education for African children.

I thank our hosts, the University of Minnesota, and I thank you all for coming, and for showing your support for what we, in Tanzania and other African countries, are doing with Books For Africa to roll back what has been rightly called a book famine on the African continent.

I thank you all for making it possible for Books For Africa to partner with us in putting as many books as possible in the hands of as many African children, and as in many schools and public libraries, as possible.

Why do we need this help? The first reason is that, as everyone across the world knows, education is the empowering tool for a better life—for individuals, for communities, and for nations. Development is about people about the quality of their lives – not only about material things. And, that begins with education.

The second reason is that a country like Tanzania, with a population of 40 million people and a GDP of only \$17 billion, cannot fully fund its basic social services, including education. Currently, the government spends over 16 per cent of its budget on education. Yet, many schools do not have proper libraries. We can only afford an average text book student ratio of 1:3, let alone books for supplementary reading. And this at a time when the government has embarked upon an unprecedented expansion of education at all levels, from basic education through secondary education and tertiary education. I will come back to this expansion later.

But let me first tell you about the education system in Tanzania as it is today, and then tell you a little story of where we came from and where we are in Tanzania with regard to education.

Pre-Primary Education

Pre- primary school is a formal school system for children aged between 5 and 6 years. It lasts for 2 years with no examinations for promotion purpose.

Primary Education

Primary Education is a seven-year education cycle after Pre-Primary. It is universal and compulsory to all children from the age of 7 years. The primary

school cycle begins with standard one (STD I), on entry, and ends with standard seven (STD VII) in the final year. Std VII examination is a Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), marking completion of the primary education cycle and it is used for selection of students into secondary education.

Secondary Education

The formal secondary school education consists of two sequential cycles. The first cycle is a four-year Ordinary Level (O-Level) secondary education that begins with Form I and ends with Form IV. The second cycle is a two-year program of Advanced Level (A-Level) secondary education that begins with Form V and ends with Form VI.

Form IV and Form VI examinations mark the completion of secondary education cycles and the results of these examinations are used for selection of students for further formal education and training, and also for certification.

Tertiary Education

Higher education is organized at two levels - non-university and university level. Non-university tertiary level institutions include those that offer up to three-year courses leading to an Advanced Diploma as the highest award possible while university level institutions include those that offer courses leading to the three-year or four-year bachelor's degree and above. A degree in medicine takes five years.

Background and Development of Education in Tanzania

Now let me give you a sense of where we came from, where we are, and the challenges we continue to face in education going forward.

At independence, we identified three key enemies of our country: ignorance, poverty and disease. Education was, and remains, a key element in addressing all of these challenges.

It is now 47 years since Tanzania became independent. Before that, we were a colony, first of Germany, and subsequently of Britain, for a total of 77 years. Colonial education, unfortunately, did not prepare us for leadership. Colonial education, for the most part, was intended to produce the clerks, drivers, cooks and messengers needed to service the system, not leaders and professionals to take over from colonial administrators and officials.

A survey conducted in 1962 showed that only 23% of Tanganyika men and 7½ % of Tanganyika women over 15 years of age had attended any formal school at all, and 85 percent of adults were illiterate. By 1985, the rate of illiteracy was down to 10% only, and 98% of all the children were enrolled to a compulsory 7-year primary education.

In 1961, the total number of children in primary schools was 486,000 only. This year 8,410,094 million Tanzanian children, 49.3% of them girls, are in 15,673 primary schools that have been built in every village of our country up from less than 2000 at independence.

At independence, there were only a handful of secondary schools with 11,832 students. Today, we have 1,222,403 students, 44.4% of them are girls. The number of secondary schools has increased from about 10 in 1961 to 3,798 this year.

According to Mwalimu Nyerere, who should know, the first Tanzanian to get a university degree graduated in 1952, only 9 years before independence. Makerere University was the only fully-fledged university in East Africa. At independence, only a few Tanganyikans had graduated from there.

As a result, we had not a single African architect; no agronomist; no soil scientist, no surgeon, no dentist; and we had only 1 agricultural engineer, 1 surveyor, and 16 medical doctors. **That was our starting point.**

Immediately after independence, we established the Dar es Salaam University College with 14 students only. Today, Tanzania has 35 institutions of higher learning, eleven of which are recognized public and private universities, nine university colleges and 11 non-university tertiary institutions. The number of university students has increased from those 14 students we began with to 65,966 currently, 36.7 per cent of them women.

Tanzania has always believed that its greatest asset, and resource, is not its huge mineral or tourism potential, its vast arable land and waters teeming with fish, or its peace and stability. The greatest asset and resource is our people. Moreover, unless the quality of our human resources is geared to the new century, unless our people have the capacity to utilize these other resources - no serious development will occur.

Tanzania has largely met the MDG target for basic education; seven years ahead of the target date of 2015. How did we do it?

Between 1962 and the 1980s, as I intimated earlier, the Tanzanian government vigorously pursued a universal primary education program with remarkable results. The gross enrolment rate in primary education rose from 35 per cent in the late 1960s to around 98 per cent in 1980. The economic crises of the late 1970s and 1980s triggered a deterioration of literacy rates, reduced enrolment at basic and secondary education levels, and generally increased gender disparity at all education levels.

By the mid 1990s, almost all indicators for basic education were in free fall. The Gross Enrolment Rate had fallen from 98 percent in the early 1980s to 77.6 percent in 2000. The net enrolment rate had likewise fallen, from over 80 percent to only 58.8 per cent. Science students completed secondary school without ever having conducted a real experiment in a proper laboratory, for many schools had none. In some schools, a whole class would share less than 5 textbooks. The pass rate in primary schools was a pitiful 19.3 per cent in 1999.

Then several things happened. We decided at the top political level that basic education would be a top priority, and adopted a five-year Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) to achieve universal basic seven-year education by 2006.

Good governance produced more government revenues. In November 2001, we received debt relief. Subsequently, more donors put aid money directly into our budget or into a pooled fund for the PEDP. All this helped to make PEDP I (2002-2006) a great success. Among other things:

1. The Government abolished school fees in primary schools.

2. There was a 64 per cent increase in primary school population, from 4,845,185 students in 2001 to 7,959,884 students in 2006 raising the Gross Enrolment Ratio from 84.4 per cent to 112.7 per cent; and the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) from 66.0 per cent in 2001 to 96.1 per cent in 2006, with gender parity.
3. In the 5 years of PEDP, the number of primary schools increased from 11,873 in 2001 to 14,700 in 2006.
4. The book to student ratio improved from 1:20 in 2001 to 1:3 in 2006.
5. Thousands of teachers were employed or retrained, thousands of new classrooms were built and thousands of teacher houses built.

We have now embarked on PEDP II (2007-2011), and we began implementing the Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) from 2004 to 2009 to absorb the large numbers of students completing primary education.. During the first four years of SEDP, 2004-2008, we achieved, among other things, the following:

1. We managed to reduce by half the fees in government secondary schools to make education more accessible to children from poor families;
2. Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in Ordinary Level Secondary School improved from 12.9 per cent in 2004 to 36.2 percent in 2008, while the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) increased from 8.4 per cent to 24.4 per cent.
3. Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in Advanced Level Secondary School improved from 2.1 per cent in 2004 to 4.0 percent in 2008, while the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) increased from 0.5 per cent to 1.4 per cent.

4. The number of students in all secondary schools increased from 432,599 in 2004 to 1,222,403 in 2008, an increase of 183 per cent.
5. The number of government secondary schools has increased by 267 per cent, from 824 in 2004 to 3,039 in 2008, and private secondary schools increased by 63.9 per cent, over the same period.

I have already mentioned the successes with regard to higher education. Now, this brings me to the kind of challenges we now face because of these successes. One of these challenges is books. Most of these schools do not have access to the internet, and have to rely entirely on books to get the knowledge they need beyond what the teachers deliver to them in class.

The Yoruba from Nigeria have a proverb: “The man who has bread to eat does not appreciate the severity of a famine.” And I can understand when people from this country where information and knowledge is all over the place—books, internet, journals, etc, cannot appreciate the feeling of gratitude and satisfaction that a Tanzanian student feels when he or she holds a book in his or her hand.

I am here on behalf of all those Tanzania children, who maybe as we speak, are reading a book donated and transported to them through Books For Africa, to thank you very much for what you did, and are continuing to do to reduce the book famine that we experience.

I thank all of you who support the work of Books For Africa, and I urge you to keep on providing this valuable support. My government and the beneficiaries in Tanzania appreciate the books that fill a critical gap in the

delivery of curriculum and general knowledge to our young people, and in the case of the books that end up in public libraries, for the general population.

To encourage your continued support for this worthy effort, I am pleased to accept the offer to serve as Honorary Chair of the new Summit Giving Society to recognize key donors to Books For Africa. In that capacity, I look forward to meeting many of you at a reception at the embassy later in the year.

Charles William Eliot (1834–1926), president of Harvard, 1869–1909, wrote and spoke of books as follows: “Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers.”

I am here to ask you to give the children of Africa the friends, the counselors and the teachers they need and deserve in books.

I thank you for your kind attention.