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TANZANIA

FIRST PERSON

Camp Puts Career Dreams Within Reach

Science camps provide students with resources to succeed



Photo: USAID/Imani M. Cheers

Tanzania's USAID Mission Director Pamela White, left, and Fatma Kassim, take a break from activities at the USAID science camp in Lumumba.

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Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Ever since she was a small child, Fatma Kassim, now 18, has wanted to be a gynecologist. Living in a small village on the outskirts of Zanzibar's bustling Stone Town center, she remembers making frequent trips to the community clinic to watch the doctors and nurses use their "magic" to make people feel better. Throughout primary and secondary school, her teachers recognized that Fatma was exceptionally gifted in mathematics and science. Asha Biwi, a physics teacher at Lumumba Secondary School, has worked with Fatma for the past four years. "She's brilliant" Asha said, beaming with pride, "The class work is very easy for her and often times she even challenges me!"

Access to textbooks and modern equipment for advanced studies in biology, chemistry, and physics is often difficult for Asha and her colleagues to obtain. Without these resources, a gifted student such as Fatma cannot build the knowledge and skills required for becoming a medical doctor.

A USAID educational initiative designed to improve the quality of learning in Zanzibar from pre-school through secondary school helps students like Fatma get the educational experience they need for success. Working with the Forum for African Women Educationalists, USAID launched a series of science camps beginning November 2005.

In March 2006, Fatma attended the program's second camp in Lumumba. For five days she and other students were engrossed in science-related activities and workshops. Lessons were taught using fun, creative methods to encourage enthusiasm about tough science subjects. As the President of the Lumumba Science Club, Fatma was thrilled to have the opportunity to enhance her knowledge of biology, chemistry and her favorite, physics. "It has been my dream to be a gynecologist and the science camps encouraged me and made me more confident that, yes, I can do it!" Fatma says with conviction.

Given her perseverance and dedication, and thanks partly to the experience she gained at USAID's science camp, Fatma can be confident that she will reach her goal.