Educating towards Self-Reliance, Responsibility, Judgement and Conscience
Cost of education is relatively high in Kenya. Even in public schools, this ranges from USD200 per year for day schools to USD450 per year for boarding schools.

For most rural families, it is an uphill task to get their children through the 4 years of secondary education. In a place like Tana Delta, where over 70% of the population survive on subsistence farming or herding livestock that they do not own, this task is even more arduous.

When parents do not have means to pay school fees in full, children are forced to drop out of school mid-way or at best attend school intermittently until they sit for their final school leaving examination.

This problem is exacerbated when more than one child is in secondary school at the same time. In most cases, whenever a choice has to be made, the girl child will be asked to stay home so that the boy child may continue with his education.

DELTA SCHOOLS SUPPORT

The TRLF educational support schemes provides funding for the operations and development of ALL the 7 public secondary schools in Tana Delta.

In 2013, 52% of the total bursary budget was paid out as school fees for students enrolled in one of these 7 delta schools.

This support enabled these cash strapped rural schools cover a significant portion of their operating costs.

The two TRLF bus vehicles provide the Delta schools with an affordable means of expanding the educational experience of their students, enabling greater participation in co-curricular activities and educational trips.

The Delta schools save a substantial portion of their development budget through the donations of school furniture they receive from Singapore schools through TRLF.
Study Aids

Many girl students in rural communities cannot afford sanitary napkins and are forced to use rags and cotton wool instead. This is a monthly problem that bedevils these girls, forcing them to miss an average of 5 school days each month. Besides suffering from low esteem, the crude napkins also causes health problems and contributes to girls lagging behind their boy classmates academically.

In 2006, TRLF, in partnership with the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), Tana River Branch, started distributing sanitary napkins to sponsored girl students.

All study aids, i.e. sanitary napkins, scientific calculators, dictionaries, mathematical sets, clipboards, etc. are now distributed at a subsidy through the schools and at TRLF bursary meetings. These study aids are donated by staff from St. Theresa’s Covent, Holy Innocents’ High School, and Crescent Girls School, all in Singapore.

We also received a great boost for our literacy programme from students in CHIJ St. Theresa’s Convent who kindly donated readers from the recommended list of the National Library of Singapore, Sandra and Carrie, ex-RI students who sponsored scanners, and from Yit Chian who donated a new PC for the project.

This assistance is invaluable because the sanitary napkins help level the playing field for the girl student, while the other study aids helps boosts the learning of English, Mathematics and Sciences for all students.

With a very generous donation of sports and music items from Excel Sports & Music, we were also able to help all the seven public schools participate in the inter-schools ball games in 2013.
UTAR Scholarship

Tana River County accounts for the lowest number of university graduates nationally. TRLF interventions over the years has enabled six students from Tana River District to pursue undergraduate studies at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) in Malaysia on full tuition scholarships awarded by the governing body of UTAR. The two first students, Oscar Raha and Hamara Awadh, successfully completed their internships from October to December 2013, with Oscar expected to graduate in 2014. We are grateful to Ms. Julie Sng and Mr. Hsieh Fuhua for their assistance when we were looking for suitable firms for the students to intern at. While in Malaysia, these students also meet with donors during their semester breaks. This interaction helps them understand in a real way the meaning and value of service, and to be aware of their responsibilities towards their communities in the future. We are especially grateful to the Wesley Methodist Churches in Melaka and Johor Bahru, Kuan Mun Kong, Audrey Chew, Juanita Fu, Grace Lim and many friends in Johor Bahru for their special support for the scholars’ living expenses.

UTAR Council Chairman, Tun Dr. Ling Liong Sik, his wife, Toh Puan Ena Ling, the UTAR Board of Trustees Chairman Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Sak Cheng Lum, his wife, Puan Sri Sak, UTAR President Ir Professor Academician Dato’ Dr. Chuah Hean Teik and UTAR Vice President (Student Development and Alumni Relations) Associate Professor Dr. Teh Chee Seng visited Tana Delta while on an official visit to Kenya in August 2013. They graciously took the long and uncomfortable journey to get to our village to understand better the home region of the students they are assisting on scholarship. We are very grateful to Tun Dr. Ling and the UTAR Education Council for their generous support in partnering TRLF to uplift lives and broaden the horizons of youths and their families in the Tana Delta.

We also thank Mr. Anant Kasibhatla who is the Indian National Record Holder for Memory, and Mr. West Wong, the Malaysian Human Calculator, for taking time off from their work to visit us and inspire our students from Garsen High School and Marifano Secondary School with their talks on memory and learning techniques.
The state of public secondary education in Tana Delta ten years ago was characterized by inadequate and poorly maintained school facilities, teachers who lacked commitment and professionalism, and a local community lacking appreciation of the importance of education. Teaching quality was extremely poor, alcoholism amongst teachers rife, chronic absenteeism the norm, and syllabuses were never covered before the national examinations. In addition, teaching staff were mainly from the local communities, making it difficult for head-teachers to make independent, professional decisions due to communal ties.

TRLF started developing GHS upon its inception in 2004 with the aim of providing a viable alternative public secondary education in Tana Delta. Since then, GHS has grown steadily and is now the biggest public secondary school in Tana Delta with an enrolment in 2013 of over 600 students (compared to an average of 150 to 200 in the other six public secondary schools). Students are from all ethnic tribes within Tana Delta as well as from the neighboring Kilifi County. Besides having the best facilities in the County (e.g. library, bakery and two science laboratories), it is now staffed by over 20 undergraduate teachers from all over Kenya. This exposure has helped GHS students expand their outlook in life, especially towards education and the opportunities it offers.

GHS charges affordable fees although expenses to cover the breakfast and lunch programmes have increased in the past two years due to the rising food cost nationally. GHS has also been able to provide an improving quality of education, emerging the top school in Tana Delta in the national examinations in 2012.
School Furniture from Singapore Schools

This year, with generous support from several schools in Singapore, we were able to supply classroom desks and chairs as well as some office equipment to several primary and secondary schools in the delta.

This project is of great value for the students here in the delta. Before we brought the furniture this year, Form 1 classes in Marifano Secondary School and Garsen High School were equipped with only chairs, while students had to use their laps as their desks.

This project would not be possible without the support of Mrs. Pauline Wong of CHIJ St. Theresa’s Convent, Singapore, Mrs. Soh Lai Leng, formerly of Holy Innocent’s High School, Singapore, and their generous staff, as well as Ms. Irene Chiam and all staff at Radiance Communications.

On behalf of students who now have a better learning environment, we thank all friends and schools in Singapore who have assisted us in this project in one way or another, including CHIJ St. Theresa’s Convent, Holy Innocents’ High School, Catholic High School, St. Joseph’s Institution, Raffles Institution and Maris Stella High School.

Form 1 students who were studying without desks from January to June 2013 now have a desk each donated by schools in Singapore.
Since 2012, TRLF has also started improving the quality of basic education in the Tana Delta. The approach being taken is largely similar to that used at the secondary school level ten years ago, i.e. to first develop a viable alternative to serve as a model school, and use that as a platform to improve quality of education in other public schools in the area.

In line with this, TRLF started the Delta Mustard Seed Academy in 2012 with 26 children. In 2013, there were 58 children enrolled in three classes. This number is expected to increase by 20-25 percent annually.

A provisional 18-month license registering the school as a private primary school cum early childhood development centre, fully owned by Tana River Life Foundation, was issued by the Kenya Ministry of Education on 30th January 2014.

Delta Mustard Seed children queuing up to wash their hands before being served a special meal by teacher Tracy Jilo and TRLF youth interns, Nyale Balozi and Joyce Chabwore.