

# STORIES OF STRENGTH: Tanzanian Women Reshaping Construction Narratives



***Decent Shelter for All***

**Stories of Strength: Tanzanian Women  
Reshaping Construction Narratives**

Edited by: Dr. Bruce Heilman  
Graphics and layout Design by Arafa C. Hamadi

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Architects for Humanity (TAWAH)

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# Contents

- 6 Introduction:  
**Mhaga Village Women Tear Down Gender Stereotypes in the Construction Industry**
- 10 **Our Points of Focus**  
by Joyce Said
- 12 **Every Successful Mission has a Story Behind It**  
by Elizabeth Kisabo
- 14 **Every Drop Matters**  
by Eng. Jane Marwa
- 16 **Women in Construction: Gaining Opportunities And Changing Perceptions**  
by Ashura Simai Abdulrahman
- 20 **Recognising Women: Transforming Mhaga Society through Innovative Practices**  
by Gloria Yohana Mushi
- 24 **Green is My Best Colour**  
By Catherine Meena
- 26 **Restoring the Lost Smile**  
By Nelly Victor Mleleu
- 28 **Intergrating with the World's Agenda**  
By Suhayla T. Abdulla
- 30 **It is Everyone's Responsibility**  
By Victoria Heilman

## Sustainable Development Goals

 1. NO POVERTY	 2. ZERO HUNGER	 3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	 4. QUALITY EDUCATION	 5. GENDER EQUALITY	 6. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
 7. AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	 8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	 9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	 10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES	 11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	 12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
 13. CLIMATE ACTION	 14. LIFE BELOW WATER	 15. LIFE ON LAND	 16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	 17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	



10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

# INTRODUCTION: Mhaga Village Women Tear Down Gender Stereotypes in the Construction Industry

Things are happening in Mhaga Village. Change is in the air. Women are coming together and building houses for themselves and for the elderly in their community. Most of the women are older, ranging in age from those in their thirties up to one in her sixties. But younger women, in their twenties, are taking notice and starting to join. The women are grandmothers, married women with children, single-mothers and recent school leavers. Social revolutions start at the grassroots and Mhaga Village is at the forefront of an important transformation of Tanzania's construction industry as women learn skills to access the wealth generated in this key sector of the national economy.

Mhaga Village is not unlike thousands of other villages spread across Tanzania's countryside. It has 372 households and a population of 1,347 people of which 737 are women. Mhaga Village is in Kisarawe District of Pwani Region, approximately 39 km from Kisarawe town. According to the 2022 census, Pwani Region has a population of about 2,024,947 out of which 1,026,331 are women. Kisarawe District is characterised by two main rainy seasons. The short rains season start in October and end in December. The long rainy season starts in March and end in early June. In Kisarawe District about 95% of the population depend on agriculture, most of them being smallholder farmers involved in the production of both cash and food crops.

What sparked the interest in construction among women in Mhaga Village was a series of fortuitous events. Tanzania Women Architects for Humanity (TAWAH) were interested in designing a girl's secondary school to provide female students with a more comfortable environment to learn and prepare for their competitive national exams. In 2018 TAWAH joined the then Kisarawe District Commissioner the Hon. Jokate Mwegelo's Tokomeza Zero campaign to improve the academic performance of female students. TAWAH

**The TAWAH Women's Vocational Centre will be a women-led knowledge hub where women in Kisarawe and all over Tanzania receive hands-on training in sustainable building techniques together with other related skills enabling them to earn income in the construction sector of the economy.**

designed and worked in collaboration with the Kisarawe District Office to supervise the construction of a new girl's secondary school in the district. In 2020 the Jokate Mwegelo Girls Secondary School was successfully completed and the Kisarawe community expressed their appreciation to TAWAH with a gift of a five-acre plot of land in Mhaga Village.

While improving education is a core goal of TAWAH, the organisation realised that many women did not and would not have the opportunity to further their formal education. TAWAH had a dream of building a training centre for women who were no longer in school to learn different construction skills. With this gift of land from Mhaga Village TAWAH saw the opportunity for its dream to come true. The TAWAH Women's Vocational Centre will be a women-led knowledge hub where women in Kisarawe and all over Tanzania receive hands-on training in sustainable building techniques together with other related skills enabling

them to earn income in the construction sector of the economy.

Together with women from Mhaga Village, TAWAH is nearing completion of the vocational training centre. Two separate cohorts of women have been trained to produce mud bricks and sand-cement blocks and have learned other skills including financial literacy, banking, safety at work places and entrepreneurship skills. As part of their training each of the two cohorts built houses for elderly village residents. A total of 5 homes and 2 toilets are completed and occupied. The 79 women of the two cohorts have joined together to form their own organisations to improve their homes and generate income through brick making and building activities. 10 women from the first cohort who attended advance trainings in VETA - Changombe, are engaged in training new cohorts with the goal of providing construction skills to approximately 50 more women every year.



We would like to thank our key partners Julius Baer Foundation and Segal Family Foundation for the financial support that allows TAWAH to bring the 'women in construction' idea to reality. Special thanks go to our media partners ITV and Radio One for publicising our work. Our appreciation goes to Tanzania Commercial Bank and Zanzibar University for providing knowledge on financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills. Last but not least we give our sincere thanks to the Mhaga Village community, the Kisarawe District, and local leaders for sharing their knowledge with us and allowing us to build with them.

In the following pages you will learn more about the Mhaga Village Empowerment Project through stories written by our TAWAH members and volunteers. Joyce Said describes the culture at TAWAH as well as her experience with the Mhaga project. Elizabeth Kisabo explains the aspects of Swahili design that were incorporated into the building that hosts the TAWAH Women's Vocational Centre. Jane Marwa details the environmentally friendly aspects of the Vocational Centre focusing on the wastewater recycling plant and rainwater harvesting. The women's empowerment aspect is the focus of Ashura Abraham and Gloria Mushi's articles while Catherine Meena explains how the natural environment was incorporated into the vocational centre design. The impact of TAWAH's project on individual beneficiaries is the subject of Nelly Victor Mleleu's article. Suhayla explains how TAWAH's work fits in with the UN Millennium Goals. Last, I outline the important role of TAWAH's unsung heroes, all the men without whose support and encouragement TAWAH's activities would not have been possible. Enjoy reading and visit us in Mhaga Village!



*Victoria Heilman*

**Dr. Victoria Marwa Heilman**  
TAWAH Co-Founder and  
Project Manager





17. PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS

## Our Points of Focus

*By Joyce Said*

Women are always told “you are not going to make it, it’s too difficult, you can’t do that, don’t enter this competition, you will never win it.” This is a discouraging voice heard by the multi-award winning architect Zaha Hadid. But she has defied the doubters and always encouraged confidence in women and in the society to help women progress forward. Hadid’s attitude raised the bar for ‘women in construction’ and for TAWAH to improve its design and construction capabilities for the purpose of helping the community in Mhaga. “Sisi ni Waswahili” exclaimed one of the elders of Mhaga village wearing a white kanzu and kofia at a meeting which our design team attended with the villagers. That phrase sank into our minds and paved the way for the creation of our design concept theme. It really captured the essence of the people of Mhaga, their originality and uniqueness. Therefore, the design to be made had to be in line with Swahili culture.

Swahili architecture is a term used to assign a whole range of distinctive building traditions practiced along the eastern and southeastern coast of Africa. Swahili designs are influenced by African, South-Asian and Islamic traditions. Swahili houses are orientated towards the north providing protection from the sun and reflecting the common practice of orienting houses towards the Qibla. Most of the houses were built from coral limestone, a building material which is light, strong and readily available in the area. A typical Swahili house is designed around a self-contained central courtyard. The courtyard is the spatial nucleus of the house for daytime activities and family gatherings with corridors leading into rooms arranged side by side with verandas easing the transition between the house and the outside. Often shaded, these verandas offer spaces for occasional small-talk and relaxation while enjoying outside views.



The design of the TAWAH Women’s Vocational Centre in Mhaga Village is a good example of Swahili architecture. As you approach the learning institution, you are received by a gate entrance located at the northeastern part of the facility. Getting closer, on a plain relatively flat terrain, earthened pathways guide you towards the main building along which you will find a gravel textured space for car parking surrounded by trees and a hedge flowers as buffers.

Feeling tired after a long journey to our facility? We’ve got you covered! Our concrete bench right at the entrance is the best spot to relax and regenerate energy. This space is open and has the most interesting views of the area. It faces the main entrance as well as the courtyard and on the further end is the brick production factory. The vocational centre is designed to include all abled and disabled users. Ramps, instead of stairs, are used for access to all rooms. A large concrete cantilever offers shade and lets you pause for a moment as you transition from the public zone into the semi-public zones. A long corridor covered with a wood pergola extends across the hall. As you walk through it, soft rays of light will hit your face through transparent roof sheets. House plants bordering the corridor in flower beds whisper a cool breeze and freshen your eyes while providing a buffer zone between the two spaces.

The rest of the facility’s surfaces are rendered/textured with natural earthened colours staying true to the materials’ natures. The deep polished brown colour from the interlocking blocks manifests from indigenous materials

mined directly on site. The floor, with its natural finish of sand-cement, blends in beautifully and provides easy maintenance. All these colours match magnificently with the cream colour on painted parts of the walls. A perforated wall articulates the façade for a dramatic shifting and setting off light and shadows giving plenty of natural illumination to the interior spaces. Standing inside the facility, one feels a fresh breeze moving through from one end to the other creating a cool microclimate without the use of any artificial mechanism. The courtyard situated at the centre of the building in the backyard, is the heart of our design. Here is where most of the meetings take place. It is a delightful relaxation spot during the day and during break times. You can never become thirsty in this zone for there are water taps with clean water collected from the rain and stored in an underground tank.

Wondering if you want a sleep over at Mhaga? YES, we have designed special blocks for visitors and for volunteers who are going to be working on-site with female scholars. The dormitories have bedrooms, toilets and enclose a courtyard. The surrounding environment is buffered with lots of lush green landscaping with shade and fruit trees. Being a community for women, handwork skills are taught including vegetable gardening. Why don’t you visit us and share your skills?

“Sisi ni Waswahili!”

- Mhaga Village  
Elder





# Every Successful Mission has a Story Behind It

*By Elizabeth Kisabo*

TAWAH could not start the design of the vocational training centre with a minimum work force, so a call for new volunteers was done with the consideration of all types of construction professionals needed for the project. As the Assistant Mhaga Project Manager, receiving new volunteers brought new friends, networking and a new experience of working with different professionals. I have met many talented and dedicated people with whom I look forward to working with in the future as part of my professional career.

Working as a group is one of our strategies and having a project leader simplifies the communication to members. During our design process, we formulated different professional departments such as the Architectural Department, Structural Department, Electrical Department and Environmental Engineering Department. Each department had a leader to guide the volunteers and contribute to consultations during the design process. We chose to have the best and simple life as professionals and to make sure that we all enjoy our careers. During the design process, we met in studio and worked as a team. It was a great experience indeed. Our studio life was made easier by having time for discussion groups. We ate together and thanks to Dada Winifrida Lyimo for making the best meals for our design studio sessions.

Each team had time to present their work to all TAWAH members and the discussion was free for everyone to make sure that every member had input on the design. It was during this time where everyone gained more confidence, learnt different presentation skills and received career guidance. From this session, I learnt that it is very important to respect each profession because I have witnessed the power of teamwork, and we depend on each other for the successful output. Since we received new volunteers to assist



the team during the design process, we had interesting sessions with different games to bring together new and old TAWAH members. The game sessions instilled new energy in us because they were fun and entertaining.

I would like to share my personal experience from the team building game sessions. I grew up in a family where I had limited time to play. With the introduction of team building games at the office, I was skeptical at first. I felt so childish, like I am all grown up, so why do I need to play games? I could not accept this situation, so I used to stay behind taking pictures and videos of others playing the games. However, an interest came and I tried the games. It was a different feeling and I felt so relaxed. From then onwards, I could not miss any game during our gatherings.

The knowledge transfer did not end in studio and extended to within ourselves. As a team, we had to transform our ideas from paper to work on the ground. At the site we met different people with different understandings, cultures and perceptions. As a team we took it as part of our learning experience in our profession and career growth. Travelling from Dar es Salaam to Mhaga Village was also like a part vacation for most TAWAH team members

and volunteers because along the road we enjoyed the trip, especially the different views of mountainous and forests. This was very nice for our memories.

At Mhaga Village, one of the most memorable moments was the mudbricks learning sessions conducted by the Building Research Institute (BRI), where we participated in all processes from doing the soil test to interpreting the results. Sitting with the Mhaga women listening to the tutors, taking notes and asking questions for more elaboration, built confidence and a volunteering spirit. As part of these interactions, the TAWAH team, Mhaga women and other villagers interested in the project sometimes had lunch together at the site with all of us were sitting under the trees eating while exchanging ideas and life experiences.

As trained architects, we took time to teach the Mhaga women who were ready to learn and work with us. We taught them how to interpret construction drawings, to read measurements and put them into practice. This experience made us very proud by increasing the knowledge and skills of the Mhaga Village women.





6. CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION



9. INDUSTRY,  
INNOVATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE

## Every Drop Matters

By Eng. Jane Marwa

We all know that water is life, and indeed it is!

Mhaga is a village currently not supplied with clean water from the Water Supply Authority. The community of Mhaga village depends on rainfall, shallow wells and boreholes for domestic use. Some available shallow wells and boreholes are very far from the Centre, and it takes hours to fetch just a bucket of water whose quality is unknown. A few communal spaces, like mosques, have boreholes in their compounds, and people are paying 50 Tanzania shillings for a 20 litres bucket of water.

TAWAH Women's Vocational Centre in Mhaga village needs water for its core activities, such as brick making, training for women & other domestic and agricultural activities. Therefore, life would be challenging without a sustainable clean water supply and good sanitation practices at the Centre. In response to the daunting challenge of addressing water scarcity and making sure that all the activities within the Centre are going on smoothly, a team of Environmental engineers deliberated to address the availability & sustainability of clean water resources, good sanitation practice and some other environmental issues that are important to the Centre. The team devised several interventions to ensure the Centre has access to enough reliable water supply and good sanitation.

We started by designing a rainwater harvesting system by constructing a 100,000-litre concrete tank for underground water storage. We constructed a storage tank and installed the system in collaboration with local artisans and trained women of Mhaga Village. Because rainwater might not be enough and unavailable during dry spells, borehole drilling became the second water source to ensure the Centre had enough water supply. The implementation started with a hydrogeological survey around the Centre to assess the groundwater's availability and comment on the depth of potential aquifers and aquifer availability. Finally, a 170m depth borehole was drilled.

As a final step, we considered the safe disposal of the domestic wastewater generated at the Centre. We wanted to ensure that the Centre

does not pollute the environment or cause human health risks. So, we came up with the idea of having a wastewater treatment facility to treat and, where possible, reuse treated liquid wastes generated from the Centre. The team designed and built a wastewater treatment plant with effluent quality that meets irrigation standards to save fresh water from the rainwater tank and a borehole. The treatment facility consists of three treatment units, the Anaerobic Baffled Reactor (ABR), the Planted Gravel Filters (PGF) and the Maturation Pond (MP).

We believe all the water initiatives identified and implemented will benefit the Centre and the community!

Water, a drop of resilience !







## Women in Construction: Gaining Opportunities And Changing Perceptions

*By Ashura Simai Abdulrahman*

Throughout the world construction has been a traditionally male dominated industry. While in some countries the number of women keep increasing in this industry, nonetheless in Tanzania construction is still regarded as a male dominated, especially in villages where a woman's main roles are to take care of families with some engaging in small-scale farming activities. TAWAH is one NGO that is fighting against the notion that construction is only for men. TAWAH supports young females embarking on careers in construction and seeks to change peoples' perceptions that exclude women from participating fully in this sector of the economy. It was hard for TAWAH to launch its construction activities in Mhaga Village because many people had a different perception on 'women in construction' and felt that construction activities were reserved exclusively for men.

The journey started with a large number of women expressing an interest in acquiring construction skills but who in reality had different goals about what they hoped to gain. It ended-up with a few who were strong enough to take the lead in construction projects while also contributing to the creation of a more open-



mind community with positive perceptions on the 'women in construction' concept. Some women refused completely to join the programme simply because they believed it was work that only men can do and they as women cannot do that work. They said, "that work needs masculinity, so it is men who can do it". Despite the prevalence of this view, some women decided to join and started working on bricks production but after a few days many decided to give up because they felt the task was hard and tough for them, and also they did not get enough support from their families and friends. There were men who used to stand from morning to evening watching the women working on the bricks anticipating that they would fail so that the men could take over. They were really discouraging them expecting all the women to dropout. However, there were those strong women who were capable enough to overcome all the challenges and discouragements from other people including family, friends and even from within their own selves. These women managed to learn all the construction steps and skills from brick making, foundations, walling, roofing to ceilings - all those processes. They are now proud of themselves for managing to build the TAWAH Women's Vocational Centre, which is a huge project, and three houses for elders in Mhaga. As one of the strong women who persevered through those tough early days of the program, Bi Salma Mape recalled: "People used to tell us that we are doing work that is supposed to be done by

There should be a time in the near future where 'women in construction' is no longer a topic for discussion simply because it has become the norm.

- Ashura Simai Abdulrahman



men and that we will get tired and get sick too. I was encouraging my sisters to not give up but there are a few who dropped out.”

Despite all the people with negative perceptions, there were a few who provided positive support to the women learning construction skills. A good example was from a man, Mr. Sylvester Sylevanus, who supported his wife and encouraged her and other women. He used to ride with his wife on a bicycle to her work site to make sure that she would not be late. He also helped the women to make bricks or with any other activity whenever he had time to encourage them. Sadly, other men used to discourage him and say a lot of heartbreaking words about him. “Actually, they used to tell me that probably I don’t have other work to do and that’s why I worked with the women and helped them. They were really seeing me as different and always surprised why I was doing that, but I did not listen to them and continued providing support to my wife and the other women. I really supported them 100% ... I also am really thankful to you, TAWAH, for bringing this Project to our Mhaga Village.”

There were a few other men who supported their wives and allowed them to engage in construction work. Currently, more and more people have changed their perception on ‘women in construction’ after seeing the wonders made by the women in Mhaga. Now young women are encouraged and ready to join the next phase. Men are now encouraging their wives and relatives to engage themselves in construction and development activities.

People in the village have been able to learn new skills and ideas, gain confidence, and are now encouraged to be good leaders for their children and relatives.

The one-year journey of building the TAWAH Women’s Vocational Centre and the three elder houses at Mhaga Village was done by women from the design (TAWAH staff) to construction (Mhaga women). People in the

village have gained opportunities and exposure to a new and different perspective which has changed and opened up their minds on what they believed women can do.

There should be a time in the near future where ‘women in construction’ is no longer a topic for discussion simply because it has become the norm.

“People used to tell us that we are doing work that is supposed to be done by men and that we will get tired and get sick too. I was encouraging my sisters to not give up but there are a few who dropped out.”

- Bi Salma Mape



5. GENDER  
EQUALITY



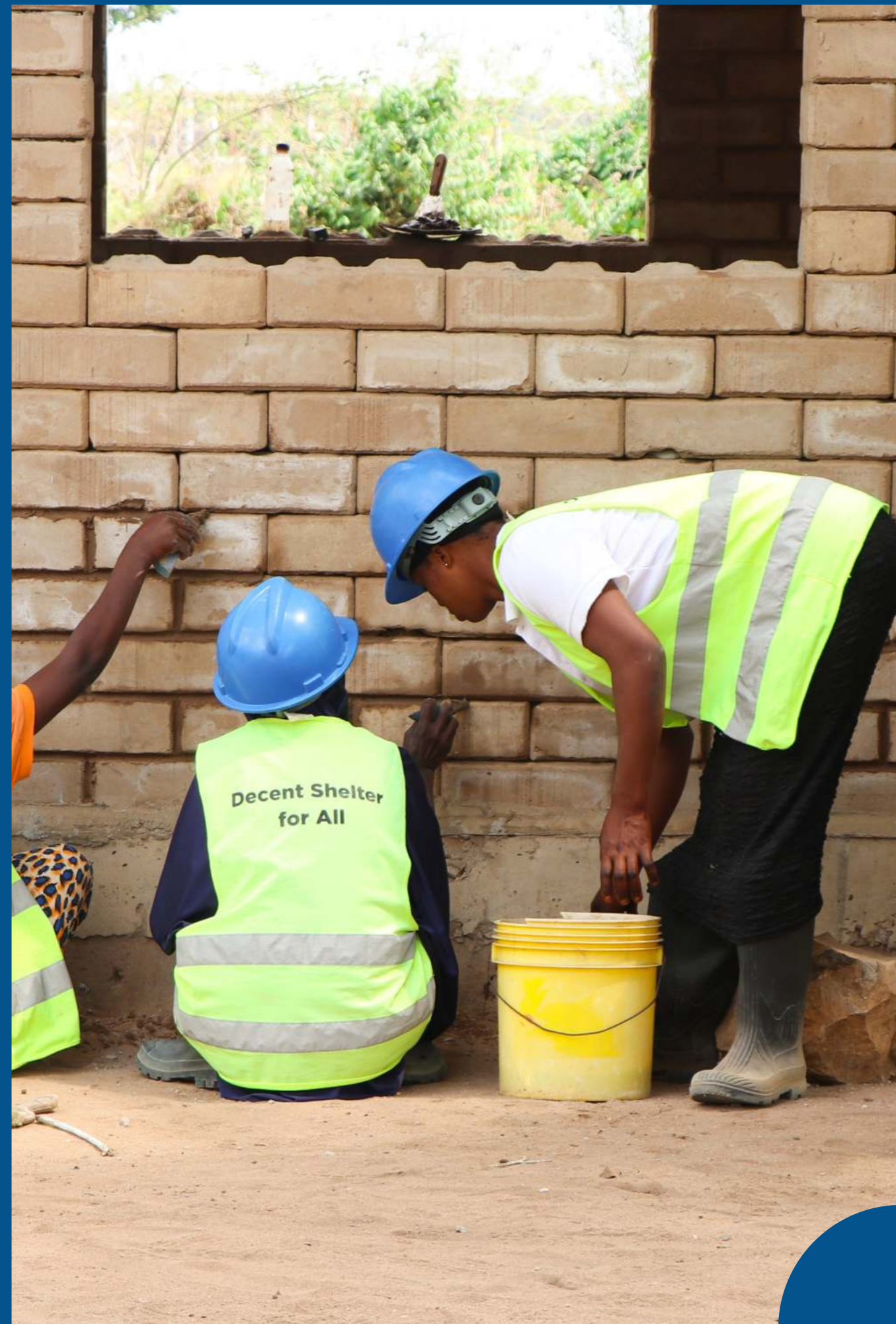
## Recognising Women: Transforming Mhaga Society through Innovative Practices

*By Gloria Yohana Mushi*

The construction industry, once steadfastly male-dominated, is undergoing a profound transformation, with women emerging as a dynamic force that's reshaping its landscape. In the following pages, we will shed light on the pioneering efforts of TAWAH women and the Mhaga women, individuals who are not only shattering barriers but also serving as guiding beacons for the future of women in construction. The essence of this article is to applaud these trailblazers, recognize their remarkable contributions, and ignite inspiration for generations of female construction workers to come.

For too long, women's presence in the construction industry has been relegated to the sidelines. However, times are changing, and the narrative is being rewritten. This article is dedicated to celebrating the extraordinary women who are leading by example and driving change. Our objective is twofold: to give these exceptional women the spotlight they deserve and to pave the way for the upcoming generation of women in the construction workforce. What was once perceived as a male stronghold is now evolving into a more inclusive realm, where women are not just finding a place but are carving out their legacies.

At the heart of this movement stands TAWAH, the Tanzania Women in Architecture and Housing organization. Established with the initial aim of advocating for "Decent Shelter for All," TAWAH has



taken a giant leap forward with this year's theme, "Women are Builders." This theme transcends the organization's earlier mission, positioning the construction sector as an ideal avenue for women to nurture their careers, contribute their skills, and infuse their creativity. This expanded vision signifies a turning point in the industry, where traditional gender roles are being challenged, and the potential of women is being recognized and embraced.

Construction is more than just erecting buildings; it's a symphony of ideas, skills, and innovation that culminate in tangible structures shaping our environment. This notion finds embodiment in the Mhaga Village project—a living testament to the power of collaboration and inclusivity. Grounded in the idea of community empowerment, this initiative champions the active involvement of both genders. Embracing appropriate technology and fostering community engagement have been pivotal to the project's success, underscoring the transformative potential that arises when diverse voices join forces.

For too long, women's presence in the construction industry has been relegated to the sidelines. However, times are changing, and the narrative is being rewritten.

- Gloria Yohana Mushi

Crucial to the Mhaga Village project's triumph was women's ability to harness technology and equipment effectively. Affordability and accessibility played key roles in ensuring the project's sustainability and its benefits for the community. The inception of the TAWAH Women's Vocational Training Centre within the village provided a nurturing space for women to exchange skills and insights. Through on-the-job apprenticeships that combined theory and practice, these women not only honed their construction expertise but also fostered a collaborative environment where challenges were openly discussed and addressed.

While the road to progress demanded dedication and time, the results are palpable. As the dawn of 2023 broke, TAWAH and the Mhaga women fundis celebrated significant milestones. Notable among them were the completed homes for community members Bibi Kisozi, Mzee Maunda, and Bibi Mseke, finalized in November 2022. The community, in collaboration with TAWAH, ITV Media, and others, shared in the joy and significance of these transformative experiences. Witnessing elders owning improved homes crafted by the hands of women from their village reinforced the notion that women are not just participants; they are pioneers shaping tangible change.

The journey of women's empowerment in construction is far from over. The stories shared here are a testament to the strides being made but also a reminder that there's more ground to cover. Encouraging women to embrace construction careers, offering avenues for training and mentorship, and fostering a culture of inclusivity will be pivotal in sustaining this momentum. As we conclude this chapter, we are filled with hope and optimism. The women in construction are not merely crafting structures; they are architects of change, designing a more inclusive, equitable, and inspiring future.





13. CLIMATE ACTION



15. LIFE ON LAND

## Green is My Best Colour

By Catherine Meena

It is another cool Friday morning and everybody is excited to go for a site visit in Kisarawe. I rise early in the morning so that I may have access to my usual window seat on the bus. A lot of things are running through my mind. How will the progress be? Will we reach early enough? How is Bibi Kisozi doing? I have so many other thoughts. Let the journey begin!

After a while, there I am slumbering since I did wake up so early so that I could not miss the bus. In the middle of my dream, I heard a voice saying, "Hey, we are in Kisarawe." Now it is time to wake up fast. At last, I have reached Kisarawe. Looking through the window I see men carrying large heavy sacks full of charcoal balanced on their motorbikes. OMG! Is this how Kisarawe is welcoming me today with all what is going on in the country and world concerning the environment - climate change, loss of biodiversity, air pollution in which the root cause is human activities; deforestation, overgrazing, burning the forest and bushes. In Tanzania these setbacks have been felt.

Shortage of rain has brought scarcity of food in some areas and interruptions of the power supply since a large percentage of electricity generated in the country is through water. TAWAH is very much aware that conserving our environment is beneficial not only for our current generation but also for the future generations. Thus, in handling the Mhaga project, from the conceptual stage conserving the environment was considered. This was done by preserving trees at the construction site to provide a good source of shade and ideal outdoor seating areas for people. The hard landscape for the women's centre is a small proportion of the larger soft landscape that provides green coverage, more fresh air, and less noise pollution. The trees absorb noise, protect against wind, provide privacy, increase shade and contribute to rain formation.

Do you think the journey of TAWAH towards environmental conservation ended there? Let me tell you about another aspect, namely how we treat waste to conserve our environment.

In the Mhaga project TAWAH made sure that waste is properly treated and can be used for other activities. For instance, TAWAH designed a plant to process wastewater to be suitable to irrigate flowers while solid waste is transformed into manure.

We all desire to leave a positive mark on the world. We are all capable of leaving a mark that could survive many years to come just by the act of planting a tree. TAWAH has made it possible for so many people around the world to leave their mark. It is the culture here in TAWAH that whenever someone visits Mhaga, they must plant a tree. This is exciting to know that it doesn't matter where you will go, there will be someone in Mhaga village taking special care with tenderness of your tree.

What are you waiting for? Welcome to Kisarawe! Let's keep our environment green and create some sweet memories.

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now."

- Chinese Proverb





1. NO POVERTY



3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

## Restoring the Lost Smile

By Nelly Victor Mleleu

You can never know how much you have touched another person's life until someone says something about your doings with a genuine smile. Fatuma Kisozi, also known as Bibi Kisozi, is among the first beneficiaries of the Mhaga project. Bibi Kisozi was alive even before Tanzania's Independence in 1961 and comes from a polygamous family. Her father, Kembe Sombi Kisozi had 15 wives with 25 children. Ten of them are the children of Bibi Kisozi's mother, Asha Mshindo. Bibi Kisozi was born in Malumbo Village. After some years her family shifted to Mhaga. She lost a lot of her siblings remaining with 4 out of 25. She was married twice. The first marriage was with Mr Koba Mkangazi. They were blessed with 4 children before he died. Bibi Kisozi married again to Mr Abdalla Lijanduka and moved to Vingunguti in Dar es Salaam. There they built 2 houses and had 4 children together before he also died. Bibi Kisozi had 8 children in total but 7 passed away and she remained with one. She and her remaining son continued to live in one of the two houses her husband had left them until they decided to sell one house due to financial reasons and continued to live in the other which needed repair.



In 2010, Bibi Kisozi could not support herself. Her life was very difficult in town while her mother was very sick, so she had enough reasons to go back to the village. She stayed with her mom and took care of her until her mom died later in the same year. After her mom died, Bi. Kisozi decided to remain in the village and lived in a house which lacked a proper roof, door, and toilet. She was in danger all the time during both the rainy and dry seasons, day and night, even robbers came to grab and steal the little things that she possessed. During some of the rainy days she used to seek comfort in her neighbour's house, who is also her nephew, Mr Athuman Said Mselema. Mr Mselema described his aunt's life as sad and said that she had lost hope due to all the problems that she faced and because there was nowhere to get help.

“Building a home is not just about bricks and mortar, its about rebuilding hope and dreams”

- Unknown Author

Bi. Kisozi's life was a roller coaster whereby she had lost many of her loved ones, which faded her smile. Mr Mselema is glad to see his aunt benefiting from TAWAH's project and insists that this should not stop and the project should proceed to touch other people's lives. He is very happy to see what happened to his aunt, whom he has known for a very long time through the ups and downs she encountered before she decided to go back to the village and live in the uncompleted house she built close to his house. He said “I am very glad and I thank the organisation (TAWAH) very much for building my aunt a house. My aunt is very glad and she always speaks with happy tears all the time about the house and all the people who facilitated this project.”

Bibi Kisozi with a big smile in a ITV Media special report of December 21, 2022 said, “I didn't know there is humanity. I didn't know there is luxury. I can now sleep until sunrise. I say thank you for this new house, you have saved my life, you saved me from diseases, you saved from loneliness, you saved me from feeling poor. I sleep well these days. I am grateful. Thank you!”



## Intergrating with the World's Agenda

*By Suhayla T. Abdulla*

Nothing in this world is established without goals. As we established the Mhaga project we had a lot of goals that we wanted to achieve. One of these goals was to fulfil the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). The SDG's are the global goals established by the UN in 2015 as a call to take action in order to enhance global development.

Us, as TAWAH, we work with the society to make our modest contribution to global development. In our Mhaga project we took action on the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the following sectors.

Starting with SDG no 3: 'Good Health and Well Being', better health starts from where you live, your home, healthy lifestyles even hopes from people around you. The Mhaga project aimed to provide village elders with a healthy lifestyle by replacing older deteriorated homes with homes of a good quality design and construction. SDG no 4: 'Quality Education', the main goal of the Mhaga project is to ensure that unemployed women from Mhaga Village get new skills to unlock the door for

new opportunities and start new careers to improve their individual economic situations. In taking action with SDG no 5: 'Gender Equality', we are enabling women to participate in construction. As we know the construction sector is mostly thought of in terms of men being the main workers, but this project shows women can do better in construction.

Looking at SDG no 6: 'Clean Water and Sanitation', we established rainwater harvesting systems for all the wazee houses and a wastewater treatment system at the TAWAH Women's Vocational Centre whereby water can be reused to ease the water shortage at Mhaga Village.

Considering the important SDG no 7: 'Affordability and Clean Energy', mud-bricks were used for the construction of all our buildings. These are local made and affordable and do not consume a lot of carbon. All our buildings are designed to use natural ventilation so clean air can pass through and keep everyone cool. The use of cement was minimised in favour of the soil available at the

building site to make the affordable mudbricks for the construction of the Mhaga buildings. The production of mudbricks was one way to reduce carbon footprints and reduce the embodied energy for our project. All buildings for the Mhaga project avoid artificial ventilation and instead used natural air by enlarging the size of the openings and orienting all buildings in such a way that natural light can pass through allowing people in the building to breath natural clean air. This SDG goes directly to the SDG 13: 'Climate Action', by reducing impacts on the environment by emphasizing natural ways of producing construction materials and reducing the production of embodied energy.

We talked about healthy homes, bricks and women empowerment. Do you think all these could exist without innovation? The TAWAH Women's Vocational Centre is the hub of all our activities. At the Vocational Centre we emphasize innovation, like the production of affordable bricks that are used to construct all of our buildings for the project and all of the work is done by Mhaga women. This is in line with SDG 9: 'Industrial Innovation and Infrastructures'.

Concluding with SDG 8: 'Decent Work and Economic Growth', TAWAH influences economic growth by creating job opportunities for the women villagers from which they get payment every week. This acts as their source of income and helps them save their money for upgrading their life standards. They create small groups known as 'vikoba' which help them to save their money in small amounts. Also, some of women have already opened bank accounts as a safe place for saving their larger amounts of money.





17. PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



## It is Everyone's Responsibility

By Victoria Heilman

The success of the Mhaga project was not only due to the efforts of women but was also made possible by men who played essential roles during the training and construction stages. The Mhaga women would have never learned to build without the gracious, helpful, and patient instruction from our skilled male fundis.

We recognise and give credit to Mohamed Nchapwaye, whom we call 'fundu Mudi', who has been and continues to be the backbone of TAWAH. We have known fundu Mudi for more than 6 years. We first met him in Pongwe, Tanga when he jumped on board to help us with the finishing touches before the official handover of our classroom block to Pongwe Primary School. His big heart and willingness to help others is what keeps him very close to TAWAH. Mhaga Village is about 79 km from Dar es Salaam. The starting phase of construction work can be hectic and tedious. Fundu Mudi was ready to leave his family in Dar es Salaam and stay full-time in Mhaga Village to make sure we got started with site clearance, building site storage, and that all needed infrastructure

was in place for us to begin construction and training. Since the start of the project fundu Mudi remained full-time in Mhaga Village and is our site manager, trainer and a link between TAWAH and the Mhaga community.

Another person who has provided invaluable service to TAWAH is Mzee Akida who is an engineer by profession and owner of Razmo Construction Company Limited. He is a very good friend of TAWAH and supports our construction projects by providing advice on construction techniques, materials and linking us with his skilled fundis to help with construction and trainings. He is our first contact when we need fundis and site supervision. We give him all the credit for the roof work on the vocational centre - asante sana Mzee Akida.

Our utmost gratitude also goes to fundu Amosi Mgonja, our carpenter and roof expert; fundu Dani our electrician; fundu Eddo our plumber; fundu Hasani our mason; fundu Fanuel our wastewater technician; and Mr Heri Hatibu our soil and brickmaking expert from the Building Research Institute in Dar es Salaam. Without their help we would not have accomplished anything. Thank you!

TAWAH and the Mhaga women would like to show our appreciation for another group of men without whose help the project could not have succeeded. The Hon. Kisarawe District Commissioner Nickson Simon put his full

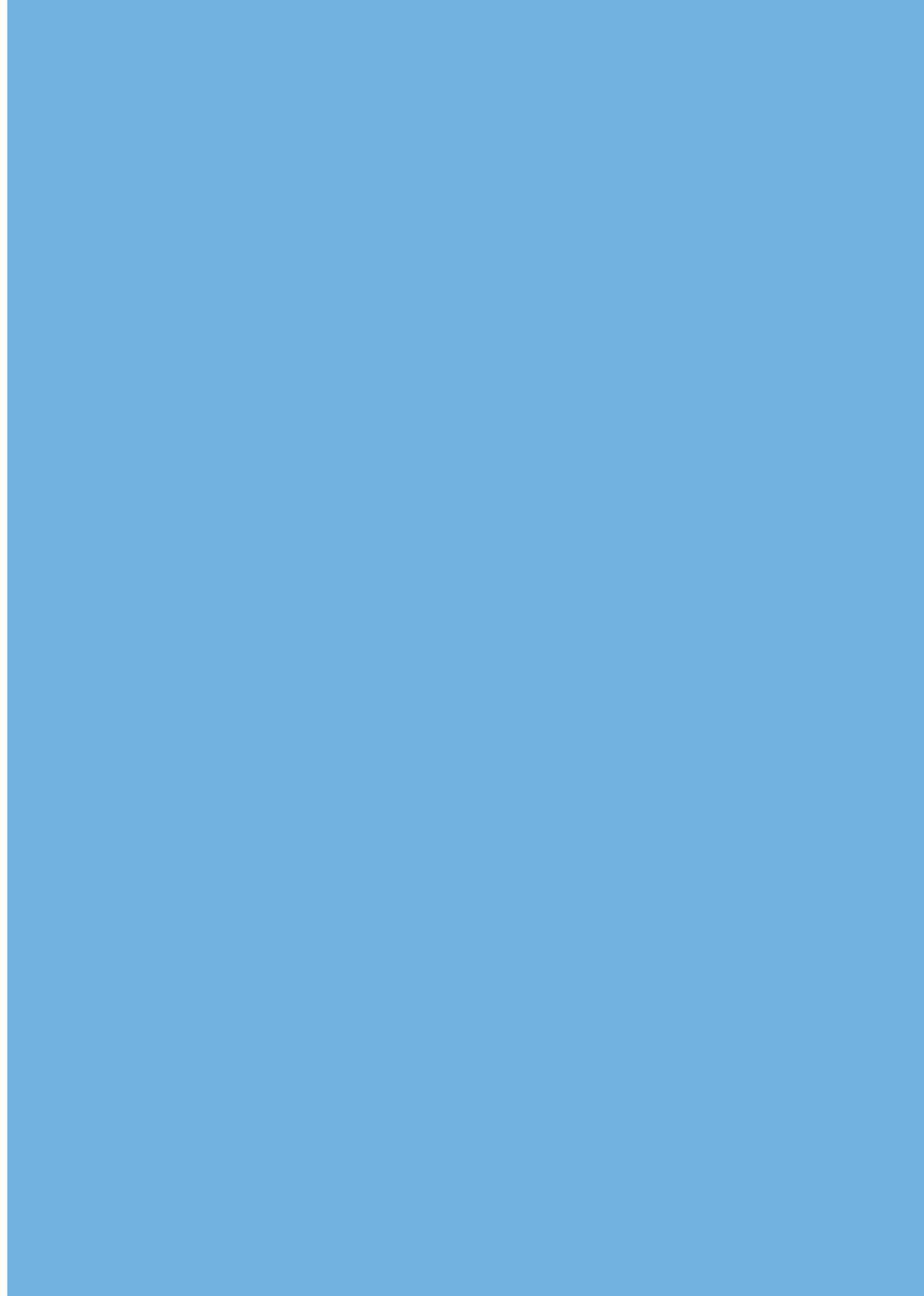


Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone's responsibility

- Ban Ki Moon, the Eighth Secretary General of the United Nations

support behind the project from the start. Mr. Sabasaba Moshingi arranged for training on financial literacy for the Mhaga women via the Tanzania Commercial Bank, while our friends from ITV Media Benjamin Mzinga and Rogers Peter helped spread TAWAH's message of 'women's empowerment'. TAWAH also extends its thanks to Agha Media for documenting our work through photography and videography. To all Mhaga Village leaders under the guidance of Mzee Kilumbi and all the men who have in one way or another supported the Mhaga project, we say thank you! Improving the lives of women is improving the lives of all Tanzanians and it is not done by women alone but by women and men working together in brother and sisterhood. As Ban Ki Moon, the Eighth Secretary General of the United Nations said: "Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone's responsibility."







***Decent Shelter for All***