



Embassy of the United States of America

March 1, 2012

Danielle Miller
Director and Regional Librarian
Washington Talking Book & Braille Library
2021 9th Ave., Seattle, WA 98121-2783

Dear Ms. Miller:

On behalf of the U.S. Embassy Nairobi I am writing to thank you for the wonderful book donation to the Thika Secondary School for the Blind, located in Thika, Kenya, just outside of Nairobi. The Thika Secondary School for the Blind is one of the premier schools for the blind in Kenya that works with visually impaired young men and women. During my visit I was told that many of their graduates go on to study at Kenyatta University, Nairobi (KU) and I did indeed see the section of the KU Library that serves physically challenged and visually impaired students prior to my visit the Thika School.

The book donation took part thanks to KU Professor Daniel Wambiri, who visited your institution last year while on a State Department program entitled the International Visitors Leadership Program that sends up and coming foreign nationals to the US on various short term study programs. Mr. Wambiri took it upon himself to seek donations from you and organized the visit to the Thika School to donate the books. This is exactly the kind of activity we hope results from our international exchanges. Mr. Wambiri is a professor in the KU School of Library and Information Science. The Dean of the School, Dr. E.W. Muya, led our visit to the Thika School and offered to partner with them to provide library and information services as part of their community outreach program. Needless to say the Principal of the Thika School accepted.

I cannot tell you how excited the students were to receive the books. Although I went along only to learn more about Professor's Wambiri's activities I was deeply moved and hope to assist in their partnership with the Thika School. Most of the public schools I've seen in Kenya suffer from poor facilities and a lack of resources but do not suffer from a lack of commitment from their teachers and administrators. The Thika School has a better library than most school libraries that I've seen in Kenya and this speaks volumes about the school's administration. They have created a modest Braille Library of curricular materials and have the materials properly organized in a clean, well maintained library that they hope to expand.

I am particularly interested in working with Professors Muya and Wambiri because I am a librarian myself and work as a librarian for the Department of State, based at the U.S. Embassy Nairobi. Although I am based here I travel to several East African countries to work with our U.S. Embassies and American Corners. American Corners are partnerships with local institutions such as libraries and NGOs. We give them books and other materials about the U.S. as well as computers and the host institutions staff the Corners and conduct programs about American society, our culture and values. We have three such Corners in Kenya located in Kisumu, Lamu, and Mombasa. Unfortunately, they lack resources to serve the visually impaired or physically challenged due to budgetary constraints. Our Public Affairs Section in the U.S. Embassy also lacks the necessary financial resources to develop collections at our American

Corners that could serve the visually and physically challenged or at schools such as the Thika School or KU.

Thus, your offer to send donated materials to Kenya will meet a great need in this developing country and will go along way to give visually impaired students a chance to succeed in life. Because I am not an expert in Braille materials I very much appreciate your guidance in sending us whatever materials you can spare and if we do obtain funding to expand on it I may seek your advice.

Finally, I want to note we have a Library of Congress Field Office located in the U.S. Embassy Nairobi that is directed by Pamela Howard-Reguindin. Pamela and I work together whenever we can and I inform her about our activities.

Again, let me express my appreciation for your willingness to partner with Mr. Wambiri and with the U.S. Embassy and I assure you the materials you send will be put to good use.

Sincerely,



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Students receiving and reading Braille books donated by the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library