



Goodness Massawe, 24, was born in the village of Imbaseni a healthy child. At age three, she became disabled due to unknown causes, and has since been confined to a "wheelchair", originally, a plastic garden chair equipped with bike tires. Her days were spent idly at home, able only to sit and watch as her family left the house every morning to work or study. In Tanzania, disabled people find it very difficult to participate in even the simplest of social and educational events. Roads are difficult to navigate for the physically impaired and buildings such as schools and businesses are not equipped for access or utilization by the disabled.

Goodness's neighbors mentioned the Jifundishe Free Library to her, and eventually she found someone to push her wheelchair up the bumpy, uneven road to see it for herself. She discovered that the library had all the books she'd missed being unable to attend school, and she began to study at the library. With the help of the library staff, she learned to read and write.

When a Jifundishe volunteer started a knitting class at the library, Goodness joined and began to knit well, despite her handicap. She sold the pieces she completed to Jifundishe to sell at fundraisers, earning enough from the sales to buy herself a real aluminum frame wheelchair, which takes more easily to the rugged road. Now she is able to come to the library every day.

Goodness is pursuing her self-directed studies and sees a future of self sufficiency. She would like to one day work in an office, and feels that with enough hard work she can prepare herself for employment. Although the odds of her actually getting a job are very small, she perseveres and works very hard at her knitting and her studies. "Now she's seeing different because she has something that she didn't have before," her sister says.

There are many people in Tanzania in a situation similar to Goodness's; trapped in a rural location due to physical or logistical barriers, prevented from learning because of the difficulty of traveling to an urban center, where a library, if there is one, would be located. Having the Jifundishe Free Library located in her rural village has meant "the world" to Goodness.