



Angelina Laisser, born in 1951 in Arusha, has an adventurous spirit. As the head of her household, which includes her aged mother and herself, she courageously embraces every opportunity to support herself and her mother.

In 2005, Jifundishe approached her about creating a library in a building on her property. An educated woman, Mama Laisser attended school through secretarial college, in a time when most women her age were unable to even attend primary school. Recognizing the value of education, and wanting to help bring those opportunities to young people in the village, she consented to Jifundishe's request and refused to charge them rent for the first two years of the library's existence. "We are really lucky to have Jifundishe here," she says, "because everybody now is free to read."

Even after moving to its current location, Mama Laisser remains an active part of the Jifundishe Free Library. She and seven other ladies began to bead as part of a project organized by the library. "It's not a small project, it's a way of earning money," she says. The library provides the materials and the women gather to bead and socialize together. For each piece a member of the group completes, she earns a certain amount of money, and an equal amount is deposited into a fund collectively controlled by the group. Their first decision was to go to the eye doctor, and Jifundishe split the cost of transportation, doctor fees, and, for some, glasses. They have also used money from the fund to buy seeds for farming, allowing them to farm twice a year.

But Mama Laisser continues to keep an open mind for new ideas. Reading in the library one day, she encountered a book about pigs. She applied her readings to the pigs she owned, adjusting the way she cared for them based on what she had read in the book. She currently owns around 30. In addition to raising pigs, Mama Laisser has chickens, goats, and cows and grows products like maize and bananas.

Because she is able to read English, Mama Laisser has been able to take advantage of the many books at the Jifundishe Free Library. She inspired the library director to offer adult literacy classes to adults in the community so that more people would be able to take advantage of the opportunities for learning that the books have to offer. More than 40 adults living in the village have enrolled in the classes.