



Raising six children is not easy anywhere. With no house, no husband, no income and no social services to rely on, MamaDebora spends each day struggling to feed and educate herself and her children. Some might wonder why this woman would bring six children into her world. She never actually made that choice. The sad fact is that women living in rural Tanzania have very little control over their sexual experiences and knowledge of reliable birth control methods is almost non-existent. Culturally, men dictate

the sexual encounters in marriage. And as often happens, when the pressure to provide for a large family grew and the going got rough, her husband abandoned the family and has not been heard from for years.

With her family crammed into a tiny rented room, she went looking for a way for her oldest daughter, Debora, to remain in secondary school for one more year in order to finish and have that all important "leaving certificate". She knows it is the only way that Debora will ever obtain any meaningful employment, and knows that even those chances are few. She does not want her daughter to live with the hardship that she has come to accept.

Having learned about the Houston Scholarship Fund through school administrators, MamaDebora camped out at the Jifundishe Free Library for a week, waiting each day to meet with someone who might provide assistance to her daughter. After finally making contact and describing her need, she was given an application for the fund.

The Houston Scholarship Fund intake process includes a visit to each student's home to assess their living situation. During the visit, the assessment team discovered that at some point in her life, MamaDebora had learned to knit. They explained that the Jifundishe Free Library hosted a knitting club where women gathered informally to learn to knit and improve their skills. Although it was a two-hour walk to the library from her home, MamaDebora began attending the club meetings where she had access to needles and yarn donated from abroad, as well as a local teacher who helped her to improve her skills. She learned to knit basic hats, scarves and small items and recently she sold a number of her items to the Jifundishe Online Holiday Shop, receiving over \$100.00; a sum that would normally take three or four months to earn selling her vegetables at a market stall.

MamaDebora's knitting skills improve every day and she is able to make hats and scarves for her children as well as small items to sell locally. When she is able to come to the library, she enjoys the company of other women, all struggling with the same issues of providing for their families and is encouraged by their support.

Debora is her first born child. MamaDebora hopes to be able to send all of her children to school so that they have a chance at sustainable lives. Despite the odds, she remains hopeful and continues to work to improve her family's condition.