



They say a picture is worth a thousand words.

Look closely at this picture. **It tells a thousand stories** – stories of hope and opportunity, and stories of **how you truly can make a difference**.

On the right is Aginatha Festo Rutazaa, a community worker who lives in the village of Moshi near Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

In 2009, Aginatha participated in Equitas' renowned International Human Rights Training Program (IHRTIP) in Montreal, where she came to understand that by financially empowering women who were traditionally marginalized and at risk, they could solve many of their problems and improve their living conditions themselves.

Upon her return to Tanzania, this single mother of two left her secure job to start a new organization, *Tusonge* – a Swahili word meaning “let’s move forward”. Through local workshops, she began coaching women who were selling second hand clothes in local markets on how to borrow and invest. She helped women develop a plan of action for the improvement of the status of women which was publicized and discussed during the local elections. She encouraged women to vote and to run for office. She helped the women start a credit circle. She helped them become aware of and fight for their inheritance rights.

You can help bring a human rights defender to the IHRTIP!



Aginatha in 2009 (middle row, 2nd from right) at Equitas' International Human Rights Training Program (IHRTIP)

And... the community began to change.

Women were talking. Women were being heard. Women were voting. More women than ever before were elected at the district level. They were becoming more successful at business and thus had more money – they could afford to send their kids to school. They invested in and managed the credit circle, lending money to women who needed it and supporting other members of the community who were in need. They could afford better food and nutrition, which in turn improved their health, and the health of their children and those living with HIV/AIDS. They helped a widow reclaim her matrimonial home after customary practices had forced her out following her husband's death.

You can help ensure that more people like Aginatha are better equipped to make amazing and life-changing differences in their communities!



Left to right: Zainabu Zuberi, Sauda Lubuva, Halima Saidi and Salma Mdee – all beneficiaries of Tusonge's entrepreneurship skills development and HIV/AIDS trainings. Since their involvement with Tusonge, these women have increased their small business assets tenfold.

This was all unheard of before.

These women, who were living hand-to-mouth, selling second hand clothes in the market, many infected by their husbands with HIV/AIDS and cast out, unable to properly care for themselves and their families, with no support systems...these women went from marginalized second class citizens to women who were lobbying for property rights, voting and being elected, forming and running credit circles, developing their businesses, improving their health and that of their families, ensuring their children's education...and this happened in less than one year.

This is the type of change that occurs when you support Equitas.

These are the people whose lives you help change. Did you ever really imagine **how important your support is?**

But there is more to this story

On the left side of the photo is a little girl, Tatu Joseph, eight years old, who comes from the village of Mwembeni. One month prior to this photo being taken, Tatu was orphaned, both her parents lost to AIDS. She too is infected.



Tatu Joseph

Tusonge women offering school supplies to other AIDS orphans

Agnes Kambi is the third person in the picture. Agnes has a grade 7 education and supports her family by selling fish. A beneficiary of *Tusonge's* services, she has improved her skills and increased her sales. Following the death of Tatu's parents, Agnes became her guardian. In the photo, Tatu is receiving a box of school supplies purchased by the group using some of the profits in the credit circle's 'communal pot'. While it is Agnes who looks after Tatu directly, it is the responsibility of the whole community of women to ensure that Tatu and 29 other children in similar circumstances are given every opportunity to develop and succeed in life.

These are the people whose lives you help change.

Since 1967, Equitas has helped over 3200 human rights defenders like Aginatha bring about incredible and transformative changes in their communities. Following participation in Equitas programs, they are better able to protect the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups, hold governments accountable for abuses of human rights and empower their communities to participate more effectively in decision-making processes.

But the fact is that for far too many people in far too many places, international human rights standards and laws remain just words. And due to illiteracy and a lack of education, many remain unaware of and unable to defend their basic rights. But this doesn't only happen in far-away countries.

In Canada, many groups face discrimination. In this age of debates over reasonable accommodation and concerns over violence amongst children and youth, our programs in 18 communities from Victoria to St. John's are helping Canadian children learn positive behaviours based on the values of respect for diversity, cooperation, fairness, acceptance, responsibility, inclusion and cooperation, right here at home.

You can help train more community workers to protect the rights of marginalized groups and improve their living conditions!

This is why it is imperative that, like for Aginatha and the women of *Tusonge*, human rights principles and values take on even greater meaning in our daily life – everywhere.

For this, **Equitas needs your support. We need your help.**

With your help, we can do much more.

Just think how the world might change if we could replicate Aginatha's success in even more communities!



Aginatha (centre) leading an activity with women from her organization, Tusonge

Your support is so important, so vital, and so appreciated.

While our programs are having a considerable impact in many parts of the world, we simply cannot do it alone.



Tusonge community workers

Please consider a gift to Equitas this holiday season.

Please help Aginatha and thousands of other brave human rights defenders around the world help people like Tatu and Agnes.

Aginatha tells us:

"It is Equitas which raised my understanding and interest to start this organization which supports women. The IHRTP programme was an eye opener to me. It helped me find the gold within me."

The women from *Tusonge* and many others like them around the world are accomplishing miracles with so little. **During this holiday season, please help them spread more miracles.**

On behalf of Aginatha, Tatu, Agnes, Zainabu, Saida, Halima, Salma and so many more, **Thank you.** May the holiday season bring you miracles, too.

Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Hamilton".

Ian Hamilton
Executive Director

PS: Please consider making a monthly donation! Monthly giving is an easy way for you to generously support Equitas!

PPS: Celebrate the holidays by giving a gift of human rights. Make a donation in the name of a loved one and we will send them a beautiful card featuring Equitas alumni putting human rights education into action in Uganda.

For more information visit our website equitas.org or call 514-954-0382 ext 241

Thank you for supporting Equitas.

Your generosity helps change lives