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Age: 63

Gender: Male

Library: Tiwi

The first time I heard of the village galled Vinuni, I conjectured a mystical cultural site somewhere within a sacred jungle where only traditional high priests visited to seek guidance from mysterious deities governing the affairs of the villagers. But that was how far I allowed by imagination to go.

Practically all I needed was to take a detour from the Mombasa/Lungalunga highway along the Kenyan south coast at a centre called Tiwi next to the perimeter fence of the Kenya Bixa Company. A stretch of recently tarmacked road will lead you to a bumpy marammed rough road about 500 meters from the highway. The precariously eroded edges of the road will lead your sight to a panoramic view of the countryside. A drying seasonal swamp on the left side of the road is a life giver to herds of cattle and goats that drink water from it as well as young boys occasionally visit the swamp to throw in fishing lines hoping to take home a cache of mudfish. There are also huge ditches dangerously close to the road as a result of seasoned sand harvesting which provide a source of income to homesteads.

The rough road is a betrayal of the wonder that awaits your sight at your destination. Vinuni primary school is without a signboard that will help you locate its position, but the tranquillity of the surroundings enhanced by tall trees and a lawn fence provide a perfect setting for an educational institute about 200 meters off the road.

The headteacher at Vinuni primary school was kind and offered me a chair in the staffroom and ordered a cup of tea for me as she assured me of my welcome and expected visit. I sipped my tea as I also admired her commanding presence while issuing directives to the other teaching staff in the room. She was of average height, light skinned, charismatic and beautiful. One would easily be forced to struggle to control his romantic imagination when closely engaged in a discussion with her. She took notice of my tattooed hands and a short conversation followed concerning tattoo art as I took the opportunity to offer to design a signboard identifying the schools location.

While out of the staffroom she offered me another chair under a tree next to a container as other guests started to arrive.

The isolated container turned out to be a library – Tiwi community library. This was the object of our gathering. Under the tree, we discussed politics and the impending GenZs countrywide protests against the government's finance bill 2024. Once inside the container the discussion took a different turn. 'If western education took root in our country starting from the coastline to the hinterland how did we coasterians lag behind in academic excellence?' that was the big question that generated a heated debate focussing on the under utilized library which was donated to the community – a treasure of knowledge.

The men and women gathered in the library exhibited sound knowledge of the job at hand. A farmer was envisaged struggling in the village to improve his farm yields without proper

modern farming technology, and quickly a stack of corresponding books were sorted out and placed on the shelves. With the presence of school headteachers in the room corresponding books to the needs of school children took a centre stage in the discussion and just at the entrance of the library relevant books were stacked on shelves for pupils' reading.

Different occupations common within the community were discussed and accordingly books were sorted out and arranged on shelves. Each one of us was challenged to take home at least one book for reading. As an artist I was surprised to see the librarian Mr Bahati easily picking a stack of art books for me to choose from. The most fascinating idea on how to engage more people in the use of the library was the proposal to initiate satellite library programmes aimed at taking books to where people are occasionally gathered like the market places.

At Tiwi community library the commitment to efficient service delivery is on another level.

If Mohammed can not come to the mountain, the mountain must come to Mohammed!