

Tanzanian Partners

Our orientation facilitator, **Steven Ndotsi**, studied early childhood development and pedagogy in Denmark, earned bachelor's and master's degrees in development studies in Tanzania and Uganda, respectively, and has pursued additional training in pedagogy. He has for decades taught children and adults of all ages on topics ranging from Swahili language and cross-cultural communication to community development and child rights. Steven has a long history of collaboration with Luther College and other educational institutions around the world, most notably schools in the US, Denmark, and Norway. For many years he provided an intensive in-country orientation for students participating in the semester-long Lutheran Colleges Consortium for Tanzania (LCCT) program involving students from Luther, Concordia, St. Olaf, and Pacific Lutheran. Since the start of the Luther College January Term program in 2002, Steven has taught orientation modules focusing on the peoples, cultures, and political history of Tanzania and provided our students with an intensive introduction to Swahili, the national language. He has hosted Luther groups at his home on the slopes of Mount Meru and arranged for our participants to meet with students and teachers at Naurey Golden Soil Secondary School, which he established near his home in Nkoanrua.

The Alumni and Friends group will visit Steven's school, tour his coffee and avocado farm, roast and grind coffee beans to make their own hot brew, and be treated to a lunch prepared by Steven's wife, Magdalena, one of the finest cooks in all of East Africa.

Allan Mollel, our tour operator, was born in Monduli Juu and raised in the semi-nomadic Maasai community of Longido near the border with Kenya. He spent much of his childhood tending goats and cows on the savanna, which fostered his intimate understanding of the landscape and wildlife of northern Tanzania. Unlike many of his peers, Allan had the good fortune to attend secondary school, which is how he came to know of Luther College. One of his teachers was Laura Wangsness (now Willemsen) '97, who first visited Tanzania as an LCCT program participant and returned to the country for a two-year teaching commitment at Moringe Sokoine Secondary School in Monduli. Allan and Laura, who is transitioning from her role as associate professor of education at Concordia University-St. Paul to Director of Global Initiatives with the University of Minnesota Extension, have remained fast friends and have collaborated on a variety of projects over the years. From 2004-2006, Allan lived in Seattle, Washington, while participating in EarthCorps International, a program designed to develop leadership skills in youth from the US and 80 other countries and to teach them best practices in community-based environmental restoration. From 2007-2008, Allan studied at Mweka College of Wildlife Management, Tanzania's premier institution specializing in professional and technical training for wildlife and tourism management. He now has nearly 30 years of experience in the wildlife tourism industry, and in 2016 he founded Maape Tanzania Safaris with the intention of preserving and celebrating the unique flora and

fauna of Tanzania and the cultural heritage of East Africa and the Maasai people. He is passionate about integrating traditional Maasai ecological knowledge with the Western conservation practices that he learned from his training in the US. A highly regarded safari company owner and operator, Allan is currently on the governing board of Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO).

Allan and his team will be hosting our group from the moment of our arrival until our departure at the end of the trip. Allan has arranged all accommodations, transport, excursions, and guides. He will be traveling with us for the entire program and is ready and eager to answer all our questions about local wildlife, landscapes, peoples, and cultures.

Musa Kamaika Meng'arana has worked with Luther College January Term groups since 2010, initially as a novice cultural guide and translator but in recent years as the organizer of all in-country program logistics and as our principal guide. Musa has extensive experience as a research collaborator, including with Lori Stanley, Laura Wangsness Willemsen (see above) and another Luther alumna, Rachel Hodapp '13. He has conducted research alongside anthropologists, educators, climate change researchers, and USAID contractors. Following his first visit to the US and to Luther College in 2017, when he had an opportunity to visit a local preschool, Musa returned home determined to establish an early childhood education program in Eluwai, his rural Maasai village. Since then he has not only built a rapidly growing preschool, but has helped to support primary, secondary, and post-secondary students who otherwise would likely never have received a formal education. These education initiatives as well as projects focused on environmental conservation and restoration, women's literacy and skill development, and family planning have been undertaken by Natopiwo ('Lifted Up'), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) established by Musa. For the past two years, his NGO has been supported by the Decorah-based Natopiwo Partners, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded and directed by Jon Jensen, Lori Stanley, Laura Wangsness Willemsen, Rachel Hodapp, and a handful of others with long ties to Musa and Maasai communities in Tanzania. Musa also has been recently elected as *diwani*, or local government councilor, of his home ward, a clear sign that he has earned the trust and respect of his community.

Our Alumni and Friends Travel group will meet Musa near the start of our program and he will travel with us until the end of our stay. On our last full day in Tanzania, we will visit his home *boma*—his family's pastoralist homestead—as well as the Natopiwo Preschool he established nearby. We'll also learn about some of the other initiatives that Natopiwo and Natopiwo Partners are undertaking in the area.