



Q3 KEEP Report from Kakenya's Dream September 2022

CLASS 8 UPDATES

With the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams coming up in December, Class 8 students were working hard throughout the summer to be fully prepared. In June, they participated in joint exams with five other schools to establish benchmarks on their current learning progress. While remaining focused on their schoolwork, the girls are also finding time to build their leadership and physical skills through extracurricular activities like sports now that the government has loosened pandemic restrictions on traveling.

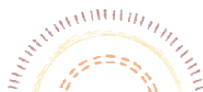
Interschool sports competitions resumed in July for volleyball and football, giving our students the opportunity to connect with peers outside the KCE I campus, develop healthy habits of exercise, and practice working in team-based settings. We are grateful for the recommencement of these activities, which are a key element of our holistic education model. Not only do they act as outlets for stress relief, but they also cultivate critical life skills like interpersonal communication and confidence that the girls need to become advocates for themselves and their education.



The 2022 school year still remains challenging, however, as the recent Kenyan presidential elections unexpectedly lengthened a half-term break from one week to two weeks in early August. While the elections were peaceful and there was no fear of violence, their effects on the academic calendar meant that our staff and teachers had to pivot quickly to restructure their syllabus to account for the shortened time. This remains a concern for us regarding the well-being of our students and the sustained pressure they face to learn all the materials adequately in time for their KCPE exams in less than three months. To mitigate this, students have access to study groups and teachers outside of the typical school day for additional tutoring and support.

New Directions

The continued nationwide rollout of the new Competency Based Curriculum (CBC), which emphasizes individual learning over class standardization, is anticipated to affect Class 8 students starting in 2024. This year, it was incorporated for Class 6 students, who will be taking their own



national exams in December. As a result of the changes from CBC and following significant discussions with government officials and our Kenyan Board of Directors, we will begin formally transitioning our boarding high school, KCE II, to include junior high school cohorts starting at Class 7 in 2023. The implementation of CBC remains complex, and we are seeing a significant need to retrain teachers across the county to effectively utilize this new curriculum's benefits for students. While the transition is creating new administrative and technical challenges, we look forward to seeing CBC in place, having already seen improvements in student learning outcomes for the classes that have undergone the curriculum change.



The difficulties of the CBC change and condensed school calendar meant that our staff and students were delighted to receive our founder and president, Kakenya, for the summer. Alongside critical strategy meetings with government and nonprofit partners, she welcomed new students and staff, provided inspirational encouragement for the girls, and oversaw the progress of our upcoming youth-friendly health clinic.

The clinic, which will be the first of its kind in our community, broke ground earlier this spring on the KCE campus. The programming is currently being crafted with attention to input from adolescent representatives from the local community. Features like family planning resources, counseling services, and inclusive operating hours will be part of the clinic's youth-centered approach. The clinic will serve as a major health intervention in our work to remove barriers like harmful traditional practices and a lack of accurate reproductive health knowledge that discourage girls from remaining in school. It is anticipated to open for community use in 2023.

Student Profile: Esther Kakenya

Before joining KCE I in 2018, Esther commuted every day to school from her aunt's house. Her days began early in the morning to complete household chores before going to school and the time she had left in the evenings to finish her schoolwork was cut short to fetch water from a far river, as her home had no running water. Her grades suffered as a result and her mother, who was single handedly raising four other children alongside Esther as a subsistence farmer, became concerned that her daughter's chance of a better future through education was slipping away. The fears of Esther's mother were well-founded, **given that less than 17% of girls in our communities even**



finish primary school due to high barriers like gender discrimination, intergenerational poverty, and societal expectations of girls as homemakers and wives. Hearing about the opportunities KCE provided for girls in similar circumstances, her mother took Esther to admission interviews in late 2017, where she was accepted into the then-incoming Grade 4 class shortly thereafter.

Since beginning her journey at KCE I four years ago, Esther's school and personal progress has come in leaps and bounds. **"My academic performance has greatly improved. I am more confident since we have been trained on leadership and how to express yourself."** With her interests varying from STEM subjects to playing football, Esther finds KCE I as the perfect environment to pursue her intellectual curiosities. She has the space and freedom she needs to grow as a student and, thriving under the mentorship of her teachers and KCE alumni, she cannot wait to see what her future holds.