

SPONSOR AN AFRICAN SCHOLAR

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DIGITAL NEWSPAPER

Issue 45



SAAS staff in Mombasa, Kenya. From left: Sylvia, Fred and Maria. The team coordinates the day-to-day operations of the office in Mombasa.

SAAS Marks 20 Years Founded in 2005

This year, Sponsor an African Scholar (SAAS) proudly celebrates 20 years of transforming lives through education in Kongowea, Mombasa, Kenya — thanks to you.

Since 2005, generous support from our donors and sponsors has enabled SAAS to help over 3,000 bright, deserving students pursue secondary and university education. Many have gone on to successful careers in medicine, law, media, finance, engineering, and beyond, becoming role models and changemakers in their communities.

Each scholarship you've helped fund has changed the course of a young life and brought hope and opportunity to entire families. Together, we are breaking the cycle of poverty — one scholar, one story, one future at a time.

Reflecting on two decades of impact, we are grateful for your belief in our mission. Your support has bridged the potential and possibility for so many young people.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to growing this legacy. With your continued partnership, we can reach even more students, unlock new dreams, and build a brighter, more equitable future for all.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Here's to the next 20 years!

With heartfelt appreciation,
The SAAS Team

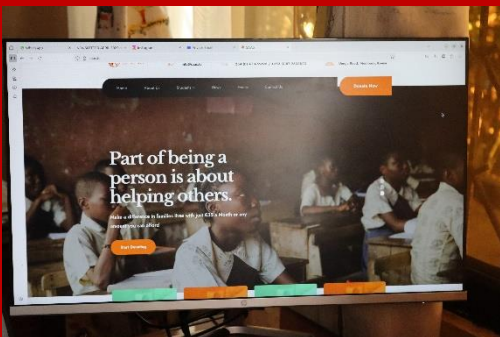
New Website Alert

We are redesigning our website, and the new site will be ready by June.

This initiative aims to enhance user experience and provide a more comprehensive platform for sponsors, donors, and the community to engage with SAAS's mission and programs.

What to Expect

- 1. Enhanced User Interface:** A more intuitive and user-friendly design to improve navigation and accessibility.
- 2. Updated Information:** Current details about SAAS's sponsorship programs, student success stories, and community initiatives.
- 3. Donation Portal:** An improved and secure system for making contributions, including options for one-time and recurring donations.
- 4. Volunteer Opportunities:** Information on how individuals can get involved and support SAAS's work.
- 5. News and Events:** Regular updates on upcoming initiatives, events, and achievements.



A view of the current SAAS website

We are excited about this development and look forward to providing an enhanced online experience for all our supporters and partners.



An aerial view of the new Kongowea Catholic Church two-story building overlooking the Kongowea slums.

Kongowea’s New Church

Founded in the 1950s

A jubilant atmosphere enveloped Kongowea as Christians and residents gathered to witness the grand opening of the new two-story church building at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Parish. After four years of worshipping in a temporary structure, the faithful celebrated the completion of their long-awaited place of worship.

The colourful mass and consecration ceremony were presided over by His Grace, Most Reverend Archbishop Martin Kivuva, the presiding bishop of the Mombasa Archdiocese. The event marked a significant milestone in the parish's history, reflecting the dedication and perseverance of its members.

SAAS shares a deep-rooted partnership with the church centred on community empowerment and spiritual growth. Many of SAAS's students and their families attend Mass at the church, fostering a strong sense of belonging and spiritual nourishment.

This connection is strengthened when some SAAS donors and sponsors attend Mass during their visits to Kenya, engaging directly with the community they support. The church serves as a pivotal space for these interactions, embodying the shared values of faith, education, and mutual support that underpin our mission.

History of the church

Founded in the early 1950s, Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Parish began as an outstation of Our Lady Help of Christians (Mama Wa Shime) Makupa. Services were held at Uwanja Wa Mbuzi, now known as Karama Main Stadium starting in the 1950s.

In 1954, due to hostility from the Muslim Brotherhood, the church relocated after purchasing land at its current location. They constructed a makuti-thatched church structure, where Kongowea Primary School's toilet block stands today.



Mombas Archbishop Martin Kivuva presides the mass for the concertation of Kongowea’s new church building.

The parish was officially established in 1961, with the late Fr. L. O'Connor serving as its first parish priest. Over the years, the parish expanded its outreach, establishing outstations that have since developed into fully-fledged parishes, totalling six in number. These include Shimo la Tewa (current Prison Chaplaincy), Bamburi Factory Church, and others.

Back to School as Term 2 begins



Maria issues a cheque to one of the students

Schools across Kenya officially reopened on January 6, 2025, marking the beginning of the 2025 academic year. Students transitioned to their respective classes, signaling a shift in the content they are to learn.

The first term ran for 13 weeks, concluding on April 4, 2025. A five-day mid-term break was observed from February 26 to March 2, 2025, providing students with a brief respite during the term.

Following the term one break from April 7 to April 25, the office experienced a bustling period as students returned to collect their school fees for the upcoming term. Additionally, our female students received their sanitary packs for the term, ensuring they have the necessary resources for their well-being during school days.

Term two commenced on April 28, 2025, and will run for 14 weeks, concluding on August 1, 2025. A half-term break is planned from June 25 to June 29, 2025, offering students a brief interval before the second term concludes.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all our sponsors and donors whose unwavering support has enabled us to keep the students in school over the years. Their contributions are instrumental in the success of these initiatives.



Computer graduates for the January – April intake pose for a photo during thier graduation day

Computer class graduation ceremony

56 graduate in the first 2025 intake

A significant milestone for the office was that 56 students were awarded certificates upon completing the January–April 2025 Computer Class. The three-month course equipped participants with essential digital skills, empowering them to navigate the increasingly digital world confidently.

The graduation ceremony, held in April, was a testament to the students' and facilitators' dedication and hard work. Tutors Wellington and Moris graced the event, whose unwavering commitment to volunteering and teaching played a pivotal role in this cohort's success.

The office extends its heartfelt gratitude to the SAAS board for their continued support, which has been instrumental in successfully running the computer program. Over the past 15 years, this initiative has impacted over 3,000 students, underscoring the board's commitment to fostering digital literacy and empowerment within the community.

As we celebrate the achievements of the new graduates, we look forward to the next cohort, eager to continue our mission of equipping individuals with the skills necessary to thrive in the digital age.



One of the girls demonstrate how to correctly wear a sanitary towel.

Boys & Gilrls Talk April Edition

The latest local news
In April 2025, the Boys and Girls Talk initiative successfully hosted its latest session. The event brought together students to engage in candid discussions on topics ranging from drug abuse and peer pressure to personal hygiene, self-esteem, and sexuality.

It aimed to provide a safe space for students to express their concerns and gain valuable insights into navigating their challenges.

Our facilitators encouraged open dialogue and fostering an environment of trust and understanding. Their expertise and dedication were instrumental in creating a supportive atmosphere where students felt comfortable sharing their experiences and seeking guidance.

Expected outcomes include:

1. **Enhanced Self-Esteem and Confidence**—Engaging in candid discussions about peer pressure, personal hygiene, and sexuality helps students develop a positive self-image and greater self-worth improving adolescents' self-esteem and resilience.

Improved Decision-Making Skills – equipping students with the tools to make informed and responsible decisions by addressing issues like drug abuse and peer influence.

Strengthened Peer Support Networks – fostering a sense of community among students, encouraging them to support one another and enhance overall well-being.

Cultivation of Leadership and Advocacy Skills—Nurturing leadership qualities and encouraging students to become advocates for positive change within their communities by involving them in discussions and activities.

We'll continue the sessions to equip students with the skills to make informed decisions and lead healthy, fulfilling lives, fostering a culture of open communication among youth.



Our KCSE 2024 top performers are all smiles as they pose with their brand new laptops issued to them by SAAS. From left: Ali Besharia who scored an A, Melyne Achieng', the first SAAS girl to score an A- and lastly Felix Odhiambo who scored an A-

SAAS shines in KCSE 2024

Three students scored grade A

We are thrilled to announce that the 2024 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results have marked a historic milestone for SAAS. Our students have demonstrated exceptional academic prowess, setting new records and paving the way for future generations.

For the first time in our history, SAAS proudly celebrates Ali Samuel Besharia, who achieved a straight A (plain), placing him among the top 1,693 students nationwide. This remarkable feat underscores Ali's dedication and hard work.

In another groundbreaking achievement, Melyne Achieng became the first female student from SAAS to score an A- (minus), breaking barriers and inspiring countless young women to pursue academic excellence.

Felix Otieno also distinguished himself with an A- (minus), contributing to the school's exceptional performance in the 2024 KCSE exams.

To honour their achievements, the office hosted a celebratory lunch at the Reef Hotel in Mombasa, attended by the students and their parents.

Each top performer received a brand-new laptop to assist in their academic pursuits as they prepare to join university later in September. Additionally, their families were presented with months' worth of food hampers as a gesture of appreciation.



Our top student Ali Besharia poses with a chicken gifted to him by his parents after scoring an A plain in his KCSE exams

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the SAAS board and all our donors and sponsors for their unwavering support, which has been instrumental in our students' success. Your commitment to educational excellence continues to inspire and empower our learners.

Congratulations to our 2024 champions—keep soaring high!

SAAS treats KCSE top performers



1.



2.



3.

- 1. Our top students in the KCSE 2024 exams and their families receive food supplies from SAAS.
- 2. The students and their families enjoy a sumptuous lunch at the Reef Hotel Mombasa.
- 3. Maria joins the students for a deep in the pool

Boys and Girls Talk event at SAAS – April 2025 edition



Madam Lillian taking the girls through a session during the Boys and Girls Talk event at SAAS



Boys Corner: the boys keenly following their session during the Boys and Girls talk event at SAAS



The girls are all smiles after receiving sanitary packs during the Girls and Boys Talk event at the office



Rear view of Kongowea Catholic’s new church building



Parishioners keenly following mass proceedings during the opening of their new church

News Event:

Gina to Visit Kenya in June 2025

Gina Woods, a founding director of SAAS, is set to visit Kenya in June 2025 as we commemorate two decades of the organization's impactful work in empowering marginalized students through education.

Since its inception in 2005, SAAS has been dedicated to providing educational opportunities to students from underprivileged backgrounds in Kongowea, Mombasa, Kenya. Under Gina's leadership, the organization has grown significantly, expanding its reach and impact across various communities.

During her visit, Gina will visit the Mombasa office to be updated on how things have been running. She will also engage with some of the sponsored students and pay a visit to the new Kongowea Catholic Church for Mass as she engages the community around Kongowea.

Her presence underscores SAAS's commitment to fostering sustainable development and educational empowerment in Kenya.

Further details about the visit and related events will be announced soon on our website and social media pages.



Gina joins parishioners as they prepare to go in for mass in the old Kongowea Catholic Church building in her past visit to Kenya.



Gina and her family pose for a group photo with the Kongowea Catholic Church youth choir during her past visit to Kenya