



The School Leavers' Attachment Scheme

SNAPSHOTS



Background

The School Engagement Programme (SEP) was established with the support of the Kilifi County Education Office. It aims at promoting an interest in science and science-related careers among students and to promote mutual understanding between members of the community and researchers. Over a decade-long of interaction with local schools, the SEP project gained

global recognition for undertaking high-quality engagement activities and was awarded the 2019 University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Award.

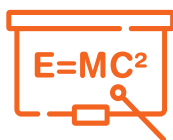
One of the activities undertaken by SEP is the School Leavers' Attachment Scheme (SLAS) which was borne from a community request to have a

program that, enables students within the community to be inspired to pursue science research. Initiated in 2010, SLAS aims to give talented students from Kilifi County hands-on experience of research at KEMRI Wellcome Trust Research Programme (KWRTF) facilities. So far 119 (65 M; 54 F) students have participated in the 3 months program.

SLAS by the numbers: 2010 – 2024



119 students participated in the SLAS program.



78% of SLAS alumni enrolled in STEM-related courses.



Among those enrolled in STEM courses **60%** are male and **40%** were female



For those who selected STEM courses **39%** chose health and health-related courses – medicine, clinical medicine, nursing, pharmacy, biology, microbiology, molecular biology.



Out of those who took up health-related courses, **58%** were male and **42%** female.

Core Activities

In consultation with KWTRP teams and key stakeholders The School Engagement Programme implements a set of activities that are core to the School Leavers' Attachment Scheme (SLAS) engagement.



Advertisement for application

Advertisement of the open call for the upcoming SLAS cohort is the first step in initiating the engagement activities. The advertisement is published on digital platforms and shared with media contacts and the local community for circulation. The advertisement criteria is an average mean grade of B+ and above in the latest Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education and completion of primary education from a school located within Kilifi County.



Open day for all prospective students

Once the shortlisting is completed, all eligible students are invited to an open day. The one-day session includes mentorship and presentations on career opportunities, University placements, and available funding opportunities. KWTRP researchers, SLAS alumni, and county government officials, among others, facilitate the sessions.

As part of the SLAS cohort recruitment process, the attendees undertake an aptitude test that provides criteria for recruiting incoming cohorts. This is followed by face-to-face interviews and selection of a cohort of 9-12 students for placement under the scheme.

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12-week attachment rotation

The selected students are onboarded into the SLAS program to begin the rotation and training. Each student spends two weeks at the Epidemiology and Demography Department (EDD), Neuroscience Department, Community Liaison Group (CLG), the Kilifi County Hospital Wards, the KWTRP Laboratories, and the ICT department. They also undergo training in communication skills, presentation and public speaking skills, personal growth plans, reproductive health, and career development.



Collaboration between KEMRI-Wellcome & Science-Mentorship Institute, USA

We partnered with Sci-MI to provide Science and Research mentorship to the 2024 SLAS Cohort. The 8-week engagement involved face-to-face and remote interactions between students and mentors. Students worked on projects that exposed them to a range of soft and technical skills, such as literature review, CV and cover letter writing, presentation, etc. The engagement culminated in a programme-wide seminar presentation, where students showcased their projects and skills learnt.



Last week evaluation

At the end of the SLAS project the students share their attachment experiences by documenting it on video, as well as filling in a survey feedback form. This information is used to evaluate the SLAS project. The students also get an opportunity to make a presentation to KWTRP staff members.

SLAS Alumni experience feedback highlight

“

I had a good time interacting with student nurses while they were assessed and asked them questions relating to the medical field. The doctors in the HDU department speak in a medical language which inspires me to continue with medicine and surgery.

“

The look of the children in the incubators, the mothers to the babies referred me as a doctor and it was a happy experience to me.” “It was hard for me to see a child in such pain.

“

I liked the session on regulatory and compliance as it made me know that everything done that affects society has its order.

“

I was too afraid to hold the small infants and see blood.” I resolved that I could not take up the medicine course. I opted for Computer Science.

SLAS Alumni Spotlight



Monica Sidi



Moses Karisa

» Monica Sidi and Moses Karisa, both SLAS students in the 2023 cohort, were awarded travel scholarships by Young Scientists for Africa (YoSA) to attend the 65th London International Youth Science Forum (LIYSF) from 24th July to 8th August 2024. During the two-week event, the students joined the opening ceremony graced by Sir Gregory Winter, a Nobel Prize laureate, and Professor Clare Elwell, the president of LIYSF. Monica and Moses & also toured various research and scientific institutions in London, Oxford, and Cambridge. They also attended lectures and represented Kenya in the cultural showcase performances and thought forums.

SLAS Alumni Spotlight



Jacob Kazungu

- » SLAS Alumni 2010
- » Bsc. Environmental science – Karatina University
- » KWTRP Post Graduate Diploma PGD Intern. The PGD internship is offered in Partnership with KEMRI and Pwani University
- » Assistant Research Officer – KWTRP
- » Wellcome Trust Masters Fellow ward – 2018
- » Health Economics PhD fellow – 2020 – Ongoing
- » Co-ordinator Africa Health Economics study group (AfHESG), a peer learning platform



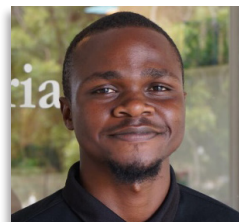
Mercy Sada

- » SLAS Alumni 2016
- » Lab Attachee (Undergrad), 2019
- » BSc in Biochemistry, Pwani University
- » Undertaking MSc. Immunology Studentship, offered in Partnership with KEMRI and Pwani University



Clement Nyiro

- » SLAS Alumni – 2017
- » LIYSF/YOSA award sponsorship Winner 2018
- » Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology, Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology
- » Current PGD intern – 2024



Gerald Alambo

- » SLAS Alumni 2015
- » BSC Biotechnology, University Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
- » Research Assistant, Female Genital Schistosomiasis Sexual Reproductive Health integration, LCVT – 2024



George Ziro

- » SLAS Alumni March 2019
- » Winner London International Youth Science Forum (LIYSF) and Young Scientist for Africa (YOSA) scholarship 2023.
- » Currently enrolled at the University of Nairobi undertaking Bio Systems Engineering



Abel Ngombo

- » SLAS Alumni – 2023
- » Currently 2nd Year student, Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBChB) – Egerton University,
- » Winner LIYSF/YOSA scholarship 2023

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