



***Project goals – Sponsorship of the annual tuition fees of approximately 15 students with financial needs and outstanding academic performance; Improvement of the teaching infrastructures, equipments and surrounding environment of a secondary school in Kibera slum***

**A school born as a community initiative**

Founded in 1998 as an initiative of the surrounding community, St. Gabriel Academy is a mixed day secondary school with around 150 students (approximately 60 girls) from the neighbouring slum dwelling of Kibera. There are eight teachers and two subordinate staff members.

Infrastructures are poor and basic, consisting mainly of mud walls, roofed with iron sheets and polythene paper. No building has cemented floor. The school has four classes and three tiny offices congested in a small house. It also has an uncompleted library structure. The laboratory and Form Four class are made of iron sheets. Additionally, the school is constructed near a sewage trench, which makes the environment quite unhealthy and unpleasant.



Background: Main building at St. Gabriel Academy.  
Foreground: Old access bridge over sewage trench



St. Gabriel Form 3 students, in mud-walled and floored classrooms

School fees are, together with the upgrading of the facilities, the biggest problem St. Gabriel Academy faces today. Since most of the parents and guardians of the Kibera youth are jobless, they are not able to pay the KSH 10,000 (approximately EUR 100) annual fee. It is out of these fees that the school manages to pay the teachers and buy the basic facilities that enable them to run the school, so teachers are sometimes forced to go without salaries and even buy materials for teaching.

**Kibera – one of the biggest slums in Africa**

The school is located in the Kibera slum, 5km. south west of the centre of Nairobi. Kibera is the biggest slum dwelling in East and Central Africa, with an area of ca. 260 ha. (2.5 sq. km.) and a population of anywhere between 0.6 and 1.2 million people, from all the major ethnic backgrounds. This multi-ethnic nature has led to many conflicts, the most recent being the post election violence in January 2008. The high rate of crime, together with the lack of building foundations (the ground of Kibera is mostly composed of refuse and rubbish) and the cramped sprawl of the area, slow down any upgrading effort in the slum. Moreover, Kibera slum is an “informal settlement” (i.e., it does not officially exist) and therefore the government provides no basic services such as schools, lavatories, running water, sewerage system, electricity, proper roads, etc.

Very densely populated (ca. 300,000 inhab./sq.km.) and heavily polluted by waste, dust and human and animal faeces, Kibera is home to many illnesses and, according to some sources, to more than 300,000 people infected by HIV.



Above: Ironsheet walled Form Four laboratory awaiting fixtures

Left: St. Gabriel's Head mistress receiving a donation from a Strathmore University representative.

Students at the Community Outreach Programme of Strathmore University have been collaborating with the school since 2007, through motivational talks for students and the channelling of funds from national and international donors for books, furniture, laboratory equipment and the construction of a new access bridge. Further funding is needed for the following:

Item	Need (Ksh)	Raised
Student fees	15-20 stud.	
Text books	380,000	
Furniture (students desks, office and staff room furniture)	500,000	145,300
Laboratory equipment	600,000	232,950
Classrooms floors	620,000	
Bridge construction	198,500	198,500
Feeding programme (per term)	60,000	
Library building	420,000	

1 EUR = 100 KSH (aprox.). For further information on the above items and other needs of St. Gabriel, please contact the COP at Strathmore University.

**1995** – St. Gabriel school was started as a study centre by the surrounding community.

**1997** – The first Form One students were admitted. Due to high demand for education in the area and resulting from lack of secondary schools, they continued to expand.

**2001** – The first Form Four class sat for its Kenya Certificate for Secondary Education.

**2008** – After the post-elections violence in January, the school was set on fire. The fire burnt all the books, lab equipment, furniture and the administration building. Half of the Form Four classroom was also set on fire, resulting in the loss of desks, blackboard and doors. Student population totals dropped from 150 to 105, although most of them have now come back.

**2008** – Strathmore University, with the financial support of a private donor from Singapore, helped build a new bridge, buy lab materials and also buy some new furniture.



Above, St. Gabriel Academy (blue) with some of the shacks of Kibera in the background.



Right, books saved from the burning of the library at St. Gabriel during the post election violence in March.



### **Gabriel Kerario: one of the school's success stories**

Gabriel S. Kerario, 24, is the oldest of five children. He lives with his mother and siblings in Kibera slum, just a few minutes walk from St. Gabriel Secondary School, where he did his secondary education. He sat for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in 2004, obtaining a grade that granted him a place to study Computer Science at Jomo Kenyatta University. He pays the University fees with a government loan that he will have to pay back when he graduates, but he also does some casual jobs to help with the living costs and school fees for his younger brothers and sisters. Gabriel knows how much he owes to St. Gabriel Secondary School: "If St. Gabriel had not existed, I wouldn't have had access to University. The school offers access to secondary education to the youth of the slum and therefore it also offers hope of a better life for our families in the future." And Gabriel is grateful – since joining University, he has spent all his holiday periods teaching Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics for free at St. Gabriel: "When I see the students, I can see myself a few years ago. I just hope that they have the chance to study and progress to higher education, too."

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#### **Mission Statement of Strathmore University**

"We dedicate ourselves to the advancement of education through teaching, scholarship and service to society by providing an all-round education in an atmosphere of freedom and responsibility, creating a culture of continuous improvement, fostering high moral standards and developing a spirit of service and respect for others"