



TURNING THE TIDE:

Somali Refugee Girl Breaks Record to Emerge Top Student



Inset: Asia Gedi Khalif at her former school, Kakuma Refugee Secondary School

It's now over a week since the Ministry of Education officially announced results from the 2021 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Exams (KCSE) Examinations.

Far away in the sweltering heat of the sprawling Kakuma Refugee Camp, 18 year old Asia Gedi Khalif is still coming to terms with news of her remarkable performance.

Asia emerged the top student in Kakuma Refugee Secondary School (KRSS) and overall top girl in Windle International Kenya (WIK) camps schools, scoring a B+ Plus of 68 points.

"I am so delighted and proud of my achievement despite the many odds. I expected to perform well but coming top in my class was a pleasant surprise." says Asia

Mr Ndambuki, the school principal could not hide his joy, ***"Asia has made us all proud as we also celebrate history being made. She is not only the overall top girl across WIK Kakuma Camp schools but also beat all 671 candidates to come top of the class in KRSS. She is the first girl in a very long time to get a B+ from the camp schools."***

KRSS is the oldest of WIK Camp Secondary schools and has the highest student population with the current student enrollment at 4,389, 1,285 of those being girls.

Looking back at her journey, Asia remembers the difficulties growing up as a young refugee girl.

"We are a family of six, all raised by a single mother. When we arrived in Kakuma Refugee Camp in 2009, we had left everything behind in Somalia, armed with only hope."

Asia credits much of her success to her supportive mother whom she says has always wanted a better life for her children.

“My mother motivated me and my siblings to study hard,” she says. “She knows the value of a good education and has always urged us to excel in our studies so that we can be successful.”

Asia counts herself lucky to have had a mentor in her sister, who is currently in Canada on a tertiary education sponsorship.

“My elder sister set the pace for me to excel in academics and offered me the much needed support and encouragement all through my education. My mother is jobless and often got sick and it’s my sister that stepped in, working as a remedial teacher in Kakuma to support my education.”

For Asia, achieving academic success meant making many sacrifices and overcoming challenges as girls are put in a more disadvantaged position in access to education.

“My friend and I would go to school even on Sundays to read and revise up to 6.p.m. I got stiff competition from fellow classmates especially boys who had a hard time accepting that a girl can also compete.”

WIK Education Officer, George Nandi says WIK strives to ensure that girls in schools are provided with full support and opportunities to achieve their full potential.

“Targeted interventions such as remedial classes, cash interventions, scholarships, psychosocial support, and mentorship among others improve learning outcomes for girls.”

Asia’s educational journey is far from over as her eyes are firmly set on the next steps.

“I hope to get a University scholarship to pursue medicine or law.” says Asia, exuding much confidence and positivity.

“My mother motivated me and my siblings to study hard, She knows the value of a good education and has always urged us to excel in our studies so that we can be successful.”



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