



Achieving the
Highest Outcomes
for the Hardest to Reach Girls



The Women's Institute for Secondary Education and Research



Educating a girl has dramatic health and economic benefits for her, her family, the community, and the world. WISER's model is based on global research that shows girls' education is the most powerful tool for reducing infant mortality, HIV risk, and poverty across entire communities. Educated girls also increase climate change resiliency and democratic governance in their countries.





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***"We've been told the sky's the limit,
but there are footprints on the moon."***

—from the WISER song "Life is a Journey"

see WISER girls perform "Life is a Journey" by clicking [HERE](#)

WiserGirls.org

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Pictured (opposite page): Girls enjoy Field Day 2023; (this page, from left): 1. Classroom instruction in a newly renovated classroom 2. Girls participate in the school football (soccer) club; 3. A Houses of Wisdom session, where girls receive peer-to-peer counseling.

Letter from Grace Murika



As we reflect on the year 2022, we are proud to report that despite the impact of COVID -19 on the education system in Kenya, WISER continued with its commitment to excellence and innovation in transforming the lives of girls and their communities. WISER successfully managed to adjust and accommodate the government accelerated school calendar of 4 terms and preparing having 2 cohorts of girls sit for their national exams in April and December, 2022. In the same year, WISER has expanded its infrastructure to accommodate younger girls through the new government system, the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC).

WISER has continued to provide a conducive environment for the girls to thrive. As we navigate through the challenges posed by a rapidly changing education landscape especially after the effect of COVID 19, we have remained resilient and adaptable, embracing new opportunities for growth and development. WISER now has the largest cohort educated female leaders of women from Muhuru bay, empowered to drive change in their community. The WISER girls, you have remained indomitable and unbeatable, a great reminder that our backgrounds do not have to define who we become.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have been part of our success, our dedicated staff and our generous donors and partners. Your support, dedication and commitment have been instrumental in helping us achieve our goals and realize our mission for a brighter future for all the WISER girls.

Together, we will continue to defy expectations, inspire change and be part of the success story of WISER. Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to our cause. When girls thrive, we all thrive!

Who We Are

Global data shows that educated girls transform the health, economic development, governance, and climate resiliency of their communities and countries.

Poor, rural girls are often missing from education, causing their communities to stay poor, sick, and lacking female representation.

WISER partners with rural communities to produce the highest academic and health outcomes for the hardest to reach girls, empowering them to drive community change.

We know that when girls thrive, we all thrive. Our mission is to empower girls and their communities through transformative education and wholistic health.

Our Values

We center the girl.

Our theory of change is based on girls' self-identified needs and research on high impact practices for change. We believe in a girl's capacity for excellence and leadership. We believe in a world where she has equal access to wholistic education and health. We invest in current WISER girls knowing that they will lift up the girls that follow in their footsteps, changing their communities and nation.

We respect the communities we work with as valued partners.

We will be transparent in our dealings and recognize the importance of local, grassroots knowledge so that we are ethical partners for equitable long-term relationships. We want a strong sense of local ownership of WISER's programs so that the impact spreads as far as possible.

We embrace our multi-cultural, multi-national team.

We believe in growing talent and learning from different perspectives. We recognize, honor and respect the varied skills and backgrounds our staff and volunteers bring to the organization.

We treasure our global family of supporters.

We celebrate WISER's successes alongside those who made them possible. We will carefully steward all resources and be transparent about contributions.



Why WISER

Global data shows that educated girls transform the health, economic development, governance and climate resiliency of their communities and countries. According to the World Bank failure to complete secondary school costs countries \$30 trillion in lost productivity and earnings.*

Poor, rural girls are often missing from education, causing their communities to stay poor, sick, and lacking female representation.



WISER
*partners with
the people in
rural areas to
drive community
change*

The Challenges Girls in Migori County face

Only **8%** of girls complete secondary school.

70% of girls are child brides.

More than 10% of babies are born to an adolescent girl aged 15-19 in Migori County

80% of girls experience gender-based violence.

Highest **maternal mortality** rate in Kenya.

400% higher incidence of HIV in girls than boys.

Girls don't know their sexual, reproductive, health, and **human rights**.

Women are missing from **political and legal systems**.

Empowering Communities

The Inspiring Journey of Lydia Faith Odhiambo

In the heart of Muhuru Bay, a small community nestled along the shores of Lake Victoria, a beacon of hope shines brightly in the form of Lydia Faith Odhiambo. Faith, as she is fondly called, is not just a symbol of academic excellence but also a testament to the transformative power of education and determination.

*pictured: WISER Co-founder and Chair,
Sherryl Broverman, with WISER Alumna and Board Member Lydia
Faith Odhiambo in 2023*

Empowering Communities

Faith's journey began at WISER Girls Secondary School, a renowned institution dedicated to empowering girls through education and health. Despite facing initial academic challenges, she graduated in 2015 with an outstanding A- (minus) score. Her journey from scoring a C+ (plus) in primary school to excelling in her secondary education is a testament of her resilience and determination to succeed against all odds.

After completing her secondary education, Faith pursued a degree course at the prestigious University of Nairobi, where she recently graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery. Her achievement is not only a personal triumph but also a historic milestone for her community, as she becomes the first woman to earn a degree in medicine in Muhuru Bay.

Faith attributes much of her success to the values instilled in her during her time at WISER Girls Secondary School. She speaks highly of the model institution's emphasis on integrity, discipline, and girl-focused programs, which have played a pivotal role in shaping her into the focused and determined young woman she is today. In a society where gender stereotypes and

inequalities persist, Faith's journey serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of empowering girls and women through education.

Currently, Faith serves as the first WISER alumna on the WISER NGO Board, where she continues to advocate for the education and empowerment of young women in her community. She is passionate about giving back and using her knowledge in medicine to uplift her community. Faith's goal is to organize mentorship programs to encourage more girls to pursue medical courses and to mobilize resources to establish a modern, well-equipped medical facility in Muhuru Bay.

Faith's story is not just one of personal achievement but also of hope and possibility. Through her dedication and determination, she is paving the way for future generations of women in Muhuru Bay to dream big and achieve their fullest potential. As she continues on her journey to uplift her community, Faith remains an inspiration to us all, proving that with courage, resilience, determination, and an inspiring environment, anything is possible.

Why WISER Works

WISER is based on evidence and designed for impact.

Decades of independent research on how to improve girls' education have generated evidence that 7 key factors are critical for success. WISER includes all 7 of them as part of our core programs: removing financial barriers; addressing girls health; having schools near girls' homes or providing boarding facilities, making schools girl-friendly by reducing gender-based violence; providing quality education by engaged, invested teachers; increasing community support and engagement; and keeping education going through emergencies, such as Covid.

Many programs want to 'empower' girls. One of the first independent studies of agency in multiple programs supporting girls in East Africa was conducted in 2022 and WISER was shown to have some of the greatest impact on improving adolescent girls' agency. The key components for our significant impact were that we target the most vulnerable girls, we have high-touch programs for holistic support, and we work with girls year-round.

WISER works. We have a 14-year track record of significant improvements in health, education, agency, leadership, and community improvement.

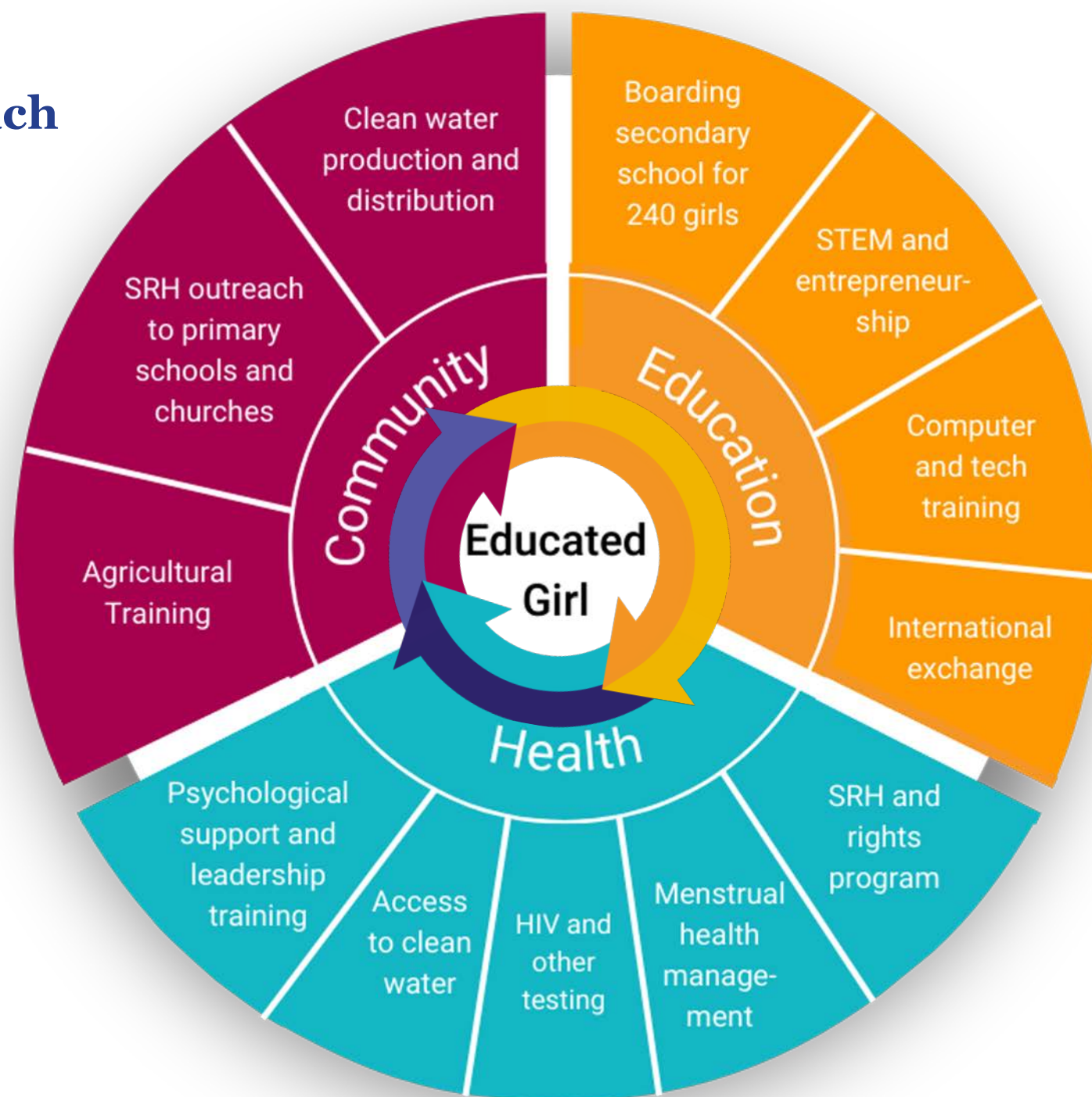




Our Virtuous Cycle

WISER takes a wholistic approach by working in three domains: Education, Health and Community Improvement.

Each domain reinforces and supports the other, is critical for a healthy, supported girl, and leads to our sustained high impact.





Education

The Challenges

WISER works in a school district where the majority of schools have failing marks on national exams. Only 7% of girls in the region complete secondary school. Our students come from some of the poorest families and over 25% of them are orphans. Despite all these challenges, once in WISER our students become nationally competitive for scholarships to universities.

What We Do

WISER provides:

Safe housing and an environment free from gender-based violence

Committed teachers who live on campus, form a tight community, and provide individualized mentoring

STEM education with science laboratories and ICT training with a computer lab, with hands on learning and real-world problem solving

Engineering and entrepreneurship clubs.

100% of our girls passed the national secondary school exam.

WISER Girls earned **government scholarships** to university at 3X the national rate.

60% of alumni pursuing careers in STEM.

WISER has created a new **network of alumni** of educated girls from a rural region.

Cultural change in the valuation of girls.



Health - Physical & Psychosocial

The Challenges

WISER works in a region with some of the highest maternal and infant mortality and an infection rate above 20%. 70% of girls in the area are child brides, 80% of girls experience gender-based violence, and girls are 4 times more likely to be HIV positive than boys.

What We Do

WISER provides:

WISER provide comprehensive health testing including HIV.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights education for all girls. Full menstrual hygiene management support including sanitary pads and menstrual cups.

Nutritious food including learning agriculture in our campus garden, and clean water.

Faculty and peer led psychosocial counseling with weekly peer support groups and leadership training.

92%
reduction in pregnancies.

99%
reduction in child marriage.

100%
voluntary HIV testing.

75%
reduction in HIV infection rates.

250,000
school days saved by menstrual hygiene management.

Increase
in girls' agency
and empowerment.



Clean water
provided to over
7,000 people in
the community.

43,000
adolescents provided with
sexual and reproductive
health and rights education.

**Community
training**
on sustainable agriculture.



Community

The Challenges

WISER has a 10 acre campus near Lake Victoria in a region with an HIV infection rate above 20%. At least 70% of the community does not have access to clean drinking water. Many girls walk 2-3 hours to collect water, which interferes with their schoolwork and increases gender-based violence and HIV. Girls in the area don't know their rights.

What We Do

WISER provides:

WISER is the main source of clean drinking water in the area as well as providing clean water on campus. We provide sexual and reproductive health and rights education to adolescents in the community and train girls as peer counselors. WISER hosts community health days, bringing in providers, such as for hearing and vision testing, normally not present in the area. All girls are trained in the functions of democracy and registered to vote.

A photograph of two young Black students, a boy and a girl, sitting at a desk and working on a STEM project. They are both wearing dark blue school uniforms. The boy is on the left, looking down at a small electronic component. The girl is on the right, also looking down at the same component. They are holding a small circuit board with wires attached to it. In the background, there is a laptop with a sticker on it. The text "WISER, STEM and Climate Change" is overlaid on the image in a white, serif font.

WISER, STEM and Climate Change

WISER ranks in the top 1% of 400 schools in its county and is the best school in the region for girls in STEM.

WISER, STEM and Climate Change

STEM education develops students with the necessary skill set to thrive in an ever-changing world. The technology section in Kenya is rapidly expanding and careers in STEM provide greater job availability, a higher salary, and the opportunity to make an important impact on society. Like in many parts of the world, girls and women are underrepresented in STEM education and jobs.

Two WISER faculty, Kennedy Mikula and Judith Atito, are now part of a Global Water Fellows program. As Fellows they will work with colleagues from the US, India, Latin America and East Asia on water quality improvement and disease monitoring. Judith and Kennedy have exciting plans to engage WISER students in community science to monitor water quality in the community and identify possible sources of contamination, while continuing to educate the community about clean water.

Research suggests that girls' education can strengthen climate strategies in three ways: by empowering girls and advancing their reproductive health and rights, fostering girls' climate leadership and pro-environmental decision-making, and developing girls' green skills for green jobs.*

Formal education is one of the most crucial ways of putting girls on the path of leadership. Further, studies show that women's political empowerment is strongly linked to better environmental outcomes, including the creation of more protected land areas, the ratification of environmental treaties, stricter climate change policies, and smaller climate footprints.

*Source: "Why is girls' education important for climate action?" Christina Kwauk, February 10, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-is-girls-education-important-for-climate-action/>



pictured: (from top): WISER student Inner teaches male community members how to rig sustainable lighting; (center and bottom) WISER students perform experiments and process data in our state-of-the-art STEM labs.

Campus Expansion

In 2022 we added a new dormitory, library, four new classrooms, new ablution block, seven teacher houses, and two volunteer houses.



Campus Expansion

In 2019, the Kenyan government mandated that all Kenyan Secondary Schools would be required to add grades 7 and 8 as part of the rollout of a new school curriculum aligned with the Kenyan 2030 goals in health, technology, and economic growth.

For WISER, this meant buying more land and building a new 'junior' campus. In 2022 we added a new dormitory, library, four new classrooms, new toilet facilities, seven teacher houses, and two volunteer houses (*come visit!*). In January 2023 the Kenyan government changed its mandate to now house grades 7 and 8 in primary schools, but given the quality of our new facilities WISER was approved as the only secondary school in the district to offer 'junior secondary'. This is an exciting opportunity as it has long been a strategic goal of WISER's to work with younger girls, before they become sexually active, pregnant, married, or HIV+ and we look forward to developing a 6-year educational and supportive program for girls from early adolescence through to adulthood.

WISER has been fortunate over the past two years to receive transformative capital gifts that have helped build our infrastructure to accommodate more girls in the WISER school than ever before. The most substantial was a \$750,000 grant from Jack Dorsey's philanthropic initiative, #StartSmall, to build the junior secondary campus. We are now equipped to house the additional 120 girls and provide them not only with safe, comfortable living facilities, but also with state-of-the-art technology for their STEM-based education.



pictured from left: 1. completed dormitory for girls 2. WISER class of 2026 in front of new classroom block. 3. completed twin classroom. Previous page: completed Dorcas Oyugi Library.

Leadership

WISER is proud to have a Leadership Team that consists of individuals who have been with us since the very beginning. These professionals possess invaluable knowledge of community needs and understand the impact of our programs. With their expertise, we are confident in our ability to continue to have a positive difference in the lives of those we serve.



Mme. Dorcas Oyugi
Head Principal



Mme. Violet Singoei
Deputy Principal



Kennedy Mikula
Director of Studies



Dr. Sherryl Broverman
Co-Founder and Chair



Grace Murika
Country Manager



Judy Nyandwaro
Finance Administrator



2022 *Board of Directors*

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Prashant Swaminathan
Steve Tremitiere
Gita Venkata

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Educational Partners



School Partnership Programs

Since the inception of WISER, students at Duke University have collaborated with WISER staff and Muhuru Bay locals to seek sustainable solutions to health and education challenges through the DukeEngage Program. Through the two-month internship, students work closely with the community to provide teaching support in primary schools, research the impacts of clean water, perform data analysis at local clinics, and respond to other community challenges. Students also collaborate with WISER teaching staff to facilitate tutoring sessions, co-curricular activities, sexual reproductive health curricula, literacy projects, and create documentaries on campus. With this experience, students are encouraged to understand the complexity of social detriments that reduce health outcomes and the importance of culturally anchoring interventions.

The DukeEngage internship is a transformational experience not only for the project outcomes but also for the strong friendships with the WISER students and locals. Duke students enjoy living on campus with the WISER girls, sharing meals, participating in sports, clubs, church services, and dancing at entertainment nights.

WISER also works with schools around the world, including the Dwight School and Tasis International Schools to develop cross-cultural exchanges amongst youth. In past years, students from Switzerland and the US have visited the WISER campus during a week-long immersive experience to learn more about Kenyan culture and the WISER mission. Our partner schools also provide fundraising support through student club organizations.



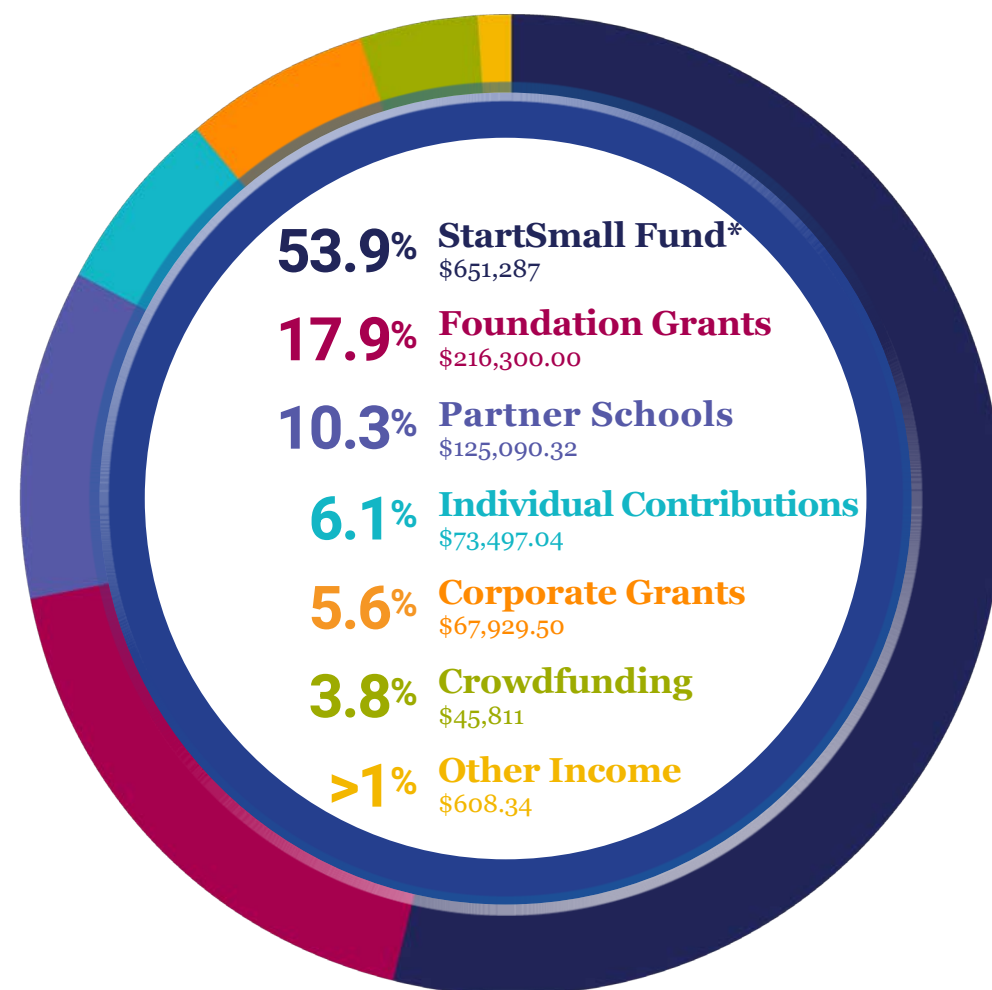
pictured: students from partner schools on the WISER campus creating change and building relationships with students and staff.

Financials (US):

Total Assets

\$1,209,592

represents 110 KES/\$



Total Expenses

\$1,230,1702

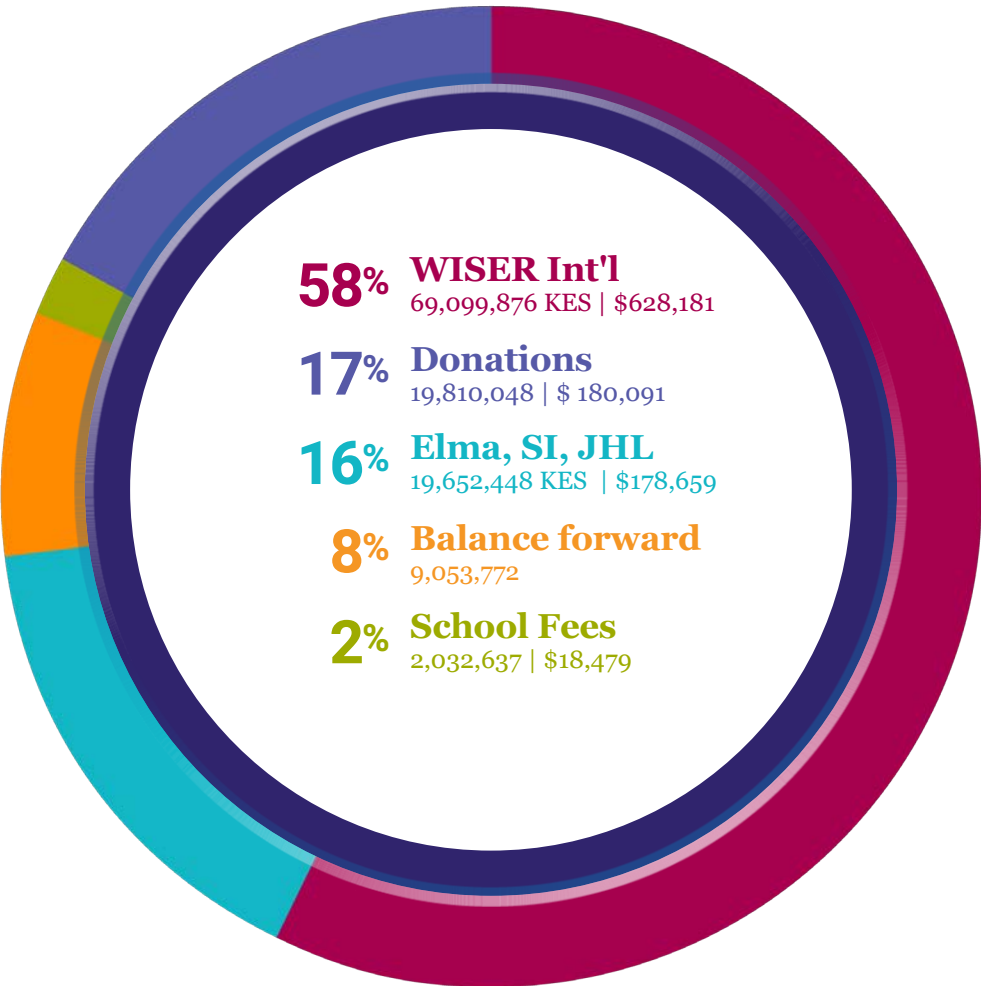
represents 110 KES/\$



**In 2021 WISER received \$750,000 from the StartSmall Fund, which provided \$434,650 for construction of our new campus in 2022. This includes \$651,287 reserved from the 2021 grant for expansion of new campus and operations*

Financials (Kenya):

Total Revenue*
119,600,838 KES | \$1,087,280 USD



Total Expenses*
118,404,816 KES | \$1,076,407 USD

