

A day in the life of a student at Kijito Upele School

Kijito Upele School is a government-run school located on the outskirts of Stone Town, on the island of Zanzibar. The school provides an education to approximately 5,830 students between the ages of 7 and 15.

Overcrowding at Kijito is so serious that the school has two sittings, with half of its students attending in the morning and the other half in the afternoon, thereby cutting children's access to education in half. Classes often contain upwards of 100 students, meaning that children have no choice but to sit on the floor for lessons.

The following pages describe a typical school day for a 12-year-old student at Kijito Upele School.

6:00am – 6:45am: *I wake up early to help my mother wash and dress my siblings. I have three siblings, aged three, five, and eight. I also put my own school uniform on, and pack my exercise books into my school bag. I love learning, and always look forward to the school day!*

6:45am – 7:15am: *I leave the slum where I live with my family on the outskirts of Stone Town, and walk approximately 30 minutes to Kijito Upele School.*

7:15am – 7:20am: *I arrive at school, and meet my friends in the sand-covered courtyard area between the classrooms. With around 2,900 students arriving, it can be chaotic. Sometimes the teachers use canes to hit the back of students' legs and hurry them along to their lessons.*

7:20am – 8:15am: *The first lesson of the day is Maths. We learn by rote, repeating what our teacher says and following along from a textbook. Between the ages of 6 and 11, we learnt in Swahili, but this year all our lessons and exams are in English, which can be very difficult. If we fail our exams this year, we are forced to drop out of school, so there is a lot of pressure. I am not normally able to eat breakfast before school, so it is sometimes hard to concentrate.*

8:15am - 9:15am: *The next lesson of the day is English. With over 100 students in each class, it can be noisy and crowded, but all of us enjoy learning and being in class. We often have to sit on the floor as there are not enough desks and chairs. Because there are so many students, the teachers are not able to give us individual support, so if we don't understand something, it is easy to get left behind.*

9:15am - 9:40am: *We have a short break, during which we play outside in the courtyard. We often share one football between all the students, and love playing together!*

9:40am - 10:40am: *Our next lesson is Swahili, which is the language that we speak at home. Again, we learn by rote and from a textbook. Students take turns answering questions and writing the answers on the blackboard. Our classroom is a little bare, as the walls are concrete and the windows are small and high up. The roof is made of corrugated iron, which adds to the noise.*

10:40am - 11:40am: *Next, we have Geography. Again, as we learn from textbooks, and by copying from the blackboard, it is sometimes hard to understand what we are being taught.*

11:40am - 12pm: *We have a second short break outside, and enjoy playing together in the sunshine.*

12pm-1pm: *After break, we have PE. Our school doesn't have much sports equipment, so it can sometimes be challenging for our teachers to teach us. We don't have sports kits, so we have to do PE in our school uniforms. Despite this, we all enjoy the lesson and the chance to play sports together.*

1:00pm - 1:50pm: *Our final lesson of the day is IT. There are no computers at our school, but our teacher draws a diagram of a keyboard, mouse, and monitor on the blackboard. We take turns practising typing on the keyboard diagram.*

1:50pm - 2:00pm: *Our school day ends, and the second sitting of students arrive for their lessons, which will run until 5:50pm. With over 5,800 students trying to either leave or arrive, it can get extremely busy. Local women also arrive to sell snacks of bread and ice pops, which those students who haven't brought their own food can buy. This can create a lot of litter in the courtyard, so classes take it in turns to pick it up and rake the sand back into place.*

2:00pm – 8:00pm: *After school, I walk home and help to look after my younger siblings until it is time for bed. I complete any homework I have been set, but as this is normally copying from a textbook, I don't always fully understand the topic.*

Photos of Kijito Upele School





