

PAMOJA

2024 End Year Report



INTRODUCTION:

Pamoja Initiative is a community-based organization founded in 2018 with the mission of creating positive change through education, sport for development, and community conservation. In its 7th year of operation, Pamoja runs Shamba la Shela School, offering free primary education to over 60% of children in marginalized communities in Lamu County. The organization also operates two swimming pools, providing free swimming classes to young girls, boys, and women, targeting 200 swimmers annually. Pamoja integrates swimming with sexual reproductive health rights education through health right clubs and peer-to-peer modules, empowering young girls and women. Furthermore, Pamoja collaborates with women-led youth community conservation groups and football clubs in Lamu County, promoting sports for development and conservation. Pamoja works closely with partners and donors to ensure its programs are effective and achieve expected outcomes in the short and long term.



1. Swim4Change – Island:

The Shamba swimming pool has been instrumental in offering free swimming classes not only to Shamba la Shela school but also to the neighboring schools on Lamu Island, such as Brighter Girls and Mararani Primary. Khadija, our swimming instructor, has been hands-on to ensure that the program runs smoothly and the goal of training the young swimmers and building their confidence is fully realized. Since its inaugural in July 2024, the Shamba la Shela pool has created access for hundreds of young girls and boys, and 17 pupils have learnt how to swim, with the youngest swimmers being as young as 4 years old.



Young swimmers at Shamba pool with Coach Khadija



Khadija (swimming instructor) with the youngest swimmers, Ramzia and Alpha (4 years old)

2. Swim4Change – Mainland:



The Pamoja complex has been super productive through the hosting of a swimming competition on April 10, a swimming gala on August 11, regular health rights club visits (linking of swimming with sexual reproductive health education), an intercounty swimming competition, and the daily Pamoja swim for change free-swimming classes. The program has trained 247 swimmers (161 girls and 86 boys). The swim for change swimmers were trained on a daily basis from Monday to Friday, with each session lasting between 1 to 2 hours. They were taught:

1. Freestyle—also known as front crawl, this is the most common stroke and is characterized by alternating arm movement and flutter kicking.
2. Backstroke—performed on your back with your face up, this stroke involves alternating arm movement and flutter kicking.
3. Breaststroke involves simultaneous arm movement and frog-like kicks. They were also taught water survival techniques, the side stroke, the butterfly, the backstroke, and elementary, also known as lifesaving skills.

Hosting activities:

- Hongwe mixed secondary school on 24/03/24
- Pamoja swimming competition on 10/04/24
- Lamu secondary schools' competition on 8/03/24
- Kiongwe Mjini primary school on 16/04/24
- Muamarani primary schools on 31/7/24
- Hindi secondary school on 27/9/24
- Sunday school Catholics on 21/11/24
- Telelani primary School, 20/9/24, was also visited by the AJWS team the same day.

Facility improvement through acquisition of new equipment:

- i. CCTV camera installation
- ii. Wi-Fi network installation
- iii. First aid kits
- iv. 150 chairs were added.
- v. Acquisition of swimming aids
- vi. Acquisition of an event tent

The Pamoja Swimming Gala was held on 11th August 2024. This was perfect timing, as school-going children were on holiday and the weather in Lamu was conducive for extracurricular activities. More than 300 participants were present, including organized swimming clubs, neighboring schools, and the Pamoja swimming team. Awards were issued to encourage the young swimmers to embrace swimming as a survival skill (especially in Lamu, where sea accidents are common), to build a healthy body, and to explore its potential as an income-generating sport.



3. Shamba La Shela Primary School: A Holistic Approach to Education

Shamba La Shela Primary School has become a beacon of educational excellence in Lamu, attracting a diverse student body. With a focus on holistic development, the school provides students with a well-rounded education that encompasses academics, extracurricular activities, counseling, and opportunities for personal growth.

The school's structured weekly schedule includes dedicated time for games, music, karate, swimming, debates, and quizzes. With a dedicated team of seven teachers and 50 learners (including three junior secondary students), Shamba La Shela fosters a nurturing and stimulating learning environment.

Physical education grounds—Shamba la Shela recognizes the value of physical education on the growth and development of our children as it helps to develop physical fitness, emotional intelligence, sportsmanship, self-efficacy, motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors that are critical for active living. As a result, Shamba la Shela offers volleyball, football, karate, swimming, dance classes, and music, including a fully equipped playground with slides/swings/monkey bars and a professional physical fitness instructor called Daniel Matifu that is committed to ensuring the physical education of Shamba la Shela students is well taken care of. Plans are in place to have a table tennis and a performance hall. Grounds are used before class, during a 9 am short break, during an 11 am long break, at lunchtime, and after school.



International Exchange and Cultural Enrichment:

In January 2024, the school hosted a delegation from the Bahrain Ministry of Education, engaging in a vibrant cultural exchange. The visit included quizzes, painting, drawing, dancing, and the exchange of gifts and learning materials. Notably, the Bahrain team shared valuable knowledge on creating school newsletters, which has greatly improved communication and reporting within the school community.



Creative Expression Through Drama and Film:

Shamba La Shela students showcased their creativity and talent in the county drama festivals, earning recognition for their singing game and choral verse. Additionally, the school produced a film titled “MASAIBU YA BIBO,” which featured both students and teachers in various roles. The film was a success, earning third place at the county level and advancing to the national competition. Access the film via the link: https://youtu.be/FTOHAW5_NNU?si=h91tC8GriHe4-qU8



Learning About History and Conservation at Takwa Ruins:

Following their outstanding performance in the Bahari yetu festival in 2023, the school was awarded a trip to Takwa ruins in 2024. This enriching experience provided students with valuable insights into the history of the ruins, mangrove restoration, the economic and social importance of mangroves, and the vital role of turtles in the ecosystem.



Cultural festival

The Lamu cultural festival is a vibrant celebration held annually to showcase the rich heritage of the people of Lamu. The dhow race, donkey race, henna painting, traditional dances, and music are among the many activities during this 3-day event in Lamu. On the 28th of November 2024, Shamba la Shela participated by presenting a traditional music dance that was among the best performances during the festival. It also gave the learners an opportunity to learn, explore, and be part of a movement that is aimed at preserving the rich heritage of the people of Lamu.



Artistic Inspiration and Music Festival Success:

Two expat artists, Sinthara and Santhi, volunteered at the school for three weeks in June, providing invaluable guidance and inspiration to the students. Their expertise helped the students prepare for the County Music Festival, where they achieved remarkable success, winning first place in six categories and advancing to the provisional level with seven items. At the provisional level, a young student named Tamara secured second place with her descant recorder performance, earning a spot in the national competition.



BAHARI YETU FESTIVAL

On the 10th of October, our learners participated in the Bahari yetu festival event. They did an art exhibition, swimming competition, sand sculpture, poems, dhow making, and wood cars. In swimming, Najma Abubakar (grade 8) emerged in position three in the girl's category, while in the art exhibition, the school got position two.

4. Moving Playgrounds: Creating Spaces for Joyful Learning

In 2024, six playgrounds were installed in the remotest villages in Lamu County that would otherwise have none, namely, Mkokoni, Hindi, Uziwa, Mararani, Manda Maweni, and Tchundwa villages. These playgrounds have been critical in providing the environment needed for children to engage in elements that develop key cognitive, social, and physical skills as well as creating safe and engaging spaces to play and learn.



Referee Training

Referees play a vital role in officiating any given match, as they are the immediate judges in offering guidance and overseeing a fair game no matter the circumstances. For referees to be competent, they need to be equipped with a certain set of skills that are critical in their line of duty. They are expected to have great communication skills, pass sound judgment, be keen to details, and have the ability to work well under pressure, among many other attributes. All these sets of skills come with practice and training. Pamoja Initiative in recognizing the importance of referees in sports activities, conducted referee training for 15 referees, which was seen through by a representative from the Kenya Football Federation (FKF) and was finalized on 22nd December 2024. Members of key football teams were also invited to create an open forum where sentiments and insightful input were shared on how to grow the football level and to build sportsmanship that will be instrumental in the growth of talents and the creation of opportunities for young talents in Lamu County.



5. Pamoja Football League: Promoting Protection & Conservation of the Environment

According to the 2009 Kenya Census, Lamu boasts a youthful population of 41.1%. Any campaign that sidelines the youth is technically undervaluing the impact of the energetic segment of a population that is capable of changing the course of history. Pamoja Initiative recognizes the value of the youth and engages them by bringing them to the decision-making table and having them on the front line when it's a matter of importance, such as the environment. Football is one of the key sports in Lamu that the youth are fond and passionate about, and when a campaign message is tied in with football, it has high chances of getting attention and support. The 2024 Pamoja football league was themed around the environment with a Swahili language tagline, “CHEZA MPIRA, LINDA MAZINGIRA” (play football, protect the environment).

2024 Pamoja Football League engaged 40 football teams and 1000 players across Lamu County. The finals were on 31st December at Lamu Sports Ground. The league had a huge impact in creating space for talent growth, sensitization, and awareness on protection and conservation of the environment.



6. Health Right Clubs: Empowering Students with Health Knowledge

In 2024, the Pamoja Initiative introduced the Health Right Clubs program in 13 schools (primary and secondary) across Lamu County, reaching out to 650 students and linking it to swimming sessions. SRHR knowledge is proven to reduce teenage pregnancies and HIV incidence, promote safer behaviors, and equip young people with skills to make more informed decisions about their health and have full control of their bodily autonomy.

A baseline survey was conducted to inform on the need basis; a curriculum was established with topics around family planning, sexual health, maternal health, adolescent development, preventing teenage pregnancy, and drug and substance abuse, and training of trainers was done to ensure SRHR knowledge was rightly administered to the learners. The health right clubs were linked to a swimming program that positively encouraged the students to partake in the exercise, and it became a success as learners benefitted from both the swimming classes and SRHR knowledge.



Donkey race

Donkeys have been at the center of Lamu culture for the longest time. They have built Lamu and are an integral part of the economy of the people of Lamu. Apart from being one of the modes of transportation in Lamu Island, they are also used for sports activities such as the famous Lamu donkey race. The donkey race is one of the sensational sports in Lamu, and Pamoja took part by hosting 2 donkey races on 10th August and 31st December 2024 in Amu and Matondoni village. This was aimed to promote the talents of the young racers, preserve the Lamu culture, promote one health, and sensitize the communities on the importance of keeping the environment clean and safe, especially the ocean that supports most of the people's livelihood in Lamu County.



Climate Action

The Lamu archipelago, which is comprised of 52 islands, has a delicate and unique ecosystem that, if not preserved and conserved, could easily be destroyed. Lamu is a habitat to the aquatic endangered species such as the dugong and the Olive Ridley turtles, as well as the terrestrial animals such as the elephants and lions that used to cross the channels from the mainland to Manda Island and no longer do so due to the digging up of the Mkanda channel. The community has to be sensitized on matters to do with the environment, waste management, and natural resource conservation in order to have a healthy population that is conscious on matters to do with the environment, and the knowledge should be intentionally passed on to the younger generations who are the future keepers of our planet. Pamoja Initiative has been collaborating with environmental community organizations and schools, such as Mkokoni Primary School, that is located in the Kiunga Marine Reserve, a gazetted national reserve, in order to sensitize them and offer support to conserve our natural heritage. 2024 environmental efforts have seen the collection of 5000 kilograms of marine plastics and sensitization of 14 schools on environmental awareness across Lamu County.



Monitoring and protection of turtle nests to ensure success in turtle hatching – 12 July 2024



Beach clean-up and sensitization campaign engaging the youth and school children – 27 May 2024

Scholarship Program: Investing in Future Leaders

The Pamoja scholarship program currently supports four students pursuing higher education in diverse fields such as management, law, medicine, and secondary education. By investing in the education of these promising young individuals, Pamoja is helping to build a brighter future for Lamu.



My name is Ikham Abubakar, a form 3 student at Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Secondary School, a dream school of many. I am very grateful for your generous sponsorship which has been pivotal in supporting my educational journey. Without your help, I may never have been able to pursue with my studies in this school which was part of my dreams. Your generosity and help have been an aspiration to me. I want to convey my heartfelt gratitude to all the members of the foundation who work tirelessly to make the world a better place for individuals like me. Since I am only left with one year to finish my secondary education, I promise to work extra hard in my studies. I hope you will continue to hold my hand in this successful journey.

Pamoja Initiative

P.O Box 370-80500

Lamu, Kenya.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE:LETTER OF APPRECIATION FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT

It is with immense gratitude that I write to thank you for the vital support you have extended to me as I embark on my Strathmore law school university academic journey. Your generosity made it possible for me to begin my first year law studies, successfully complete my first semester, and continue confidently into the second.

Your scholarship has not only eased the financial challenges of pursuing my studies but has also inspired me to strive for academic excellence. Your belief in my potential inspires me to make the most of this opportunity and to work diligently toward my goals.

As I progress in my law studies, I am profoundly grateful for the significant role your support has played in laying the foundation for my success. Your generosity inspires me to strive for excellence and one day contribute meaningfully to my community, embodying your values.

Thank you for your generosity and commitment in giving me this opportunity. I look forward to keeping you updated on my progress and achievements in Strathmore.

With sincere appreciation,
Mary Ndegwa



(Handwritten signature)

TELELANI SCHOOL

P.O BOX 5-80503

MPEKETONI

2/10/2024

THE DIRECTOR

PAMOJA INITIATIVE

SHELA

DEAR SIR

RE: APPRECIATION FOR SPONSORING TELELANI SCHOOL HEALTH CLUB FOR SWIMMING.

On behalf of the Telalani school Health Club members (made up of forty seven pupils) and four Teachers, I would like to thank you for choosing to sponsor us for a swimming day at the Pamoja Initiative swimming pool on 20/09/2024

It was an educative, fun day for our students and teachers. We look forward for another such day again.

Thank you.

Yours Sincere

Shebwana Haji Ahmed

HOI

TELELANI PRV. SCHOOL
MPEKETONI
2/10/24

Testimonials:

"I learnt how to swim within few weeks in this pool. I am not scared of deep water anymore." Elizabeth Wangui – 10 years old.



"Coach Ibrahim has been very helpful in teaching me how to swim. I can now do kickboard perfectly". Adrian Adriel – 6 years old.



"I am very proud of my swimming abilities. I got position 2 in breaststroke category in the Pamoja swimming gala. Next year I will be in position one." Abdulkhalik Khalil – 12 years old



"I learnt how to swim in 2019 through the Pamoja swim for change program and ever since swimming has been my favorite sport". Sofia Maina - 13 years

Pamoja Initiative

P.O Box 370-80500

Lamu, Kenya.

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: LETTER OF APPRECIATION FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT

I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Pamoja Initiative for your generous support throughout my academic journey. It is with immense pride and joy that I inform you of the successful completion of my studies, an achievement that would not have been possible without your assistance.

Your scholarship provided not only financial support but also a sense of motivation and encouragement to strive for excellence. It lifted a significant burden off my shoulders, allowing me to focus fully on my studies and personal growth.

As I embark on the next chapter of my life, I am deeply inspired by your commitment to empowering students like me. I am committed to using the knowledge and skills I have gained to contribute positively to my community and to uphold the values that Pamoja Initiative stands for.

Once again, thank you for believing in me and investing in my future. I hope to one day pay it forward and support others in achieving their dreams, just as you have done for me.

Yours sincerely,

Izat Mohamed



Challenges:

1. Lamu County has been experiencing regular power blackouts, which negatively affect the swimming pool activities.
2. The rainy season from April to June affects the operation and attendance, as well as increasing the cost of maintaining the pool.
3. Two of our pool water pumps broke down, and we had to replace them with new ones; this was a huge cost that we had to incur to have the program up and running.

Funders of Pamoja Initiative:



Sarah



Conclusion:

Pamoja Initiative is transforming lives in Lamu. Through the power of sport, education, and community engagement, we are fostering a more inclusive, empowered, and sustainable future. Our swimming program has not only taught 1,593 young people to swim but has also instilled confidence and a sense of agency, opening doors to new possibilities while creating access to swimming to 4,320 people. Shamba la Shela continues to nurture 50 young minds with the support of 7 dedicated teachers, 1 swimming instructor, 1 fitness instructor, a chef, and 2 helpers, providing them with the tools to thrive. Our donkey race, promoting the health and welfare of these invaluable animals, reached hundreds of youth in both Amu and Matondoni villages. Through the school's health rights clubs, 650 students have gained knowledge on sexual reproductive health rights; they are now fully aware of and have full control of their body autonomy. Our environmental awareness campaign, a collaborative effort with schools and women-led organizations, successfully engaged youth through football and resulted in the collection of 5,000 kg of marine plastic. The Pamoja football league, now a renowned event in its 7th year, unites 40 teams and 1,000 players, reaching over 5,000 youth through its fan base and campaign messages around environmental protection and conservation. From empowering girls through swimming to educating youth on sexual health and environmental awareness, our initiatives create a ripple effect, strengthening the entire community. As we look ahead, Pamoja Initiative remains dedicated to expanding our reach, deepening our impact, and inspiring the next generation of leaders in Lamu and beyond.



Shamba la Shela students at Karate training sessions.



PAMOJA

HUB OF OPPORTUNITY

   [pamojaglobal](https://www.pamoja.co)

www.pamoja.co