

Kamasaypayna

Kamakatheh Section (January, 2023)

St. Henry Primary School in Kamasaypayna has seen a sharp increase in enrollment since completing construction of a new mud-brick building. A total of 148 students—75 girls and 73 boys—are enrolled in classes one through five, up from an enrollment of 53 students in 2017. The surge in student numbers followed on a determined outreach by the local School Management Committee to recruit students who walk from five surrounding villages. The final step needed to make the building usable was a zinc roof, added just this past summer.



St. Henry Community Primary School's new building in Kamasaypayna, Kamakatheh Section

Founded in 1999 with support from the Roman Catholic Church, St. Henry is a “community school” supported primarily by community members. The school has received only occasional government assistance. As recently as 2019, only classes one through four were offered, and the school met in temporary structures unsuitable for use during much of the rainy season.

On 15 November 2022, former Kalanthuba Regent Chief Daniel S Koroma presided over a festive celebration at the school, attended by the Kamakatheh Section Chief Sara Kamara and the

school's founder, Daniel Sara Turay. Assembled in front of the school, the student body welcomed visitors with songs, and later in the proceedings one student from each class gave a recitation from memory.

Houghton University professor emeritus Ron Oakerson and 2019 graduate Honus Wagner made congratulatory remarks to the assembled faculty and community members. Wagner, who participated in research on community-school formation in Kalanthuba in 2018-19, was instrumental in raising the funds needed to add a zinc roof to the new structure prior to the onset of rains in June. Wagner was presented with a goat for his service to the school. Following the convocation, traditional dancers entertained the crowd, and community leaders hosted a meal for their guests in Kamasaypayna's new court barray.

According to Head Teacher Peter L. Bangura and his colleagues, much work nonetheless remains to be done, including the provision of toilets and safe drinking water, plus the acquisition of additional furnishings, teaching materials, and supplies. Attendance can be improved still further by adding a meal for students during the school day, and the future of the school would clearly be enhanced by improving both financial and in-kind support for teachers.