

Teacher's Corner Alex Murimi teaches at Blest Hands School in Kiambu C

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Readinglist We feature
a storybook titled
Animal-lympics **P.2**

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Highlights from Kenya's first-ever sign language spelling bee

The event was held at Aga Khan Primary to mark International Day of Sign Languages on September 23

BY TEBBY OTIENO

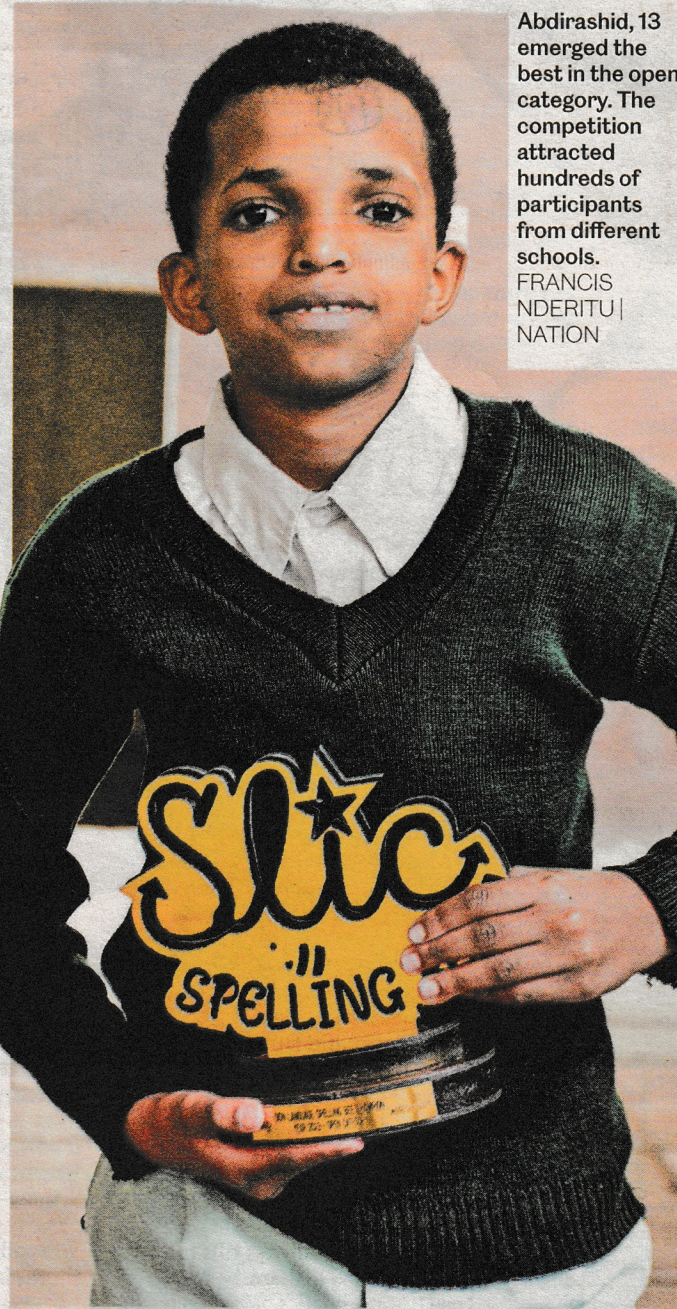
Every year, the world marks the International Day of Sign Languages on September 23. According to the World Federation of the Deaf, there are more than 70 million deaf people worldwide. More than 80% of them live in developing countries. Collectively, they use more than 300 different sign languages. Do you know the Kenyan Sign Language?

This year, two organisations joined hands to host the country's first-ever sign language spelling bee competition. Action for Children with Disabilities and The Sign Language Is Cool hosted this event at Aga Khan Primary School in Nairobi. It drew hundreds of participants from different schools who competed in three categories: Open, Grade 1-3, and PP1& PP2.

While speaking with Junior-Spot through a sign language interpreter, Abdirashid Mohamed, 13, of Samic Basiir Special Education Centre in Eastleigh, expressed his delight after being named the Open Category winner.

"My teacher encouraged me to enrol for the competition and assisted me with finger-spelling. The hours of practise were worth it because I succeeded in the competition."

Mohamed is passionate about education and aspires to pursue a career related to computers. Despite facing communication bar-



Abdirashid, 13 emerged the best in the open category. The competition attracted hundreds of participants from different schools. FRANCIS NDERITU | NATION

riers especially when interacting with hearing people, the young boy is determined to achieve his goals.

"I know how to read lips but communication is still a cha-

llenge as most hearing people don't know sign language."

The event offered an opportunity for the Deaf and hearing children of Pre and Lower Primary from different schools who gath-

ered at the Aga Khan primary school in a Sign Language contest under the theme, a world where Deaf people everywhere can shine anywhere.

The Grade 1-3 category was won by Mopian Asiany, a grade 3 student who aspires to be a teacher while Hadasha Njeri, from Georges primary school, won the PP1 and PP2 category.

According to SLIC Hub coordinator, Diana Kamau, SLIC campaign is guided by the mission to promote sign language to the hearing population for the purposes of inclusivity.

"Apart from the interaction between the hearing and the Deaf Children, we are also concerned about their literacy. When it comes to big words that don't have signs, they can fingerspell well so as to communicate effectively with the hearing child," she says.

The winners are members of SLIC clubs formed in schools and communities. They will compete in the next year's Sign Language Spelling Bee, where judges will assess their vocabulary growth. The campaign aims to assist hearing people in learning sign language to bridge the communication gap between them and Deaf children.

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Some words don't have signs so we teach Deaf children how to finger-spell such words

Diana Kamau

