



January 2017

Meet the Scientists...

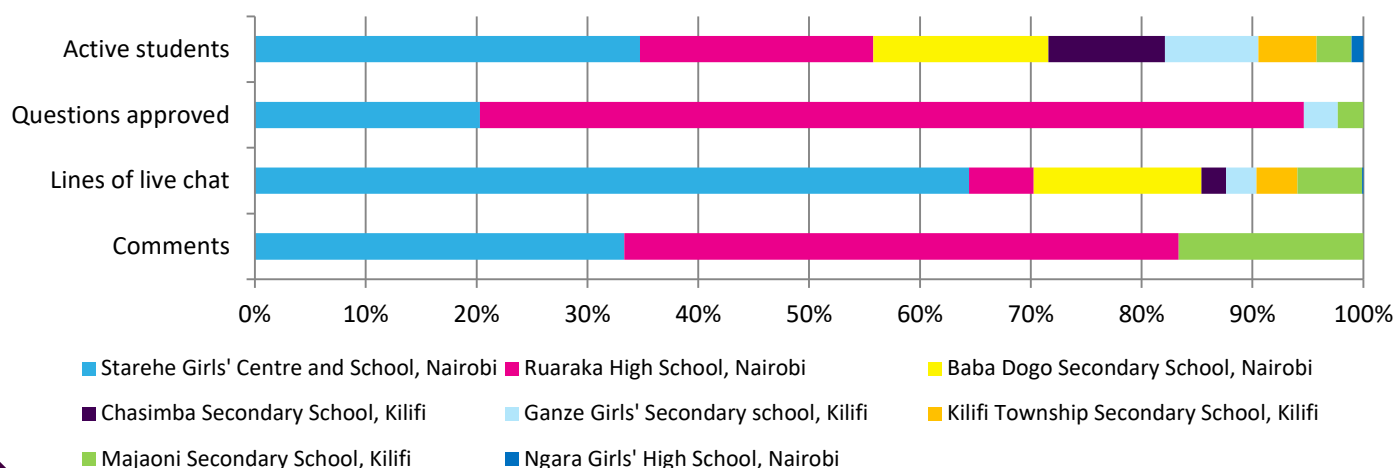


The January 2017 event was the second time the I'm a Scientist project has been run in Kenya, and the first event to reach schools outside of Kilifi. The Blue Zone was one of two non-themed zones.

George, the zone winner, works on genetics using computer programs to look at data. Patricia is a paediatric doctor working on new drugs and vaccines, Kamal has a background in theoretical physics and looks at different ways for science and technology to work in society. Charles works at KEMRI, helping researchers communicate their work to the public, and Betty works on treatments for malaria.

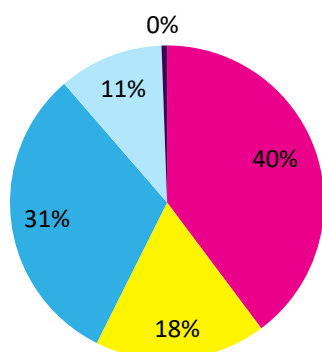
The Blue Zone was the busiest of the three zones run this January, with the most students logged in, the most questions asked, and the most lines of live chat. Nearly two-thirds of the lines of live chat came from Starehe Girls' School in Nairobi; where students were often joining different chats to post their own questions.

School data at a glance

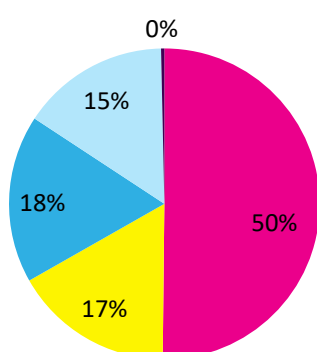


Scientist activity

Answers



Lines of live chat



Scientist	Profile views	Position
George Githinji	174	Winner
Charles Kamau	149	2nd
Kamal Bhattacharya	158	3rd
Patricia Njuguna	127	4th
Beatrice Amboko	115	5th

Key figures from the zone and the averages of the January 2017 zones

PAGE VIEWS	BLUE ZONE	JAN '17 ZONES AVERAGE
Total zone	6,457	5,266
ASK page	1,413	1,047
CHAT page ³	749	467
VOTE page ⁴	386	259

Popular topics

Four out of the five scientists in the zone worked around health research, and this was reflected in the topics discussed; health research is certainly an area of interest to the students taking part. Nonetheless, there was a good variety of questions asked, both in CHAT and ASK about other areas on topics such as space, the Earth, time, and technology.

Questions about children were common, reflecting Patricia's work as a paediatrician, as well as other questions around people, health, diseases, HIV and AIDS, and cancers. There were also more general questions asked in the *climate change?*, *Given that asteroids from mars?*, and questions about animals and insect

	BLUE ZONE	JAN '17 ZONES AVERAGE	2014 EVENT ¹
Schools	8	7	10
Students logged in ²	109	95	136
% of students active in ASK, CHAT, or VOTE	87%	85%	86%
Questions asked	553	395	487
Questions approved	261	189	282
Answers given	176	146	203
Comments	13	16	89
Votes	125	156	298
Live chats	8	7	10
Lines of live chat	1654	986	1,051
Average lines per live chat	207	131	105

were also more general questions asked in the zone, such as “*what role have we humans played to bring about climate change?*”, “*Given that asteroids from mars are found on earth, would asteroids from earth be found on mars?*”, and questions about animals and insects.



Keywords from live chats in the zone, size of the word represents its popularity



¹ Numbers for the 2014 event are generally higher. This is possibly due to 10 schools taking part in a single zone in 2014. In 2017, 22 schools took part across 3 different zones, with fewer schools taking part in each zone.

² In the 2014 event we measured “registered students”, rather than “students logged in”. The login process for students has changed between events, the numbers look at roughly the same thing though.

³ CHAT page view count may come out lower than expected as a number of chats happened on the back up chat, which was hosted on a different server.

⁴ VOTE page view count may be lower than expected. A number of votes were sent through SMS from the teacher.



Keywords of questions approved in the zone, length of bar represents frequency of use



Example Questions (click for links)

What role have we humans played to bring about climate change?

Can we replace damaged brain parts with computational devices?

How does human blood able to blend in to another person who has the same kind of blood type?

Do dogs have blood groups like human beings?

Will we ever cure cancer to prevent more deaths caused by it?

If it was possible for a man to dig a hole that can penetrate the earth crust, would he find himself in another continent?

Since there no perfect vacuum in space can there be plants which can survive?

Why is it that has become difficult to establish curative drugs for HIV/AIDS?

Given that asteroids from Mars are found on Earth, would asteroids from Earth be found on Mars?

Is it possible for a seed to germinate in your stomach?

How do snakes produce poison in their bodies and yet it does not affect them?

Is it true that when the moon comes close to the Earth that the water can be pulled up?

Examples of good engagement

The students in the Blue Zone were hungry for information, asking questions on a variety of subjects. The scientists gave friendly, engaging, and sometimes light hearted answers. A common topic in live chats was about motivations and advice for getting into scientific careers...

"@Patricia What really motivates you in ur career and what drove u into it?" — abpb345, Student

"I am motivated by making a difference to the world. I want to make sure we have vaccines that are safe and protect people. This makes me know that my work is useful." — Patricia, Scientist

Another student asked for advice on becoming a doctor...

"Hello Patricia, I would like to become a doctor like you...may ask the challenges you face?" — lizkim, Student

"To become a doctor one must sacrifice time and enjoyment. Medical school is a busy time with all day classes and lots of evening study. The challenges is being strong as patients die or present very sick and there is not much we can do." — Patricia, Scientist

On a more light-hearted note, students in CHAT and ASK were very interested in the topic of space, and aliens; life on other planets, alien visits to Earth, travel to other planets. The student's were also keen to share their thoughts with the scientists...

"are aliens real" — Kevin, Student

"Sure why not? I think it's totally likely." — Kamal, Scientist

"I also think so. It doesn't make sense that only one planet among the billions of bodies in the universe is inhabited." — aaqb345, Student

"Exactly right." — Kamal, Scientist

Kamal answered a lot of questions — nearly a third of the answers in ASK — answering questions with a passionate, engaging, and sometimes joking tone; although the jokes were not always completely appreciated by the students, such as his answer to [this question about Spiderman](#).

Scientist winner: George Githinji

George's plan for the prize money: *"I would spend it on engaging young people with scientific research. This is something that I am very keen on! There is a clear gap in the way young people engage with research and scientists. I would like to spend the prize money on similar efforts and bringing young people closer to science."* [Read George's thank you message.](#)



Feedback

We're still collecting feedback from teachers, students, and scientists; and we will be running some focus groups in April/May 2017. Here though are a few comments made during initial feedback...

"Academically it exposed the learners, it was very motivating because they had a chance to interact with the scientists. Apart from regular classes the students were exposed to the internet and got skills on using the internet. They got to learn about cooperation as they were doing the activity." — Teacher, Baba Dogo Secondary School, Nairobi

"They liked the scientists especially the photos of them and their profiles. They liked the responses, all their questions were answered, the scientists fitted in their shoes and never ignored their questions." — Teacher, Majaoni Secondary, Kilifi