



AS IT IS

Kenyan Woman Goes Back to Primary School at 98

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In a classroom in rural Kenya's Rift Valley, a student takes notes alongside her fellow classmates. She wears the same school **uniform** – a grey skirt and a green sweater. However, there is one difference. Priscilla Sitienei is more than 80 years older than them.

Sitienei turned 99-years-old on February 11. She said she went back to class to set a good example for her great grandchildren. She also wants a new career.

"I would like to become a doctor because I used to be a **midwife**," she told Reuters. She added that her children were supportive of her decision.

Back in 2003, the government of the East African country began helping to pay for the cost of **primary** schooling. This has allowed some older members of society, who had missed out on education in their younger days, to go back to school.

This has given Sitienei more than an education. She has also become a film star.

Sitienei travelled to Paris last year for the launch of a film about her journey. It is titled *Gogo*, which means grandmother in her **native** Kalenjin language. She will also be heading to New York City soon for a showing of the film there.

Sitienei is in her sixth year of primary school. She says her aims were far more **practical** than becoming a movie star.

She said she had the idea when her great granddaughter dropped out of school after getting pregnant. Sitienei said she jokingly asked her great granddaughter if she had money remaining on her school **fee**, and she said yes. So, Sitienei told her that she would use it to attend school.

She said she had hoped that her great granddaughter would continue with her studies. But when she refused, Sitienei decided to go to school herself.

She said she also enjoys other school activities, including physical education classes.

"It keeps me **fit**," she said. "I get to jump around, even though not as much as they ... do, but I at least move my body. That is my **joy**."

Sitienei shares her wide experience and knowledge with the children. Her teachers also use her experience to keep the peace during lessons. Her class teacher, Leonida Talaam, said she uses Sitienei to help control the class. And it works!

"When I go outside," the teacher said, "the class remains silent."

I'm Anna Matteo.

Monicah Njeri wrote this story for the Associated Press. Anna Matteo adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

uniform – *n.* a special kind of clothing that is worn by all the members of a group or organization (such as an army or team)

primary – *adj.* first in time or development

native – *adj.* belonging to a particular place by birth

practical – *adj.* relating to what is real rather than to what is possible or imagined

fee – *n.* a fixed charge

fit – *adj.* physically healthy

joy – *n.* a feeling of great happiness
