COLUMN/FEATURES

Believe me folks, church is not for everyone

BABABOYI

With ANTHONY TAMBWE 0735 807164

LAST week, my wife woke up and chose violence. Not the ordinary kind of violence where a person throws a slipper at you for forgetting to buy onions. No. This was spiritual violence. Holy violence.

Now, before I continue, let me explain the situation properly. The previous night, I had attended what historians will one day describe as a "high-level summit on alcohol consumption" at my favorite watering hole, Zakayo's Pub.

I had arrived home at around three in the morning carrying myself like a retired boxer after twelve rounds with Mike Tyson. My shirt was hanging outside my trousers, my shoes were arguing with each other and my breath smelled like a brewery had exploded in my mouth.

I collapsed onto the bed and immediately started snoring like a faulty generator.

In fact, I had already started dreaming, where l was somewhere on a beach eating nyama choma with angels when suddenly somebody shook me violently until my teeth rattled.

I opened one eye with great difficulty. The room was spinning like a ceiling fan sponsored by Satan himself, and there standing like the angel of death was my wife, Mama Boyi.

I asked her if there was any emergency, or whether the house house was on fire.

"Yes," she said. "The fire of the Lord. We are going to church."

Folks, at that moment I knew my ancestors had abandoned me.

I checked the time. It was barely morning. Birds themselves were still negotiating whether to wake up or not. Even the sun had not fully committed to appearing. Yet there was my wife already dressed like she was attending a conference with angels.

I tried diplomacy.

I told her that God understands these things, and assured her that today I was going to pray from home.

She folded her arms and told me in simple terms that whether l liked it or not, we were going to church.

I attempted another strategy, and told her that l was very sick. She looked at me the way a teacher looks at a wayward child and told me that at my age I should know how to differentiate between sickness and a hangover

This woman had no mercy.

As I struggled to sit upright, I noticed another shocking development in the house. My son, the domestic thug himself, had also been summoned for the holy expedition.

This boy normally dresses like a backup dancer in a reggae music video. His trousers permanently live below his waistline, and his hair looks like he lost a fight with electricity.

But on that day, my wife had ordered him to dress like a normal human being.

The boy was furious.

"Mum," he protested, "you are violating my rights. I am Rastafarian."

First of all, this child is not Rastafarian. He only listens to two Bob Marley songs and smokes weed, the one he fondly calls ' the holy herb' with his friends behind the kiosk.

But he continued his protest like a human rights activist.

"I and Jah have an understanding," he declared.

My wife pointed at him with the authority of a military commander and told him that today even Jah was going to church.

The boy looked at me hoping for support. Unfortunately, I was fighting for my own survival. My head was pounding like construction workers were building a highway inside my skull.

I dragged myself to the bathroom where the mirror showed me a man who looked like he had been recovered from a shipwreck. My eyes were red, my face looked folded. Even my bald head appeared tired.

As I brushed my teeth, I prayed silently for a miracle. I beseeched God and told Him that if He truly exist then my collection of metal should do what it usually does and refuse to start.

Most of you know about that sorry excuse of a car. It is a vehicle powered mainly by hope, prayers and insults. Sometimes it starts. Sometimes it just coughs angrily and refuses. I have reached a point where I greet mechanics more often than relatives.

So, I came out pretending to be concerned. I told my wife that l was sure the vehicle will not cooperate.

Instead of panicking like a normal person, that woman smiled calmly and told me that she had already requested a Bolt.

A few minutes later, the Bolt driver arrived. I knew it was going to be a difficult journey because the driver looked too cheerful for that hour.

Nobody that cheerful should be allowed near hungover people.

The journey to church was torture. Every bump on the road felt like somebody hitting my brain with a hammer. Meanwhile my son sat in the back seat wearing an expression usually seen on prisoners being transported to court.

He kept muttering things like, "Babylon system," under his breath. My two daughters were used to their mother dragging them to church, so l was sure they were having a great time watching me and their brother suffer.

My wife ignored both of us completely. She sat there holding her Bible like a woman escorting two dangerous criminals to rehabilitation.

When we finally reached church, I was already exhausted. Church ushers welcomed us with terrifying levels of energy.

I nodded weakly as l was ushered in, because speaking felt dangerous.

We found seats somewhere in the middle. The choir was singing enthusiastically, but to me every sound felt amplified by one thousand.

I tried very hard to remain awake. Truly, I tried. But my friend, the devil of hangover is powerful.

The pastor had barely opened the Bible when my eyelids became heavier than sacks of cement. Slowly, against my will, I drifted into sleep.

The pain l felt soon afterwards reminded me of the day l was circumcised.

My wife's elbow landed directly into my ribs.

Meanwhile, my son was experiencing his own spiritual confusion. Since there was no reggae music in church, he decided to create his own. The boy sat there shaking his imaginary dreadlocks and nodding his head rhythmically to music only he could hear.

At one point, I looked at him and almost burst out laughing.

The pastor was preaching seriously about salvation while my son looked like he was attending a live concert by Bob Marley.

To make matters worse, during worship people began closing their eyes and raising hands emotionally. My son also raised his hand, but not spiritually. He was conducting imaginary reggae beats in the air.

Disaster struck when the pastor told us to close our eyes for prayers, and the church went silent, and at exactly that moment, I snored.

Not an ordinary snore but a catastrophic snore the kind that sounds like a motorcycle refusing to start.

The entire row turned to look at me.

Even the pastor paused briefly.

I woke up confused and shouted, "Amen!"

Mama Boyi looked ready to commit murder inside the house of God.

After service ended, people greeted each other joyfully, but my wife's face looked like thunderclouds preparing for heavy rainfall.

The Bolt ride home was completely silent, even the driver sensed danger and reduced conversation.

I sat there quietly calculating my chances of survival.

How Young Scientists Tanzania prepares students for science

By SUNDAY NEWS Reporter

THE Development of Science and Technology in any country is one of the major components which is crucial for accelerating economic and social growth of the society.

Young Scientists Tanzania fulfils this role by creating the platform for people to secure Science and Technology job opportunities and major business ideas.

YST, working with The Tanzanian Government, has been making great efforts to create conducive environment for youth to be able to exercise Science and Technology in their field and by making it a priority in order to produce better economic results and to contribute to national growth.

The Young Scientists Tanzania model consists of two components, the Outreach Programme which is the major activity of the yearly programme for YST. On the Outreach programme, mentoring of science methodologies is provided by approved experts to teachers from secondary schools across the country. The programme gives them hands-on skills on how to nurture young boys and girls in developing and using their in-born talents to come up with solution based science project.

"The main focus of Young Scientists Tanzania is to upskill teachers and students on practical scientific methodologies and provide relative outreach and mentoring opportunities in their schools and regions. This model has facilitated thousands of students to present science research project for the annual programme since 2012. Young Scientists Tanzania has worked directly with 19,908 students since 2012. It is a model that works." says Joseph Clowry, Co-founder for YST.

"The level of enthusiasm and passion for science among Tanzanian youth continues to grow remarkably. In 2026 alone, YST received 1,330 applications from students across the country wishing to participate in the programme, a clear indication of the increasing interest among young people to engage in research, innovation and practical scientific problem-solving. The large number of applications reflects how students are now eager to use science and technology not only as an academic subject, but also as a tool for creating solutions, driving innovation and shaping the future of their communities and the nation at large." says Nabil Karatela, YST Project Manager.

He added that YST science nurturing programme has lifted the anxiety for many students to exercise their mind to think of science practically and make come out with practical modality of solving the problem.

"Last year 2025, YST managed to make the dreams for two young boys (Samuel John Mwilangali and Sammy Deodatus Basil) come true by enabling them to use their talents and come up with a very constructive science project titled; Light Intensity Reducing System, secondary students from St Joseph's Cathedral High School," he said.

Their project captured the attention of judges and announced as overall winners for YST 2025, giving them the opportunity to enjoy the awards and gratitude of the winning.

In detailed, their project was about developing a Light Intensity Reducing System (LIRS) aimed to optimise light use by reducing unnecessary brightness while maintaining fishing efficiency, thus minimising environmental impact and operational costs.

They said that, purse seine fisheries in Tanzania, particularly those operating in inland and coastal waters, often rely on artificial light to attract fish at night. However, excessive or poorly regulated light intensity can lead to ecological disturbances, increased bycatch and energy inefficiencies.

Field assessments of their project were conducted in the selected fishing communities along Lake Victoria and Indian Ocean coastline, where light usage patterns, fish catch data and energy consumption were recorded.

In Tanzania, light fishing is prevalent in Lake Victoria and coastal waters for dagaa, using kerosene lanterns or LEDs to attract phototactic species.

A study conducted in 2019, on Lake Tanganyika found that, LED adoption increased catch efficiency but raised concerns about overfishing, as brighter lights attract more fish, including juveniles (PLOS One, 2019).

This is similar to Vietnam, where LEDs increased catch rates by 1.58 times while reducing UV radiation and fuel use (ScienceDirect, 2020). However, Tanzania's reliance on small-mesh seines (often illegal) exacerbates overfishing, unlike Vietnam's more regulated purse seine operations.

The project has been the best exemplary of the initiatives that YST is investing to youth basically to develop them to have practical science skills and innovation, in order to be able to come up with science project that can yield solution over the existing problem in the society.

For his part YST Co-founder Dr Gozibert Kamugisha said " the success of all these initiatives for YST Programme has been made real with the strong support from the Sponsorship of Karimjee Foundation (KF), who has been supporting these movement for more than 15 years now.

The Karimjee Foundation believe that, science is the major cornerstone for development in any country and youth the special group needs to be empowered and equipped enough to exercise their talents and use the opportunities available.

"With the support of Karimjee Foundation, YST has been able to open up platforms for many students to exercise their scientific talents and come up with workable scientific projects which help to solve the existing problem in the society," he detailed.

He added that for the past 15 years YST has been able to provide scientific methodology trainings to 19,908 students, 3,189 teachers, whereas 3,265 students and 1,564 teachers managed to develop some scientific projects and got opportunity to participate in the YST Science Exhibitions.

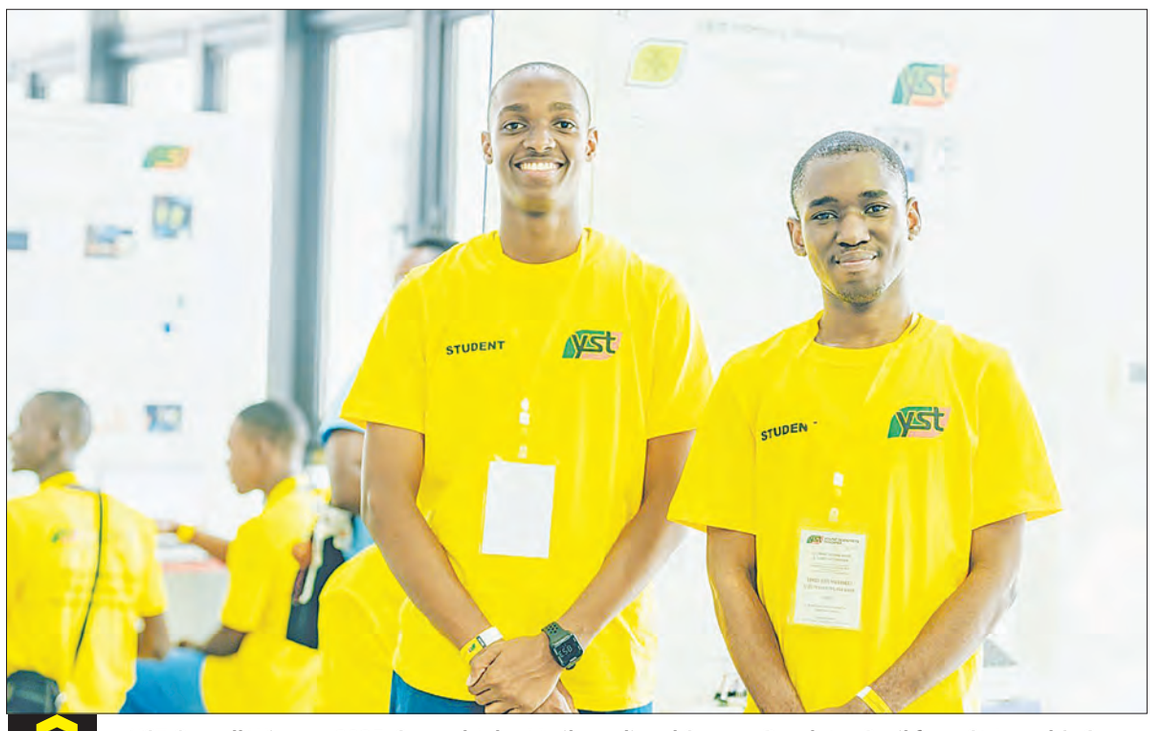
"Some of the scientific projects, that were displayed last year were developed, nurtured and commercialised ready for sale," Dr Kamugisha explained.

"But also, through the support of Karimjee Foundation, total of 53 students has been awarded scholarships for the exceptional skills and dedication in their scientific endeavors. In keeping with its commitment to education and empowerment, the foundation is proud to announce that four additional scholarships will be awarded this year, furthering its mission to invest in the future scientist and leaders of Tanzania.

The KF Scholarship programme has been the corner stone for many students with the passion to excel in science and become the competitive scientists in the market.

Apart from Karimjee Foundation, other sponsors who work to roll the ball of YST, such include Shell Tanzania, Institute of Physics (IOP), Exim Bank, Beyond Bamboo, Costech and Speedy Print. Entirely, all sponsors have played a crucial role in making sure that, young generation is equipped with valuable science skills.

Dr Kamugisha added that the support we have been receiving from our sponsors has enabled to increase the enthusiasm in science and innovations to many students from across the country."



YST Overall Winners 2025: Samuel John Mwilangali and Sammy Deodatus Basil from St Joseph's Cathedral High School

100 million African children out of school, causes and solutions

MANY countries across Africa have embraced universal basic education policies in recent decades. But recent data has revealed that more than 100 million children and adolescents remain out of school, out of a total potential population of 469 million. The latest statistics suggest that after some years of progress, the situation is deteriorating. Education and youth empowerment scholar Moses Ngware and his co-researchers recently carried out an analysis of trends going back 25 years. Their main findings are set out below.

What are the school attendance trends in Africa across all age groups?

In 2000, the number of out-of-school children in primary school, lower secondary and upper secondary was above 100 million. It was down to about 90 million in 2014, and then up again to 100 million by 2025.

Viewed against Africa's high population growth of above 2.5%, these absolute numbers suggest that school participation is not keeping pace.

Nevertheless, between 2000 and 2024, the proportion of out-of-school children and adolescents declined at all education levels. It fell from 37% to 20% for primary schools; from 47% to 35% for lower secondary and from 56% to 47% for upper secondary school-age children. This is despite the absolute numbers of out-of-school children remaining high.

Countries that showed greatest improvement included Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Madagascar and Mozambique. Improvements were driven by at least two main factors. First, targeted policy responses that enabled them to achieve good coverage in a short time. Second, a strong political will combined with a multi-sectoral approach. The approaches included combining conditional cash transfers for households, food supplies, expanding access to schools and implementing universal education policies that reduce cost of schooling for households.

On the other hand, there are countries that made little or no progress. They include Angola, Cape Verde, Lesotho, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. The main drivers of the low progress are: political instability, as seen in South Sudan; poor economic performance, as witnessed in Zimbabwe; the high opportunity cost of schooling, as seen in Lesotho, where boys drop out due to poverty related coping mechanisms, including herding cattle, with only one in every five boys completing grade 12.

What are the notable changes in recent years?

In the past five years, we have seen a steady increase in absolute numbers of out-of-school children and adolescents from 95 million to 100 million, with an average of about 1 million children either not transitioning from primary to secondary school or leaving school or not joining school at all.

There are two main drivers of such a trend. First, finance the fizzling effect of the universal basic education subsidies of the early 2000s. These subsidies made basic education affordable to many households. Of the 42 African countries with free education in their policies, only three were in a position to offer free schooling in 2025. Donor funding of education by multilateral organisations has also been reduced, with education aid in Africa declining by 7% in 2024. Second, the negative impact of COVID-19, with about 10 million who left school due to the lockdowns never to return, for various reasons, including forced marriages among girls and child labour for boys.

Across all the schooling levels, higher than before rates of out-of-school children and adolescents were observed in the Sahel region, in Central African Republic, Chad, Mauritania and northern Nigeria. These countries or regions are characterised by politically motivated violence, harsh climatic changes and a history of low school participation.

Why is school completion important for societies?

The main benefits to societies of school completion include transition to decent work, girls' empowerment, and improved health outcomes. An additional year of schooling increases an individual's lifetime earnings by about 10% on average, with a potential to increase an individual's purchasing power. Such benefits can also trickle down to households through providing household financial stability and enhanced family support.

For girls, school completion is critical for participation in decision making at societal level. Research shows that a woman's power to make decisions, such as education for her children or where to invest, increases with education attainment. This has a bearing on economic independence and gender equity within the society.

Furthermore, and related to these two benefits, children of mothers who have completed secondary education have a 45% lower under-3 mortality rate. This implies that such children have about half the risk of death before age 3 compared to those born to mothers with no education.

What are the gender dynamics?

By 2025, the proportion of males that were out of school, at 51%, was only slightly higher than that of females. However, the out-of-school female rate was on the rise – up by two percentage points in 10 years.

If this growth continues, then the proportion of out-of-school females will overtake that of males in the coming years. This will compound the vulnerabilities disadvantaged girls face in their schooling journey and transition to work.

In addition, the gains made in the last three decades in closing gender gaps in education will be eroded. Eroding the gains made in education has severe consequences, especially for girls. For instance, we are likely to see an increase in females getting married much earlier, and child bearing among adolescents may also increase.

Source: The Conversation