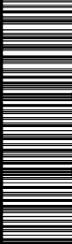


THE SAMBURU Girl Child

SAMBURU WOMEN TRUST



The Voice of the Samburu Girls & Women

**GIRLS
SPEAK OUT**

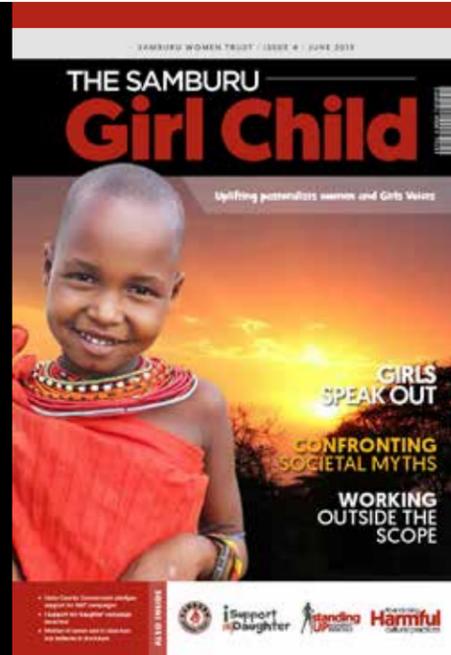
**CONFRONTING
SOCIETAL MYTHS**

**WORKING
OUTSIDE THE
SCOPE**

- Isiolo County Government pledges support for SWT campaigns
- 'I support my daughter' campaign launched
- Mother of seven and in class two but believes in the future

ALSO INSIDE





OUR VISION

We envision a society that recognizes; promotes and protects the fundamental rights and freedom of women and girls; and ensures full participation of indigenous women in their own development

OUR MISSION

We exist to empower pastoralists' women and girls to claim their human rights, strengthen their capacity to influence local and national policies, and address harmful cultural practices through integrating the role of women as decision-makers in the community

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MS JANE MERIWAS FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SWT

AS A COMMUNITY MOTIVATOR AND AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S AMBASSADOR, I HAVE SEEN THIS ORGANISATION GROW FROM SCRATCH TO A HUB OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRL'S COLLECTIVE ASPIRATION.

It is the first indigenous women organisation to address and document the unspoken silent harmful practices of girl-child beading among the Samburu community. This has been a long journey full of hope, struggle and aspiration among indigenous women and girls. My experience and working with women and girls has taught me to be humble, be a good listener and become that person who can go an extra mile to look for solutions when diplomacy fail.

My key role in the organisation is to coordinate and oversee that every member in the office is facilitated to deliver his/her task monthly, quarterly and by the end of the year ensure that we have met our set objectives as stipulated in our guiding principle of project beneficiaries.

My best moment comes when I see women liberating themselves through informed decision making; mothers and elders willingly embracing girls' education as a priority. Engaging in open discussions on the previously unspoken silent traditional harmful practices of girl-child beading among the Samburu community feels my heart with joy. It is through these open discussions that as an organisation, we are able to strategize on how to confront this vice.

The community is slowly embracing our approach and developing positive attitude towards ending the vice. If we were to compare some years back when we kicked off the advocacy at the community level, major strides have been made. Women and girls are now taking the lead in advancing and protecting their rights. They are becoming ambassadors of social change in the community.

Most of these women endure myriad of problems ranging from lack of access to basic needs in their households, denial the rights to own property and other form of human right violations. Women especially in pastoralist's communities carry a heavy burden of marginalization and it is only through recognizing and supporting them that they can be empowered.

This unique vulnerability facing girls in pastoralist communities is a major concern to Samburu Women Trust (SWT). Our quest is to advance the rights of these young ones with the focus being on special protection measures on those affected by child beading, early/forced marriages, FGM, forced abortion and killing of infants among other harmful practices in our midst. Girl-child beading is one of the cultural practices that have affected our girls and as an organisation, we took it upon ourselves to fight it.

This was after we identified it as being a vice that is oppressive to our girls.

Most of these practices that are our concern expose young girls to sex at an early age and in many instances, they become mothers before they reach the age of 18. This is against the existing laws but has continued to thrive. In girl child beading, the minors are literally sex slaves to the morans and have to they endure physical beatings but cannot raise a complaint.

But as in every other success, we have faced challenges. Still there are many others hurdles ahead of us which we cannot jump without your help. To support the girls, we have to ensure that they attend school and remain in school. Girls face many challenges when they are in school, since a girl is a sensitive child and happens to encounter many challenges as she grows up while compared to the boy. Sanitary pads and school fee for these girls will go a long way in ensuring that they do not miss classes during those days of the month.

The girl is the future and it is time that we recognized this, protect and encourage her to have a bright future. We can do it as parents, we can do it as a community, we can do it as the government and we can do it as organisations. Let us support women and girls. With your participation, we shall scale greater heights.

HELPING Eradicate

Harmful cultural practices



JULIET NJOKI
ADMINISTRATOR/
FINANCE OFFICER

My experience while working with Samburu Women Trust has been a journey of witnessing its small beginning growing into a big organisation; something that fills my heart with joy as I endeavour to be a good steward of all that has been placed in our hands. Though it hasn't been easy to convince the community to abandon some of the harmful cultural practices, I have witnessed young girls trading the beautiful beads that bode them to sexual slavery for education. For this I say kudos SWT!

The director deserves a pat on the back for not giving up through the tough and rocky path. I highly appreciate the support from our pioneer donor; IWGIA for the confidence they have had in us which has served as a platform for other donors like KIOS, AJWS and Zen Gardens. These donors have entrusted their resources on us to carry out this noble duty of giving the Samburu girl child a voice to say no to harmful cultural practices.

May God bless you all for supporting the good course of uplifting pastoralist women and girls.



LUCY NTEPENIKA
COMMUNITY LIAISON
OFFICER

My day to day engagement with the project beneficiaries and community members has increased my quest and advancement of women and girls rights in my community. My role as community liaison officer is to monitor and document human rights violations that are not spoken, hidden silently under culture and traditions. I analyze community concerns and hold meetings with the project beneficiaries in their respective areas.

Being a child born and brought up in this community, I have witnessed a gradual but significant change. The community is now embracing women participations in community activities. However, there are still many challenges with the main one being how to make the women participate in decision making, both at the household and county government levels. I believe the new Constitution is a new dawn for women and our hope as an organisation still give us a platform to engage respectively government bodies to developed legislations with affirmative action.

I was born and raised in Kipsing, the Programme implementation areas of SWT Girl- child beading initiatives. Being a young Moran, I have witness girl being beaded and its negative impact of women and girls dignity in our society.

Being a human rights defender, I believe in equality in the society hence i engaged my fellow youth to address this silent harmful practices for our mothers and sister for better tomorrow. In my community our mothers and sisters have remained voiceless and this has hindered their participation in key decision making in the community.

My role in the organization is to mobilize resources for community, identify the community training needs and monitoring the programme implementation for both community and project beneficiaries to enable achieve the organization goals.



LAURA AOKA
PROGRAMME INTERN

Joining the Samburu Women Trust group has been a life changing experience. Working with passionate people whose priority is to advocate for the girl child rights has opened my eyes to a new world. I have learnt to work with vulnerable people and to put their concerns and needs first by getting involved from start to finish in a project. When I joined SWT, my goal was to be a person who can influence people's life positively and make the world a better place.

Being part of the group has increased my ambition to be a better, confident person and not take things for granted. I hope to continue growing with Samburu Women Trust.



Our Growth & Future

Over one decade Samburu Women Trust has been in the forefront raising concerns of the indigenous women and girls human rights.

This has been done through data analysis, publications and media campaigns, effectively lobbying for women participation and inclusion in decision making starting from the household level to international arena. Our continuous engagement and involvement is slowly changing attitude and mindset of elders who are the custodian of culture.

Our intergenerational dialogue approach applied in our programmes is embraced by the communities. Drawing on the wisdom inherent in our communities, it has raised the level of confidence among local communities and more specifically to our women and girls who now strongly believe in their power to shape their destiny.

Our work is to ensure women and girls live a dignified life in the society since they play an integral role in the community. They do all the domestic chores and are the mothers who in the long run guarantee the continuity of the society. However, it is sad to note that they are not given the recognition

they deserve but are instead subjected to misery.

Girl-child beading exposes the girls to early pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/Aids. In this engagement of sexual intimacy, the girls are not expected to get pregnant even though no contraceptives are provided. Those who are unlucky to conceive are subjected to a cruel method of terminating the pregnancy. The victims (young girls) are left traumatized and there have been instances some die during the process. As a community, we have a duty to ensure that this practice is done away with.

Our determination to end this vice has seen us devise ways to adorn the girls with the beads for purposes of beauty only. Through the **“i support my daughter campaign”** we aim to ensure that as many girls access school since education is a right guaranteed in the constitution. Beads make our girls prettier but when our beautiful daughters are denied the right to go to school a result of beading, the beauty is wasted. They ought to be smart both physically and intellectually so as to survive in the competitive world.

We have noted that the enrolment of girls in lower classes is high but dropout rate is high as they go up the education ladder. These girls need to be encouraged to pursue education to the greatest heights possible and for this to be achieved all stakeholders need to work a team. They should not be considered as source of wealth through forced early marriages.

Currently we have six girls who have not undergone the cut or FGM [Female Genital Mutilation] with full support and blessing from their parents; they have become our ambassadors of social change in the community. Out of the six girls, two are in primary school, three in secondary school and one sat for her KCSE last year and awaiting to join the University. She is currently an

intern/volunteer in our Nanyuki office, where she learns and acquires skills of leadership and is a mentor and role model to other girls in her village.

On the other hand, we have managed to enroll 150 young beaded girls in different primary schools across our areas of operations. Seven of the girls are sponsored by NTV reporter Rose Wangui, 10 others are under sponsorship of **“i support my daughter campaign”** which has received support from Zen Gardens and Caroline Mutoko of Radio Africa. Several others with no formal sponsorship are under the care of their head-teachers in different schools and Ol Donyiro Catholic Mission which has been turned into a safe haven for girls running away from harmful tradition practices. But the latter are facing challenges of inadequate resources to sustain them and risks of the girls dropping out remains high.

The Kipsing community has donated land to SWT for the construction of an office. The construction work has already commenced. The building will act as a safe haven for girls escaping harmful cultural practices. At the same time, it will also be SWT's field office for community liaison and capacity building within the community.

We express our gratitude to partners who have believed in our work and continued support our objective to achieve our mission including Isiolo County Government, Provincial administrators, police officers and community elders. The media fraternity has remained a valued partner, granting us a friendly platform to articulate our issues to reach a wider audience.

Our development partners have remained supportive all through and we are grateful for they have believed in us. The partners include IWGIA and KIOS, AWJS, Zen Gardens, Kivulini Trust, national and international human rights institutions, National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders - Kenya, Ol Donyiro and Kipsing community. They have played a big role towards advancement and uplifting pastoralist women and girls voices in our community.

BY JANE MERIWAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tracing the roots of the beading culture

Beading has been part of Samburu culture for decades. A research carried out by Samburu Women Trust in 2012 established that it dates back to sometimes around 1780.

According to one of the elders, beading was recommended as a way of taming the community warriors (morans) from admiring and “stealing” the elders' wives. Mzee Loshopoko from OlDonyiro explained that beading started when the Samburu decided to separate age sets as a way of creating harmony within the community.

This came after an ugly incident when the warriors fought the elders during ceremony as they attempted to take away their wives. After the fight, a bull was slaughtered and a cleansing ritual called Lminong' organised. It is during this ceremony that the idea of morans being allowed to take young uncircumcised girls as temporary brides was born.

It was resolved that warriors would be living in the forest where they make their own foods and were not allowed to interact with elders or have an intimate relationship with their wives. Anyone caught sleeping with a circumcised [read married] wife lost the coveted title of being referred to as a moran.

A story is told of how one day a moran leader who had beaded a young girl sneaked into the hut of a married woman and left his spear outside.

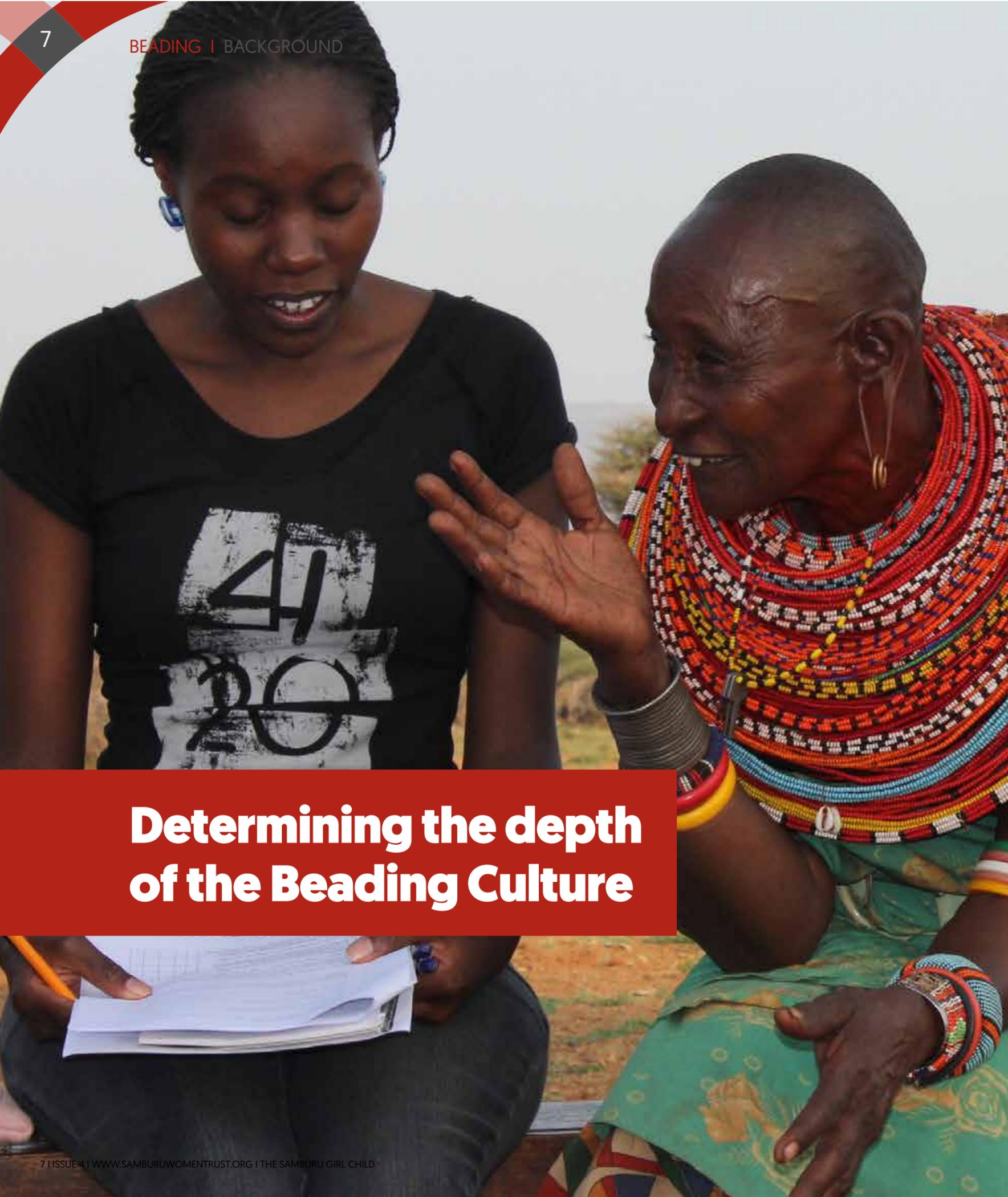
His beaded girl who was suspicious laid a trap and took away the spear which she took to her singira. When the moran came out of the married woman's hut, he found his spear missing and proceed to his girl's singira where he saw the spear but never made any comment.

The moran knew his secret might leak out and the following morning, he blew the horn and summoned the warriors telling them they had to go for a cattle raid so that he could give the animals to the elders to appease them and seek forgiveness.

However, the raid was not successful and tens of the warriors were killed by the rival community. Since then, it was resolved that beading would continue being practised in the community and elders would never admire young girls while on the other hand it was declared a taboo for a warrior to sneak into a married woman's hut for sexual pleasure.

For over two centuries now, the culture of beading has continued to thrive.





Determining the depth of the Beading Culture

Ahead of the commencement of the anti beading campaign programme in 2012, Samburu Women Trust (SWT) conducted a scientific research to determine the extent of beading within Ol Donyiro region. The research revealed that girl-child beading is still rampant among members of the Samburu community with many of the respondents admitting that it keeps their culture alive.

The research conducted in the Kipsing area of Isiolo's Ol Donyiro division in December 2011 and July 2012, most of the 26 respondents who included 17 males and nine females averred that the practice has contributed to high illiteracy levels. Most of them [88.5percent] have never attended any school and those who had, did not complete primary school.

On the ground, most of the schools that were visited had only a few pupils with girls being a minority. This pattern suggested that the community residing in the two areas of focus visited did not value girl-child education.

The respondents admitted that there is a high rate of unwanted pregnancies, cases of abortions, no value for girl-child education and early and a culture where young girls were forced marriages was rampant. While confessing that forcing the girls to get married undermines girl-child education, they were quick to argue that there was nothing wrong with the practice insisting

that it was their culture. They pointed out that the practice has cultural significance in that it enhances morality while keeping the culture alive.

Adorning of beads (necklaces and bracelets) is common among the Samburu. The beads enhance the beauty of the girls and mothers are obliged to purchase them for their daughters. When the morans buy the beads and present them to the girls, it is a financial burden taken away from the family. Fifty per cent [50%] noted that beading contributes to early/forced marriages considering that the girl is now more beautiful. Early marriages and forced labour, (herding), were identified as factors denying girls their right to dignity as well as formal education.

Seventy three per cent [73%] of the respondents were not aware of any legislation protecting child rights but twenty six per cent [26%] had some knowledge on the right to education and the law against Female Genital Mutilation. Most said that they saw nothing wrong with beading saying that culture was being followed. Majority were aware that denying a child access to formal education was an offence, same with early and forced marriages.

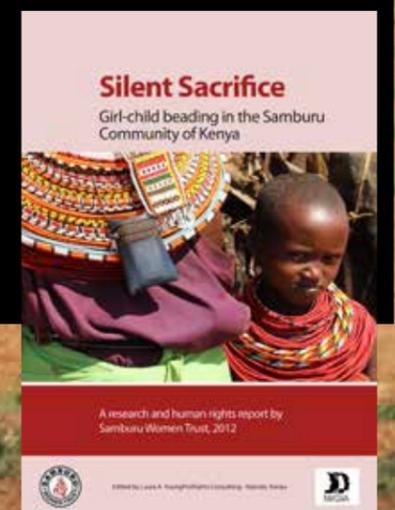
The interviewees said that the practice can eventually be abandoned mostly through education and ending moranism. Majority of them admitted that they knew their

neighbours the Rendille and Turkana also engaged in the practice.

Men were more willing to participate in the research but this is mainly due to the fact that women do not have a voice in the community. They fear repercussions from their husbands which include physical beatings. However, one woman was bold enough to admit that she knew of the death of one girl during forceful abortion.

The research further established that the majority of the residents are affiliated to traditional religion and this could be the reason behind them holding onto the culture they have lived with. They hold it true that their ancestors chart their destiny and as such they should observe the norms and traditions of the community.

Two thirds [approximately] of the residents said that they were traditional believers while the remaining are Christians. There were no interviewees who claimed to subscribe to the Muslim faith.





SWT WORKING CLOSELY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

BY KAMAU NGUGI

The National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders has been working closely with Samburu Women Trust in an effort to safeguard the rights of girls and women in the indigenous Samburu community.. Our initial contact was made when SWT executive director Jane Meriwias launched a campaign to fight widespread but silent human rights violations that had continued for decades without anyone raising a finger.

As she embarked on her campaigns, she met a lot of resistance especially from men who felt the issues she was raising were better left undisturbed. Ms. Meriwias received threats and the authorities in this case police officers could not guarantee her safety as she traversed through parts of Isiolo County to defend the rights of Samburu girl child. Unbowed by the threats but still acknowledging the dangers she was exposing herself to, she sought our support.

Our coalition works with outstanding individuals and organisations involved in defending acts that contribute to human right violation. National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders is the leading human rights organisation in Kenya that addresses Human Rights Defenders issues through protection, capacity building, awareness raising and advocacy. When SWT director approached us, we felt that the issues she was raising were legitimate in that it was adversely affecting women and children.

We resolved to team up and we organized a visit to Kipsing village in Isiolo County to officially launch the anti-beading campaign. The harmful cultural practices take away the voice of the girl child; affect her personal health and works against upward mobility. We have partnered with SWT in an endeavour to give children and women a voice to say no to atrocities meted upon them.

The support we extend involves skills development targeting partners and the local administration regarding various aspects of the violated rights. Our main focus has been on educating chiefs and law enforcers on the existing Acts that have been put in place to protect the child.

There are national legislations like the Education Act, the Sex Offences Act and Anti-FGM Act among others. At the global level, there exists the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children [CRC],

By sensitizing partners at the local level, it accords them an opportunity for the people to be part of the campaign. At national level, we provide a forum where SWT can articulate the issues so that the authority can recognize the challenges on the ground. Such forums also provide an opportunity for both local and international partners to come on board and support the campaign against girl child beading and other forms of Gender Based Violence [GBV].

Kamau Ngugi is the Executive Director, National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Kenya.



VISION
Human Rights Defenders working and living in a safe, secure and conducive environment.

MISSION
To be the leading Human Rights Defenders



Mr. Albert Lemasulani

TEAMING UP FOR BETTER RESULTS

Infrastructural challenges and poor means of communications has seen SWT seek partnership with other organisations operating within OI Donyiro area.

One of the organisation that has come on board is Ndugu Zangu Christian Community Charitable Trust. Though there is no formal agreement on a partnership deal, the desire to protect the vulnerable children has seen the two organisations join hands by sharing information and seeking each other's logistical support where necessary.

"We have been housing girls who have run away from forced marriages and beading. They had to walk for long distances to seek refuge at our place," says Albert Lemasulani, Executive Officer at Ndugu Zangu Christian Community Charitable Trust.

Being on the ground, Ndugu Zangu Christian Community Charitable Trust offers a safe haven for girls running

away from harmful cultural practices. While SWT has been spreading the message to the girls to refuse being beaded or be subjected to FGM, it does not have its own rescue centre and the alternative is to cooperate with the authorities and established institutions.

Chiefs and police officers who have undergone the training of law enforcers by SWT were sensitized to assist in weeding out the harmful practices have been liaising with Ndugu Zangu Christian Community Charitable Trust. Mr Lemasulani feels that cooperating with the law enforcers bear good results.

"There are girls who were brought by the area chief and another one who walked all the way from Tualle. She has a passion for education and she is now set to sit for her Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) this year," says Mr Lemasulani.

He adds that Samburu Women Trust and Ndugu Zangu Christian Community Charitable Trust have been working closely with local chiefs and terms that as the best approach to sustain anti-beading campaign. Other stakeholders whose contribution is crucial include the Area Children Advisory Councils as well as national and county governments.

He argues that the most effective way would be to target men, women as well as the affected children pointing that taking away the girl forcefully from the parents might not work as this tend to create enmity



GODANA DOYO
GOVERNOR, ISIOLO COUNTY



MOSES KITHINJI
MINORITY LEADER
Isiolo County (MCA, Bulapesa Ward)



DAVID LEMANTILE
DEPUTY SPEAKER
Isiolo County Assembly

County Government pledges support for SWT campaigns

ISIOLO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

“Eradicating harmful cultural practices calls for concerted efforts by all stakeholders. That is the reason why the county government fully supports this campaign”.

These were the words of the Deputy Speaker at Isiolo County Assembly Hon David Lemantile during a meeting with SWT officials in his office. SWT director and her team had visited the OI Donyiro Member of the County Assembly (MCA) in an effort to bring the county government on board.

Hon Lemantile grew up in OI Donyiro and is conversant with the situation on the ground. Unlike other political leaders who shy away from commenting on thriving harmful

cultural practices for fear of losing their political seats during elections, the MCA talks passionately on the need to do away with beading and Female Genital Mutilation.

“As the county government, we are fully behind SWT in fighting outdated cultural practices. Our efforts are geared towards making education accessible to the children and civic education for women and elders so that they can prioritize education,” said the deputy speaker.

Speaking on education, Hon Lemantile noted that the community was now warming up to educating their girls. Many girls performed well during the 2014 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams with three of them getting financial support from

Equity Bank to pursue secondary school education.

“Three of our girls received the Wings to Fly from Equity Bank. It’s a pointer that the community is keen on education unlike some few years back when only a few girls could complete their primary school education,” the MCA said.

He revealed that the County Government of Isiolo had set aside Sh1million to educate women on the need to eradicate harmful cultural practice. The national government would also come on board to support the fight against Gender Based Violence (GBV).

The Deputy Speaker was full of praise for the strategy adopted by SWT to eradicate GBV within OI Donyiro region.



“Use of dialogue is the best approach. Talking with women, elders and the girls will bear fruit unlike use of force that in many cases breed resistance. I have heard of several cases where young girls are defying their parents in planned forced marriages and this is happening because they are now aware of their rights,” said the leader.

However, he said there was need for putting up a rescue centre where girls could seek refuge and learn. This he said would not only encourage the girls to be bold enough in denouncing the harmful practices but it could act as shelter for the girls during drought when their parents migrate with their cattle.

“Men and women are supporting the idea of taking their children to school. We have to seize this opportunity to encourage even those who are still

reluctant. The best girl in 2014 KCPE came from Kipsing and we shall reward her as a way of encouraging others,” he said.

Expanding the campaign

A motion to allocate funds towards the campaign to eradicate Gender Based Violence is on the way. The Minority Leader at the Isiolo County Assembly Hon Musa Kithinji feels it is time the County Government teamed up with community based organisations that were bringing results.

The Bura Pesa MCA hailed the activities of SWT and called the organization to extend its operations to other parts of Isiolo County where harmful cultural practices such as FGM and early forced marriage are rampant.

“I will sponsor a motion seeking to set at least Sh2million to address the issue of gender violence in the county. SWT campaign in OI Donyiro is bearing fruits and I believe we should support them to widen their scope,” said Hon Kithinji.

The MCA said all must join hands in this worthy course and asked the national government to extend its support since what SWT was doing is supplementing the Government’s policy of ensuring every child access free and compulsory education.



'I support my daughter' campaign launched

KIPSING LAUNCH

It was one of the biggest gatherings witnessed in recent times in the sleepy Kipsing market. Some walked; others rode on motor bikes while others hiked lift on lorries with one thing in mind-to a meeting called by Samburu Women Trust where the governor's would be the chief guest.

It was the first time the Isiolo Governor was visiting the area and expectations were high though it was not lost to the locals that he was coming solely to launch the "I support my Daughter



campaign. And when he rose to speak, he kept out of other matters affecting the entire county, choosing instead to concentrate the issue at hand-how all should join hands to protect the girl child especially from harmful cultural practices. In his speech, Governor Doyo steered out of politics despite being prodded to address the matter by various speakers.

"We have an obligation to educate our daughters and appreciating them is what will start this process of supporting our daughters. I have a three-year-old daughter and I support her to have a

good life". Governor Doyo said to crowd estimated at 2,000 people.

He said the County Government of Isiolo would work with stakeholders out to support the girl child noting that the minors are made to suffer by being denied education and being subjected to early marriages and other practices that are detrimental to their well being.

The Governor was categorical and insisted that it was time the culture of selling off girls was discarded. He added that women leaders have supported the country and the community in particular and as such, girls should be supported. Governor Doyo pledged to support schools in the region through funds to improve learning facilities.

Local leaders who addressed the gathering noted that as much as the Central Government is mandated to ensure that schools are facilitated for, children from the region were not attending classes due to a number of reasons. In a normal schooling day, girls and boys can be spotted herding goats and sheep. Food offered by school was cited as an incentive that retains the children in school but most of the time, it is not adequate or there is no water to cook.

The Governor's wife Madina Doyo

pleaded with the community to support girls and ensure that they have a future they deserve. She said that they have to attend school and become people use citizens in future instead of banking their hopes of getting married and attending to their husbands.

Attendants to the meeting admitted that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was rife in the region and there was a general agreement from the speakers that the community had to find alternative ways of accepting the girls as women as opposed to forcing them to undergo the cut.

"Time to do weed out child beading practice in our midst is now. We should be thinking of how to take them to school with a view of bettering their future lives ", said Jane Meriwas, the Executive Director of SWT, speaking to the community in the local Samburu dialect.

Meriwas sent a passionate appeal to the County government to support schools in the area by allocating funds which will encourage parents to enrol their children, especially girls in school.

The Governor, in his key speech, promised that funds from his government will be allocated to build a dormitory at Kipsing Secondary School. The girls in the school sleep in make-shift structures.

He further informed the meeting that since he was elected governor, education in the whole county has been boosted by bursaries to the tune of Sh2million which have already been awarded to deserving children.

Locals named pointed out failure by the government to convene regular consultative forums to address issues affecting the community was hampering development in the area. Poor infrastructure was named as the biggest challenges local had to contend with.



Mr. Francis Lekalasi, Ol Donyiro Ward Administrator

Boy child input crucial in anti-GBV campaigns

Mr. Francis Lekalasi grew up in Ol Donyiro and attests that girl child beading has been rampant over the years. Now in his mid 30s, he says the practice is on the decline thanks to combined efforts by community based organisations, education stakeholders as well as government officials on the ground.

"Beading has been with us for long but nowadays you can travel for several kilometres without spotting a beaded girl. The Catholic Church and establishment of more schools are some of the factors that have contributed to the decline of the practice," says the Ol Donyiro ward administrator.

As an employee of the Isiolo County Government, Mr Lekalasi interacts with the local community on daily basis assessing their needs. He says priority should be given on education

whereby at least a nursery school ought to be put up every year in the villages to encourage more children to enroll.

But he cautions that education campaign should be broad based-targeting both boys and girls. He points that the action of beading involves boys and girls but the latter bears the brunt especially when they fall pregnant.

"Morans carry out the cattle raids because they want to look tough and get praised through songs by the young girls. The girls thus become easy targets for beading by the warriors many of whom have never set a foot in school," says the ward administrator.

He adds that the allure of moranism and the pride associated with beading may dissuade a boy from joining school. But he points out that all is not

rosy in beading among moranism with cases of the warriors getting involved in serious fights being common. This he says can only be overcome by having all children getting enrolled in school.

Mr Lekalasi says at times, the warriors target school going girls by waylaying them on their way to or from school. "Some few years back, I witnessed some morans try to bead a girl who was on her way to school. The girl raised an alarm and the beading move was repulsed,"

The ward administrator opines that the message by SWT is getting positive results in that girls can now raise a voice against oppressive cultural practices.



Mother of seven with her daughter in class

Mother of seven and in class two but believes in the future

From a tender age, Elizabeth Shangaiyo could herd her father's cows and goats, go for kilometers to fetch water and generally do house chores considering the fact that she was the only girl in the family. Her two brothers could not participate simply because culture dictates.

Today Shangaiyo is a mother of seven. She is in her mid 30's and in class two at Lengwenyi Primary School of Ol-Donyiro in Isiolo County where four of her own children school. One shares a desk with her. A daughter is in class four, a boy in class one and in the same school, another boy in nursery. Two other children are in different schools with one attending classes in the neighbouring Meru County.

In the wee hours of a normal school day, Shangaiyo will be up and about ushering the new day like any other mother in the village. There is the fire

to light, breakfast to prepare, and other house chores to do. She will then wake her four children and ensure that they are ready for another day in school, freshen up and put on her school uniform and after breakfast, the five-some will leave the homestead on their way to school.

It took a step of faith and a lot of determination for her to run away from an abusive forced marriage and later enroll in school despite all the odds against her. At her age, she has undergone much trauma, both physically and psychologically, but she has weathered the storm and is now facing each new day confidently.

Her problems started when she was sold off to an old man at a tender age. She did not have a choice and had to leave her home and start a new life as somebody's wife. But her father gave her two cows as a parting gift. This was after her in-laws had paid the bride price.

But even after resigning to the fact that she had started a new life altogether, things turned from worse to worst immediately after assuming residence at her new home in the neighbouring Samburu County. A few weeks after becoming a wife, her husband left her and travelled to Nairobi to look for a job. She was left with her in-laws but according to her, her mother-in-law was abusive and could even beat her.

"She was against my marriage to her son and went out of her way to frustrate me. She could at times beat me and force me to do strenuous chores ignoring the fact that I was pregnant with my first child", Shangaiyo said through an interpreter. "I was young and naïve. I had to abide with all that I was told to do", she added.

One day she mustered enough guts and left the homestead unnoticed without knowing which direction to follow to reach her matrimonial home. She had had enough of the beatings and was ready for anything. She walked for days on end, begging for food and accommodation along the way before finally reaching home after about a week.

But there was no welcoming party at home. She found that her father had passed on in her absence and her brothers were not amused to see her. They were adamant that she belonged with her husband now that the bride price had been paid. Her cajoling that they return the bride price earned her severe beating and she was forcefully taken back to her in-laws.

"I could not understand how my own brothers could be so cruel. Although I was somebody's wife, I was still their blood sister and the least they could have done is to share my predicament", Shangaiyo lamented with tears streaming down her cheeks.



Back at her in-laws', the mistreatment persisted but now on a higher gear. Her mother-in-law made her really suffer, maybe because she had run away, and this led to complications when she finally gave birth to a girl. She was bed-ridden for weeks after delivery. Her mother-in-law had given her a concoction of herbs which she believes were poisonous. In her sick-bed she became weak and could not walk but literally crawled to reach the next point. Today her leg is semi-paralysed and she walks with a slight limp.

Out of the blues, her mother arrived one day as she lay writhing in pain in her bed. She may have carried a magic wand because after two weeks of attending to her, Shangaiyo regained strength and could now walk around and attend to her growing infant. It was by grace of God that the baby had held on to life.

Her mother then left after she had recovered and although she begged her to take her back home, her pleas fell on deaf ears. She was somebody's wife.

Now that she was back in shape, her mother-in-law came back to torment her but Shangaiyo decided that enough was enough and strapped her daughter on her back and left. She threw all cares to the wind knowing that she would get another severe beating when she reached home but

this time, she had resolved that she would never go back to her in-laws'.

Her mother was not surprised to see her and this time, she sided with her after her brothers insisted that she goes back. Her mother stood her ground and even involved the local community convincing them that her daughter would die if she went back to Samburu. Her brothers had to concede defeat and with time, left and started life elsewhere leaving Shangaiyo and her mother.

As years rolled on, she gave birth to six more children out of wed-lock because she could not re-marry point being that her in-laws had refused to accept back the bride price. In essence, she was still somebody's wife. Her mother supported her and together they raised the children until the in-laws came back to taunt them. When at one point they tried to abduct her, the community intervened and apprehended her husband and handed him over to the administration. He was later released on condition that he leaves her alone. This is the time she enrolled in school.

"As a community, we saw it wise that she enrolls in school so that she could be protected by the law", Mr Phillip Leparamarai, a village elder said. "We have vowed to protect her as a community and support her endeavours", he added.

Shangaiyo's long and strenuous battle to freedom has challenged the community and not only have many parents accepted to take their children to school but they are slowly appreciating the fact that girls also have a place in society and as such should be respected. With girls enrolling in school, cases of early and forced marriages have declined and this is bound to have a positive outcome in the future.

At school, Shangaiyo feels safe and according to Mr Peter Lesootia, the school head, she is committed and focused in her quest to get knowledge.

"She is very focused and eager to learn. Her age does not seem to bother her and we are willing to support her in every way possible", he says.

As the day ends, Shangaiyo rounds her flock and together they troop back home where she embarks on her motherly duties.

She wants to proceed past university but first, she must do her bit as a pupil and a mother.

Her efforts to liberate herself have not gone unnoticed and Samburu Women Trust (SWT), a local organization aimed at enhancing women rights has been watching her progress closely.

According to SWT's executive director Ms Jane Meriwas, Shangaiyo has proved to the world that indeed, with faith and determination you can achieve anything, including freedom, regardless of where you come from.

"We are keenly monitoring and documenting Shangaiyo's situation knowing too well that there other vulnerable women and girls whose voices are not heard and as such cannot access justice", Ms Meriwas said.

She added that there is need to ensure that Shangaiyo remains in school and that all avenues are exhausted to ensure that her in-laws do not continue pestering her and interfering with her well being.

"She still lives in fear without knowing when her in-laws will pounce next. Her matter should be solved amicably between the parties involved so that she can be officially divorced to give her a chance to move on. If this is not possible, then legal redress will be the next option", Meriwas says convincingly.

Now that the women in the village are not supposed to own property, children included, Shangaiyo may have opened the liberation path with her courage and this will benefit other women, Meriwas believes.

Samburu Women Trust has held meetings with the local community, provincial administration and also the school management to ensure that nobody is allowed to harass Shangaiyo or any other girls attending school. This is with an aim of enhancing women emancipation.

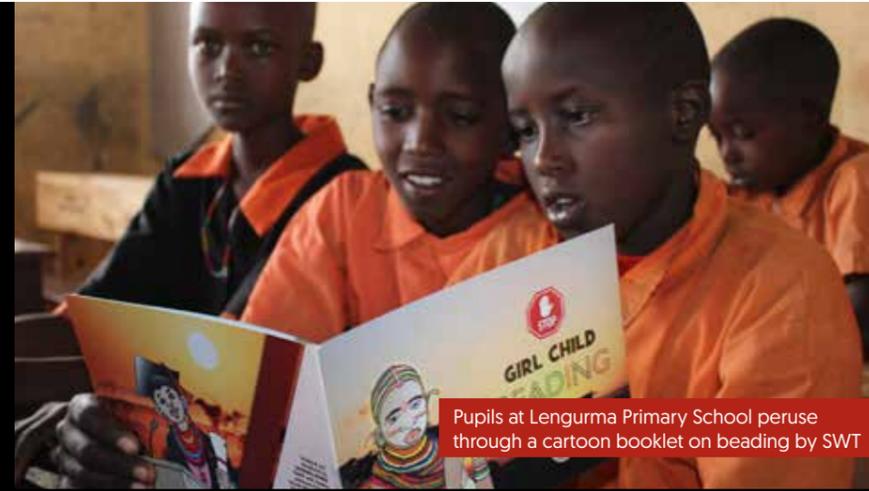
For Shangaiyo and other girls and women entangled in retrogressive cultural norms, the future looks bright for sure.



Law enforcers after training sponsored by SWT



An SWT beneficiary from Marsabit before [left] and after joining school [right]



Pupils at Lengurma Primary School peruse through a cartoon booklet on beading by SWT



SWT's Board of Trustee Margaret Super with girls set to join school for the first time



Elizabeth Shangaiyo with her two daughters at Lengwenyi Primary School with her Headteacher



Participants at a para-legal training in Nanyuki



Consultative meetings in Samburu County



SWT staff receiving a donation cheque from Zen Garden towards support of education for girls



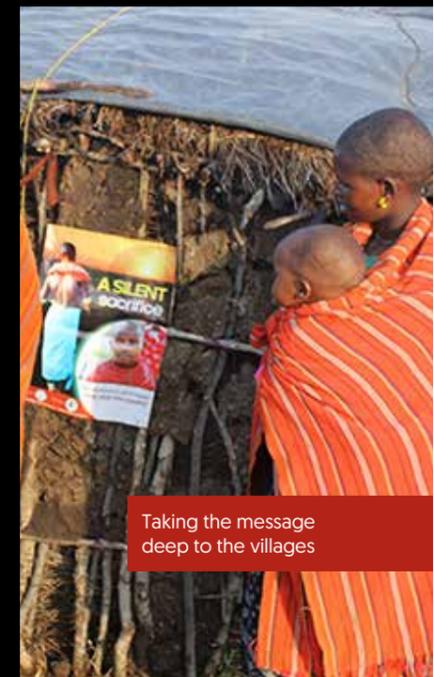
Keeping up-to-date on the anti-beading campaign



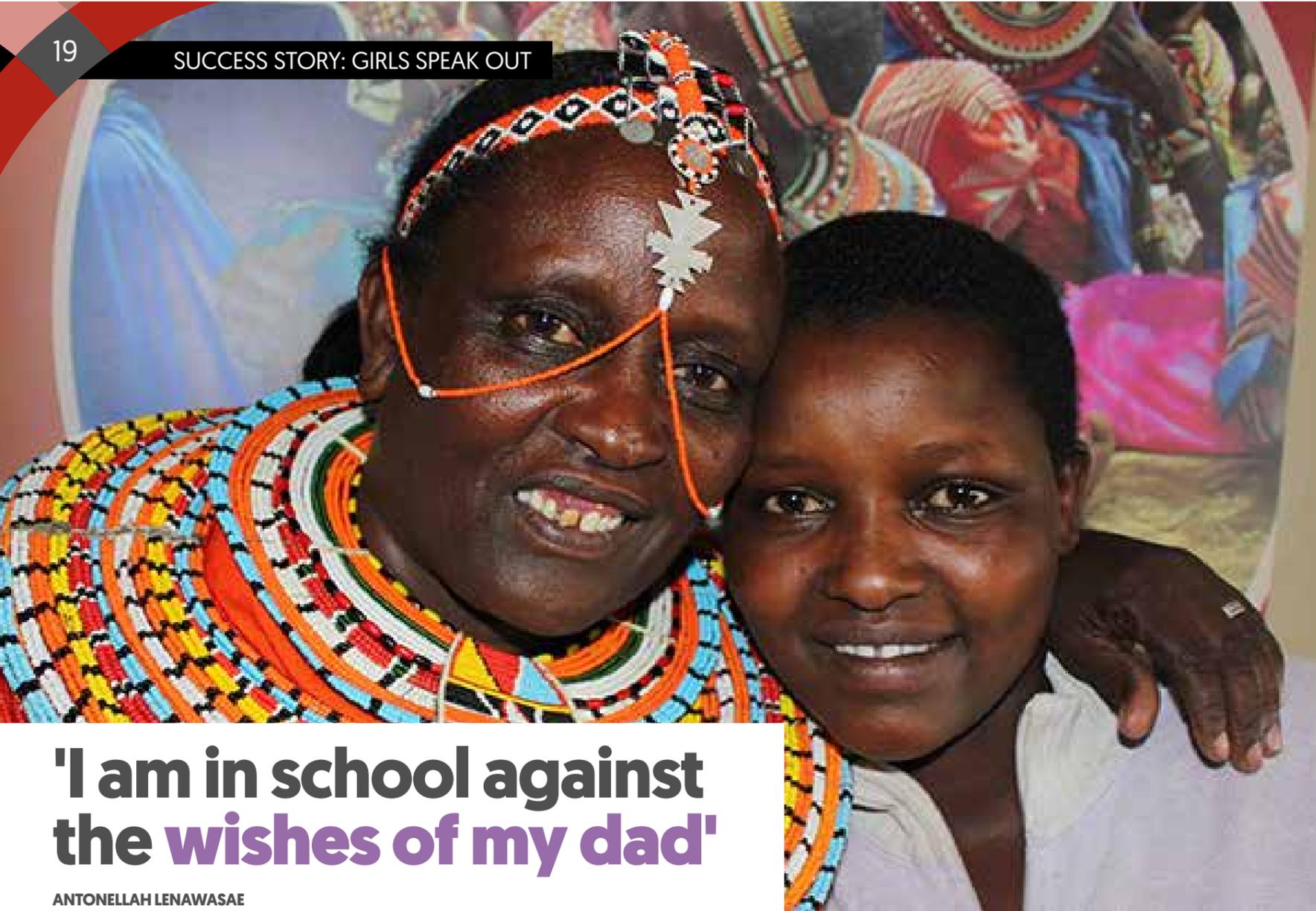
Residents attending 'I support my daughter' campaign launch at Kipsing



A community focus group discussion during an External Evaluator Programmes field visit for monitoring and evaluation

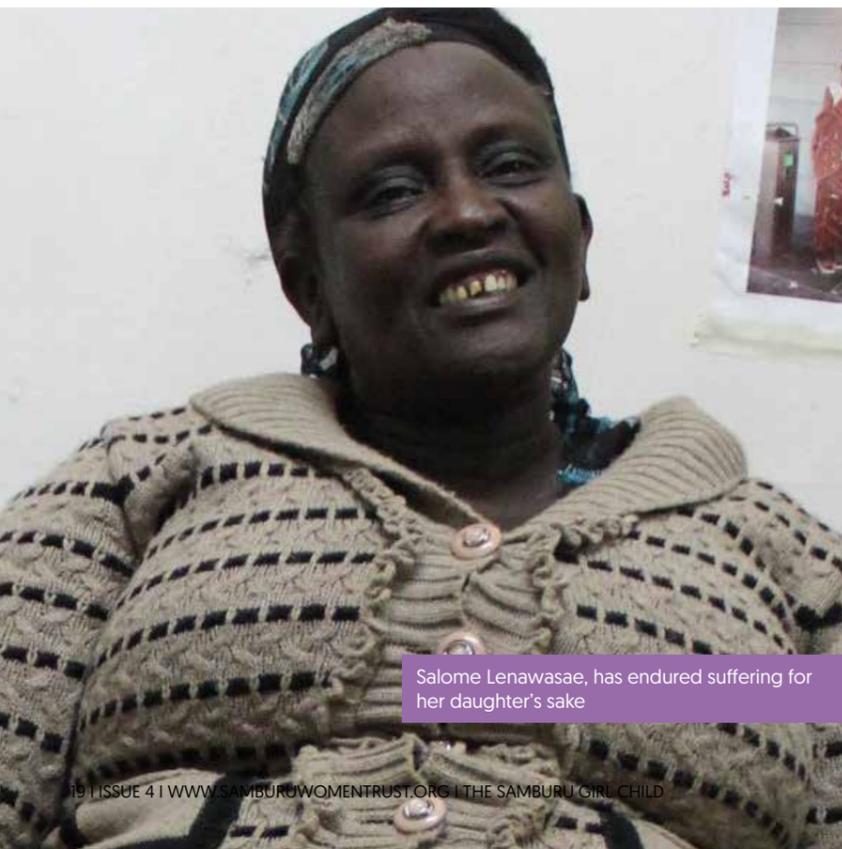


Taking the message deep to the villages



'I am in school against the wishes of my dad'

ANTONELLAH LENAWASAE



Salome Lenawasae, has endured suffering for her daughter's sake



Antonellah Lenawasae, now a form three student

Seventeen-year-old Antonellah Lenawasae breaks into tears as she narrates the battles her mother has fought to keep her in school. For six years, she has been warding off persistent suitors eager to turn her daughter into a child bride.

"I am the reason that my mother run away from my dad's place to live alone. It's a sacrifice she made because of me," says the Form Three student amidst sobs.

Now schooling at PCEA Nanyuki High School, the eldest daughter in the family says it is by grace of God that she will complete her secondary education next year. If her mother had not defied her father's orders, she would have been plucked from Magadi Primary School in Laikipia County while in class five and probably she would be a mother of three today.

The suitor had visited her father and formal dowry negotiations had commenced. The husband to be had brought blankets which traditionally precedes cattle, the ultimate bride prize. With the father having accepted the marriage proposal, plans were made to subject Antonellah to circumcision alongside some 300 girls during a big ceremony held at Ngaremare village.

"Many people visit to witness the big ceremony and my maternal aunt from

Samburu County was one of them. I think they had organized with my mum since a day before the ceremony was to commence on Sunday, she sneaked me to Suguta Marmar," says the fifth born in a family of four boys and two girls.

Soon after they arrived in Suguta, someone called the aunt to demand that she takes her niece back so that she could undergo the cut like the other girls. However, after she consulted with her sister (Antonellah's mother), they agreed to ignore the demand. Meanwhile, the suitor presented the bride prize with the father promising that the bride would be delivered to him.

"My aunt enrolled me at a local primary school and after we closed for the April holidays, I went to visit my mum at Ngaremare. On seeing me, my father went into a state of rage and declared that I would be married off immediately to the elderly man who had by now paid the dowry," she narrates.

But Antonellah's mother could hear none of that and decided to report the matter to the chief. Her husband was summoned and ordered not to marry off her daughter. His pleas that he had already received the bride prize fell on deaf ears. He threatened to beat up her wife for reporting him.

When school reopened, Antonellah was enrolled in a boarding school at a rescue centre run by Catholic nuns at Suguta. She met 50 other rescued girls and was to remain there for three years. During the holidays, she could not go home but sought refuge at her aunt's home to avoid meeting her dad.

"Even after my mum met Jane [SWT executive director], my dad still continued to make visits to our Rumuruti home during the holidays to harass me so that I could give in and get circumcised. It was then that Jane organized for me to join Al Jijo primary school which is far from home. I sat for my KCPE in 2012 and scored 263 marks," she says.

Having completed primary school, the father thought it was now appropriate to get another suitor for her with the first one having given up by then. Antonellah refused to comply and sought SWT's intervention. She eventually joined secondary school. Her father passed on last year but the daughter is not bitter with him saying the culture of forcing young girls to get married is rampant among the Samburu community.

"There are myths that have been coined to ensure that girls get circumcised and eventually get married. I want to urge all Samburu girls to defy this harmful practice and when their

fathers try to force them, they should report to the authority. I will never under FGM and girls should learn from me that nothing bad will happen to them if they defy their fathers orders to get out of school to be married off," says Antonellah who is invited to speak to girls during civic education meetings.

I had to stand firm for the sake of my daughter

Salome Lenawasae stands out among the few women daring enough to defy orders from their husbands. It is a rare occurrence for a married woman to speak anything contrary to the wishes of her husband for they are taught to be submissive and never to question nay decision he makes.

Salome paid dearly for her defiant nature. However, she has no regrets for the suffering she has endured for nearly ten years for she says her daughters' education is enough to wipe away the tears.

"I was forcefully removed from school and married off when I was barely ten years old. I swore that none of my daughters would suffer due to retrogressive cultural practices. My other daughter is in class eight and I have resisted plans by her late father to marry her off," says Salome.



Lengurma parents warm up to education

LENGURMA SCHOOL

Lengurma village stands out as the epitome of anti beading campaign within Ol Donyiro village. At the local primary school, a not too common scenario in the locality is witnessed during break time. Boys and girls run around playing various games, their faces telling it all—they are happy to be in school.

A few years ago, the happy looking pupils would be deep in the thickets looking after sheep and goats, returning to their boma

in the evening. Education is yet to be considered a apriority in this community. Girls main chore is that of looking after their parents' livestock as they wait for a suitor to come by or a moran to bead her. Boys 'role has been that of being the community warriors to protect the interest of the community namely keeping off aggressors out to steal their cattle.

In 2009, the local community put up a nursery in the village and a few years later, World Vision Kenya Isiolo office

constructed a modern school deep in the village. It is the first such school in the region and the pupils now had modern classrooms, a dining hall and a kitchen as well as VIP latrines. A girls' dormitory stands magnificently in the compound. The construction of this facility came a year after the launch of the anti beading campaign with Lengurma being one of the focal points.

During a research carried out by SWT to determine the best approach to

confront beading and other harmful cultural practices, many of those interviewed were of the view that education was the surest route of uprooting the some deep rooted traditions that were no longer beneficial to the community. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and beading remains rife in the region with the community hiding behind the mask of culture preservation. The pro education campaign is bearing fruits with a good number of parents enrolling their children at Lengurma Primary School.

"I brought my children here when my husband was away searching pasture for our livestock. When he came back and found them already in school, he agreed that they could continue with education," says Nolorukoti Leruso, a mother of three daughters and a son.

One of her daughters, Jeska Leruso is now in class four and says she hopes to study up to the university level and become a teacher. The girl is bright and skipped class one when she joined the school in 2013. After being enrolled, six other girls from the village emulated her.

"Many of my colleagues in the village now appreciate the importance of education. They prefer their daughters being in school than herding goats where they become easy victims of beading," says Nolorukoti.

The school motto seems to emphasize why education is so important in this region. The school head Peter Lemasulani explains that the motto "Education for Change" aims to

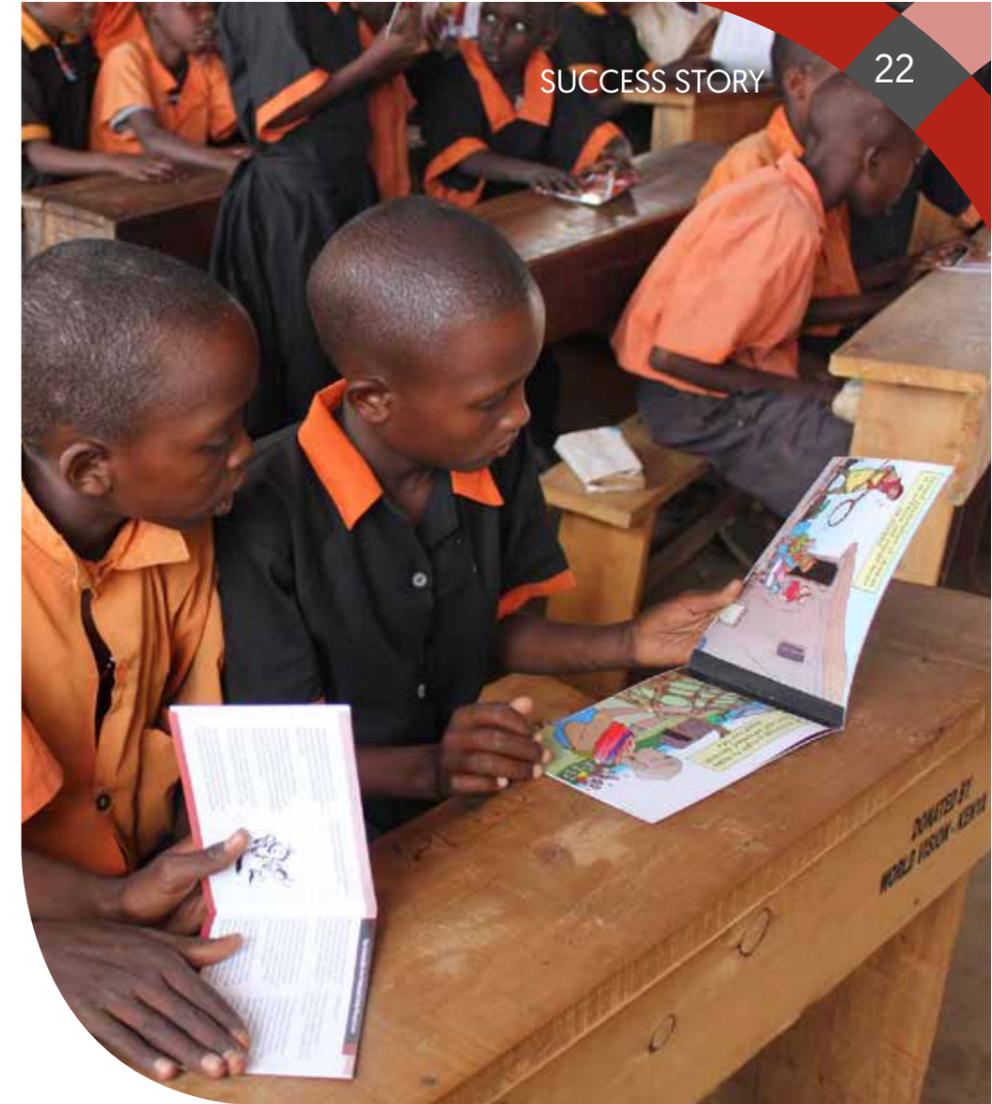
transform the community to embrace positive change.

"Education is the only effective tool to change deep-rooted cultural beliefs. Girls who join the school start to learn the rights of every child immediately. The message spread by SWT has convinced many parents why they should do away with beading and FGM and instead bring their daughters here. Personally I have been visiting the manyattas to persuade the parents to bring their children to school," says Mr Peter Lemasulani.

For the last three years, the population of girls has been rising steadily. In 2012, the total number of girls was 66. It increased to 91 the following year and in 2014, the school had 114 girls.

But Mr Lemasulani says getting some girls to school has not been easy and sometimes it calls for patience.

"I have five girls who took me lengthy period to bring here. In one case, I had to wait for a year and I kept following



her family as they migrated in search of pasture. I am happy that the parents are now very supportive of their daughter," says the head teacher.

Mr Lemasulani adds that by joining hands with SWT, it is now becoming easier to convince the parents. Again, parents who see their neighbour's children go to school are easier to convince while some of the children are eager to experience school life like their age mates in the village.

However, the head teacher says there are a number of challenges in making the children access education. Top among them is the nomadic life of the pastoralists where children who are already in school drop out to follow their migrating parents during drought.

Once the boarding facilities become operational, it will become easier to retain the girls in school. However, boys would still be disadvantaged and the danger of them dropping out during drought will continue to loom.



Confronting Societal MYTHS

JANE MERIAS

One of the major reasons why Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) continues to thrive among the Samburu community is the fear of an impending curse. This comes to play when an uncircumcised girl falls pregnant. There is a deep held belief that it is a taboo for a child (any girl who has not been cut) to give birth and an ill omen is likely to befall the family or the newborn.

However, one woman who resides near Ol Donyiro market is out to dispute this belief and is leading by example. Mrs Jane Merias Lekaldero is a married mother of five girls and has vowed that none of them will be subjected to FGM. And as fate would have it, the first born daughter fell pregnant last year while still in high school. There was intense pressure from the family and notably from her husband for the girl to be cut.

"My husband was pressuring me to take my daughter to the circumciser on realizing that she was pregnant. I remained firm and opposed it and the daughter also stated that she was not ready for it," says Jane.

The secondary school student gave birth to a healthy baby boy and has rejoined school. Nothing has happened to her or the family. Jane

says she is the second wife and her stepdaughter defied pressure to face the circumciser and is also doing fine.

"My grandson is doing fine and I am certain nothing will happen to him. I am happy since my other four daughters now know that nothing happens when one defies community pressure to undergo FGM," she says.

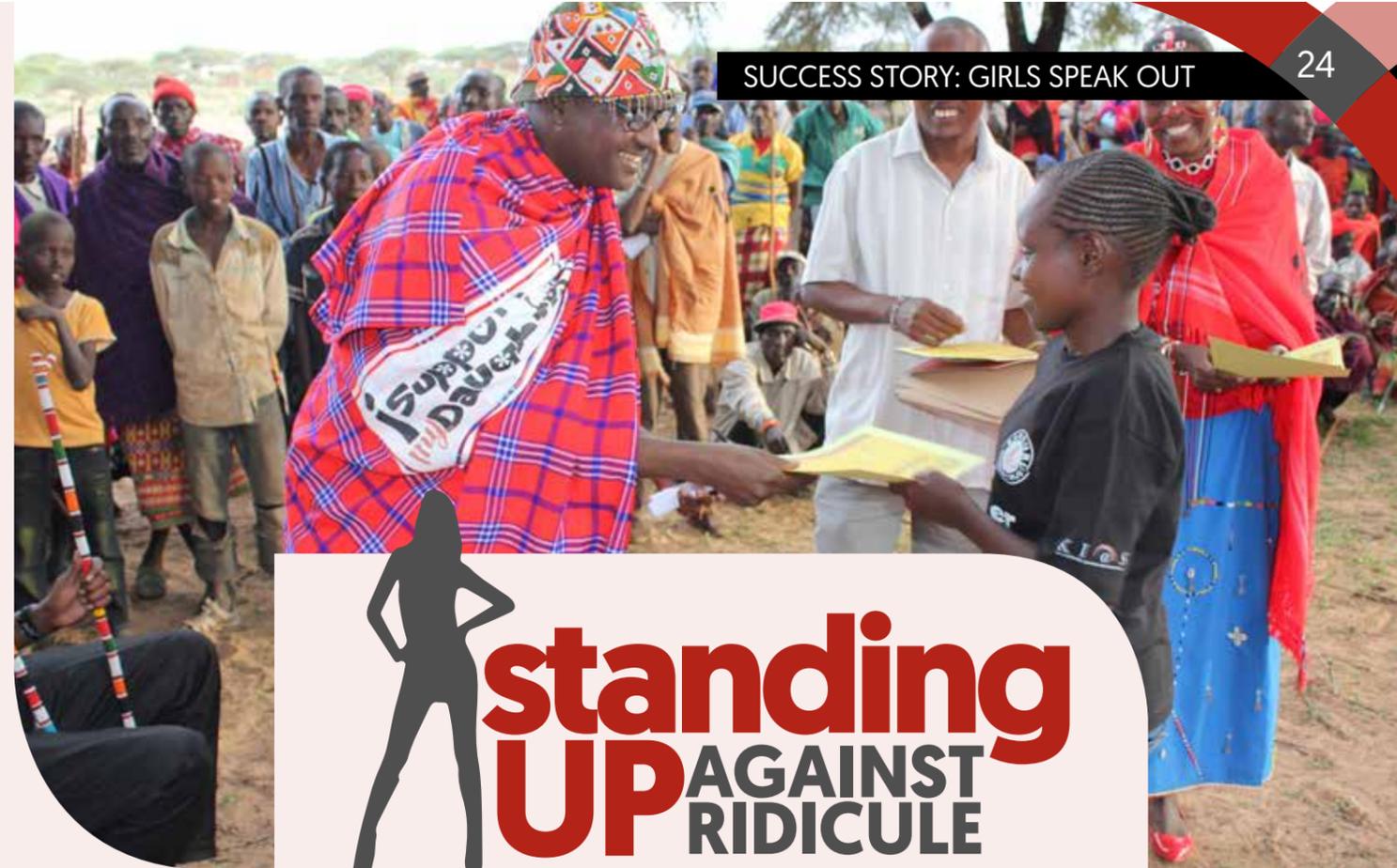
Jane who doubles as a community healthy worker and has been educating the girls on the negative health implications of getting circumcised. She advises any girl who is forced to undergo the cut to seek refuge at the local chief's office or at the police station.

While FGM is still rampant at her village, Jane says cases of beading have reduced drastically in recent years in the areas around Ol Donyiro market. This she attributes to efforts by SWT to work with the authority as well as incorporating child rights activists like herself in the campaign.

In the course of her work on health matters, Jane has been talking to women and girls, persuading them to discard the beading culture. Other times she has been engaging the morans urging them to let the girls go to school instead of ruining their future.

As one of the volunteers assisting SWT in monitoring GBV issues at the village level, Jane has been vocal in her campaign sometimes forcefully removing the beads from the girls and taking them to school.

She attends stakeholders' workshops, women exchange program organized by SWT as well as paralegal trainings. Her testimony during these workshops has inspired other women to stand up against oppressive cultural practices.



standing UP AGAINST RIDICULE

MAGDELINE BARAKA LEKULA

For eight years now, she has endured ridicule from villagers for going against the grain by refusing the cut. Some have referred her in derogatory terms, telling her she should not consider herself a Samburu girl but as one of the local community that is looked down upon for failing to practice circumcision.

But still unmoved, Magdalene Baraka Leruka has her family to thank for supporting her to further her education against a backdrop of intense pressure to undergo Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a precursor for marriage among the Samburu girls. Having sat for her Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in 2014 and managed a grade C+, the eighteen-year-old is now set to join a teachers training college.

"I am now an adult capable of making a decision on what is right for me. Despite the segregation I have suffered in my village, I have become a role model to my younger sisters as well as to girls who succumb to societal pressure for fear of being stigmatized," says Magdalene.

The first born in a family of four boys and four girls says a teaching career

will enable her to freely interact with girls from her community. Girls undergoing psychological torture for saying no to FGM and forced early marriages will see her as a beacon of hope.

"Girls have been told that they can never get married until they undergo FGM. I want to prove them wrong by getting a suitor from my community. But if this does not happen and I get married to a man from a different community, I will still have made a point," she says with a chuckle.

But Magdalene confesses that at one time she demanded that she undergoes the cut like many of her age mates. It was only because her father stood firm against this rite that the circumciser's razor blade evaded her.

"In our class we were seven girls, all from my community. After holiday, they all came back to school having undergone this rite. I went home and demanded that I undergo FGM to avoid being a social misfit. However, my father ignored my pleas and I had to eat a humble pie," says Magdalene with a smile.

Her mother was also at one time put under intense pressure from her fellow

womenfolk. One day the circumciser came visiting in the village to attend to other girls.

Not to be left in the ensuing cultural celebrations, her mother requested Magdalene to have a minor cut just to shed a little blood but the father refused. She was however allowed to join in the celebrations with instructions from her granny to behave like she had been cut. But the truth would soon come out and she and her sister continued to be treated as children as her friends basked in the glory of being "mature women". Her sister is now in Form three.

If she has failed to gain any recognition in her village, Magdalene has attained new status as an anti FGM ambassador. She has been attending conferences where she highlights the negative impacts of female circumcision. Her campaign has endeared her to SWT where she now works as an intern as she awaits to join college.

She has been attending SWT sponsored human rights clubs to encourage girls to say no to some cultural practice that are likely to impact negatively on their lives.

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Chief Francis Lekula

Continued from previous page...

Why my daughters won't face the circumciser

Senior Chief Francis Lekula of Longopito Location of Isiolo County says as long as he is alive, none of his four daughters will be subjected to circumcision. He stood by his daughter Magdalene, withering pressure from family members, villagers and age mates. The fact that he is a government official and FGM is outlawed

did not deter villagers from persuading him to respect the culture of their forefathers.

"My stand is very clear on this matter and I can never be swayed by anything or anyone. I will educate all my girls up to Form Four. Once they attain eighteen years of age, they can make their decision as adults and anyone who wishes to be circumcised will be free to do so," he says authoritatively.

As a chief in Ol Donyiro division where harmful cultural practices are

rampant, Mr Lekula is leading by example and is using all approaches. He spreads the message during his barazas and works closely with child rights activists in the area. He also brought on board the Officer Commanding Ol Donyiro Police Station since as he puts it, sometimes the law has to be applied if persuasion fails to work. For his efforts he was promoted to a senior chief last year.

CHALLENGES



POOR ROAD NETWORK

The operation area is served by poor roads and is out of mobile telephone network. This complicates the matter when there is an emergency to be attended to.

Volunteers who have been trained on paralegal by SWT may witness a situation they would wish to report to the authorities. But with no telephone network and no means of transport, intervention may not come as first as it should.

Owing to poor state of the road, public transport service is not available

between Kipsing and Ol Donyiro. One can only connect the two market centres through walking through the wildlife infested thickets or hire a private vehicle. The vehicle has to be a four-wheel drive and this raises the cost.

SWT has been hiring a four-wheel drive vehicle which someone time its difficult to hire due to bad road terrains and the vehicle owners hike the prices and it would make things a bit easier if the organisation had its own vehicle.



Consultative meeting at Kirimon at the Laikipia-Samburu border

WORKING OUTSIDE THE SCOPE

While SWT main focus has been on beading and to an extent other related gender base violence that confronts the Samburu girl child, other issues that the CBO cannot afford to ignore keep cropping up. It is out of the realization that someone is willing to lend an ear that different cases of human right violations are directed to SWT office. This poses logistical challenges especially when issue is far in the interior or outside the programme area.

A recent case is where SWT office was informed of an expectant woman in the border of Laikipia and Samburu County who had been given orders by her husband to kill the infant immediately after birth. The husband argued that he did not father the unborn child and hence vowed it would never be brought up in his homestead. Fearing what would befall the baby upon birth; the disturbed wife approached a local pastor for assistance who in turn informed SWT office.

This particular incident occurred in Kirimon village which does not fall under SWT's programme area. However, after getting this information, intervention was inevitable. Resources had to be mobilized to reach the ground. The husband skipped the meeting but SWT oversaw fruitful deliberations in the presence a pastor, the local chief, a political leader (a former councillor) and the pregnant woman.

Infant killing is not a new practice in the Samburu community but it has been known to occur as a result of beading and for babies born with certain form of disability. This was however to be a different kind of infant killing with those who heard about it saying it was something not witnessed in the area.

"I have served as an assistant chief of this area for 15 years and have not heard such an incident. A man can complain and the culprit is fined through a traditional mechanism but ordering the unfaithful woman to kill her own baby sounds strange" said the administrator, Mr Sultan.

The chief, Pastor Francis Lekula and former councillor Sopira Lerumpe resolved that they would warn the woman's husband and also monitor the pregnant woman to ensure the infant was not harmed after birth.

To SWT, it was not only a noble course but a timely intervention where a life was saved. However, this expense was not budgeted for and accessing this region called for a special vehicle.

Similar cases are likely to come up in future and it might call for setting up an emergency kitty to cater for such unexpected eventuality. On a positive note, it is an indication that the community is now appreciating SWT's effort towards eradicating GBV.



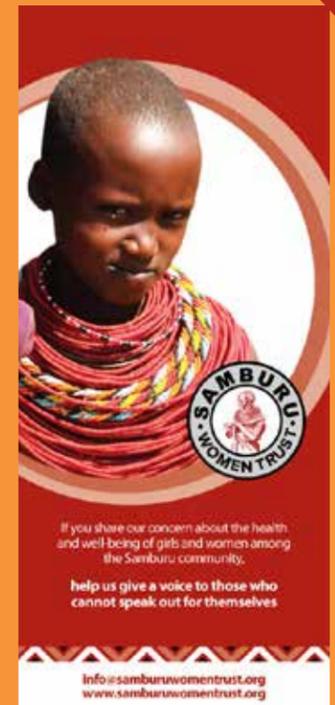
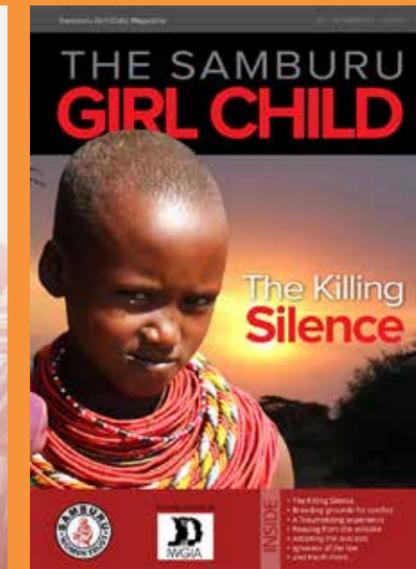
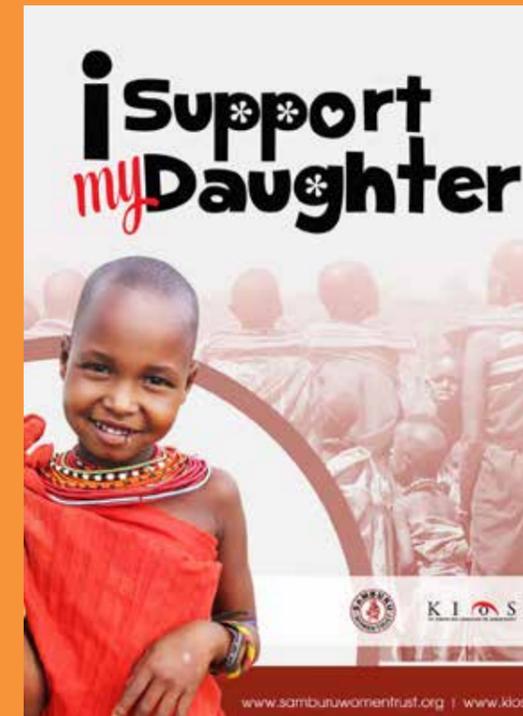
Media Campaigns BEARING FRUITS

Though the beading culture has continued to thrive among the Samburu indigenous community, it was not a topic of discussion until SWT launched the campaign to end this sexual slavery in early 2012. To the local community, it was nothing to talk about; having been passed from generation to generation and hence became a norm. Hence, there was need to create a platform where the outside world would be informed of this form of violence meted against innocent girls, some as young as ten.

Samburu Women Trust reckoned that use of the mass media would be an effective tool to expose the vice with a view of bringing it to an end. Policy makers, law enforcers as well as child right groups would be incorporated in the fight against this form of sexual violence.

Awareness campaigns were launched where national television, newspapers, newsletters, radio, posters, booklets and other channels of communication was employed.

This awareness campaign has borne fruits with several partners joining either through advocacy, financial and logistical support. It has also resulted in the community as well as their



leaders talking openly about it and seeking ways of ending it, top of it being encouraging parents to take their children to school.

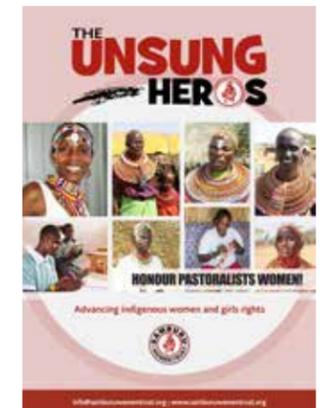
Nation Television (NTV) has kept the fire burning through production of a documentary on the topic as well as inviting community leaders and affected women to the studio for talk shows.

This has encouraged elected leaders from the Samburu community to speak openly against the practice while calling on the county and national governments to play a vital role in safeguarding the rights of the children.

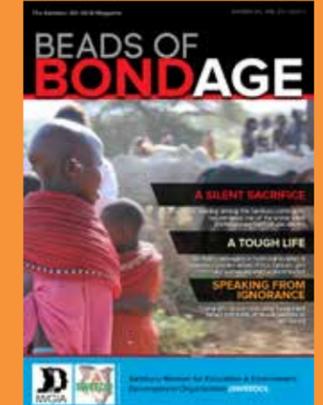
In its part, SWT has been publishing newsletters and produced a documentary in both English and Samburu language. These materials are distributed

freely to stakeholders in local, national and international forums.

This awareness has attracted support from within and outside the country and the benefits has been trickling to children of the indigenous community where beading culture is now on the decline with reported high enrolment in school for both boys and girls.



A GUIDE TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT | A booklet for children rights growing up in pastoralist communities





New Strategies

Implementing the programme has been a learning process. Every other time, unexpected challenges emerge and this calls for innovative ways to confront them. SWT intends to broaden its campaign by use of new strategies.

Engaging community's opinion leaders directly

The campaign dubbed "I Support my Daughter" is aimed among other things to empower girls to openly speak on issues affecting them openly. There is a deep rooted taboo that fails to give girls a voice and this makes them submissive to societal demands regardless of whether they work against their interests.

The "support my daughter campaign" which will run for three years aimed to sensitize the community on bringing out the voice of girls which have remained subdued for a long time. Engaging community leaders in discussion on the plight of the girl child will make them accept the fact that the young ones have a place in modern day society where the key word is consultation and protecting the rights of the child.

School councils

While persuading the community to listen to the girl child could be a slow process, the school offers the right environment where the youngsters can easily be encouraged to freely express themselves. Formation of girl's council in primary and secondary school will accord them an opportunity to air their views without fear of victimization.

Girls will be encouraged to form councils where they will be meeting regularly and note down how their interests can be taken care off at the school level.

From these meeting, a representative will be picked and empowered to sit in the school management committee where she can ably articulate their concerns.

Folk media

Effective communication remains the most efficient tool to apply if the community has abandons harmful cultural practices. Changing attitude calls for persuasion techniques where the target audience gets the message through deliberate listening/reading or coincidentally.

Performing arts has been proven to be an effective medium of getting the message across. SWT will support talented local youths to form theatre groups and come up with interesting skits and songs that can effectively deliver the message in a form of entertainment. The theatre group will perform during organized road shows or at public meetings.

Reflective jackets will be distributed free to motor cyclist operating in the affected areas.

Use of existing community structures

Pastoralist communities are known to have strong homegrown administrative structures that have been used over the years to solve internal disputes and maintain harmony in the society. Most of these structures are still intact having survived through generations.

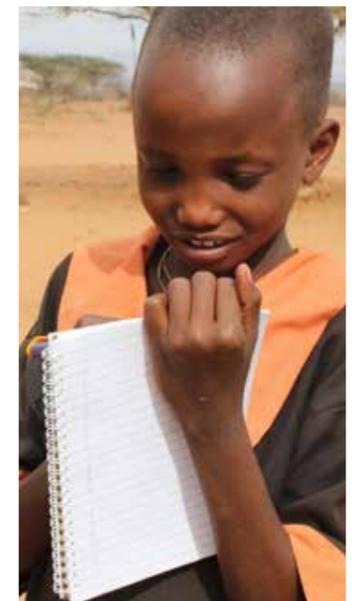
Involving the elders and persuading them to use these structures to propagate what is beneficial to the society in modern day world would greatly assist in bringing about desired positive changes.

Leadership

SWT recognizes the need for more females in leadership positions and that each young lady has the potential to become a strong leader of her own life, in her community, and in the world.

We hold regular seminars and workshops throughout the year focusing on developing each girl's leadership skills, including teamwork, responsibility, focused goal setting, public speaking, and self-confidence.

By creating a safe space for girls to be themselves, we give them the power to find their voice, and the direction to put it to use to improve their future and their community.



Lessons learnt

- Respect to Indigenous People's cultures and norms when implementing projects in the areas and involving and consulting the beneficiaries yield results. Applying confrontational methods to fight cultural practices only breeds resistance.
- Community engagement and participation is vital. It has given SWT success where so far six girls have not undergone the cut and together with their parents are increasing awareness of the negative effects of FGM and other related gender based violence
- The unspoken silent harmful cultural practices has been made known public both by the community who now discuss and speak openly, print media and audio
- In defeating the entrenched beading culture, the Government needs to intensify civic education campaigns among the indigenous community. Majority of the people are still ignorant of the existing legislation provisions that outlaw some cultural practices. They are also not conversant with the rights of the child as spelt out in the constitution as well as international conventions [United Nations and African Union].
- Local administrators [chiefs and assistant chiefs] are best suited to turn the tide against girl child beading and other deep rooted retrogressive cultural practices. Making them part of the campaign and ensuring they are empowered by the Government to carry on this vital duty. Presently they face hardships when trying to access some of the administrative areas owing to poor means of communication.

Way Forward

Despite the prevailing challenges, SWT intends to keep the campaign to empower the Samburu girl child alive. Through empowering the girl, future mothers will be bold enough to speak against harmful cultural practices and in so doing defeat some of the vices that has been thriving under the guise of preserving culture. Giving women and girls that crucial voice to say no to practices that border on Gender Based Violence will be achieved through five approaches:



Mobile schools

A number of factors contribute to low school enrolment. They include scarcity of infrastructure, migratory nature of pastoralists, moranism among others. It has been established that there are potential pupils including morans but they are wary of the school environment.

Mobile schools would mean that the volunteer teachers would go to where the students are at the convenient time including in the evenings. This is technique is bound to elicit interest to those who have not been to school and compel them to seek enrolment in formal schools to further their education.

Those who may not wish to move to the next level of education will have benefited in that they will have learnt to read and write.



Girls Leadership Mentorship programme

Our Girl Leadership and women Mentorship Programme focus to give girls access to education, adolescence girls reproductive health and provide exposure and platform for girls to share their challenges, success and lesson learnt to real-life experiences. The end results girls motivate each other from, what they have seen and experienced, turning that motivation into focus on their leadership in life.

The programme also aims to give girls who have gone through the programme the opportunity to mentor younger girls with dreams of becoming successful in different field in life.



Suggestion boxes

Due to a number of factors, some girls might be shy to air their grievances in the open. To take care of this group, SWT will assist in establishment of suggestion boxes where those who have concerns can put them down and drop them anonymously.

After a set duration, SWT staff will be visiting the school, opening the suggestion boxes and analyzing the main issues raised with a view of recommending suitable action. The bottom line of this approach is to ensure that everyone's voice is heard.

Whenever a serious issue is raised, SWT will engage professional counsellors to speak to the girls. The bottom line is to replace shyness induced by the society with confidence.



Community radio

High illiteracy levels remain an impediment in the media campaign to create awareness. This calls for new approaches in designing the messages to ensure that it not only reaches a wide audience but it delivers the correct message with little distortion. Use of community radio station would offer a great opportunity where the community can interact in their local dialects.



Beads for economic empowerment

SWT appreciates the fact that it is totally impossible to separate the Samburu from his/her beautiful beads which are used for adornment. As such, while the symbolic beads that condemn a young girl to sexual slavery cannot be entertained in present day, the beads that enhance beauty could be used to empower the Samburu woman.

SWT is in the process of establishing a shop where women can stock the beads for sale. Presently, the beads are sourced from Nairobi and it is envisaged that trading with beads will empower women economically. The shop will also act as an information centre for researchers interested in knowing more about the rich Samburu culture including their sharp dressing style.



The Unsung Heroes & Heroines

SWT salutes courageous men and women who have played a big role in creating awareness about the negative effects of the beading culture that have for years thrived within the community with no one raising a finger.



Mrs. Mepukori Lekula

MRS. MEPUKORI LEKULA

She had the courage to tell the world that she was a victim of the crude abortion. She even went ahead to demonstrate how it is carried out during the shooting of television documentary and did not mind about how the community that has been silent on the practice would treat her afterwards.



Ms. Hellen Leisono

MS HELLEN LEISONO

Popularly called Mama Riziki, she stands out from the community in that she adopted two children who had been left to die in the forest. The children had been born out of a beading relationship and as traditions dictate, they are killed or left to die. The lucky ones are adopted by non-Samburu in the belief that they are a source of bad omen to the family. However, Mama Riziki, though being a Samburu herself took the responsibility of bring up the two babies who are now in school and in perfect health. Nothing bad has befallen her out of that considerate gesture and she is a source of inspiration to those advocating for the weeding out of the beading culture.



Ms. MamsaarLemeriwas

MS. MAMSAARLEMERIWAS

She has been against the beading culture since childhood and somehow managed to evade becoming a temporary wife of a warrior when her age mates became victims. However, she appreciates the beauty of the beads and to adorn her daughters she sells her own goats and cows and buys beads for her girls so that they cannot be beaded by warriors. She also believes in empowering the child through education and she leads by example.



Ms. Margaret Letaba

MS. MARGARET LETABA

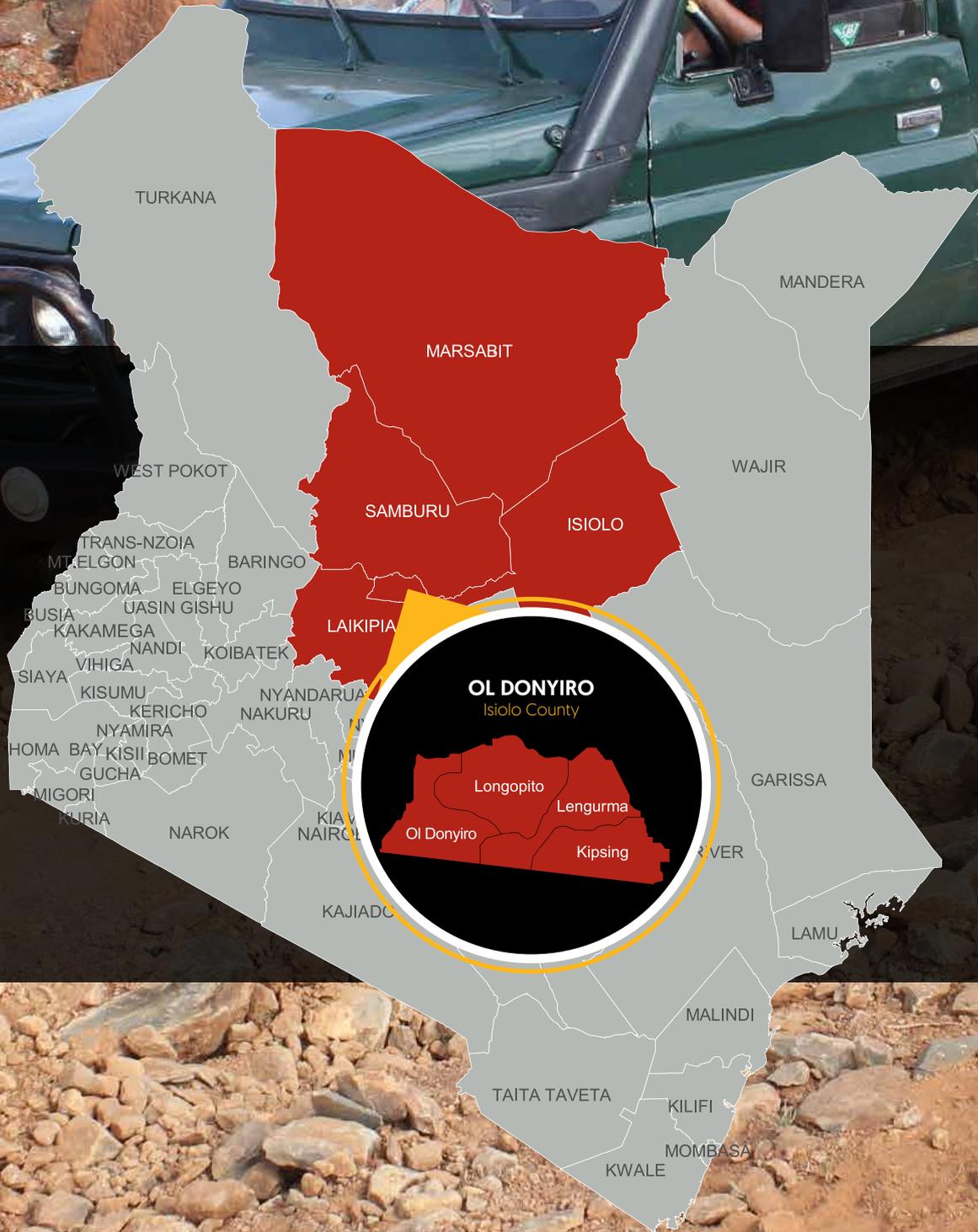
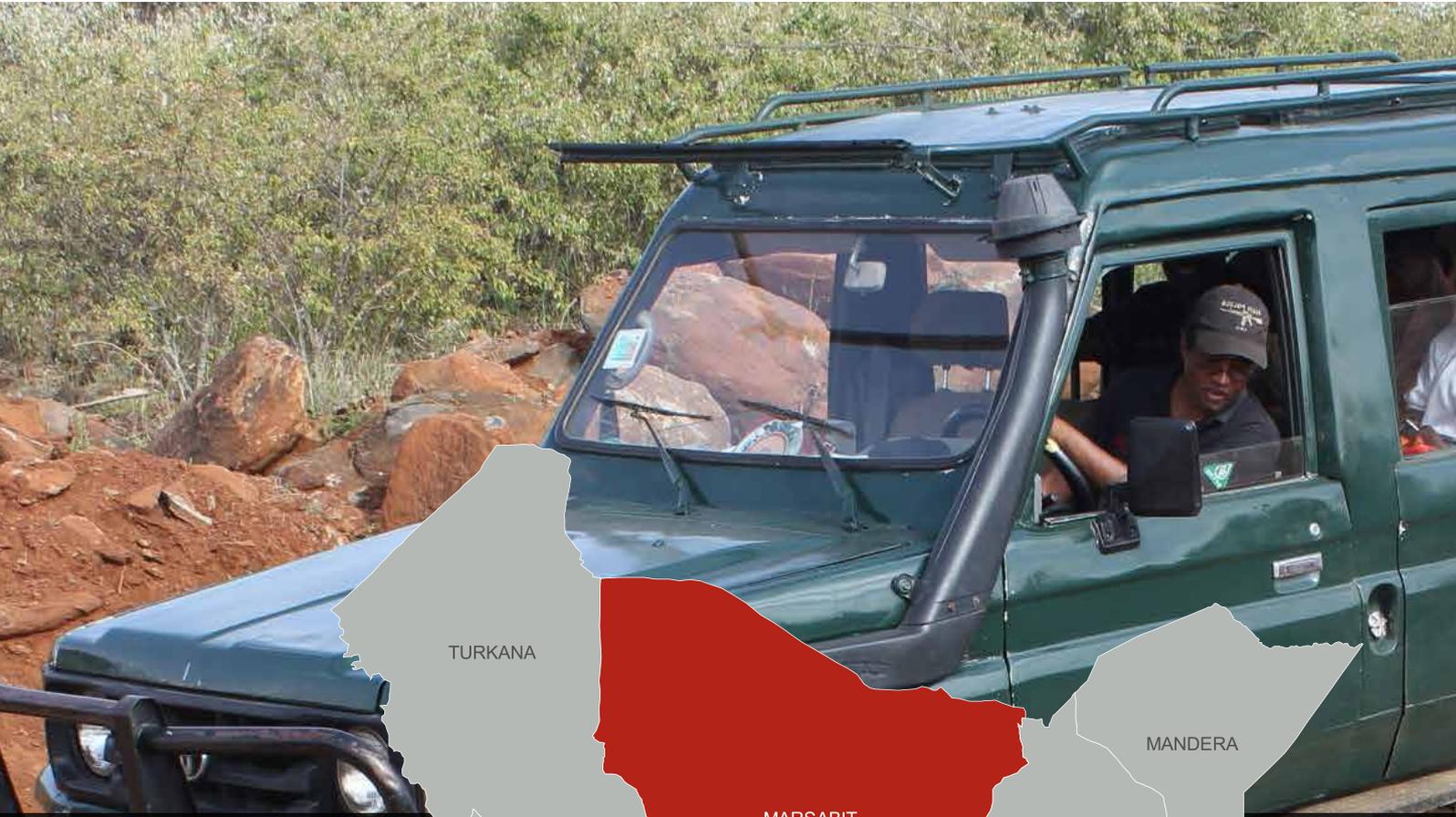
Despite her physical disability, she has been able to bring up children born out of beading relationship. She has no source of income but that has not deterred her from rescuing new born babies abandoned to die in dry river valleys. One of her adopted daughters is now an adult who has her own children.



Mr. Francis Lekula

MR. FRANCIS LEKULA

He is one of the administrators who have stood up in words and deeds in safeguarding the rights of the Samburu girl child. Though as a chief he has the powers and authority to arrest offenders, he has chosen a soft approach-pleading with the locals to abandon traditional practices that work against the well being of the girl child. He has been spreading the gospel in his public barazas (meetings) in the village. For those who appear defiant however, he has not abdicated his duty and has involved police officers to ensure that girls go to school. Her own daughters have not undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and are in secondary school.



**OPERATIONS
AREAS**

