

## **Enhancing the health and well-being of the Indigenous Girl Child**

The girl child faces inequality and discrimination from an early age as compared to her male counterpart. This has caused her to lag in terms of personal development and advancement while the boys have thrived under the patriarchal society that has provided resources and opportunities to ensure his success. The Beijing Platform for Action recognized the disadvantage the girl child faces and has made recommendations on how the inequality she faces can be remedied.

Since then, many governments have made provisions to ensure that girls rights are upheld. One such provision is the anti-Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) act in Kenya. Non-governmental organizations have also developed programs to advance the rights of the girl child. Breaking the silence on violence against indigenous girls, adolescents and young women a report published by UNICEF, provides clear evidence that indigenous girls, adolescents and young women face a higher prevalence of violence, harmful practices, labor exploitation, and harassment, and are more vulnerable to sexual violence in armed conflicts. It also underscores that violence against indigenous girls and women cannot be separated from the wider contexts of discrimination and exclusion to which indigenous peoples as a whole are often exposed in social, economic, cultural and political life

Indigenous girls and women face multiple layers of discrimination in and outside their communities due to their gender as well as their Indigenous identity and being poor. They are faced by multiple challenges that prevent them from reaching their potential and they are unable to contribute to or make their mark in the world. In many indigenous communities here in Africa, she is seen as a source of wealth through the bride price paid for her when she gets married or is forcefully married off when the family is in need of money, available labor because she supports her mother in the household chores and taking care of the family and is sometimes forced to go and work to support the household. In most cases she is seen to be a liability because of her needs especially when it comes to her reproductive care during her menstruation.



*These girls from Samburu and west Pokot attending Viva girls trainings in their location feel happy sharing and working together as it is one way of developing self confidence.*

The training workshops for the ViVa girls has provided an opportunity for the empowerment of the Indigenous girl to ensure that girls can thrive and advance social justice through a new generation of feminist leaders and have a future where girls can be free from violence, be healthy and dream. Indigenous Information Network (IIN) through financial support from MADRE our longtime partner was happy to start this project which has brought changes in the community. Changes where the community has embraced and appreciated on the initiative to an extent they felt they are all part of it and have helped to further partner with IIN to expand and make it participatory and a success. The main purpose of this project is to empower the Indigenous girl child and make her gain confidence and claim her place in the community and the society, it is important that they know that they determine their destinies, and they have the power to overcome the various challenges they face. The Viva Girl activities started with Kenya and slowly IIN welcomed partners in Cameroon. The activities on the girl child are then carried out in different localities. Then in the past two years 2020 the project continued in Kenya, Sudan and Tanzania. The girls that were targeted in these activities were between the ages of 8-20 years. Since April 2020 to April 2021 about 3,500 girls have been reached. The age of girls are vulnerable to many external and internal factors that can influence the direction their lives take.



Since most of the Indigenous girls come from communities who still practice traditions and culture strongly, they face many challenges some of which are interrelated and are as result of social, economic, and cultural activities in their own communities. Because of these challenges there was need to quickly come with up with a strategy to advance education on sexual and reproductive health and rights of the girl child who is more impacted than the boy child, empower then young girls to fight against the harmful cultural practices and create a safe space and platform for them to engage.

In our Indigenous Communities, some of those who are Pastoralists and other minorities still practice Female Genital mutilation (FGM), they do it secretly because in some countries like Kenya it is illegal. Those who practice it believe it is a rite of passage and once a girl is circumcised, she becomes a woman. Some of the girls admitted that they underwent the cut because they never knew the effects of female circumcision. Since then, they learnt its effects of FGM such excessive bleeding which can lead to death. These led to many making pledges to not

allow their young sisters and their daughters in future to get circumcised. These practices put the girls into a circle of poverty, powerlessness, exposure to domestic violence, mistreatment which can endanger their lives and abusive sexual practices. In some places like Longido and Kimokouwa in Tanzania, the girls are aware of FGM Some knew about it before and few of them understood it from school after joining Secondary school that FGM is prohibited by the government although they are not able to share to the community. They are afraid that they might be stopped from continuing with their studies if they knew the truth about the effect which is caused by the FGM. The girls shared that these days, they get circumcised while young so it is so difficult for them to run away from the FGM so they asked the organization to raise this awareness to the parents. Indigenous girls facing the main challenge to attend school during their menstruation period which lead to the poor performance and school dropout.

Female genital mutilation is still a challenge and continues to go out of hand in most areas of Narok County with this pandemic among the girls. They have been forced into this practice and it's done 'behind doors'. Cases of FGM in Orgos and Olorien were not as rampant as before due to the interventions of IIN and Viva girl programs they have had in the past compared to Olmogonge and Churaa whereby 6 girls out of 26 of those who attended the training had undergone the cut. The girls also become vulnerable to early marriage once they have undergone the cut.

### **Poverty and Early Marriage**

Poverty is linked to many issues facing Indigenous girls. These include Early marriage, premature sexual experience, early pregnancies, school dropout amongst others. Families living in poverty and cannot not afford to provide basic needs for example provide clothes and sanitary kits for their girls. This forces the girls to enter unwanted relationships for them to get these items. The families are promised a good life by some individuals especially old men who offer a hefty dowery in exchange of their girls and some make promises of continuing to sponsor the girl to pursue her education. This is why they send off their girls for marriage at a tender age.

The Maasai and Samburu community for instance, like many of the pastoralist Indigenous communities, view girls as property and can marry off their girls in exchange of livestock. However, tables turn once they settle in their homes with their new husbands when they are forced to stay indoors and take care of the household instead of progressing with education as promised. Poverty has also led many girls to drop out of school due to lack of school fees. The pandemic also exacerbated early/forced marriages in this communities.

### **Teenage Pregnancy**

Early pregnancies which is a result of relationships with men for different reasons especially those connected to poverty and being given money occasionally to buy personal effects. While others are enticed to engage in sexual activities, some girls reported that they have been or know someone who has been raped. This leads to early pregnancies which lead to early marriage in many instances which in turn leads to school dropout since it's hard for the girls to balance school and marriage life. This encourages domestic violence and discrimination since they don't know about their rights and laws that protect them.

### **Parent- Child Relationships**

Some of the participants shared that they had strained relationships with their parents. This rift has caused a lack of accountability on both the parent and the child side. Some of the behaviors that the kids are involving themselves such as drug and alcohol abuse, early sexual experience and performing poorly in school are just some examples of activities done by children in the absence of parental guidance.

## Peer Pressure

It continues to be a matter of great concern, most of them are afraid of been discriminated against by their peers hence fall into negative activities. These include premature relationships that can lead to early sexual exposure; use of drugs and some develop strained relationships with their parents when they follow their peers. This affects not only their family and home life but also affects their performance in school and may lead to dropping out in some instance.



*Some of the Viva girls trainers from Kenya on the left and Tanzania on the right who at the same time became mentors and mentees in Girls and Climate*

## Climate Change

Climate change- in addition to other effects, climate change has caused water scarcity which has led to drought which forces the girls to walk far to search for water. They sometimes also do not have water readily available for them to use for sanitation purposes. In Kiltamany for instance, the girls said that they experience problems when it comes to their menstruation; there isn't enough water for them to keep clean and also the water they get is dirty which can have adverse effects for their health. Because of this, they prefer to have disposable sanitary towels as opposed to the reusable ones.

## Covid-19

The Pandemic came with its own challenges. Most Governments did not know how to really act fast in managing and create awareness on the virus. Covid impacted on almost everything and education and academics were hard hit. The schools have lagged behind in terms of curriculum and especially those in remote rural areas compared to the urban settlements. The rural folks were

not able to attend the online classes due to the lack of technology and internet. Their access to the basic knowledge on their rights and matters concerning their reproductive health education has been limited because institutions or bodies that offer such learning have not been able to reach out to them due to the confinement measures. The closure of schools and rescue centers increased cases of gender-based violence among the girls for instance some of the girls were circumcised and some of them married off during this pandemic period. Due to the confinement measures, some girls are trapped in their homes with the perpetrators who many times are their relatives. Another challenge to them is that they do not have the masks, water and soap, as directed by the Ministry of Health as preventative measures against the virus.

**Conflict**



*Delibaya women group based in Khartoum and Khaduble Sudan has been training Viva girls who have dropped out of school to read and write and to make different art work to sell and earn an income for them and their families*

Conflict between communities has affected the girls because of lack of stability. This is a very serious issues as conflict impacts more on women and girls. In communities such as the Samburu of Kenya and the Nuba of Sudan, there is no peace which means no stability and security they need to thrive in that already hard environment. Conflict also contributes to issues such as school dropout, early pregnancy/ marriages and poverty and loss of life and property. Conflicts also separates family and women and girls are left without security causing more vulnerability that can cause sexual abuses and lose of property and displacements.

Both IIN, Parents especially women groups and the girls are happy with all the work and continue appreciating the VIVA project,. We are all happy of the growth and the demand from the community and the girls themselves to have more trainings to reach other girls. The teachers and Parents continue to accompany the IIN team during training to make it more participatory and inclusive to help in decision making and also help get strategies to eliminate the negative practices and activities that impact on the lives of our girls.

Below are the areas where the Viva girls were implemented from 2020 to date;

	<b>Country</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Location</b>	
1.	Kenya	Samburu	Kiltamany	

		Transmara	Kilgoris	Enooretet, Ildolisho, Endonyo-oongopit, Ololchani, Oloiborsoito, Lepolosi Olalui Olomismis
			Lolgorian	Saparingo
			Kajiado	Nanana girl center
			Ololulunga	Orgos, Melelo, Ololoipangi
2.	Sudan	Kadugili, Khartoum		
3.	Tanzania	Arusha Region		Tingatinga, Isinya, Longido, Kimokouwa, Ketumbeine Gilai and Lumbwa )

Numbers trained 2020 to 2021 - 3500 girls

**Lessons learnt and the sharing of information from different areas where we had the trainings**



*Nasha Saiyan- from Melelo Ololulunga- “Since Covid 19 came it has really affected us as girls, some have gotten pregnant and it is a problem, also I have been taught about FGM and one of its effect is death and other effects that we were not aware about. Next time I will call my fellow girls to come so that they become aware”*



*Vivian Naatu “Covid 19 has affected as some of our girls are getting married leading to school dropouts also I have learnt about sexual reproductive health that if I overstay with a pad it will cause some infections which is harmful to our health. I am happy and am requesting for more teachings”*



Lina Nengoros- from Kiltamany Samburu “I have learnt about early marriages, drug abuse and its effects and harmful cultural practices.”



*Miriam Potishoi* – Programme Assistance- Paran Women Ololulunga “I am happy to report a message from all women of Paran women group about girls and climate change.” the trainings of our girls, we are so much excited because we have seen behavior changes in our girls in the community. Early pregnancy, Early marriage and school dropout have reduced with high percentage. And we are requesting for more trainings to our girls because we have seen such a great change.”

**In Tanzania** the areas visited increased from the ones done in 2019. We realized in Tanzania we needed more outreach if we had to ensure we get more girls. IIN had also upscaled and involved more partners. We welcome Loocip who worked in the areas of target to help access and reach out to more areas and more schools. Tingatinga is in Longido District at Enduimet Division. The people are purely pastoralist who also practice small scale farmers. We brought girls from Ingereyiani, Leremeta and Endonyo Emali. In Longido and Kimokouwa, Eworendeke, Orbomba, Oltepesi and Ranch. Keumbeine and Gilai Lumbwa areas wards are in Longido District at the boarder of Ngorongoro and Longido, it is geographically located near Mount Lengai and Lake Natron, Which



*Some of the girls in the trainings. They all came of the different areas mentioned*

On the Sexual Reproductive Health, facilitator started by asking the girls whether they know sexual reproductive health or had it before. The response was few of them know about it but many of

them do not know. Brief introduction was done on the topic and then taught them on importance of being clean during their menstruation period and how many times they are needed to change the pad in order to protect herself from infection, and being smart as a girl so that they would be an example to the community surrounding her.

Early Marriage was discussed, with girls and they told us that their parents were the ones who encourages the early marriages in order to get the doweries, because of their culture supports the idea of early marriages. The girls were informed on where they could get help when they parents try to stop them from going to school to get married while they are young. First place where they can get help is at the village offices, social workers at local government office and the police station. Girls should be opened to their teachers to know what they are facing and going through.

On FGM, girls were asked if they know about it, the answers were that, they knew it and few of them understood it from school after joining Secondary school that FGM is prohibited by the government although they are not able to share to the community. They are afraid that they might be stopped from continuing with their studies if they knew the truth about the effect which is caused by the FGM. The girls shared that nowadays they get circumcised while young so it is so difficult for them to run away from the FGM so they asked the organization to raise this awareness to the parents. The girls also added that Indigenous girls continue facing the main challenge to attend school during their menstruation period. This problem had led them to poor performance and school dropout.



*One of the girls who attended a training in Ketumbeini- Arusha Region Tanzania and Nanana Kajiado Kenya*

Discussion on drug and substance abuse were key to the girls as it is increasing every other time in the community. Even though many girls did not have much experience on it, it was important since it affects other members of their families. Women and girls are not much involved in drug abuse but we taught them on how to maintain good culture and to stay away from bad companies in any place like schools and young men during holiday because they told us the problem are boys who are becoming drunker while they are still young. Although there is no big challenge in the villages, it is critical on the high ways, small town and in cities where women and girls go to buy groceries and food.

The girls were very impressed by the all topics that they were taught and they were asking if possible we should be visiting them every holiday, few girls are able to share their testimony on



how they went through the challenges during their studies and now they succeed in school and they encourage other girls to be very stable because the journey is not easy.

**In Narok County** which included Transmara and Ololulunga, Indigenous girls face a number of challenges that includes FGM, early marriage and other forms of gender-based violence due to existing social norms and with Covid-19 these challenges seem to gradually go out of hand. The viva girls' project has held numerous trainings whereby mentors take them through various topics inclusive of the challenges mentioned earlier on and other existing conditions that have put them through oppression.



The training was for two days and the girls trained were of ages between 12 to 20. The trainers and those invited especially in Ololulunga where Paran resource center invited some Government administrators who work on development in the area to talk to the girls emphasized on Female genital mutilation and early marriages. They did this because there were cases where female genital mutilation was performed among the girls who attended the training. They said they will follow up on the girls and their parents by taking action. During the trainings, girls were also put in to different groups so that they can work together discuss and share experiences and bring out challenges affecting them as girls, they presented and most of the girls said that they are forced to undergo female genital mutilation. After the presentation girls were further informed about the common harmful cultural practices which can affect them. These include early/forced marriages and female genital mutilation, the importance of education and later guided on how to do well in their academics by example, having group discussions at home where they can borrow reading materials from each other if their parents are not in a position to purchase them.

During the training, the girls were informed about Covid-19 pandemic which has affected everyone. They learnt on the signs and the measures they need to observe to avoid contacting the disease. During the event, they observed measures such as social distancing, washing hands using soap and enough water, closing mouth while sneezing and coughing and wearing masks. They were also encouraged to learn different skills that could help them earn little money like bead making helping parents in kitchen gardens to plant vegetables. These small activities could end up to be good income generating activities during this period as they wait for schools to open. Besides learning from home, they can do things such as beading, kitchen gardening and tree planting during their free time



*Some of the girls in the different workshops and working in groups to learn and motivate themselves*

The sad thing is that cases of FGM in Orgos and Olorien are not as rampant due to the much training they have had in the past compared to Olmogonge and Churaa whereby 6 girls out of 26 of those who attended the training had undergone the cut. The girls also become vulnerable to early marriage once they have undergone the cut. The Maasai community view girls as property, whereby they marry off their girls in exchange of livestock hence marrying them off at a tender age. These families living in poverty stricken areas are promised of a good life by some of these perpetrators (old men) in exchange of their girls hence sending off their girls at a tender age. These tables turn once they settle in their homes with their new husbands when they are forced to stay indoors and take care of the household.

In the areas in Narok mentioned, Poverty is still rampant due to the decreased economic stature of their parents hence forcing these girls to trade their dignity with basic necessities such as sanitary towels, food and money for them to access health amenities by having intimate relationships with men around their villages. Due Covid 19 confinement measures it has forced them indoors with some of the perpetrators who at most times are their relatives. Their lack of involvement in the curriculum for instance has given them too much time in their hands hence getting them into relationships where they are harassed to give into sex. They haven't been able to stand against this violation. Peer pressure is another challenge which has continued to be a matter of great concern, most of them are afraid of been discriminated against by their peers hence fall into illicit activities. These include relationships; use of drugs and some may go against their parents to join with their peers.



Viva Girl project activities have really helped provide the girls a safe space for them to speak up their issues and has given them the necessary tools to standing against all forms of gender abuse

In all the areas visited by Viva Girls projects, care packages were received with warm faces and grateful hearts. The girls revealed to be highly motivated at the end of the session and felt ready to start their new term in their new classes. The main challenge observed from the session is that many girls were faced with challenges which included the inability of the girls to fully access sanitary towels and financial worries as some feared for their academic future since they are from humble backgrounds.



Here some of those challenges they face

- Lack of parental guidance, lack of basic necessities and peer pressure is a major contributor to the girls' challenges. This information came out from the breakout discussions.
- Some of the girls are still not confident enough to speak up their issues.
- Most of the girls from Lolgorian delay starting school.
- Some of these girls reported that their siblings back at home have influenced them in one way or another, they have either made them undergo harmful cultural practices like FGM, especially their sisters who have been cut. They say its tradition and so they should follow

it as well. They sometimes find themselves also taking drugs after their brothers who abuse harmful substances such as tobacco, bhang and alcohol.

- The younger adolescent girls are aware of a few rights they have but are not really sure what they mean or entail, and what to do if their rights are violated.
- The girls have embraced environmental conservation, they have planted a couple of trees around the school and they always ensure that the environment is clean.
- During the training the girls said that they fear their parents and they cannot share their problems with them. For instance, topics on reproductive issues and relationships is a taboo. They said that their parents are strict and can even beat them up because they feel that you have started misbehaving or already engaging in such activities.
- It was the first time to have Viva girls program in some of the areas. It was interesting to find out that the girls face similar challenges. The girls were happy because of the Viva initiative.
- There were 3 girls who attended one of the trainings and were already pregnant and some had undergone FGM in another. This means that as we speak on issues some of the girls are already experiencing.
- Some of the girls were not aware of the different topics and the harmful effects of other practices such as FGM. They just knew that it was part of their cultural practices and traditions.



*Girls working together in groups to bring our recommendations very important session to make it participatory*

## Recommendations

1. They requested for more trainings of the same nature as they had a lot to learn from them.
2. Provision of more sanitary kits
3. To be provided with more pads because some of the parents cannot afford to buy for them
4. The parents also need to be trained on the harmful cultural practices because in many times the parents will be the ones to make the decisions related to these practices.
5. Provision of revision books and lights to help them with their schoolwork.
6. Development of scholarships or bursary funds to be able to assist and reduce school dropouts
7. To have sports during the Viva training to make it more interactive.

8. To have an Intergenerational dialogue between parents and their children.



*Viva girls also works with girls in disability like you see here on the left from Poroko and on the right is girls for. St Joseph's kilgoirs.*

During the trainings the girls revealed that most of them are forced into the use of family planning methods to prevent them from getting pregnant since they fear getting pregnant. This has led to increased number of HIV/AIDS infection and other sexually transmitted diseases. Discussed with the girls the different effect of using these contraceptives at early age and how this will affect them in future. It was evident that such meetings are very helpful to the girls and the girls have really changed and are willing to learn more. The girls have shown positive attitude towards this workshops and encouraged us to have more of this with the parents.

In 2021 Viva tried to start selecting certain theme in order to help the girl child understand more and fell part of the other world. The theme chosen was : **Digital Generation, Our Generation.** This was to celebrate, empower and amplify the voices of young girls around the world, To recognize girls rights and the challenges girls face. Generate awareness on the importance of girl education, health and nutrition.

The meetings were successful, and it was evident that the girls were learning and that such meetings help them grow and helps them find their purpose in life. The girls were lively, and this was so encouraging and showed that they need more of such meetings. We found out that these girls have started using contraceptives and this needs much attention and expert advice.

They learnt a lot on handling the issues that they brought from the group discussions they had. Packages to enhance their hygiene were also distributed to them and these included soaps and sanitary pads. With what they learnt from the discussions and training they will be able to reach out to other girls and inform them about the dangers of allowing themselves to be oppressed.

**In West Pokot, Viva girls did the training in Naramam and Kacheliba**



In the Kacheliba area, girls are facing all forms of gender-based violence from sexual harassment, Female Genital Mutilation, forced child marriages and victims of harmful cultural practices are denied access to reproductive health care services. Parents, especially mothers are far off from closing the intergenerational gap due to these beliefs that they have till now..

From the open group discussion, they agreed with such trainings and said there was indeed progress. The girls have embraced education by choosing to stay at school and not to indulge in illicit behaviors such as substance abuse and premarital sex so as to curb cases of school dropouts among adolescent girls.



From the interview conducted one of the girls, Devinah Lomakal, “girls are facing a challenge of staying at home during the rainy seasons so as to prepare their household’s land for greater yields. Their parents tell them to either choose to stay days without food or go to school and this forces them to stay home for them to care for their families’ needs first. She also said that they always have to wait for the water to subside so they can cross to the other side when the rains fall in the morning.

Naramam's chief Daniel Lokwatum said that early pregnancy has been a major issue for these young girls, the cases escalated since the onset of the pandemic, Covid 19. The young men are lying to these young girls of better life it been a time where families are facing crisis of unemployment, food insecurity and poverty in general". He also said that the lack of school fees is really disempowering the young girls as most of them are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, they drop out and are sent out to look for jobs like house managers in other towns.

He encouraged the team to continue empowering the women in all capacities as they are the cornerstones of most households, the girls' success has always been a result of them having to emulate their mothers so their empowerment is crucial. He reported that climate change has really affected the girls, there has been an increase in gender-based violence in form of sexual harassment as rape. Some of the herdsmen looking for greener pastures for their livestock and water come from other villages and towns into their village and rape the girls some of them kidnap them and the girls are reported missing and sometimes they are reported back bruised or even dead.

He is concerned that their women and girls are been influenced by other communities to carry out certain harmful cultural practices that they as local leaders are trying to curb. Female genital mutilation for instance, women are taking out their girls to other places to carry out the procedure and it's done at night where the rest are not aware. He believes if the community is aware of what is happening there is less likely to be room for such practices in the community..

One of the elderly woman was disappointed that the parents nowadays are not teaching their children the pokot language, she believes that the parents have no time these days to sit down with the children and teach them the basics and also the children have failed in their part to learn and inquire about some of the traditions. She says that those in towns cannot even say a word in pokot, the education they receive have made them disinterested in their language as they feel talking in that language is been illiterate they also don't understand the importance of traditional language.



Sexual reproductive health information recommended that that the girls needed to maintain high standards of cleanliness during the menstrual periods by bathing and changing the used sanitary towels regularly. The speaker urged the girls to also report any case of rape as early as possible for immediate help from the medical centers. She further emphasized that early pregnancies interfere with the health of the growing girls.

Furthermore, health care centers needed to be at the reach of people for easy accessibility. The problems faced as far as sexual reproductive health is concerned included; traditional beliefs and cultural practices, discrimination of people with disabilities, poor health coverage, poor sanitation and water and lack of information about family planning. So, the girls were taught some of the family planning methods.

The girls admitted that such vices take place in that area and therefore needed to be careful. The practices put girls into the circles of poverty and powerlessness, mistreatment such as violence, abuse and forced sexual relationships. It can also lead to infections such as HIV. To make it worse, it leads to school dropouts. They were shocked to get to know the short- and long-term effects of Female genital mutilation

The girls learnt that access to education by girls is hindered by poverty, cultural norms, poor infrastructure and violence among others. Girls education is not only limited to getting girls into school but it also entails ensuring girls learn and feel safe while in school so as to complete all levels of education and acquire skills to effectively compete in the labor market. They also needed to learn social-emotional and life skills in order to adopt to the changing world. They were also informed that better educated women tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, have fewer children, marry at a latter age and access better health as well as educational services.

The girls learnt that peers are people of the same age group or closer to them, whom they can share experiences and have similar interests. Peers makes dozens of decisions and influence each other behavior positively or negatively.

Girls were informed that there is the positive impacts of peers

- Friendship; among the peers, one can get good friends.
- Positive examples; peers set good example for each other.
- Feedback and advice; friends can give out advice on how to try out new ideas.
- Socializing; peers give opportunities to others to try out to socialize.
- Encouragements; peers can encourage one another to work hard.
- New experiences; peers might get one involved in clubs, sports and religious groups.

During the training the girls came up with the following recommendation;

- Girls need more training on their sexual and reproductive rights and what to do when these rights are violated and where to report to.
- There is need for more women empowerment programs and these may include their young daughters too.
- There is also need to make the girls aware of the importance of traditional language in their communities so as to ensure easy flow of traditional knowledge transmission.
- Sex abstinence for adolescent girls needs to be re-emphasized by not only organizations but also community members and the youth and also the area chiefs.

**In Samburu** it was also unique in that the women who are the mother of the girls wanted to be there also to talk to the girls. This was important since this is a very closed traditional community.





The workshop took place at Kiltamany and those trained were between 12-24 years. It was first time to train the girls from that area and also their first time to have such training. They were very happy and requested for more trainings. The girls from the area face a lot of challenges especially lack of enough water and harmful cultural practices. The girls under harmful practices because of traditions for example the Samburu community still practices female circumcision but secretly as they believe it is a rite of passage and once a girl is circumcised she becomes a woman. Some of the girls admitted that they underwent the cut because they never knew the effects of female circumcision. Since they learnt its effects they will not allow their young sisters and their daughters in future to get circumcised. These practices put the girls into circle of poverty, powerlessness, exposure to domestic violence, mistreatment which can endanger their lives and abusive sexual practices.

Early/forced marriages-the girls in the area are still married off at a tender age, preventing them from achieving their dreams and also leading to school dropout. During the pandemic the cases of female circumcision and early marriages have gone up since the girls are at home. Water is still a big challenge in Kiltamany; the girls said that they experience problems when it comes to their menstrual; there is no enough water for them to keep clean and also the water they get is dirty which affect their health. They suggested for the normal pads, because they do not get water to wash the reusable pads. Most of the parents are poor, cannot not afford to provide basic needs for example provide clothes and pads to the girls forcing them to enter into unwanted relationships for them to get the items or they are married off in exchange of livestock. Lack of school fees, which also force them to drop out of school. Most of the girls drop out of school mostly due to early pregnancies and early marriages.

Conflict between communities has affected them. There is no peace which makes them migrate to safe places. Their parents also do not develop themselves in terms of business for instance they depend on livestock and when it is stolen during conflicts they become poor. It is a challenge to them since they do not have the masks, lack water and soaps to prevent themselves from infections.

The girls thanked the Viva girl project and requested for training because they feel they are still facing a lot of challenges. They were also happy that their mothers selected members of their groups to attend and listen. There were 8 women groups in attendance namely Kiltamany women group, Naapu, Narapu Nchurai, Mpagas, Naisula, Naserian, Naitopok and Nyuat.

The women were given a chance to speak up their challenges and their progress regarding the group activities and the meeting hall they are supposed to build. About the hall: They have collected stones and sand soil. They stopped building the hall due to lack of resources like water and also drought have affected them, people are busy with their household work preventing them having their group meetings. They said the women groups are important because it has helped them come together to do activities like buying of livestock which has helped them sustain their families during the drought season.



Seeing the joy in the girls trained, some achievements were;

- The organization was able to take food to the community
- We were able to understand the challenges the community is experiencing, drought being the main one.
- We were able to know the progress of the women groups concerning the meeting hall they were to build.
- We were able to visit the community resource and knowledge center and the cyber

In Samburu they had other additional challenges such as ;

- Drought has led to death of livestock, water shortage which is not enough for human beings and livestock, food scarcity.
- They buy grass for the livestock since there is no green pasture, of which others do not afford to buy it.
- They have not got any help from the county government regarding relief food.

- They are unable to sell their livestock at a good price because they are not healthy but due to lack of food for their families, they sell at a lower price, which is a loss.
- Little rainfall leading to water shortage and lack of green pasture for the livestock.
- The shops have been closed because of debts since they do not have money to buy food stuffs.
- The community of Kiltamany are still experiencing severe drought which has led to lack of food and water for both human beings and the livestock.
- Despite the challenges brought by drought they are still struggling to survive.

Some of their recommendations and conclusion

- They would like to continue with bead work which will help them get income to sustain their families.
- They still need the viva girls training.
- Thank IIN for training them on income generating activities, because it has helped them to get income which has helped them to survive during drought.
- They were very grateful for the food bought for them, it has enabled them feed their families.

**In Marsabit** we have different challenges and recommendations considering majority are from Rendille and Samburu living in a very fragile environment of semi-arid Areas. Girls who were trained were from Merille and Laisamis area. This was a different area from The traditions we had of Logologo. It was important to ensure diversity and here voices from other areas in the county.



Owing to numerous challenges that girls face in our societies such as teenage pregnancies which have become rampant especially during this Covid-19 break. On Sexual reproductive health The girls were taught personal hygiene that is how they can keep their bodies clean especially when they are in their menses, cleaning their bodies and changing pads regularly so that they can avoid infections .Relationship was also discussed where some girls opened up and said that they engage in this relationship some as from standard six and was because of lack of parental care and poverty .They said the boys will help them with whatever they have. Early pregnancies were also discussed

and we found out that during this covid-19 break,13(thirteen) girls got pregnant, 4(four) from Merille and 9(nine)from Laisamis both from high school and primary. Facilitator madam Rose who had knowledge on health, taught them the causes, effects and how the girls can access health care and encouraged them to come out and confide in her so that they can get help.

Harmful cultural Practices was facilitated by Antonella Khoyan the area chief. Very interesting to have an area chief facilitate such a session reaffirming that all the community want best for the girls. The girls were taught on early and forced marriages where they were told what early and forced marriages are. They were encouraged to go and report soon cases to the area chief of their respective places and in case they do not get assistance from other chiefs who are all male, then they can come to her. She further taught on the dangers of female genital mutilation such as excess bleeding leading to deaths and were told to embrace alternative rite of passage where girls can be taken to a place for workshop of two weeks then after workshop they are protected to have been circumcised, mayaan (prayers) done by the elders of each clan should also be administered as a rite of passage.

Education and drug and substance abuse is a crucial concern for all in the community and there is a need to ensure that all is well understood and support by all the family and community. The girls were taught the meaning of education which is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. They were taught on the on the importance of access to education where every girl is given an equal opportunity to go to school, regardless of colour, gender, or physical appearance. They were also taught on reading habits where they were given some key points on how they can have good reading habits, now that they are at home and being girls, they have to do the house chores.



Taught on the following good habits setting time, always carrying a book, finding a quite place for reading and setting high goals. The girls were also taught on how they can choose a right career path by;

- ✓ Identifying what excites them and keep one energized.
- ✓ Keeping in mind what they are good at.
- ✓ Knowing their aspirations in life.
- ✓ Exploring the careers that have got demands.

On drugs and alcohol abuse, they were taught what drugs are, that are legal and illegal ones. They were able to give examples as they are also taught in schools. Reasons of drug abuse involves;

- ✓ Curiosity and peer pressure especially among school children and young adults.
- ✓ Recreational purposes.
- ✓ As a means of obtaining creative inspiration among others.

Taught on the symptoms and treatment of drug abuse. On symptoms they were taught things like;

- ✓ Craving the drug, despite difficulties obtaining it.
- ✓ Deterioration of school or work performance.
- ✓ Difficulty holding a job in future.
- ✓ Disengagement from non-drug related activities.
- ✓ Using drug before or during activities where safety is concerned.

On treatment they were taught things like;

- ✓ Support groups.
- ✓ Supervised withdrawals.
- ✓ Rehabilitation to assist those with severe addiction.
- ✓ Motivational incentives to reinforce abstinence.
- ✓ Family therapy to help the family understand the problem and to avoid enabling drug use.



Just like other areas it was also important to elaborate and discuss on Peer pressure , Poverty and child labour. The girls were taught on the dangers that come with this peer pressure, for instance engaging in relationships and drugs just because your peer/friends are doing it.

On poverty girls opened up and said that because of their poor background where getting food is also a problem ,they are forced to engage in activities such as relationships with boda-boda boys (*motocyle riders,*) sugar daddies, those whom at least they know they can get something to buy food with, but they also said as a result of this they get pregnant and because the boda-boda boys and sugar daddies would not want to take responsibility, they end up doing abortion or even the child on their own. They were taught on alternative ways of helping themselves for instance having small kitchen gardens around their homes, keeping poultry and also see the area chief and people who they can trust to get help.

They gave reasons as to why they engage in child labour for instance carrying sand and gravel to construction sites, that they do all that because of poverty and irresponsible parents. They were told that child labour is illegal and that when they are forced to do what they are not able to do, they should report to the area chief or the children’s department.

Child labor was discussed as the worst form of abuse and exploitation of children. The convention on rights of children (CRC)urges the government to take effective measures to eradicate it. Poverty and child labor have contributed greatly to violation of children survival, education, protection and development.

