

**PEER TO PEER FOR PEACE BY CHEMTAI LANGAT '17
SAMBURU COUNTY, KENYA- SUMMER 2014
BROWN UNIVERSITY.**

PROJECT SUMMARY.

The project seeks to empower girls from the Samburu community in Kenya by providing mentorship, a host family program and sanitary supplies.

BACKGROUND

The Samburu are a Nomadic pastoralist community found in the Northern part of Kenya. The Samburu community is highly patriarchal and the role of the woman seems invisible and yet is the glue that holds this community together. Traditional cultural practices that involve women are most of the time harmful and to their disadvantage. One of them is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a cultural practice that involves the cutting of genital organs of young girls in order to prepare them for marriage and child bearing. FGM is harmful physically and psychologically. The community that is supposed to protect these girls is the one that takes them through these horrible experiences. Those who escape this practice become outcasts. After the girls have gone through FGM they are married off to older men some the age of their fathers. The girls find themselves in polygamous unions and risk getting infected with HIV/AIDS. These practices deny the girls education that is essential in a future that is increasingly closing out the less educated.

Samburu Girls Foundation was formed to rescue girls from FGM and early marriages. The foundation has managed to rescue 143 girls in total, but it has not built a home for the girls. The girls are placed in boarding schools. In the Kenyan education calendar there are three-one month holidays in April, August and December and it is during this time that the community organizes circumcision and marriage ceremonies. When the girls go home for holidays they remain vulnerable to these harmful practices and most of them are forced to go through them.

The girls in the Samburu community hail from a community where FGM and early marriages are lauded. The girls therefore face a lot of peer pressure. The girls lack exposure to other girls from the rest of the country who value education and who live perfectly normal lives without undergoing FGM.

For most girls in Samburu community sanitary towels is a luxury. Most girls miss school or even drop out because of lack of sanitary towels. Some of them use banana leaves or cloths for their menses making almost 72 days in a year a nightmare for the girls.

PROJECT IDEA.

The girls face a continual threat of being forced into FGM and early marriages during the holidays. My project provides a solution to this problem by creating a host family program for the girls. This will be done through collaboration with national girls schools in Kenya. These are secondary schools that admit the best performing students in elementary schools from all parts of the country. I will establish clubs in these national schools and these clubs will identify potential host families by asking students in the schools to ask their parents if they are willing to host a girl from the Samburu Girls Foundation. The families will then be taken through a day's information session where they will be made aware of about the girls they will be hosting and the objectives of the host program family. The host families will be

required to sign an agreement stating that they will take full responsibility of the girls during the holiday.

The clubs that will be formed in the national schools will serve as a mentorship program for the girls both in Samburu Girls Foundation and Samburu community. The clubs will organize a three-day retreat where they will meet with girls from the Samburu Girls Foundation. My project will also provide sanitary towels and panties to girls in the Samburu girls foundation and other girls from the Samburu community. My project will give sanitary towels to 150 girls. These sanitary towels will last for a year.

Pre-project Plan

- Correspond with teachers in charge of clubs in the four national schools. Send out information about the host program through the teachers.
- Recruit four volunteers who are alumni of the four national schools. They will help in the implementation of the project.

Project Plan

- Establish the clubs in the national schools and have several information sessions where the students will be taught on mentorship.
- Reach out to potential host families and put 20 girls into the host family program during the August holiday.
- Visit schools in Samburu county with girls from the clubs to talk to the girls and distribute the sanitary towels and panties.
- Hold a retreat during which the girls will be assigned mentors. The girls will be taught on the avenues to get help when they are forced into undergoing FGM and early marriages.

IMPACT OF THE PROJECT.

The girls from the Samburu community will be aware of the dangers of FGM and early marriages and will be in a better position to resist peer pressure and know how to seek help. Through the clubs, a retreat will be held annually to ensure the continuity of the mentorship program. The clubs will raise funds in the schools with the help of the school administration and Samburu Girls Foundation.

The girls from Samburu will have a peace of mind without having to worry about lack of sanitary towels.

Through this project the girls in Samburu will be empowered and this means that they will fight for the rights of their own daughters contrary to what is done today. The girls in the national schools will have an invaluable opportunity to serve their own peers and mentor them.

Samburu Girls foundation will be relieved of the problem of losing girls over the holidays instead, they will focus on raising funds to build a home for the girls.

QUALIFICATIONS.

I consider myself the right candidate because I am a Kenyan girl who has friends and relatives who have been victims of FGM and early marriages. I have mentored girls from my community before and have always wanted to do this on a larger scale. I attended one of the national schools and I know the willingness of the students, teachers and parents to participate in community service. I approached the founder of Samburu Girls Foundation, Josphine Kulea and she is very enthusiastic about my project. I am very passionate about this project and I cannot stop thinking of the many girls with great minds that we lose to FGM and early marriages.