

## Meet the ten girls participating in the Education, Leadership, and Rights Training Program!

After a very in-depth selection process, the following ten girls were specially chosen from various Maasai communities in Kenya and Tanzania. It was determined that the following 10 girls were the brightest of the original pool of applicants, came from poor backgrounds, and expressed a willingness to come back and work in their communities.

It is our pleasure to introduce to you...

### Ledaiki Ann Nailantei



Ann is fifteen years old and the youngest child of six. She is from a semi-arid region, where limited rainfall significantly limits economic activities. Ann was raised by her aunt after her parents died when she was four. A businesswoman, Ann's aunt struggles to pay for the schooling of Ann and her other siblings, all of whom currently attend secondary school.

Though driven at school, Ann struggles with the death of her parents and often has trouble focusing on her studies. Despite this, Ann's determination during her primary education caught the attention of a head teacher, who has helped Ann throughout the years to raise money for her school fees. Ann joined the Bisil Girls Secondary School in 2009, when she started Form One. When she finishes school, Ann wants to join the Kenyan Army and work to advance the position of women in her community.

### Naipanoi Kipaili



Naipanoi is fourteen years old and is the only child of her father's second wife. When her mother died, Naipanoi's father and his first wife raised her. There are significant burdens on Naipanoi's family, as her father, a Maasai herdsman, is paying school fees for the eight children under his care.

Naipanoi loves school, and considers herself grateful to have escaped the typical fate of girls her age who undergo female circumcision and early marriage. She is a member of her school's Press Club, and wants to be an accountant when she finishes school. She would like to put some money back into her community and help other girls pursue their education.

### **Kakenya J. Barta**



Kakenya is fourteen years old and is the first child of six. Her family comes from the Transmara District, an area that has experienced tribal clashes between the Maasai and Kisii communities. The violence displaced Kakenya's family, and they have since settled on a strip of land offered to them by a sympathetic neighbor.

Kakenya's family cultivates the land, and assists the owner with chores. They engage in subsistence agriculture, as they are unable to produce surplus crops for sale. As a result, Kakenya's father has started herding cattle to earn extra money. Kakenya's parents made the unusual decision not to circumcise and marry-off their daughter, focusing instead on her education. When she finishes school, Kakenya would like to be a broadcaster. She is currently in Form One at the Bisil School.

### **Sabina Tumeki Siankoi**



Sabina is fifteen years old, but like many rural Maasai does not know her exact date of birth. She was born to an illiterate mother who was ostracized because she was unable to conceive a boy. When her father died in 2000, his parents expelled Sabina and her mother from their land and threatened to marry-off the six year-old girl. In Maasai culture, only men can purchase land, and Sabina's mother was forced to build a house on her brothers' property. She currently supports Sabina and herself from the earnings of her small bead-working business.

Sabina is determined to finish her schooling, and laments the lack of educated female role models in her culture. When she finishes her secondary education, she plans to become a nurse and improve the rural healthcare system in her community.

### **Elizabeth Kironua Sakuda**



Kironua is sixteen years old and was orphaned at a young age when both parents died. She was raised by a foster family that continues to care for her today. Growing up in a rural area, Kironua walked three kilometers every day to school, and was the only child in her family to receive an education. As an orphan, she was ostracized from her community and underwent circumcision at a young age, an event that she recalls as highly traumatizing.

Despite these significant challenges, Kironua excels at school, and wants to become a surgeon. She currently attends Baraka Oo Ntoyie, a Maasai school that is considered a safe haven for girls in the community.

### Peninah Yolamu Andra



Peninah is the firstborn of six, raised by her grandparents after her father abandoned the family and her mother passed away. Her father returned several years later, and now supports the family with his three cows, their sole property and source of income. Peninah comes from a Maasai community in Tanzania where education is regarded as a luxury, particularly with respect to female children. Her father, uncle and grandparents pool their earnings in order to send her and her siblings to school. However, regional drought threatens her family's livelihood and ability to afford education.

Peninah currently attends Kajiado Hills Academy in Kenya. She is a very determined student, and takes extra English lessons so that she can communicate with her Kenyan peers. She would like to be an English teacher when she finishes school, and plans to use her earning to help support her siblings.

### Rehema Emmuel Hotee



Rehema is thirteen years old, and is from a Maasai community in Tanzania. Her mother is sick with TB, and her father does not help to support his family. Her family depends on pastoralism as a livelihood, and in times of drought she and her siblings have had to rely on donations of food for survival.

Rehema is delighted to be learning English, and considers herself fortunate to have funding for her education. But she faces significant obstacles: a lack of electricity at home, and time-consuming tasks such as fetching water, both of which limit the hours she can spend on her schoolwork. Nonetheless, she is determined to finish school. Rehema wants to become a teacher and return to her village to educate her pastoralist community about alternatives sources of income.

### Martha Lazaro Rokonga



Martha is sixteen years old and is one of five children. Her family is unable to afford school fees for all their children, and they have married off two of her sisters for their dowries. Maasai who own property are typically able to afford education, but Martha's parents own only two cows and three goats, and struggle to provide for the family.

Like many Maasai girls, Martha has been circumcised, and believes that the decision to circumcise one's daughter lies with the husband. Both of her parents are illiterate, and Martha is very grateful for the opportunity to continue her studies. She plans to teach once she finishes her schooling.

### Mary Saidi Ngobei



Mary is sixteen years old, and the only child in her family of seven who attends school. All of her siblings have been married-off to support her family, and Mary has been pulled out of school twice when her parents were unable to afford the school fees. A former teacher acknowledged Mary as a strong student who should be in school, and coordinated funding for her education.

Mary is delighted to be able to continue her schooling, though she laments the fact that her siblings have not had similar opportunities. She is currently in Form One at Kajiado Hills Secondary School.

### Sophia Somei Sirau



Sophia is sixteen years old and the oldest of seven children. Her four younger sisters have already been married-off to help support the family. Her mother supports the family with a small bead-work business, and is unable to perform any strenuous tasks because of ill health.

Like many of the other girls, Sophia yearns for an educated female role model whom she can emulate. After she finishes school, Sophia wants to teach and work to improve her family's situation. She is currently in Form One at Kajiado Hills High School.