

Information and Relief Center for Children in Transmara – Fighting Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage



Executive summary

Tareto Maa is a community based organisation in Kenya.

We perform information campaigns on Girl's Health and Child Rights and aim to overcome the outdated traditions of female circumcision and forced marriages within the Maasai community.

Where we come from and who we are

The circumcision and forced marriage of girls are outlawed worldwide. Nevertheless they are still being practiced in rural regions of East Africa. In particular in the tribe of the Maasai. There it is a tradition to take girls from school, when they are between 11 and 13 years old, and to circumcise them without any anaesthetization or medical supervision. Many of the girls bleed to death or die due to infections. For those, who survive, school attendance ends and they will be sold – for a bride price of ca. 1,200 USD – to a man, which is in most cases much older than them.

Tareto Maa – meaning: „Help for the Maasai“ – has been founded by **Gladys Naing'olai Kiranto**, who has suffered genital mutilation as a young Maasai girl herself and could not find anyone then, who was able to protect her. The information and relief project is seated in Kilgoris, District Transmara, and has been registered in April 2009 as a “Self-Help Project“ by the Kenyan Government. The local pastor is a member of this community project and acts as one of the contact persons for the public – which is very important, because the church is respected as a moral authority in rural Kenya. And it is important, because in the Maasai community, a woman is not allowed to raise topics like circumcision towards men (and that means: towards the fathers of the girls). The **local congregation of the African Inland Church** actively supports and innervates the work of Tareto Maa.



Gladys Kiranto

Tareto Maa is a genuine grass root project – but with many supporters from abroad. In the year 2010 the group managed to win supporters in North America, Asia and Europe. **A German and an English Tareto Maa group have already been set up.** The German group has been approved as a tax-exempt charity by the German authorities, the English group is applying for this status right now. A group in the US is going to be founded. These national groups consult with the Kenyan group, support the fundraising and inform the respective publics on the topic of FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) and the work of Tareto Maa. But the project locally is managed and run solely by the Kenyan group – based on their knowledge of the Maasai culture and regional structures.

Goals and objectives – Protecting girls and informing the public



In front of Gladys Kiranto's house

Tareto Maa aims to strengthen Girl's Rights and to overcome FGM in the community of the Maasai. The group's work focuses on the region where Tareto Maa is seated: Kilgoris and the surrounding area. Tareto Maa closely cooperates with the local congregation, the civil society in Transmara and with the local authorities.

To achieve its goals, **Tareto Maa informs the local public about FGM, Child Health and topics of Sexual and Reproductive Health (esp. HIV/AIDS).** Members of the group go into the schools as well as into community assemblies, and explain about the injuries, both physical and psychological done by female circumcision and the importance of school education for girls. They distribute information brochures (written in Swahili). They offer personal talks and they inform the children about health and HIV/AIDS.

If a girl does not want to be circumcised and married without consent, she can ask Tareto Maa for help. Gladys Kiranto and the pastor will talk to the parents then and try to convince them, not to let the girl be circumcised, but send her to school instead.

But in some cases, a family refuses and castes out their daughter. Then Tareto Maa will take care of the girl. **Tareto Maa has set up a Relief Center for these children in need.**

If a girl loses her home due to her refusal to being circumcised, Tareto Maa registers this girl at the local police station (the police will help to protect the girl) and admits her to the rescue center. Tareto Maa takes care of the costs for food, clothes and education when no mutual solution within the family can be found.

What we have achieved so far and where we intend to go

Thanks to supporters in Kenya, the UK, the US, Germany, Sweden, Japan, Taiwan and many other countries, we have been able to pay for the costs of living and school fees for 27 girls in 2010. Brochures in Swahili have been produced and we distributed them in Transmara. English and German versions of the brochure are displayed in Europe at the moment.



Girl with typical Maasai decoration



Cooking for the kids



In use: sneakers, which have been donated

In 2010 a Tareto Maa website, a Facebook group, a Kiva group and a fundraising page on www.better-place.org have been successfully set up and developed.

A very important step for us has been the purchase of a plot of land in Kilgoris where we have built a **rescue center**, enabling us to shelter more girls in case of an emergency.

And this emergency occurred in December 2010. At the end of a school year, in the last week of November, traditionally the “circumcision season” starts. We had expected that about 15 more girls would take refuge at Tareto Maa during these weeks. But we underestimated how many girls were looking for help. Nearly each day more children came. Some of them from a huge distance and from regions where Tareto Maa had not even communicated – the word on Tareto Maa’s work had just spread. Instead of 40 children, which we had expected for 2011, **we now have to nourish and send to school a total of 70 children.** Each girl, who asks for our help and cannot go back to her family, means additional costs of 570 USD per year.

The new rescue center was built in November and December, and the girls moved in on January 1, 2011. The construction works meant a **great boost for the local support which Tareto Maa receives.** Members of the community visited the construction site and said: “We thought you were only talking – but now we see, you are really doing something to change things.” Members of the community started to bring food and clothes for the girls and set up sponsorships for some of the girls. This local support remains on a very high level. Even the District Government reacted and offered to pay the salaries for additional guards – so that the girls are safe at night.

Furthermore, the community decided **to join forces and raise funds to set up a private school.** The idea is to strengthen the education in Kilgoris and to raise money for Tareto Maa. Instead of sending the girls of Tareto Maa to public schools, which are quite far away and cost fees, the private school could offer a better education, charge tuition for the children who are sent there by their families – and then the girls of Tareto Maa could go there “for free”. This is one of the measures which will generate regular funds for Tareto Maa in the future. The community wants to start with one classroom in the beginning of 2012 and then build a new classroom each year.



The new Rescue Center

With the beginning of 2011, Tareto Maa set up **individual child sponsorships.** With a monthly fee of 35 USD, a donor enables a girl to attend school. Thirty-one sponsorships have been set up in the first four months – with donors coming from Africa, Europe, North America and Asia.

Besides the task to raise the funds for the 70 children, our most important challenges for the next few months will be:

- To install a **solar panel**, so that the children can do their homework for school in the evening with electric lights. (The solar modules have been donated by a German company – now the transport and installation has to be managed.)
- To build a **security fence**, so that the rescue center is protected 24/7.
- To establish a **school classroom**, so that we can educate the children cost effectively in our own school.

It is a very realistic option, **that FGM in Kilgoris and the surrounding villages can be overcome in a period of three to five years.** The Kenyan group is experiencing already, that the people are starting to rethink the traditions of circumcision and forced child marriage.



But nevertheless, the group of children who have to be sheltered, will grow in the next few years – as each December some more girls will need shelter, not all of them can go back to their families and they will have to stay until their school education is completed.

Some of the girls we are taking care of

But even if our objectives are achieved – i.e. the girls completed school and no more girls are mutilated in Kilgoris – there will be **further tasks for Tareto Maa**: To help the girls, who have left school, with their vocational training and to inform on FGM in other parts of Transmara.

Hence, Tareto Maa plans to set up additional training courses to help the young grown-ups: For instance with computer skills. And – in the long run – Tareto Maa wants to set up a “Community Center” which benefits the whole community by delivering health and educational services: Thereby raising funds, which shall be used for Tareto Maa’s continued work on FGM, Child Rights and Child Health.

Fundings and partners

All members of Tareto Maa – whether in Kenya or any other country – work on an honorary basis. No one receives any salary for it. **Each board member donates part of his or her income to Tareto Maa.** In many cases, these donations add up to a considerable percentage of the individual person’s income.

Donations and support are raised **via the Internet**. Tareto Maa is one of the most successful projects on the donation platform Betterplace.org. More than 150 individuals from all over the world have donated over 20,000 Euro (28,000 USD) via the site www.betterplace.org/projects/1707-relief-center-for-children-in-transmara. Tareto Maa also has one of the biggest supporters’ groups on Kiva.org, including more than 390 members (and with subgroups setting up individual sponsorships for some of the girls of Tareto Maa).

Further funds are raised individually

- by events like birthday parties with “donations instead of presents” or charity runs and bazaars
- by Tareto Maa collection boxes in medical practices
- by working with companies (e.g. donations of shoes, solar modules etc.)
- by friends and relatives of the board members in Kenya, Germany and the UK.

100 percent of any donation made to the group’s bank accounts in England and Germany will be forwarded to the organisation’s account in Kenya, without any drawbacks.

Tareto Maa Kenya keeps a transparent record of all amounts and donations. In an **annual documentation** the Kenyan group reports to the groups in the UK and Germany as well as to the donors.

As the project in Transmara has successfully developed and the project's challenges – 70 children by now – have developed as well, Tareto Maa is very interested in developing partnerships with international partners and supporting institutions.

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