

Report

“Campaign to end Female Genital Mutilation in Civicon and surrounding villages, Marsabit County”. Project 2023-2025

Background

Two Sisters Village/ Civicon and its surrounding areas are inhabited by the Samburu community. Like other pastoralist groups, the Samburu's practice the harmful tradition of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), on young girls. This practice significantly contributes to low schools' enrolment, early pregnancies and forced early marriages amongst the girls. There is need to increasingly engage and mobilise the local communities in the target area by raising awareness and bringing together community resources to develop a sustainable and self-reliant solution to end this violation. This will entail targeting different stakeholders at the individual, interpersonal, community, and leadership levels, as well as other relevant organisations working on this topic in the region.

Two Sisters School and Two Sisters Church

Two Sisters Church in Kalmar, Sweden has been supporting the construction and development of Two Sisters School, since the start in January 2019. The school began with two pre-primary classes and 42 learners and was inaugurated in March 2020. In June 2021 Two Sisters School was officially registered as a public school in Kenya, and a headteacher was appointed. The school has developed positively and by January 2026, Two Sisters school has eight classes, pre-primary 1 and 2, grade 1-6, in total 280 learners. There are also a Learning Resource Centre (library) and a small kitchen that provides two meals a day for the learners. About one third of the children in the village go to school, an increasing number, the others are helping their families taking care of the animals.

FGM and Community Conversations

From the very beginning, Two Sisters Church in Sweden reacted against the practice of FGM and discussed with Steven Labarake, the headteacher, and villagers, ways of changing this tradition. Many projects have been organized in northern Kenya against FGM, often planned externally, and with mixed results. With that in mind, members of Two Sisters Church asked Steven Labarakwe and the community in Two Sisters Village to make a plan for how to eliminate or reduce FGM locally. In the second half of 2022 and the beginning of 2023 the villagers and Steven held several community conversations and meetings, eventually developing a project, for three years, aiming at starting a process towards ending the practice of FGM. The project plan was targeting all involved groups with seminars and workshops, to make it possible to achieve consensus and long-lasting results. The budget included bringing in health experts from neighbouring clinics, as well as providing tea and light meals for the participants. Two Sisters Church decided to give financial support to the workshops, two times a year, 500 000 Ksh a year, in total 1 658 000 Ksh. Two Sisters Church also gave support to the final graduation ceremony in September 2025. The church held several fundraising activities in Kalmar, Sweden each year, maintaining regular communication with Steven Labarakwe and Two Sisters Village throughout the project.

Project: Campaign to end Female Genital Mutilation in Civicon and surrounding villages.

- Specific Objectives.
1. Increase in community support for the elimination of FGM.
 2. Reduction of the number of girls undergoing the cut.
 3. Reduction of the number of parents (mothers and fathers) planning to circumcise their daughters.
 4. Training and capacity building of community members on the harmful effects of FGM.
 5. Creation of an all-inclusive anti-FGM taskforce at the community level.
 6. Identification and adoption of alternative rites of passage.
 7. Engagement of circumcisers in alternative income generating sources.

Expected Outcomes.

1. Achieving a 20% increase in community support of the anti-FGM campaign.
2. Attaining a 20% reduction of girls undergoing the cut.
3. Successful adoption of alternative rites of passage by the community.
4. Creation and frequent meetings by the local anti-FGM taskforce.
5. Successful engagement of 30% of the circumcisers in alternative income generating activities.

Activities: 1. Community entry. 2. Education, workshops and training. 3. Community Conversations. 4. Community mobilization. 5. Identification of alternative income generation for circumcisers. 6. Community-led Alternative Rites of Passage.

Work Plan: 2023-2025

Budget: 1 658 000 Ksh

Workshops and activities

2022, test workshop

10 December: FGM sensitization workshop at Two Sisters Cup (football), three men’s team and two women’s teams, in total 150 people. The outcome of this workshop gave inspiration and ideas for developing the three-year project

Facilitator for all workshops: Steven Labarakwe

2023

11-12 June. Two-day workshop in Two Sisters Village. Key speakers: three nurses from Olturot and Gatab on the definition of FGM, health risks, long term effects, community inputs. Key stakeholders addressed: circumcisers, opinion leaders in the village, elders, women, and youth/ moran



Some of the participants in the two-day workshop

9-10 December. FGM sensitization workshop at Two Sisters Cup, four men's and two women's teams, 150 people + 72 villagers. Key speaker: Moses Lentoror, nurse from Olturot



Moses Lentoror



Two Sisters Cup trophies and teams

2024

6, 13-14 November. Three-day workshop on FGM awareness with 46 villagers, women, men and youth. Key speakers: three nurses from Olturot and Gatab on dangers of FGM, legal implications, community perspectives. Developing a community action plan including community awareness, engaging traditional and religious leaders, empowering women and girls, strengthening legal enforcement, commitment and monitoring. Forming a local antiFGM committee to talk to people in the village, lead and monitor the action plan.



28-30 December. FGM workshop at Two Sisters Cup, 12 men's and 2 women's teams, 300 people. Key speakers: nurse Moses Lantoror from Olturot and nurse Hosea Leparsanti from Gatab, representatives from county government, Steven Labarakwe and Philip Lekupuny. Topics on FGM history in Samburuland, health impacts, legal framework, cultural perspectives, empowering women, alternative rites of passage



2025

Preparations for the graduation ceremony/ alternative rite of passage

In the beginning of the year 22 girls from Two Sisters School, with the support from their families, said they were ready to go for an alternative rite of passage. The girls, age 9-13, were prepared in the first half year through a series of meetings and mentorship sessions, facilitated by Steven Labarakwe, Two Sisters School teachers, community elders and women. These sessions included life skills training, education on girls' rights, discussions on the harmful effects of FGM, learning traditional songs and dances for the graduation.

The graduation ceremony itself was carefully planned over several months by the villagers, the school, and Steven Labarakwe, in close consultation with Two Sisters Church, ensuring both content and ritual reflected an alternative rite of passage. The ceremony was made public and the entire community invited, with special arrangements including the slaughter of a bull and ceremonial attire for the girls to emphasize the significance of the event.

Graduation ceremony/ alternative rite of passage

On graduation day, 28 September 2025, the whole community was gathered at Two Sisters School, together with the learners from Two Sisters School and nine Swedish guests from Two Sisters Church and Kalmarsundsskolan, around 500 people. The 22 girls walked in a procession dressed in ceremonial clothes, accompanied by their mothers and younger schoolmates. The girls sang a song and recited words on freedom and rights for girls.

Each girl received a bead necklace with their initials. They were blessed by community elders and by representatives from African Inland Church and from Two Sisters Church. Finally, they were awarded graduation certificates. The celebration continued with dances, singing and eating.



MY RIGH MY VOICE!

I as a girl, I deserve to be happy,
I have my right please! Protect me!
Right to eat
Right to education
Right to shelter
Right to good health
Right to be loved,
I have no voice because of my age.
**My right, my right, my right, my
voice.**



Evaluation

An evaluation was conducted two weeks following the graduation ceremony to assess immediate outcomes and community response. Interviews and focus group discussions were held with the 22 girls, parents, elders, teachers, local leaders to gauge their perceptions of the alternative rite of passage. Results:

- **Local community:** The feedback indicated strong community approval of the ceremony and increased commitment to abandoning FGM.
- **Girls' Experience:** The 22 girls reported increased confidence, understanding of their rights, and enthusiasm for continuing education. They expressed pride in their accomplishment and motivation to serve as peer mentors for other girls.
- **Behavioural Observations:** Community members demonstrated positive engagement during the ceremony, openly discussing the harmful effects of FGM, and endorsing alternative rites of passage as culturally acceptable replacements.

The local anti FGM committee held a follow-up meeting to review the ceremony, document lessons learned, and plan for future community sensitization activities.

12-13 December 2025: An FGM awareness workshop was held at Two Sisters Cup, targeting mainly youth, but also parents, community elders, and women. Key facilitators included local nurses and Steven Labarakwe. Topics covered: health risks, legal framework, community perspectives, and promotion of alternative rites of passage.



Results and outcomes

The “Campaign to End Female Genital Mutilation in Civicon and Surrounding Villages” was planned and developed by the local community, together with Steven Labarakwe, and with support from Two Sisters Church. The methods used were community conversations, workshops and school-based programs. The establishment of a local anti FGM committee in 2024 strengthened community ownership and provided a sustainable platform for monitoring and advocacy. The committee organized regular meetings, facilitated discussions and prepared for the alternative rite of passage.

Results and outcomes:

- Successful mobilization of parents, elders, youth, women, and local leaders.
- Significant increased community awareness of the harmful effects of FGM.
- Understanding the importance of education in stopping FGM, since all the girls taking part in the alternative rite of passage were students from Two Sisters School.
- A measurable reduction in the number of girls undergoing FGM in Two Sisters Village, that is the 22 girls in those age groups attending school. It is about 10-15 % of the total number of girls in the village.
- A shift in attitude from the community towards abandoning this practice.
- Developing alternative income-generating opportunities for circumcisers.
- Developing and adopting an alternative rites of passage/ graduation ceremony.
- Fostering leadership among girls and increased participation in school.
- Creating strong linkages between school, families, and community stakeholders.
- For the future, reducing the risk of FGM among girls in Two Sisters Village.

The graduation ceremony of 22 girls served as a visible demonstration of the community's commitment to protecting girls' rights, reinforcing social norms against FGM, and celebrating the empowerment of girls.

Conclusion

Owned by the local community, guided by Steven Labarakwe and supported by Two Sisters Church, the project has made considerable progress over the three years and exceeded the expectations. It has combined education, mentorship, community engagement, and culturally sensitive rituals. The graduation ceremony demonstrated the community's commitment to protecting girls' rights and promoting education, health, and wellbeing.

The project has laid a solid foundation for lasting change and continued protection of girls' rights in Two Sisters Village and surrounding villages.

Way Forward

The plan is to sustain the project by

- integrating FGM and girls' rights in the education at school.
- continue community education campaigns.
- empower girls as peer mentors.
- engage local leaders to reinforce legal frameworks.
- scale the alternative rites of passage model including neighbouring villages.
- arrange an alternative rite of passage annually.
- make a new three-year anti FGM plan.

Steven Labarakwe, coordinator

Philip Lekupuny, Two Sisters School

Ebbe Westergren, Two Sisters Church