



# The Unspoken Vice in Samburu Community

**LAIKIPIA, MARSABIT & SAMBURU COUNTIES**

**RESEARCH REPORT, 2016**



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# **THE UNSPOKEN VICE IN SAMBURU COMMUNITY**

**SWT RESEARCH REPORT**

**APRIL 2016**

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**OUR VISION:** We envision a society that upholds human rights, fundamental freedom, well being, dignity of women and girls in pastoral communities.

**OUR MISSION:** We are an indigenous women-led organization that champions the rights of women and girls among the pastoralists' communities through strengthening their capacity to influence policies, decision making processes and address harmful cultural practices.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# Abstract

The Samburu are a Nilotic community who reside in Northern Kenya. These indigenous communities are mainly nomadic pastoralists and are deeply rooted in their culture. This culture is safeguarded and perpetuated by the elders (usually older men in the community). The Samburu society is organized by *age set* and *age grade* for men and women respectively. Every grouping is by *age-set* and *age grade* with different tasks and responsibilities including ensuring that the next generation has been trained and equipped to continue with their cultural practices.

One such cultural practice is girl-child beading. Girl-Child beading is a cultural practice among the Samburu community, which sanctions a non-marital sexual relationship between Samburu men in the 'warrior' age group and young Samburu girls (usually between the ages of 9-15 years) who are not yet eligible for marriage. The practice has been in the community for centuries and is associated with a number of human rights violations as described in the first pilot research by Samburu Women Trust (SWT), "*Silent Sacrifice*" Report. As a result SWT has been advocating and lobbying for the practice to be included and recognized by law as a Harmful Cultural Practice. This initial pilot research was conducted in one ward in Isiolo County where the Samburu communities reside.

After witnessing and observing the negative impacts girl-child beading was having on the girl-child in Isiolo County and began addressing it, SWT commissioned this research to look further into the prevalence and impacts of girl-child beading in three other Counties where the Samburu community live namely; Samburu, Marsabit (lower) and Laikipia (North) Counties. The research also sought to look into the communities' perceptions on the practice, to understand why they still practice this tradition despite the numerous negative impacts associated with it and the solutions they envisage for addressing these negative impacts of the practice on girls. This report summarizes the data collected in the field by tabulating some of the statistics from the household surveys and focus group discussions conducted.

The structure of the report is such that the data has been analyzed and discussed by county to show the comparison and differences in each of the county regarding the practice. It also includes a detailed analysis of the legal framework in Kenya for addressing Harmful Cultural Practices. The positive and negative impacts of the practice have, however been compiled together as most of the responses were similar across counties; and the communities' strategies of addressing the negative impacts of the practice were also similar and hence this information has also been consolidated after the county by county analysis. The report ends by making some conclusions and recommendations based on the data collected in this research, conversations with different stakeholders including SWT and including feedback from the data validation workshop of this research.

This research should not be seen as conclusive document into this practice but an initial insight into the communities' thinking and perception of the practice. Therefore additional and more in-depth studies can be conducted to build on this research or a specific component that is relevant to the issues wants to further understand or address.





# Introduction

Girl-child beading (*Nkishooroto e saen*<sup>1</sup>) is a cultural practice among the Samburu community which sanctions a non-marital sexual relationship between Samburu men in the ‘warrior’ age group and young Samburu girls who are not yet eligible for marriage. It involves Samburu warriors (or morans as they are commonly referred to) giving specialized beads (*nkishooroto e saen e Imuran*<sup>2</sup>) to an uncircumcised girl to signify the commencement of a sexual relationship. Girls may be as young as nine years old when they are beaded. The process begins with negotiations between the moran and the girl’s mother, as well as the girl’s brothers, who often also are morans. Once the relationship is agreed, the girl’s mother builds a hut for the couple called a ‘*singira*’ where the moran will have access to the girl for sexual intercourse.

During the process of beading the moran brings large quantities of beads as well as other goods to the girl’s mother as way of appeasing her. Since these relationships take place within clans, the process generally does not lead to marriage and pregnancy is forbidden. The uncircumcised girls are still considered children themselves and thus it is a taboo for them to give birth. However, when pregnancies do result, beaded girls may be forced to have a traditional abortion or to give up the newborn for infanticide or for adoption into another ethnic community. Some girls are beaded at a very young age, even as young as three or four, and the morans wait for them to grow older before beginning a sexual relationship.<sup>3</sup>

## ORAL HISTORY OF BEADING FROM THE SAMBURU ELDERS

The Samburu girl-child beading practice began when the Samburu community divided community members into generations. There was a big inter-generational fight all across the community territory, something that caused huge division among the married and the non-married. The fight was when the sixth generation was circumcised and this was between Lkukuyat, Lwantaro and Lg’erejon<sup>1</sup>. This is when the warriors were barred from going out with married women. Something called ‘Lminong’ was also invented which barred morans from eating meat at home as a way to separate them from the young and the elderly. Then the warriors were advised to associate only with girls and if caught with the elders’ wives, they would be cursed. One of the moran leaders at that time of the Lkipipilat<sup>2</sup> generation, was found chatting with a married woman by the girl he had beaded in a married woman’s house, she therefore decided to steal the spear which is normally left outside the door of the house and hid it in her ‘*singira*’. When the warrior came out of the woman’s house, he found that the spear is not there as the girl has already taken it back to her *singira*. He got worried that he called for an urgent crisis warriors meeting where he told the warriors what had just happened. After the warriors meeting, elders were called upon to help in solving the problem. One elder, a community leader gave the affected moran two choices; either to go for raids at Mt. Tirre (today in southern Ethiopia) get as much cows as possible as only way to cover the scandal or try to have sex with all married women in the manyatta. The warriors decided to go for the first choice. They went for raids lead by the affected moran. When they succeeded the elders really wondered why this had to happen and they had to question and after they knew the cause, they decided to put the rule of warriors ‘beading girls’ so that they don’t keep on seducing married women and since then warriors have been beading girls.

Following the above oral history on how the girl-child beading practice emerged, the warriors’ beaded girls across the clans without restriction. However, at one point a moran was found with a beaded girl and it triggered an inter-clan conflict and that generation was completely wiped out.

As a result the elders ruled that each clan to bead their own girls to reduce the conflicts and that has stood to date. During the validation workshop for this Beading Practice research, a Board of Trustee of

1 Samburu term for girl-child beading

2 Samburu term for symbolic beads (nkeri)

3 *Silent Sacrifice-Girl Child Beading in the Samburu Community in Kenya*, a Research and Human Rights Report by Samburu Women Trust, 2012

Samburu Women Trust (SWT) and also an elderly woman/leader among the Samburu, Helen Leisono (well known as Mama Riziki) also gave additional insight on how the value and importance of the beading practice to the community.



*The genesis of beading is that the community looked up to the morans as the main defenders of the community and their livestock from external threats. The elders figured that the only way to make the morans fierce and loyal to the community was to introduce beading; so that the morans could defend the cattle and the community to the death; this is confined to the clan to ensure that the morans respect the family of the beaded girls and ensure the wellbeing of the livestock of the entire community.<sup>4</sup>*

The Samburu are plain Nilotes who mainly reside in the Northern parts of Kenya. They are nomadic pastoralists and pastoralism is a way of life in this community. The Samburu are culturally related to the Maasai but are still distinct from them while show a specifically rich and picturesque of artful beadwork, songs and dances. This then shows how beads play a large part in Samburu culture. This forms part of their identity and it's connected to their spirituality.

The Samburu is mainly a patriarchal and gerontocracy society. The governance of the community is by male elders who are esteemed for their perspective and wisdom they have acquired from their ancestors. The elders are also the custodians of the culture and its perpetuation. The beading practice is one such culture that has been preserved and valued over the past centuries. As noted earlier the purpose of beading was to ensure and to keep the commitment of the warriors (morans) to the security of their community and livestock specifically among clans.

*The Samburu society, like many other indigenous cultures, is organized into specific age and gender groupings; each age set has an important role in the community. Samburu males are grouped into three general categories, including children, warriors (morans), and elders. Boy children are tasked with helping the Samburu family care for livestock and carry out other simple daily tasks. Boys undergo a circumcision ceremony in their teenage years to transition into the warrior age-set, commonly called morans. Samburu females also are divided into age groups – girls, married women and elder women. Samburu girls also are responsible for assisting the family with caring for livestock and for assisting their mothers with her duties in the family home. Samburu girls undergo Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in their teenage years to prepare them for marriage.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>4</sup> Beading Practice Research Data Validation meeting, March 4 2016, Samburu Women Trust

<sup>5</sup> Silent Sacrifice-Girl Child Beading in the Samburu Community in Kenya, a Research and Human Rights Report by Samburu Women Trust, 2012

Beading plays a key role in the Samburu community. It is used for identity, beauty and adornment and beaded girls are highly valued and respected as the results in this research will show. The women are also cautious not to attend public meetings or gatherings without their beads on because it is a sign of beauty and has cultural value. The morans also adorn themselves with beads and during Samburu cultural festivals a wide array of the use of beads. Beads are also considered very sacred as they are used in various life cycles (at birth, initiation, marriage and death). However, girl-child beading as mentioned earlier, is a silent Samburu culture that allows morans to reserve a young Samburu girl (between the ages of 9-15 or younger) for an unrestricted sexual relationship with her and with it comes a myriad of negative impacts on the girl.

Samburu Women Trust (SWT) has been working among the Samburu communities in Isiolo County, became increasingly concerned about the negative impacts beading had on the young Samburu girls and in 2012 conducted a pilot study supported by the International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) to investigate these negative impacts and the communities' perceptions on the beading practice. The pilot research was conducted in and around Kipsing and Ol Donyiro locations in Isiolo. Later in 2015, SWT sought to build further on this research by increasing the geographical scope to cover Samburu County, the southern part of Marsabit and a baseline in Laikipia North whose inhabitants are mainly Samburu and the Rendile communities.

This research interviewed 657 respondents at the household level and had 20 focus groups discussions and focused on the following issues; a) understanding the practice, prevalence (the extent to which the practice still exists) and impacts of girl child beading, b) to draw out the communities perceptions on the practice, c) communities' solutions to addressing the negative impacts of the girl child beading practice and; d) to analyze the extent of human rights violations as a result of the beading practice. The key findings of the research indicates that although the practice is fading out in many areas visited, the practice still exist and it's still shrouded in secrecy and the community doesn't want to talk about it, especially in areas where it is still rampant in like in lower Marsabit.

This had implications on the data collected where the expectation was to find high numbers of beaded girls but the data revealed there weren't any or very few in number. Most of the community members and stakeholders in these regions are familiar with these areas and confirmed that the data should have had higher numbers. Other key findings were that education was playing a huge role in the communities desiring to do away with the practice. In areas where schools were inaccessible due to the distances it required to reach them or difficult terrains the beading practice was still rampant. In future additional research in this area will require mapping of educational institutions and determining how they could affect beading practice.

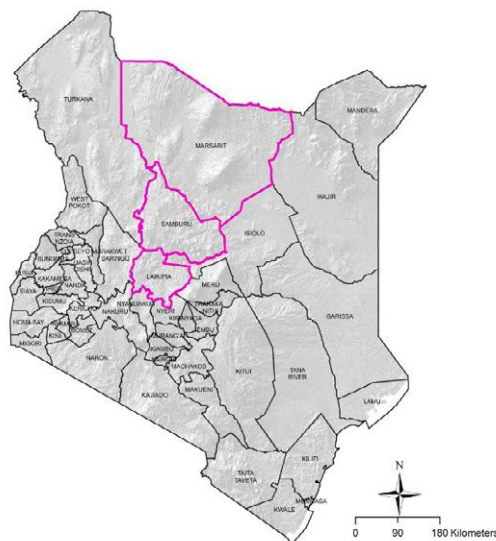


# Methodology

The research's goal was to understand the beading practice as a whole with no bias over the negative impacts of the practice but focusing mainly on the communities' attitudes, perceptions and insights into the practice. Hence the methodology was designed to collect as much data as possible at the household, community and other stakeholder levels.

The research team conducted the research in Samburu, lower Marsabit and Laikipia (North) Counties between December 2015 and January 2016. In Samburu county the research was carried out in all three (3) sub-counties; Samburu West (5 wards - Loosuk, Porro, Maralal, Lodokejek, Suguta Marmar), Samburu East (4 wards - Wamba North, Wamba West, Wamba East and Waso) and Samburu North (5 wards - Ndoto, Nyiro, Baawa, Angata Nanyekie, El-barta); in Marsabit the research focused on Marsabit South sub-county and covered 5 wards-Laisamis, Logologo, South Horr, Ngurnit and Loiyangalani where the Samburu and Rendile communities are the main inhabitants and; finally in Laikipia county the research was conducted in Laikipia North sub-county crossing cutting through various wards to provide a baseline on beading in the area.

Map of Kenya highlighting (in pink) Samburu, Laikipia and Marsabit Counties<sup>6</sup>



## Experimental/ sampling design

Our sample units comprised of individuals at household levels and focus groups of women, elders and warriors in the areas of study. Our sampling strategy was probability where cluster sampling was used based on wards in the counties of interest. A sample of clusters (wards) was selected and then a sample was taken separately from each selected ward based on population dynamics (Census Report 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Maps designed for this report by Benson Maina, GIS and Remote Sensing Consultant



We used the confidence level of 95%, and a confidence interval of 8 and using the sample size calculator and the following census statistics we arrived at the samples used in the research.

Samburu North – 10,051 households, Samburu Central – 18,300 and Samburu East 9,976, Lower Marsabit 16,608. The questionnaires were distributed randomly to the wards considering the population also in each ward. The Laikipia stretch was about 4,861 households.

## Data collection instruments

**Household Questionnaires:** These were designed such that each questionnaire would elicit information on specific, quantifiable variables that were pre-defined. The household interviews had a sample size of (N=657) for all three (3) counties with the highest total number of respondents from Samburu and overall by gender women as the highest number of respondents as illustrated in table 1 below.

**Table 1: No. of household questionnaires administered by County and by gender**

COUNTY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)	MALE RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)	FEMALE RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Samburu	489	74.4	264	53.9	225	46.0
Marsabit	128	19.4	36	28.1	91	71.0
Laikipia	40	6.0	22	55.0	18	45
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>99.8</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>49.0</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>50.8</b>

## Focus Group Discussions

Formal pre -arranged group interviews of between six (6) to eight (8) participants were organized to generate discussions. However, a few of the focus groups interviewed were more than the 6-8 targeted participants. In total twenty (20) focus groups were interviewed for this research and were selected by the research assistants and through the snowballing technique. The groups comprised of 160 individuals both male and female. Samburu County had 14 groups of 129 individuals; Marsabit County had 4 groups of made up of 16 individuals while Laikipia County had 2 groups of 15 individuals.



### **Semi-structured interviews**

For partners and other key stakeholders; these were pre-arranged interviews to understand their interactions and perceptions with the beading practice.

### **Secondary data**

We collected secondary data mainly from the first pilot research on girl-child beading by Samburu Women Trust's, "Silent Sacrifice" report. This report gives a rich overview of the beading practice and its origins with firsthand account from the community. It was a key document in shaping the variables to be collected, analyzed and interpreted for this research, which is viewed as a geographical scale-up of the pilot research carried out. Several other documents contributed to this report including those providing the legal framework in Kenya in relation to harmful cultural practices and the Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of a Child. A data validation workshop for this research was also held and the feedback from stakeholders has been included as part of the research report.

## **Data analysis**

Our research analysis was both quantitative and qualitative. The household questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS). The focus group discussion and semi structured interviews data were analyzed qualitatively. We interrogated the data to build a narrative account describing and interpreting what we found. Triangulating between different sources and examining them for common threads and patterns. (Newing, 2009)





# The legal framework for discussing harmful cultural practices in Kenya & Africa

Women constitute about 50% of the population of Kenya however a vast majority of them are illiterate and affected by poverty. They are also greatly affected by customary laws and practices, which have subjugated them completely<sup>7</sup>. Kenya has diverse laws that govern the rights of women and children. These laws are grounded on both local and international instruments that are aimed at protecting the rights of women and children as well as driving them to enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms fully. Culture does have a strong hold on the people of Kenya with harmful cultural practices conducted in and shrouded by secrecy. Women and children suffer the brunt of the negative impacts of these harmful cultural practices, often having to withdraw their rights and privileges in favor of the more chauvinistic male population.

## The Constitution of Kenya

This is the Grundnorm; supreme and supersedes all laws in the Republic of Kenya. In this position, the Constitution of Kenya has overriding privileges over all other laws in the land. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 under Chapter four (4) provides for a wide range of fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual yet the persistence of the patriarchal cultural law systems has produced patterns of discrimination that deprives women the ability to enforce these fundamental rights. Some of these individual rights (The Constitution does not segregate rights as belonging to either men or women but conjoins all Constitutional rights and privileges as belonging to both genders) that are of particular relevance include:

- Right to life; Article 26
- Right to equality and freedom from discrimination; Article 27
- Right to human dignity; Article 28
- Right to freedom and security; Article 29
- Protection against slavery, servitude and forced labor; Article 30
- Freedom of conscience, religion, belief and opinion; Article 32
- Right to a clean and healthy environment; Article 42
- Right to language and culture; Article 44
- Right to family; Article 45
- Right to fair administrative action that is expeditious, efficient, lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair; Article 47
- Right to access of justice; Article 48

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<sup>7</sup> Law and the Status of Women in Kenya by Janet Kabeberi-Macharia

Article 10 (2) (b) sets out the national values and principles of governance to include, among others, human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination and protection of the marginalized. Article 19 (2) states the purpose of recognizing and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms as being to preserve the dignity of individuals and communities and to promote social justice and the realization of the potential of all human beings. This general proposition is important and relevant to women's struggle for gender equality and gender equity.

Further, Article 21 (3) under implementation of rights and fundamental freedoms states that:

***“All State organs and all public officers have the duty to address the needs of vulnerable groups within society, including women, older members of society, persons with disabilities, children, youth, members of minority or marginalized communities, and members of particular ethnic, religious or cultural communities.”***

This shows that the Constitution in itself recognizes that women and children are disadvantaged and require protection. Article 27 (3) and (4) also state: - “(3) Women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres. (4) The State shall not discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on any ground, including race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, color, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, dress, language or birth.”

## Laws protecting the rights of children and women in Kenya and Africa

Children also have specific laws in Kenya that outline their rights for example the Children Act Chapter 141 CAP. 141 Part II sub section 3 (safeguards for the rights and welfare of the child), states that; The Government shall take steps to the maximum of its available resources with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights of the child set out in this part.

**Section 4:** (1) Every child shall have an inherent right to life and it shall be the responsibility of the Government and the family to ensure the survival and development of the child.

**Section 7:** (1) Every child shall be entitled to education the provision of which shall be the responsibility of the Government and the parents. (2) Every child shall be entitled to free basic education, which shall be compulsory in accordance with Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Section 9:** Every child shall have a right to health and medical care the provision of which shall be the responsibility of the parents and the Government.

**Section 13:** (1) A child shall be entitled to protection from physical and psychological abuse, neglect and any other form of exploitation including sale, trafficking or abduction by any person.

**Section 14:** No person shall subject a child to female circumcision, early marriage or other cultural rites, customs or traditional practices that are likely to negatively affect the child's life, health, social welfare, dignity or physical or psychological development.

**Section 15:** A child shall be protected from sexual exploitation and use in prostitution, inducement or coercion to engage in any sexual activity, and exposure to obscene materials.

In an attempt to promote and protect the rights of children in Kenya, the government developed the National Plan of Action (NPA) 2008-2012. The relevant legal and policy instruments that guided the NPA 2008-2012 are the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter Country Adoption, the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNCESCR), the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UNCRC Optional Protocols on Sale, Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

of Children and the Protocol on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts, the International Labor Organization Conventions 138 and 182, the National Children Policy and other relevant sector-specific policies of the Kenya Government(National Plan of Action for Children in Kenya 2015-2022).

The 2006 Sexual Offences Act (SOA) provides strong legal protection for victims of sexual violence (rape, defilement, child trafficking, child prostitution, child pornography, and other related issues). The Act clearly establishes that sexual offenses are acts of violence and lays emphasis on bringing the perpetrators to justice. However, major steps need to be taken in terms of implementation, increasing coordination and resource allocation to enable actors to provide witness protection, raise awareness about the SOA, and improve investigative and prosecutorial capacity. Also needed is improved provision of psychosocial support for survivors of sexual offenses in Kenya (SOA 2008).

Although the policies and laws keep referring to retrogressive cultural practices there is still gap in clearly and strongly recognizing beading as a violation of human rights particularly for the girl child. Though Kenya has faced a number of gender related challenges in the past it has also made strides towards policy development and enactment of legislations geared to gender equality and protection such as the ones mentioned earlier; a) the Children's Act, b) the Sexual Offences Act and; c) the Gender Bills awaiting enactment by Parliament.

Looking at the constitutional and legal framework in Kenya one observes that it provides for an environment to address the negative impacts of girl-child beading. However, implementation continues to prove challenging especially in the rural and remote areas like Samburu and Marsabit where the law implementers are thinly spread around the region and very few cases of the negative impacts of beading are reported to the local administration and health centers. Other factors also contribute to this including the secrecy surrounding the practice and the communities' commitment to their cultural practices is still deeply entrenched whether harmful or not. These practices are also protected through a patriarchal governance system which contributes to the lack of reporting of the negative impacts of beading as it is viewed as the norm.

The Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (which Kenya as a member state of the Africa Union and has ratified). Chapter One Article 4: Best Interests of the Child states *"In all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration."*

#### **Article 21: Protection against Harmful, Social and Cultural Practices states**

- State parties to the present charter shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful, social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child and in particular:
- Those customs and practice prejudicial to health or life of the child; and
- Those customs and practices discriminatory to the child on the grounds of sex or other status.
- Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory.

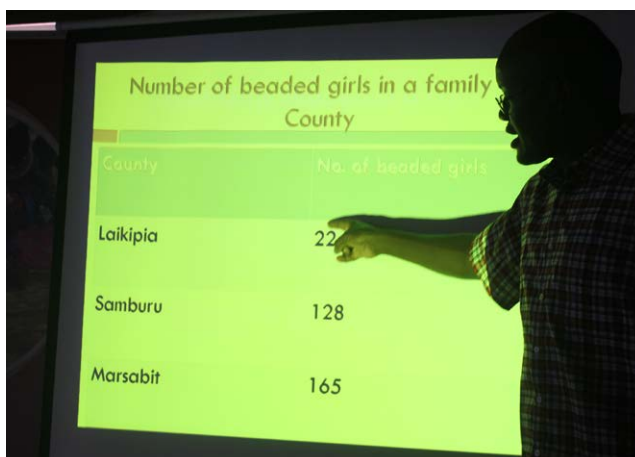
#### **Article 27: Sexual exploitation states;**

- States Parties to the present charter shall undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and shall in particular take measures to prevent:
- The inducement, coercion or encouragement of a child to engage in any sexual activity.

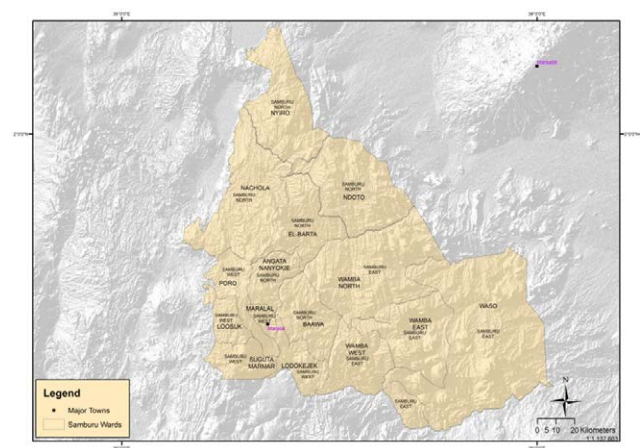
# Research findings and discussions

## SAMBURU COUNTY

The research conducted in Samburu County covered three (3) sub-counties; Samburu East, Samburu West and Samburu North across fourteen (14) wards and 140 villages.



Map of Samburu County with field research areas<sup>8</sup>



### Overview

Samburu County covers an area of roughly 21,000Km<sup>2</sup>. Samburu county's main inhabitants are mainly the Samburu and Turkana communities who are nomadic pastoralists. The population as at the census 2009 was 223, 947. The research focused on the Samburu community who take great pride in their versatile and rich culture. Samburu is a very vast county and the terrain is difficult. Accessing some of the communities in the remote areas of the county proved challenging as they have poor road infrastructure and means of transport to reach these areas is rare or completely unavailable.

When it rains, travel is impossible and the high insecurity requires constant diligence and awareness, as was the case while the research team went through South Horr and Baragoi locations sometimes having to cancel focus group meetings due to insecurity incidents.

A number of variables were explored and data collected in relation to the Samburu culture of beading girls. As will be observed in the findings the practice still exists especially in the remote and rural areas of the county. However, the study also revealed that there is a decline taking place in the practice especially in the village towns due to a number of sensitization campaigns on education, the growth of urban centers in a number of areas in the region and the negative impacts of the beading practice.

<sup>8</sup> Maps designed for this report by Benson Maina, GIS and Remote Sensing Consultant

According to the data collected of the 489 respondents interviewed at the household level it revealed that most of the respondents were between 16-36 years of age and above who then constitute 92.8% of the total respondents. It should be noted that most of the community members were not born in hospitals and hence may not have the correct or accurate age. About 22 of the respondents said they did not know their age. Additionally 86.9% of the respondents have lived in the county for 6-10 and above years as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Age of the respondents and the period lived in their community**

COUNTY	AGE	PERCENTAGE	PERIOD LIVED	PERCENTAGE
Samburu	16-36 and above	92.8	6-10 years and above	86.9

The data also showed that 61.6% of the same respondents between the ages of 16 and 36 had no formal education with the majority being women at 54.2%. Table 3 below illustrates the level of education of the respondents by gender. The Samburu community has had a different system of learning which is informal. Intergenerational transfer of knowledge was a more prominent way of learning for example a mother would train her daughter on how to manage her household and on womanhood among other essential life skills and she would be expected to also train the generations thereafter.

The same would apply to the elders preparing the warriors for leadership in the community. The other factor is that Samburu being a remote county and difficult to access has had very few schools available over the past several decades. With time a number of schools have been constructed but the community is still hesitant to embrace education due to the fact that a majority of pastoralists want to see evidence and value of new developments before committing or venturing out to embrace them.

The data further shows both men and women still lag behind where formal education is concerned. This could also be another factor into why most of the Samburu community has little or no formal education because unless parents and guardians have experienced the benefits of this type of education, it is most likely that the following generation will also not receive formal education.

**Table 3: Level of education by gender**

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	MALE	FEMALE
No formal education	327	156	172
Some primary school	70	37	32
Completed primary school	24	18	5
Some secondary school	15	12	3
Completed secondary school	17	13	4
College and University	29	19	10
TOTALS	482	255	226

In the household interviews respondents were also asked to share how many girls had been beaded in each family interviewed in the past two Samburu generations (1990-2016) commonly known as *Lmooli* and *Lkishami*. The data below, depicting the number of beaded girls in these past two generations, is tabulated by locations and by number of questionnaires administered in that particular area. As mentioned earlier the beading practice is shrouded in secrecy and thus making it difficult for the community to be forthcoming with information regarding the practice for the fear of being ostracized and shunned by fellow community members.

It should be also noted that some of the locations mentioned in table 4 below indicate that there are no beaded girls in that area. However, sources from the community, county government and SWT indicate that girl-child beading is prevalent in the area. These locations include; Lodungokwe, Mataakwani and Nkaroni in Samburu East sub-County. The recommendation is that SWT to carry out a small study to understand the prevalent of Girl Child beading in these areas.

**Table 4: Number of beaded girls in Samburu County in the past two generations**

LOCATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	NO. OF BEADED GIRLS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Amaiya	8	4	50
Angata Nanyeiki	7	18	257
Barsaloi	32	19	59.3
El-barta	37	72	194
Ndoto	1	0	0
Koiting	9	10	111
Elbarta	1	2	200
Lodokejek	27	51	188.8
Lodungokwe	7	0	0
Loosuk	30	3	10
Maralal	37	9	24.3
Mataakwani	9	2	22.2
Lbukoi	15	36	250
Morijo	2	9	450
Nairimirimo	24	47	195.8
Ndoto	40	44	110
Ngilai West	26	20	76.9
Ngilai	5	5	100
Nkarenarok	1	3	300
Nkaroni	14	0	0
Opiroi	14	16	114.2
Porro	18	16	94.1
Sirata	12	15	125
South Horr	33	55	166.6
Suguta	24	2	8.3
Tuum	2	6	300
Waso	44	44	100
Waso Rongai	2	10	500
Waso West	9	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>518</b>	



Samburu girls are beaded at a young age and the research sought to find out what is the common age of girls to be beaded. 467 of the respondents mentioned that the common age for girls to be beaded was 13-15 years as illustrated below in table 5. At this age the girls are considered as minors or children according to the Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Article 2: Definition of a child – A child means every human being below the age of 18years).

**Table 5: Common age for girls to be beaded in Samburu County**

COMMON AGE FOR GIRLS TO BE BEADED	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Below 10 years	77	16.4
10-12 years	169	36.2
13-15 years	221	47.3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>99.9</b>

SWT’s research in 2012 cited a number of negative impacts associated with the beading practice particularly on girls. During this research we sought to find out the overall observations, attitudes and perceptions (whether positive or negative) that the community had on beading as a cultural practice. As will be later discussed the impacts do not only affect the girls but also sometimes affects the morans and the girls’ parents and other extended families.

## **Communities’ Perceptions on Impacts of Beading**

### **Social and Cultural Factors**

We wanted to find out whether beading as a cultural practice is common in the areas we visited and to what extent. These were some of our findings; In Samburu 288 respondents (58.9%) affirmed that it was still a common practice. This would indicate that beading is still prevalent in the county and mainly in the remote parts of the region.

The other factor explored was also to find out whether girls are consulted during the girl child beading engagement process. The data indicates that 148 (30.3%) respondents were not consulted while about 69.7% agree that they are consulted and we found that this is because some girls between the ages of 12-15 years are considered to be mature enough by the society and hence can be consulted while with the young ones they consult their brother(s) who should be in the warrior age set. It should be noted that in the context of the Samburu community “consulting the girl” does not necessarily mean that she will have a choice to say no but she is merely being informed that a particular moran will or has beaded her. This means whether the girl wants to be beaded or not she has no option to decline the proposal. As will be noted later girls who refuse to be beaded often face gender based violence to bring them into submission of the moran’s demands.

## Ampoi's story



*Ampoi (pictured left) is about 27 years old. She is a mother of 3 girls. She was beaded at a young age. Ampoi says when she was first approached by the moran who had beaded her to let her know of his proposal she rejected him. He then beat her severally to force her to accept him. About this same time her mother had already built her a “singira” where the moran would meet with her. She had no one to help her when he would beat her. He also forced her to have sexual relations with him. After a year of this treatment, Ampoi realized nothing would change and accepted her fate. She says during this period she was depressed and often when she thinks back to that moment she is filled with sadness and pain. It's because of this that Ampoi has vowed that her daughters will never be beaded and wants them to instead have an education. Ampoi later got married to the same moran, which is not common.*

We further found that girls are married before they attain the age of 18yrs. This was affirmed by 137 (28 %) of the respondents in the research. Also young girls are forced to marry old men as second wives as affirmed by 127 (26%) of the respondents. The data also revealed that 15% of the respondents acknowledge that the beading practice enhances the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus. This data was not verified with health centers and hence should be understood as the communities' observations and experience.

When asked whether beading leads to a high rate of unwanted pregnancies, 13.3% of the respondents agreed. 12.5% also agreed that the practice leads to high rates of abortion. In comparison to the data collected on the impact of beading on girl-child this numbers seem small. While discussing the “*impacts of beading on the girl-child*” later in this report, one will notice that the number of respondents who mention that beading leads to a high rate of unwanted pregnancies and abortions is significantly higher.

According to Samburu cultural belief, uncircumcised girl should not get pregnant and should then not be allowed to give birth. In beading, unprotected sex is practiced hence many beaded girls get pregnant in the process since contraceptives are not accessible. The culture dictates that infants conceived in the beading practice are outcasts hence the pregnancies must be terminated at all costs through conducting crude abortion.

## Impacts of beading on the girl-child

Throughout the research it was noted that both the positive and negative impacts of the practice on the girl child in all three counties (Samburu, lower Marsabit and Laikipia-North) were very similar. Hence this data has been compiled together later in this report. However, specific impacts that had some differences especially in terms of statistics in the different counties have been included as discussed and revealed by the respondents in that county.

### Negative Impacts of Beading on Education

Here we have included what the communities described as the impacts of beading in the education life of the young girls in Samburu County, the findings indicates that;

- 18.8% of the respondents agreed that beading affects the girl child's education and 28 respondents mentioned having known of 106 girls who had dropped out of school or did not attend school as a result of being beaded.
- The respondents who affirmed that beading affects a girl child's education were then asked to define how beading affects a girls education and below were some of the responses;
- Beaded girls have a negative attitude towards education. This is mainly because beaded girls are highly valued, are perceived as more beautiful and have a sense of pride in this status. Non-beaded girls do not receive the same treatment from the community.



- Culture does not allow a beaded girl to go to school because one is considered already in a marriage though temporary and secondly a beaded girl has a certain dress code that should never be removed unless the engagement is broken.
- Beading leads to early marriages which means a girl will not go to school.
- It leads to school dropouts as girls choose the beads over education due to the fact mentioned earlier that beaded girls are more valued and esteemed by the community more than non-beaded girls. 316 (64.6%) respondents agreed that the communities still do not value girl-child education.

### **Negative impacts of beading on a girl child health**

The research found that 198 respondents agreed that;

- Beading increases the risk of spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS as the morans will more often than not have multiple sexual partners.
- Pregnancy related complications affect a girl in various ways including maternal deaths, physiological and psychological stress.
- As a result of the forceful abortions sometimes girls are not able to conceive again as their uterus are destroyed leading to life trauma. The community that sees a woman's ability to have children as a continuity of life, hence a woman who can't conceive is shunned although will not be abandoned by her husband if she is married.

### **Other research findings on the negative impacts of beading**

When asked about how communities dealt with the psychological effects and trauma associated with abortions, infanticide and giving away of their children who were conceived as a result of the beading engagement, 156 (31.9%) respondents mentioned that they advise the girl while 277 (56.6%) said that the community does not care. A number of the focus groups interviewed especially the women concurred with the survivors of girl-child beading indicating that they were left on their own to deal with the aftermath or consequences of their sexual relationship with the moran.

Further 32 (6.5%) respondents confirmed that there have been reported cases of infants and girls death as a result of beading to the local administration or health centers while 457 (93.5%) are not aware of any reported cases to the local administration or health centers. This then indicates that the cases are not reported even if they are happening and this is an indicator of the secrecy and silent nature that surrounds this practice in the society.

### **Communities' Opinion about Beading**

The communities were asked if girl-child beading was still a common practice as at the time of the research and 288 (58.9%) said that it was still a common practice among the Samburu. We wanted to find out why beading is still prevalent among the Samburu community despite the numerous negative impacts they had shared during the research and we found that 246 (50.3%) indicated its because culture dictates that it is practiced and that it is a rite of passage for both the girls and morans as it prepares the former for womanhood and the latter for manhood. During the focus groups with men and women, a majority affirmed that the reason the practice still existed was because it was part of their culture.

However, when asked if they still thought beading was the right practice for this era, 397 (81.1%) indicated that they don't think beading should continue to be practiced mainly because more girls are going to school now as more parents and girls begin to see the value of education. They also mentioned that beading violates the girl-child's rights. At the focus group discussions the women vehemently agreed that beading has no value at whatever level (cultural and economic) for them and the community. They said that it leads to inter-clan conflicts which lead to unnecessary deaths. The morans also mentioned that they were also no longer interested in beading as it's a very expensive venture. In Uaso the morans mentioned that they would rather go to school than bead a girl.

In the men's focus groups discussions, 9 elders from four (4) age-sets *Lkimaniki* (1948-1960), *Lkishili* (1960-1975), *Lkiroro* (1975-1990) and *Lmooli* (1990-2005) all of them confirmed and agreed each beaded a girl during their time. But in the subsequent age set of the current morans the practice has really gone down, that they can identify some specific morans who have beaded girls in the same village. These changes were mainly associated with introduction of education where both boys and girls are now going to school. The perception generally seems to be changing towards the practice especially for the women who have now completely disowned the practice and most of them are against their girls getting beaded. However, the culture still exists in many of the interior areas of Samburu and it's still a silent practice and no one is talking about.

The key thing that came out is that the community themselves are finding the practice fading out naturally as people get to understand that the practice does not have much value. In addition 272 respondents, when asked whether the Samburu communities can eventually abandon this practice, said they did not think the practice could ever be abandoned because it's part of their culture. About 30 respondents mentioned that they didn't know if the Samburu could ever stop the girl-child beading practice.

### **Community's awareness on laws that protect the rights of girls and women in Kenya**

We also sought to find out the level of awareness within the communities on the legal framework in Kenya that protects the rights of women and girls. This was to gauge the capacity of the community in knowing, understanding and application of the laws to address the negative impacts of Harmful Cultural Practices in their communities.

Three hundred and six (306) about 62.6 % respondents are not aware that there are legislations in Kenya that protect a child's right. In addition 216 respondents indicated that they did not think beading was unlawful while 105 of them said that they had no opinion on whether beading was lawful or unlawful. 32.5% said that they thought beading was an unlawful practice.

Further the research investigated on whether they knew that it was a crime to deny a child the opportunity to access formal education. Two hundred and fifty four (254) respondents indicated that they did not know that denying a child an education was a crime. 44.8% were aware that it was crime.

The Children Act 2008 that no child shall be subject to early marriages and we sought to find out of the community understood or was aware that early and forced marriages were a crime. Two hundred and seventy four (274) respondents admitted to not knowing that it was a crime while 201 mentioned that they were aware that early and forced marriages were a crime.

The above data shows that a majority of the respondents that were interviewed are unfamiliar with the legal framework that protects a child's rights. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Chapter one on the rights and welfare of the child Article 2 defines a child means every human being below the age of 18 years. Beading mainly affects the girl-child and as earlier discussed the Samburu culture allows for girls less than 15 years to be beaded hence the laws that govern the child would need to be understood by the communities and how to apply them to curb the negative impacts of beading on the girl-child.

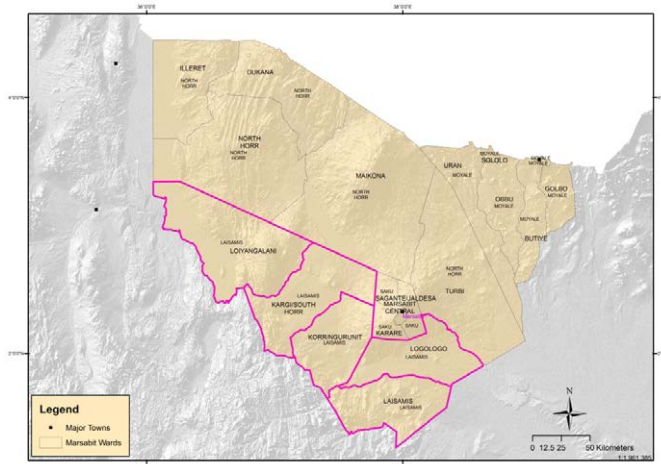
A number of the negative impacts of beading like child pregnancies which lead to forceful abortions which could lead to death of both mother and child, child marriages, Gender Based Violence (GBV), denying the girl-child opportunities for an education among others earlier mentioned are considered violations of human rights. The legal framework in Kenya as indicated earlier could provide a basis to address these impacts but also beading needs to be highlighted as one of the Harmful Cultural practices in legal and policy documents.



# MARSABIT COUNTY

The research in Marsabit County covered one (1) sub-county in the Lower Marsabit (Laisamis sub-county). We covered five (5) wards namely; Laisamis, Kargi-South Horr, Loiyagalani, Korr-Ngurnit and Logo-logo and across 43 villages. The composition of the respondents from this sub-county was mainly the Samburu tribe at 57.8% and Rendile tribe at 38.2% of the total respondents.

Map of Marsabit County with field research areas<sup>9</sup>



## Overview

Marsabit County is the second largest County in Kenya with an area spanning 70,961.3Km<sup>2</sup>. The 2009 Census recorded a population of 291,166 (52% males and 48% females). The County comprises four sub-counties; Saku, North Horr, Laisamis and Moyale. Marsabit is home to over 14 different communities<sup>10</sup> including the Samburu and Rendile communities. The research was conducted in this area mainly because these two communities are well known to practice beading. There has also been inter-marriage between the Samburu and the Rendile leading to an adoption of each other's culture. However, during the field research process, the Rendile respondents interviewed confessed that many of them are mainly adopting and are getting assimilated to the Samburu cultures including girl-child beading. The 2009 Census indicates the Rendile communities had a population of 60,432.

Rendile are believed to be alienated and experts believe the pure Rendile are almost extinct with their language confined to a few places in Kargi and Korr. The Rendile language is under threat from Samburu. Just like the Samburu, the Rendile culture is built on strict separation of sexes during important cultural and spiritual practices. The Rendile girls receive *empooro engorio*<sup>11</sup> beaded collars for marriage.<sup>12</sup>

There is a slight difference between beading in the Samburu culture and the Rendile culture in that with the Rendile community, the suitor will often marry the girl that he has beaded since they will be both be from different clans while in the Samburu culture since beading happens within clans, the relationships take place between clans and hence considered incest and marriage then is strictly prohibited. However, both cultures bead girls at a young age as will be noted later in this report which most often than not leads to negative consequences on the girl-child.

We interviewed a total of 128 respondents at the household level between 16-36 years of age and above who then constitute 85.1% of the total respondents. About 11 of the respondents did not know their age. Thirty two (32) respondents were male and ninety one (91) were female. The data also revealed that 108 (84.3%) respondents have lived in the County for 6-10 and above years as shown in table 6.

<sup>9</sup> Maps designed for this report by Benson Maina, GIS and Remote Sensing Consultant

<sup>10</sup> [www.marsabit.go.ke](http://www.marsabit.go.ke)

<sup>11</sup> Empooro engorio means beads to symbolize you are a woman ready for marriage

<sup>12</sup> A trip down memory lane (author not clear) and [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net)



**Table 6: Age of the respondents and the period lived in their community**

COUNTY	AGE	PERCENTAGE	PERIOD LIVED	PERCENTAGE
Marsabit	16-36 and above	85.1%	6-10 years and above	84.3

Table 6 above shows the data on the level of education, by gender and by community in Marsabit County. The data has focused only on the Samburu and Rendile as they are the communities associated with beading. As is the case with Samburu County, the data reveals a high percentage of respondents had no formal education (Samburu at 62% and 43% for the Rendile). It also reveals that women lag behind in this area. Informal education and intergenerational transfer of this knowledge is highly valued in this community.

It is this knowledge that has enabled thousands of generations to survive and adapt to the changing times hence it should be encouraged and protected. However, having no formal education limits the opportunities of the younger generations who have to compete in a world that highly values formal education. With the constant changing environment, a formal education would create enable these communities even better understand how to integrate the old with the new and find synergies between the two. Formal education also gives insight into some of the negative impacts of some of the cultures still practiced in the community that lead to negative consequences like those noted in the girl-child beading practice.

**Table 7: Level of education by gender and by community**

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	MALE	FEMALE	SAMBURU	RENDILE
No formal education	106	24	80	62	43
Some primary school	3	2	1	2	1
Completed primary school	6	3	3	4	2
Some secondary school	1	0	1	1	0
Completed secondary school	3	1	2	2	1
College	2	1	1	1	0
University	4	1	3	2	2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>49</b>

The data below reveals a high percentage (153.9%) of beaded girls in Laisamis sub-county in Marsabit. As mentioned earlier, the Rendile community is said to be adopting and getting assimilated into the Samburu culture and it may well be that they picked the beading practice from them. Rendiles' are Cushitic peoples and are said to be of the same family as the Somali who do not practice beading and it is highly possible that they picked this practice from their Samburu neighbors. Interestingly even though the Rendile suitors often marry the girls they bead, the respondents mention the same negative impacts on the girls as that of the Samburu. Table 8 below illustrates the number of beaded girls in Marsabit county and disaggregated further by community.

**Table 8: Number of beaded girls in Marsabit County in the past two generations**

LOCATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	NO. OF BEADED GIRLS	SAMBURU	RENDILE
Karare	5	11	4	1
Korr	3	3	0	3
Laisamis	34	47	0	33
Log-logo	25	45	16	7
Laisamis	1	5	0	1
Mt. Kulal	31	38	31	0
Ngurunit	29	48	28	4
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>50</b>

The common age for girls to be beaded as revealed by the findings was 13-15 years for both communities. It also showed that the Samburu community bead more girls between the ages of 10-12 years than the Rendile as depicted below in table 9.

**Table 9: Common age for girls to be beaded by community**

COMMON AGE FOR GIRLS TO BE BEADED	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	SAMBURU	RENDILE
Below 10 years	4	4	0
10-12 years	40	29	9
13-15 years	79	41	38
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>47</b>

## Communities' Perceptions on Impacts of Beading

**Table 10: Communities perception on impacts of beading by tribe**

IMPACT	SAMBURU		RENDILE	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Respondents aware of girls who have died as a result of forceful abortion	11	7	9	1
Respondents knowledge of cases of infanticide and girls' death that have been reported to the administration or health centers	3	7	8	1
Does child beading affect the girl-child education?	18	55	30	19

Table 10 above illustrates the communities' perception regarding three variable areas investigated. One will observe above that 74.3% of the Samburu communities residing in Marsabit County believe that girl-child beading affects a girl's education while earlier in Samburu County 18.8% agreed that beading affects education. This could indicate that the beading practice is still deeply entrenched among the Samburu communities living in Lower Marsabit than it is in Samburu. This reason for this variance was not explored in this research but could form the baseline for future research to compare trends of the beading practice in Samburu and Marsabit Counties. Later in this report we will list some of the reasons why these communities thought beading affects a girl child's education as responses were similar throughout the three counties of the field study.

When the respondents were asked how many girls they knew had dropped out of school as a result of beading from the Samburu communities they affirmed that collectively it was 60 girls. Another 7

respondents said they didn't know of any girls that had dropped out of school as a result of beading. Within the Rendile community collectively 28 girls were confirmed as having dropped out of school as a result of this practice, 3 respondents didn't quantify the number but said they knew many girls while 27 respondents mentioned not knowing any girls to have dropped out of school because of beading.

**Table 11: How communities deal with psychological effects and trauma of infanticide, giving away of infants conceived as a result of beading**

COMMUNITIES' RESPONSE	SAMBURU	RENDILE
Advice the girl	25	39
Don't care	45	8
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>47</b>

The above table indicates that 60.8% of the respondents from the Samburu community did not care what happened to girls who had to deal with the psychological effects and trauma of infanticide or were forced to give their infants away. Children conceived as a result of the beading engagement are considered outcasts as the moran and young girl are usually from the same clan which is considered incest among the Samburu. However, in the Rendile communities, they seem more concerned about the girl's mental and inner status. However, we could not assess whether this "advice" given to the girls made a positive impact on them.

Several other social and cultural factors were investigated to give further insight and gauge the degree to which communities' agreed or disagreed that the beading practice contributed to these factors as shown below in Table 12.

**Table 12: Social and cultural factors examined by tribe**

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS	SAMBURU (NO. OF RESPONDENTS)		RENDILE (NO. OF RESPONDENTS)	
	AGREED	DISAGREED	AGREED	DISAGREED
Is girl-child beading practice common?	30	32	46	0
Are girls consulted during child beading engagement	23	42	30	9
Beading enhances spread of HIV virus	13	44	4	29
Beading causes a high rate of unwanted pregnancies	47	14	6	37
Beading causes high rate of abortion	43	19	6	35
Beading causes high rate of school drop outs	30	24	26	16
Girls education is not valued by the community	34	30	17	26
Girls are married before 18 years	22	1	41	2
Child marriages exist in the community	50	13	36	4

The responses from the two communities differed in a number of areas and this could be attributed to the fact that though the beading process is similar in some ways in both communities the major difference (being that Rendile suitors often marry the girl they beaded) lead to the communities viewing the impacts of beading differently. For example among the Samburu, the data here reveals that beading causes high rates of abortion because if a girl conceives during the beading engagement process she is not allowed to carry the child to term while in the Rendile community if the girl was beaded it means she was in a recognized marriage and the child conceived in this marriage is legitimate.

Both communities, however, agreed that girls are often married before they attain the age of 18 years which then agrees with the data that girls are often beaded at a young age and the progression from this relationship is ultimately marriage.

## Communities' opinion about beading

Among the Rendile communities 39 (79.6%) respondents mentioned that they think beading as a practice is still applicable in this era compared to 20.4% respondents who don't think the practice should continue. In the Samburu communities 25.7% think that beading is still relevant in this day while 74.3% say that they don't think the practice should still continue in this era.

When asked why beading was still a prevalent practice 94.6% of the Samburu respondents and 98% of the Rendile community mentioned it was because culture dictated and that it was also a rite of passage. This continues to show that culture is still valued in these communities and the role it plays in the perpetuation of the beading practice. As will be mentioned later communities shy away and are cautious of situations that would threaten their culture or cause them to defy their norms.

The respondents were also asked if there were any cultural and economic significance of the beading practice in their communities and families. For the cultural significance variable 50% of the Samburu respondents noted that it had no cultural significance while the other 50% thought it still had value. In addition 56.8% mentioned that it has no economic significance. Among the Rendile 32.7% indicated beading had no cultural value while 67.3% thought it still has cultural significance. 38.8% of the respondents found that beading has no economic value. This trend agrees with their counterparts in Samburu and Laikipia counties. However, even though the respondents indicate that this practice has no economic or cultural value findings above indicate they would still want the practice to continue.

Throughout the research the respondents mentioned that beading directly contributes to child marriages. However, 41.9% of the Samburu and 28.6% of the Rendile community believe that beading doesn't contribute to child marriages. In addition 32.4% from the Samburu community and 46.9% from Rendile communities indicated that they didn't know if beading contributed to child marriages. Further investigation will need to be conducted to understand why some of the respondents thought beading contributed to child marriages and how.

## Community's awareness on laws that protect the rights of girls and women in Kenya

We also disaggregated the data on communities' awareness on laws by County so as to assess the levels of understanding of the legal framework in each County. Table 13 below gives insight for both the Samburu and Rendile communities in Lower Marsabit region on this subject. It should be noted that a high number of Rendile community respondents have no knowledge of what laws exist to protect the rights of girls and women in the country. This opens them up to a higher degree of vulnerability towards human rights violations. During the focus discussion groups with women from this county they urged SWT to develop programs that train women on their rights.

**Table 13: Communities' awareness on laws that protect the rights of girls and women in Kenya**

COMMUNITIES' AWARENESS LEVELS ON;	SAMBURU			RENDILE		
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Legislations that protect child rights	39	27	8	4	7	36
Child beading being unlawful in Kenya	39	16	18	3	3	38
Denying a child to education is a crime	44	20	9	6	6	35
Knowledge that child marriages are a crime	45	20	9	6	5	37

Other impacts of girl child beading and the strategies proposed by communities in this County have been summarized later in the report as similar responses were received throughout the three counties.







The data showed that 82.5% of the respondents had received no formal education and about 17.5% had received some primary level education and one had received a university level education. During the focus group discussion with the men from Kirimon sub-location they admitted that one of the biggest challenges they had with the older generation is that majority of them had no education. Their statements agree with the statistics of the level of education between 31-36 years and above which indicates that 85% of respondents in this age bracket have no formal education.

Table 15 below illustrates the number of beaded girls in Sossian ward by location. The data would indicate fewer girls are beaded here than the other counties where Samburu communities reside. However, the practice is still present in this area. Sossian ward is a cosmopolitan area (about six other tribes live in this area) and the Samburu community's interaction with other cultures or people could have led to the fewer numbers of girls being beaded in this ward. Most of its neighboring communities do not practice beading and the majority has embraced formal education. During the focus group discussion (which were mainly comprised of older men-the elders and women) they mentioned that the reason for the low number of beaded girls was because more parents were appreciating the value of taking their girls to school and felt like girl-child beading as a practice added no value to them or their daughters. A number of them mentioned that they preferred buying the beads themselves for their girls and that if they discovered a moran had beaded a girl, the parents would remove them from her neck and hang them outside their manyatta<sup>15</sup> as an indication to the moran that he would not be allowed to bead their daughter. A further 75% of the respondents when asked if beading had any value in this era said no.

**Table 15: Number of beaded girl in Sossian ward**

LOCATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	NO. OF BEADED GIRLS
Ewaso	8	6
Loborsoit	8	5
Sigira	8	6
Sossian	16	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>

Compared to Samburu and Marsabit Counties, 75% of the respondents mentioned that the common age for girls to be beaded in Sossian ward was 10-12 years as shown in table 16 below.

**Table 16: Common age for girls to be beaded in Sossian ward**

AGE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Age	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 10 years	6	15
10-15 years	30	75
13-15 years	4	10

## Communities' perceptions on Impacts of Beading

For the Samburu communities interviewed in this ward, 82.5% said that they did not know of any girl that had undergone the crude abortion performed on a girl if she conceives during the girl child beading engagement process. However, 87.5% of them later acknowledged that beading leads to high rates of abortion. This would indicate that in as much as the girl-child beading practice may be slowly dying off in this community, even the fewer girls being beaded now would have to undergo an abortion if they

<sup>15</sup> "A Maasai or Samburu settlement or compound, often temporary, established by a family or clan, or as an encampment of young warriors." <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/manyatta>

conceived while in this union. As mentioned earlier these relationships are clan based and conception is forbidden even though no family planning options are used. A child from this union is aborted and if carried to full term must be killed or given away to other communities. Members of the same clan are considered as brothers and sisters or very close relatives and hence a union like this is considered incest.

The communities' also mentioned that beading affects a girl's education in various ways; for example once a girl is beaded she is not allowed to go to school as was earlier mentioned in this report. However, another factor that causes the girls not to go to school is that the traditional believers will not allow her to wear any other attire expect her traditional regalia that symbolizes she is a beaded girl. Most school going children are expected to wear uniforms specific to their school and hence this would be a hindrance for the beaded girl. They also mentioned that culture undermines formal education and specifically a girl child's education. However, with time this is changing and the value is slowly being embraced by the community but still has a long way to go. Beaded girls also don't value education because they now consider themselves "mature women" even though they are mostly under the age of 15 years and it's almost a taboo for married women to consider going to school.

Unlike the other two counties, the interviewees (85%) in Sossian ward agreed that the girls were usually consulted when a moran wanted to bead them. This differs from the statistics of the other two counties and this could be attributed to the fact that parents here no longer encourage or perpetuate the practice and instead want more girls to go to school. They would therefore teach and encourage their girls to say no to being beaded and opt for a formal education.

The community also acknowledged that there were health related issues as a result of beading including psychological trauma and stress. However in connection with this it would seem that they still didn't know how to address these issues or how to help the girl, 42.5% said that most of the community members didn't care what happened to her and another 45% would advice her. When further probed on what advice they would give, most respondents would be silent. 65% of the respondents also thought that beading has no cultural significance or value while another 75% mentioned that it also has no economic value.

The respondents were also asked if they saw a correlation between beading and early marriages. 50% of them said that beading does lead to early marriages because girl child beading in itself is already considered a temporary marriage. A number of girls after the beading process will most likely move on to "another" marriage with usually much older men or as subsequent wives. This is because the likelihood of a girl being married by the moran who beaded her in the Samburu community is almost nil due to factors explained earlier in this report.

## Communities' awareness on laws that protect the rights of girls and women

**Table 17: Communities' awareness levels on laws that protect the rights of girls and women**

COMMUNITIES' AWARENESS LEVELS ON;	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Legislations that protect child rights	18	14	2
Child beading being unlawful in Kenya	14	10	10
Denying a child to education is a crime	10	10	13
Knowledge that child marriages are a crime	15	13	4

Looking at the above statistics it indicates that most of the communities understand that there are laws that govern and protect the rights of children in Kenya. This could have also contributed to the practice dwindling in this area.



# Impact of beading on the girl child Samburu, Lower Marsabit and Laikipia (North) Counties

As mentioned earlier the negative impacts on the girl child from all three counties was very similar and hence we consolidated what the communities' had observed, experienced or perceived as the impact of beading on the girl child.

## Positive Impacts

Some of the key positive impacts of the beading culture the communities described were;

- Beading brings a sense of pride and recognition to the community; for the warriors, the beaded girls and their families.
- It is/was considered a source of wealth sharing among families. During warriors rites of passage ceremonies (Lmuget) meat is shared with the beaded girl's family (Lkurum<sup>16</sup>).
- The morans sometimes have meat eating sessions (Loikar) just by themselves and part of this meat is shared with the beaded girl's family (Lpaut, 17)
- Family relationships are strengthened and cemented.
- It prepares girls for official marriage and the warrior for manhood and marriage.
- It enhances the beauty of a girl. The colorful beads are used to adorn the girl from head to toe making her stand out. A number of the older women interviewed said this was a source of great pride as everyone in the community would stop to stare at the girls.
- Beaded girls are viewed as mature, respectful, obedient and honest and hence more ready for marriage than non-beaded girls.
- Beaded girls receive protection from their warriors and hence giving them a sense of security.

## Negative Impacts

As mentioned earlier beading presents several negative impacts that affect the girl-child but also the morans and the girl's mother. Below were some of the negative impacts described by the communities;

- It leads to early and forced marriages since the only outcome of the process is marriage to elderly men.
- It leads to early pregnancies.
- It leads to high abortion rates as children conceived in this relationship (which is clan-based) among the Samburu are considered outcasts.
- It creates enmity and conflicts among warriors and clans.

<sup>16</sup> A special part of fatty meat that is given to the beaded girl's mother as a sign of appreciation. This is compulsory for a moran who has beaded a girl

<sup>17</sup> Voluntary gift that the moran who has beaded a girl shares with the beaded girl's family

- Beaded girls have no opportunity to access formal education, as this is not allowed because they are considered mature and ready for marriage. It is also considered a taboo to remove the beads which would be required if they needed to go to school.
- It leads to high illiteracy levels among girls and women in the community as a majority of the beaded girls will probably never access education.
- It increases the risk of spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS as the morans will more often have multiple sexual partners.
- It encourages child prostitution. When the beaded girl's mother provides a "singira" for her daughter, it is viewed as an open invitation for the moran to visit her at any given time.
- Beaded girls become more dependent on the individual who beaded them or are enslaved by them.
- It has led to death of girls through forceful abortion. The communities were asked if they were aware of any child that had died as a result of forceful abortion and 162 (33.1%) of the respondents affirmed that they had knowledge of girls who had died in the process of crude abortions.
- It leads to child labor. Once a girl gets pregnant as a result of being in the beading engagement process and refuses to have an abortion or abortion fails she's forced to fend for the child because she will not be accepted in her family or get married. This child will be forced to engage in manual work in order to support her child.
- Beading leads to psychological stress for the young girls. Coercion is mainly used to force the girls to accept the beads, no one prepares the girls to understand the consequences of being in a sexual relationship including that one may get pregnant which would lead to being shunned by the community and may lead to forceful abortions being performed on the girls.
- The beads around the neck are heavy and a burden to carry around. They sometimes cause injuries on the neck and on the upper forearms. They are tiresome and waste of time.
- It leads to physical abuse towards the girl especially when she acts/speaks contrary to what the warrior wants.
- Girls become mothers at a very tender age. As noted in the earlier data on the common age for girls to be beaded, most respondents mentioned that girls are mostly beaded at the age of between 9-15 years.
- Girls are despised after breaking off their relationship with the warrior and at times rejected; it also ruins their reputation and sometimes never gets married thereafter.
- Most girls who have gone through abortions are usually not married as first wives. They are considered only worthy of being second or third wives.







# Communities suggested strategies to curb the negative impacts of the girl-child beading

During the research we also wanted to find out from the community themselves what they thought were the best strategies to curb the negative impacts of beading. Some of their key recommendations were;

- The communities to adopt formal education for all children (both boys and girls).
- Conduct awareness, education and sensitization workshops and trainings in the communities on the negative impact of beading.
- Empowering women to increase their capacity to stand up against the vice and how to use the legal framework to protect themselves and the rights of the girl-child.
- Girls rights campaigns in the affected areas
- The government should enact and enforce legislations that protect the rights of the child
- Engagement of elders and moran to support ends the beading initiatives at the community level.



# Other arising issues from the communities besides the culture of beading

Further in the research some of the respondents raised some critical issues that the research team thought relevant to be incorporated in this report. These include;

- The increase of non-beaded girls dropping out of schools because of early pregnancies.
- Abortion rates among these girls is also high because of the use of over the counter drugs meant to assist in carrying out the abortions
- The Rendile community is now embracing the beading culture more than their neighboring Samburu community meaning that they will also have to deal with the many negative impacts of the practice on the girl-child.
- Communities (especially the women) are developing different strategies to address the negative impacts of the beading practice and this should be supported.
- Marriage of young girls by old men is a practice that also needs to be addressed among other harmful cultural practices.
- Circumcision of both boys and girls (Female Genital Mutilation-FGM) is a critical issue in the community across the whole Samburu community that should continue.
- Marriage rituals and procedures should continue as an important part of the culture.
- Cultural rituals on the rites of passage like Lmuget, Launoni (a description of the Launoni will be found later in this report) as an age set leader, are part of the fundamental cultural practices to be fostered and maintained
- Dressing code (which includes their beautiful beads) of the community (women, girls, warriors and elders) came out very strongly as a big concern as changing hence becoming a big threat to the Samburu culture and traditions.



**Dr. Florence Nyokabi Wachira, MBS** - Commissioner at National Gender and Equity Commission, making key opening remarks during research data validation at Beisa hotel, Nanyuki.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The research affirms that beading is still a practice in the Samburu community despite the negative implications it has on the girl-child. The main factor attributed to this is that the practice is part of their culture. Each generation born finds the practice-taking place and they are inducted into it whether they want it or not. Questioning the cultural practices and values one is considered as an enemy of culture, someone that doesn't respect their culture and an outcast. Even though a number of the respondents do not see the value of beading in this era, they still also believe that it will not come to an end because it's a cultural practice. Further, when asked if the practice has any cultural significance 51% of the respondents in all three counties still felt that it was important and 48.3% indicated that the Samburu will probably never abandon or stop practicing girl-child beading.

As mentioned severally the beading practice is still shrouded in secrecy and this report may not have fully exhausted or captured the issues surrounding the practice. For example discussing sex openly is considered a taboo. Girl-child beading is a practice edged on sexual relations between the moran and the girl and hence discussing it would also be considered a taboo. Also several campaigns have been conducted on the negative impacts of beading on the girl-child and this could easily stir fear among the communities if they thought that this would lead to incarceration or other consequences with the law.

It was also clearly noted that girl-child beading has a direct implication on a girl's ability to obtain an education, which then leads to an increase in illiteracy levels in the Counties. Once a girl is beaded she cannot go back to school and this then defines the rest of her life what role(s) she takes up as she is now considered a mature woman despite the fact that she is still a child.

The psychological trauma associated with girl-child beading is unquantifiable as the girls will rarely voice the internal conflicts and stress that comes as a result of being forced to accept the beads from the moran and the implications of this union. The sexual relations that take place between the girls (who are children or minors based on definition of Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child) are commonly referred to in some common law jurisdictions as statutory rape<sup>18</sup> or "unlawful sex with a minor." In statutory rape, overt force or threat is usually not present. The statutory rape laws presume coercion, because a minor is legally incapable of giving consent to the act.<sup>19</sup> However, it should be noted that in girl child beading overt force and threats (including Gender Based Violence) are used sometimes to get the girl to give in to the moran's demand for sexual intimacy. In the Samburu culture sex is not discussed and rape is not acknowledged or even mentioned, as it is believed this rarely happens especially to beaded girls. Other factors that could affect the girl's well-being associated with this practice as mentioned earlier include the forceful abortions, infanticide, giving away of their infants to others sometimes even outside their community and child marriages.

Under the penal code, the age of sexual consent is 16 years. Consequently, under the Sexual Offences Act, anyone who has sexual contact with a child shall have committed rape and liable upon conviction to imprisonment for a term, which shall not be less than ten years, but which may be enhanced to imprisonment for life. Both the warriors and the girl child parents are committing numerous other offences under the Sexual Offences Act and Penal Code. Murder and abortion are also serious crimes in Kenya. Besides this criminal nature of girl child beading, it also results in the violations of numerous human rights for the girl child.

**Section 143 of the Penal Code CAP. 63** stipulates that "Any person who unlawfully takes an unmarried girl under the age of sixteen (16) years out of custody or protection of her father or mother, or other person, takes away or detains her against her will, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for seven years. In law, the girls are minors and cannot give consent under through girl child beading, the warriors are committing the offence of rape as now Under the Sexual Offences Act, relations later. All this leads to a lot for suffering and traumas and violates numerous human rights of Samburu girls.

The Samburu girls suffer from these gross human rights violations in silence since it is a tradition, which is a taboo that is not spoken about openly within the Samburu community, that is even sometimes denied by the community, and that is in general unknown by the Kenya society at large.

Child beading is a fundamental human rights violation and impacts all aspects of a girl's life. Child beading denies a girl of her childhood, disrupts her education, limits her opportunities, increases her risk to be a victim of violence and abuse, jeopardizes her health and therefore constitutes an obstacle to the achievement of nearly every Post -2015 (SDG) and the development of healthy communities.

In relation to this during the focus group discussions especially with the women, it was clear for a number of them this was a practice they wanted to completely do away with because of the negative impact it has on their daughters. However, many of them acknowledged not having adequate knowledge or know-how on helping their daughters deal with trauma associated the practice. However, they are also still torn as they have an obligation to follow culture and are also drawn to the gifts that come when the moran is asking to bead the girl.

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<sup>18</sup> In some common law jurisdictions, statutory rape is sexual activity in which at least one person is below the age required to legally consent to the behavior, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statutory\\_rape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statutory_rape)  
<sup>19</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statutory\\_rape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statutory_rape)

There would be a need in addition to sensitization on the negative impacts of beading on the girl-child to equip the communities and especially the older women and girls to provide psychological support for girls who have undergone or undergoing girl-child beading process. This ensures that the community can foster the resilience needed to overcome the negative impacts of beading.

Samburu Women Trust (SWT) and other stakeholders including their donors and other development partners should use these findings to advocate and lobby the government of Kenya to include beading among the Harmful Cultural Practices in Kenya and push for laws and policies that will mitigate the risks and negative impacts it has on girls. Since SWT also takes part in the bi-annual proceedings of African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), they could use this opportunities to highlight the findings of this report with the Working Group on Indigenous Issues for their consideration to have beading also included among the Harmful Cultural Practices in Africa.

It is also important to incorporate relevant ongoing and upcoming processes both at the national, regional and international levels to seek legal redress and to highlight the silent harmful practice in many public forums in order to raise awareness. Addressing these forums will help to lobby the Kenya government to address the issue; the relevant ones include the Human Rights Council, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women-CEDAW, United Nation Special Rapportuer UNSR for women and indigenous people, United Nations Human rights committees and the Committee on the Rights of the Child-CRC.

We highly recommend that some of the findings here be used for action or interventions in the communities still practicing beading. The findings would also be valuable in advocacy activities and in influencing policies. Samburu Women Trust should also avail the results for other partners to build on different aspects of the research that they think are critical to address the negative impacts of this practice.

## **Additional feedback and recommendations from the stakeholder's validation workshop meeting**

During the validation workshop, fieldwork data collection and the research team, a number of key recommendations came out from research participants, partners, and government officials and also from the National Gender and Equality Commission.

The research has brought out many variables that could form subjects of further research which should build on the current findings; these were also incorporated into the research recommendations;

- SWT and other partner organizations need to open up dialogue among the Samburu community on what culture means to them and what needs to be done to address the negative effects of harmful cultural practices and how to develop their own responses and alternatives through their self- evaluation as opposed to invoking education as the main and the only solution.
- More investment is needed to address this harmful cultural practice particularly in Samburu East, Samburu North and the Lower Marsabit.
- In areas of capacity building, campaigns on girl child rights, on the school age going children to go to school, targeting elders, warriors and girls that have not been to school as the main beneficiaries of beading.
- Establish an education and awareness programme in the key affected areas, to make the Communities understand that culture is not static but dynamic, however the approaches being employed are often –top-down and externally driven, the demonization of their cultural expressions makes them fail to understand the rationale of being coerced in to new modes.

- Undertake TOT (Training of Trainers) among the morans and other community leaders to become champions within the community using role models/ ambassadors to undertake this in their own language and approached by involving local actors to create the requisite impact/ripple effect through the established and acceptable structures and approaches.
- Enhance networking between CSOs, national and county governments and other institutions to form a critical mass and secure the requisite vigour and spirit to address the practices.
- Work and sensitize the Policy makers at the national and county levels so that they can also develop responsive and practical interventions and invest in the implementation of the ASALs policies, frameworks and blue prints to provide opportunities for the communities to seek alternatives and to develop according to their priorities.
- Identify role models that have gone through beading to be used as motivators and models that can inspire change within the community through the established and acceptable structures and approaches.

Daniel Lempushuna, the Deputy Director, Ministry of Gender and Social Services, Samburu County government, was interviewed on his department's engagement and interaction with the beading practice. He mentioned that the beading problem is rampant in Samburu especially in the lowlands of Samburu County and therefore he requested SWT and partners to emphasize the eradication of this vice, as it is a hindrance to the advancement and education of Samburu girls and deny them the opportunity to achieve their lives dreams and aspirations.

One of the other challenges he mentioned that was confronting the community in eradicating the beading practice is the appointment of the *Launoni*.<sup>20</sup> It's mandatory for him to bead a girl, as it is believed that all the girls in that clan are like his daughters. This prevents him from having multiple relationships unlike other morans. This would mean that as long as the tradition of appointing Launoni continues beading would not end perhaps only be reduced.

The participants felt that further research is needed to establish the population of morans and uncircumcised boys in the community so that the threat to the girls can be identified and strategies can be developed to deter them from beading and secure the future of the girls.

Dr. Florence Wachira, Commissioner, National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) who officially opened the data validation workshop, mentioned that as the commission implements its mandate, it has become increasingly clear that many of the causes of discrimination of women and girls are deeply rooted in culture. She said that culture is a way of life and it encompasses people's beliefs, customs, morals which they accept and pass over from one generation to the next. As a result, people get very attached to their culture because it defines them. They often will resist any attempts to change because they will always use the past to justify that it has worked well to preserve what they hold dear.

This means that if you want a people to change an aspect of their culture, you must provide them with sound reasons and often, evidence based reasons for doing so. She said that this brings to the fore the importance of research. Research provides empirical evidence to support calls for change-it informs action and shapes peoples understanding of issues so they can take informed decisions.

It is the hope of the research team that the findings and recommendations of this research will be used to indeed inform the actions of Samburu Women Trust and other stakeholders working on the girl child beading practice in the Samburu and Rendile communities will find them useful for action and designing programs together with their communities that will build resilience for the positive aspects of beading but also address the negative impacts of this practice especially on the girl-child.

20 The Launoni is an appointed age-set leader in each of the Samburu communities' nine clans in charge of the warriors of his clan for a period of 15 years.



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