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## RefuSHE (formerly Heshima Kenya)

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**Project Title:** Girls Empowerment Project

**Location:** Kenya

**Grant Amount:** \$50,000 - Over Two Years

**Grantee Website:** [www.heshimakenya.org/index.php](http://www.heshimakenya.org/index.php)

**Areas of Impact:** Education & Literacy, Leadership Development

### **Mission of RefuSHE (formerly Heshima Kenya)**

Identifying and protecting separated and orphaned refugee children and youth living in Nairobi, Kenya.

### **Summary**

The Girl's Empowerment Project (GEP) is Heshima Kenya's informal education program designed for young refugee women and girls, aged 13-23 years old. It provides opportunities for basic education, livelihood options, human rights education and cultivates leadership skills within a safe and supportive community. The curriculum, which consists of 4 transitional components encompassing basic education, life-skills training, vocational training and income-generation support, is specifically designed to address the challenges faced by these girls by providing a safe space, daycare, meals, transportation to and from site, and access to Heshima's other programs. DFW will support 150 girls.

### **Why We Love This**

We love this program because it serves a group of women and girls that are often ignored or relegated to the sidelines. It teaches them many things: human rights, leadership and vocational skills - the very things needed to empower them to move up and out of their refugee status and become self-sufficient.

## Video





### **Mission**

Heshima Kenya specializes in identifying and protecting separated and orphaned refugee children and youth living in Nairobi, Kenya. Their shelter, education, and community outreach services, coupled with local resources and the refugee community, enable and empower unaccompanied refugee minors, especially adolescent girls, to live healthy lives. By providing resources for long-term support, these children and youth become catalysts for strengthening intercommunity ties creating sustainable change within the local and global communities.

### **Life Challenges of the Women Served**

Kenya has been host to a protracted refugee crisis since the early 1990's resulting in the current population of well over 600,000 refugees in Kenya's refugee camps and well over 100,000 refugees in Nairobi, most of whom are not registered with the Government of Kenya or the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Among the worst affected by this crisis are unaccompanied, orphaned, and separated refugee girls and single young women, some with children of their own.

Orphaned and separated refugee children and youth are considered the most vulnerable and invisible population in the world, with refugee girls and young women facing the highest risks of exploitation, assault, forced marriage, and abuse, resulting in extreme barriers to education, medical care, and employment.

Classified by human rights organizations as "unaccompanied," most have fled from persecution in the nearby countries of Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The refugee children and youth Heshima Kenya serves are often survivors of unimaginable atrocities; they have fled persecution in their countries and have been torn from their families, who have been killed or have disappeared in war.

With very limited access to formal assistance in Nairobi, such as shelter, education, and medical care, refugee girls cope with extreme poverty and the physical and emotional scars from war and, in many cases, prior abuse and exploitation.

There are no statistics detailing the number of unaccompanied refugee children in Nairobi, especially girls and young women, but Heshima Kenya and UNHCR believe this number to be over 25,000.

### **The Project**

The Girl's Empowerment Project (GEP) is Heshima Kenya's informal education program designed for young refugee women and girls, aged 13-23 years old. It provides opportunities for basic education, livelihood options, human rights education and cultivates leadership skills within a safe and supportive community.

The curriculum, which consists of four transitional components encompassing basic education, life-skills training, vocational training, and income-generation support, is specifically designed to address the challenges faced by these girls by providing a safe space, daycare, meals, transportation to and from site, and access to Heshima Kenya's other programs.

The Girl's Empowerment Project is a multi-phase program offering a safe community for girls and young women to learn about their human rights and how to access them while addressing avenues for self-sufficiency and leadership building. Participants engage in four program components with the Youth Coordinator, teachers, and volunteers to:

Gain a working knowledge of BASIC EDUCATION concepts focusing on math, English, and Swahili using a specialized education curriculum for girls with no formal schooling

Engage in LIFE-SKILLS discussions and activities with experts and volunteers surrounding topics of gender-based violence prevention, reproductive health and nutrition, HIV prevention, peace and human rights, community resources, and art therapy.

Participate in VOCATIONAL TRAINING to gain basic tailoring skills providing a foundation for future self-reliance and independence.

Invest in INCOME-GENERATING PROJECTS through participation in a financial literacy course followed by a competitive micro-loan program to begin their own businesses.

The GEP takes place under one roof in Kileleshwa, a neighborhood of Nairobi. Additionally, the Welfare Officer and caseworkers conduct home visits of participants to ensure their full participation in the program.

All of the GEP's efforts are designed to foster confidence in the girls and young women and to build their capacity to respond to their experiences by beginning to heal, demanding their rights, and seeking a life of dignity.

The GEP's **basic education component**, mandatory for all participants, provides daily classes (Monday through Thursday mornings) in math, English, and Swahili. The girls are assessed upon enrollment, and regularly thereafter. After three years, it is envisioned that the basic education module will:

- prepare all participants to pass the Kenyan Primary Certification Education (KPCE) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exams, both of which are internationally recognized certificates that enable participants to join high schools or colleges, especially if resettled abroad, and

- place participants, especially those aged 17 and up with children, on a path to self-sufficiency.

The GEP's **life-skills component** takes place every Friday, and includes structured units on sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence prevention and response, HIV/AIDS prevention, human rights and peace-building leadership, and community resources. Discussions often include guest experts as well as field trips and sports competitions to support learning and social development.

After demonstrating a strong commitment to the GEP and overall learning process, participants are invited to participate in the **vocational training component** Monday through Friday afternoons through the Maisha (meaning Life, in Swahili) Collective – a specialized tailoring course and income-generating project developed as a springboard to complement participants' transition into self-sufficiency. (See this month's **Fair Trade, Books, and Films** document to learn more about the Collective, and find out how you can purchase beautiful scarves made by the women.)

The GEP also provides **income-generation support** to ensure that girls can participate without having to drop out because of money concerns or other social demands. They provide daily bus fare and/or van transport for participants living outside their Safe House program (in the refugee community with host families). The GEP provides daily breakfast and lunch, as girls living in the community often work as domestic house-help and go without meals. On-site daycare is provided to support girls with small children. The daycare provides the girls a chance to focus on their learning while also having access to their children throughout the day to support with feeding and diaper changing.

Girls participate in the program on an average of two years or until they turn 19 years of age. Graduates are encouraged to volunteer as mentors to other girls in the program

and within the community.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Can you picture yourself at age 12—where you lived, what your parents and siblings looked like? Now imagine that you and your family had to flee on foot to escape an advancing armed contingent of some sort. You can only take what you can carry, running and hiding for days and weeks—trying to find food and a safe place to sleep each day. If you are caught, you will be raped, as will your mother and sisters. Your father will probably be shot, and your brothers either killed or forced to join the armed group. It has happened to millions, and is happening to thousands as you read this question. Can you even imagine?
2. What do you think it will take to change cultural traditions that treat girls and women as property that can be bought and sold?
3. It is hard to disavow strong cultural messages, even if they make your own life more difficult. In what ways have you struggled when (or if) you discovered that you don't believe something you were raised and expected to believe? Has it caused problems within your family? How have you responded?

### How the Grant Will be Used

DFW's contributions will support 70 girls and young women in the Girl's Empowerment Project for 12 months following receipt of the grant, and 80 participants over the course of the second grant year.

Guided by Heshima Kenya's Youth Coordinator and teachers, participants will become empowered to access new information, skills, and economic opportunities. GEP participants will gain increased self-confidence and capacity for decision-making, problem-solving, and teamwork.

Through the GEP, these young refugee women and girls will not only become self-sufficient but will also be able to mobilize resources and advocate for other community members to overcome poverty and other barriers to success.

### The Program Budget

Heshima Kenya will receive \$50,000 from Dining for Women to support their program over a two-year period.

Budget Item	Cost
Personnel costs (~7%) for director and teacher salaries	\$12,000
Education program supplies (~66%) – books, notebooks, etc.	\$4,000
Travel expense (~37%) – vehicle insurance, field trips, special projects	\$13,450
School support – half of tuition & fees for those in public school programs	\$8,000
Travel, Lodging, and Meals for staff and volunteers	\$2,650
Communications – internet and phone	\$3,900
Security – monthly panic button rental	\$3,000

Furniture & Equipment / Facility Maintenance (~38%)	\$3,000
<b>Total of Program Budget supported by DFW over 2 years</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>

**Please note:** Net donations over the grant amount will be reserved to ensure we fund in full all future selected program grant requests, provide **Sustained Program Funding** to former DFW featured programs, and to offer up to \$30,000 to an organization selected by member voting through the new **Member Choice Program**.

### **Why We Love This Project/Organization**

We love this program because it serves a group of women and girls that are often ignored or relegated to the sidelines. It teaches them many things: human rights, leadership, and vocational skills – the very things needed to empower them to move up and out of their refugee status and become self-sufficient. We also love that Heshima Kenya is educating existing refugee organizations about this population and building a referral network that improves access to services and compliments existing resources rather than duplicating them.

### **Evidence of Success**

Since 2008, over 350 girls and women, along with their children, have been direct beneficiaries of Heshima Kenya's unique, holistic services. Designed to meet immediate needs at intake, the program fosters social relationships, meets educational and vocational goals, and eventually supports the successful reintegration of self-sufficient young women. Since its founding, 35 participants have been invited to join the Maisha Collective, which serves a dual purpose of providing economic support and exit strategies for unaccompanied girls to reintegrate into the community independently and with confidence.

### **Voices of the Girls**

"I wanted to be independent – to take care of my baby, and feed him with my own money. At first I was so scared of the unknown. I was scared that I would be out there with my child as a refugee in a city that is still very foreign to me. Then I finally said, let me try. Now, I'm proud of myself, and it's not scary, because I'm not alone. I still have Heshima Kenya."

– **Euphrozone, Rwanda**

"That night I celebrated with my wonderful Heshima Kenya girls, but everyone there was crying. I loved them. They loved me, too. Heshima Kenya was my safe place, my home because I was living with family who understood me and I understood them. Through our pain we reached out to each other. Together we began rebuilding our lives."

– **Candide, Burundi**

"Before my education at Heshima Kenya, my world was limited. I am ten times happier today than I was yesterday. My family would be very proud of me."

– **Hawa, Somalia**

"I was enrolled into the Maisha Collective Project, Heshima Kenya's income generating activity, and I am very excited. I have also been attending tailoring classes and now know how to make pillowcases. Everyone loves the pillows that I make which has really motivated me. My child is doing great and is really happy."

– **Nadia, Yemen**

## **About the Organization**

Anne Sweeney and Talyn Good co-founded Heshima Kenya, a U.S. non-profit and registered non-governmental organization based in Nairobi. Sweeney and Good had extensive experience working with refugees in Africa, and created the organization to provide comprehensive social services and advocate for responsible change. They believe that children deserve to live as children, to grow and develop with integrity and flourish in communities where their rights and best interests are respected.

Heshima Kenya strives to achieve their mission through the following objectives:

To ensure the healthy development of unaccompanied refugee minors by providing a continuum of holistic care to address issues of medical care, shelter, education, legal documentation, and family tracing.

To promote long-term self-sufficiency among unaccompanied adolescent girls by providing them with the skills, resources, and economic support to make a healthy transition to adulthood.

To work in tandem with partner organizations and local churches, mosques, schools, and clinics to identify and protect additional unaccompanied refugee minors and create awareness about their special needs.

To strengthen the capacity of the refugee community to provide effective care to minors and engage their long-term participation as caregivers, volunteers, and mentors.

## **Where They Work**

Kenya is the biggest economy and most influential country in east Africa, a hub for trade and the regional headquarters for U.N. agencies and other international non-governmental organizations. In a region of unrest, Kenya has mediated to try to bring peace to troubled neighbors Sudan and Somalia.

The former British colony's reputation for stability was shaken when communal violence erupted over claims that the 2007 presidential election was rigged. Some 1,500 people were killed.

Peace was restored when a power-sharing government was agreed between re-elected President Mwai Kibaki and the new Prime Minister Raila Odinga, who had stood against him. Both sides agreed to an investigation into the trouble by the International Criminal Court, but many Kenyans fear the underlying tensions between the rival camps, which have ethnic undertones in a country of diverse tribes, are unresolved. Other pressing challenges include high unemployment, crime, and poverty; most Kenyans live below the poverty level of \$1 a day. Droughts frequently put millions of people at risk.

A unique and valuable perspective on conditions in sub-Saharan Africa is offered by Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize laureate and founder of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. (See this month's Fair Trade, Books, and Films document for several recommended books by and about Dr. Maathai):

"Every people in the world has a code of wisdom they have developed out of their experiences over the course of time. That code of wisdom is reflected in their ways of life: their worship practices; their sense of justice and fairness; their agriculture and the food they eat; their biological heritage and environment; their songs, language, and dances; and the way they mourn their dead and celebrate life. All of these are what we mean when we talk about the culture of a people.

"African peoples' cultures were deliberately demonized, trivialized, and destroyed, and people were encouraged to embrace a culture that was largely Western. Now the problem is that, when you deny people their cultural heritage, you render them vulnerable and make them feel inadequate. They become people with no ground to stand on, and they are disempowered. That is what happened to Africa during the colonial period, and because the cultures of Africans were largely unwritten when they got their independence, it was very difficult to go back to the pre-colonial cultures, and to a large extent many of them died with their ancestors. Because the people who were given power by the colonial administrators were devoted converts to Western culture, they imposed that culture even more on their peoples.

"As a result, when we look back and try to deal with the challenges that confront us, we don't have one of the very important platforms we need to stand on to start. When I compare the experience of sub-Saharan Africa with Africa to the north, the reason why

the northern Africans seem to have been able to pull out of the colonial legacy better than the southerners is, in my opinion, probably because they have a culture that is written, that wasn't completely destroyed, and even if the colonial power tried they were able to resist. India also seemed to deal better with their post-colonial period than Sub-Saharan Africa. Gandhi removed his three-piece suit (which represented Western success) and put on a dhoti; he ate Indian food and adopted the symbol of the spinning wheel—all to appeal to the Indian peoples' sense of themselves and their rich, written culture. This gives me reason to question aloud, and encourage Africans to do the same, whether culture may be a missing link in Africa's failure to progress.”

### Source Materials

Heshima Kenya website, blog, newsletters – [www.HeshimaKenya.org](http://www.HeshimaKenya.org)

US Embassy website on Nairobi – <http://nairobi.usembassy.gov/>

Documents and images provided by Heshima Kenya to Dining for Women

Kenya Statehouse website – <http://www.statehousekenya.go.ke/>

Politics / Economy / History / Geography –

<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/country-profiles/kenya/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13681341>

<http://www.kenya-information-guide.com/kenya-culture.html>

### Additional Resources

On the **DFW January Program webpage for Heshima Kenya** you will also find links to:

Food for Thought – an in-depth look at the issue of women and girls as refugees

Program Presentation – PowerPoint file provided by Heshima Kenya

Program Video – link and downloadable file

Recipes, Customs, and Cuisine

Fair Trade, Books, Films, and Music recommendations

The U.N. 2015 Millennium Development Goals: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

**Heshima Kenya**



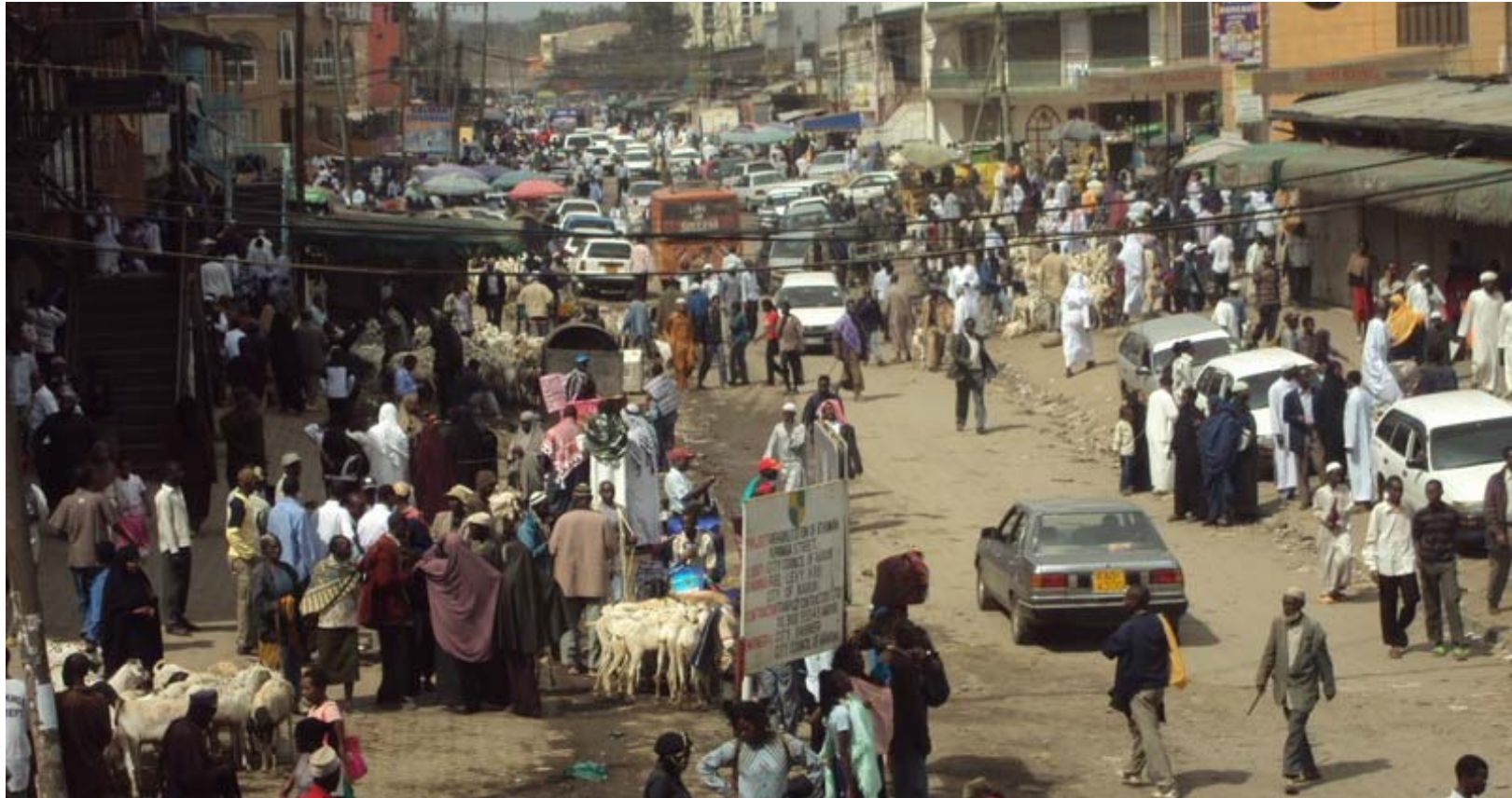
# Refugees in Kenya



Kenya has been host to a protracted refugee crisis since the early 1990's resulting in the current population of well over 600,000 refugees in Kenya's refugee camps

# Refugees in Nairobi

- Over 100,000 refugees reside in Nairobi, most of whom are not registered with the Government of Kenya or UNHCR.
- Among the worst affected by this crisis are unaccompanied, orphaned and separated refugee girls and single young women without family members.



# Unaccompanied Minors



- Orphaned and separated refugee children and youth are considered the most vulnerable and invisible population in the world, with refugee girls and young women facing the highest risks of exploitation, assault, forced marriage, and abuse, resulting in extreme barriers to education, medical care, and employment.
- There are no statistics detailing the number of unaccompanied refugee children in Nairobi, especially girls and young women just over 18 years of age, but Heshima Kenya and UNHCR believe this number to be over 25,000.



# Heshima Kenya

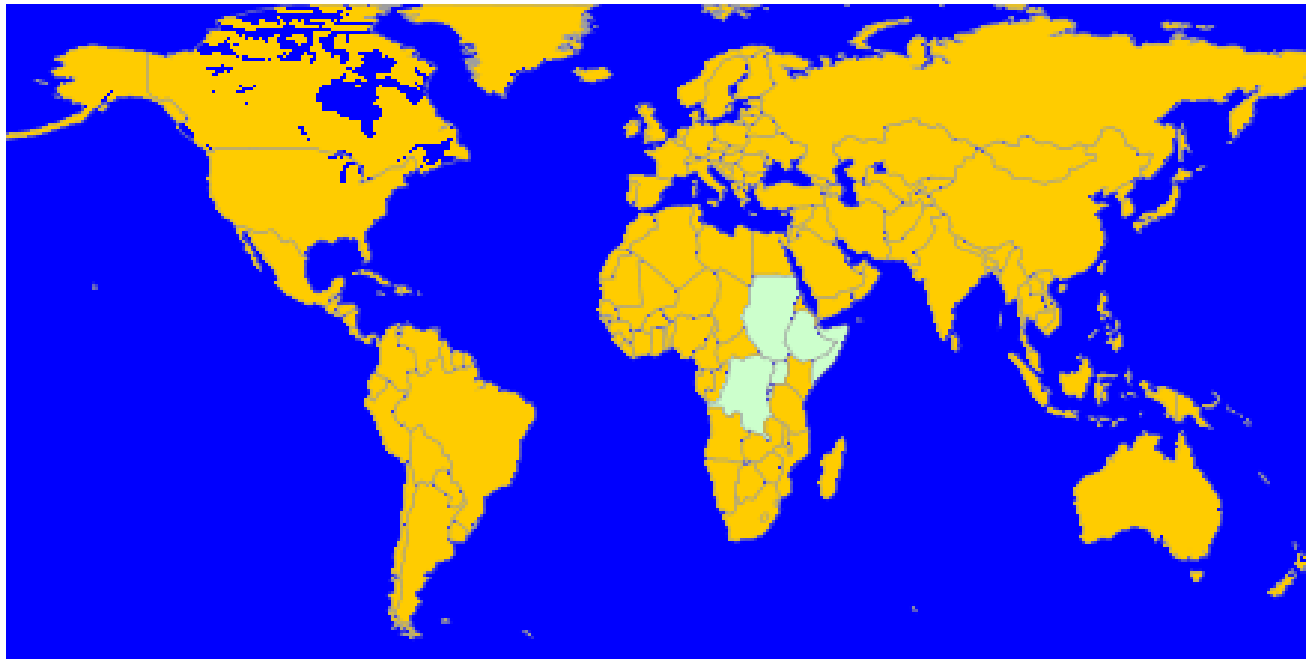




Co-founded in 2008, Heshima Kenya is the *first* organization in Nairobi dedicated to protecting and empowering *refugee* children and youth, especially adolescent girls, who have lost their families and been displaced by war.

Our holistic model has provided education, shelter, case management, and outreach services to more than **350** girls since 2008.

# Who we serve



Women and girls ages 13 to 23 years old from Somalia, Ethiopia, DR Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, and Burundi.



# What We Do

**Heshima Kenya:** specializes in identifying and protecting unaccompanied and separated refugee children and youth, especially girls, young women and their children living in Nairobi, Kenya. Our shelter, education and community outreach services, coupled with local resources and the refugee community, empower this population to live healthy lives. By providing resources for long-term support, these girls and young women become catalysts for strengthening networks creating sustainable change within the local and global communities.



## **Core Programming - The on-the-ground services we provide include:**

- Case Management, which includes an array of social services that provides healthcare and legal services for our young women.
- The Safe House Program, that provides secure shelter for girls and their children who are facing extreme protection risks.
- The Girl's Empowerment Project, which provides alternative education tailored to each girl's individual needs, including math, language, life skills and tailoring training. Graduates are invited to participate in The Maisha Collective, an entrepreneurship-training program where girls design, produce, and market a line of hand-dyed textiles, allowing them to begin to earn and save money.
- Community outreach through our Sexual and Gender-based Violence Prevention Initiative, which increases awareness about women's rights and available resources.



# Advocacy Program



- We are actively working from the ground up in order to advocate for stronger protection policies and programming efforts. Our advocacy focuses on refugee protection, child protection, and the rights of women and girls.



## **UN Millennium Development goals supported by Heshima Kenya:**

**Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality And  
Empower Women**

# Girls' Empowerment Project





# The Girls' Empowerment Program

- **Dining for Women** will support our Girl's Empowerment Project.
- Through the GEP, participants engage in four transitional program components: basic education, life-skills training and discussion, vocational training through our specialized tailoring program, and financial literacy training and income-generation through our Maisha Collective.
- The Maisha Collective is an innovative economic springboard that teaches saving concepts and helps facilitate self-sufficiency by engaging participants to create a line of unique hand-dyed scarves and other textiles.



# The Girls' Empowerment Program

- Through the GEP, young women will be empowered to access new information, skills, and economic opportunities.
- All of the GEP's efforts are designed to foster confidence in the girls and young women and build their capacity to respond to their experiences by beginning to heal, demanding their rights, and seeking a life of dignity.
- Through the GEP, these young refugee women and girls will not only become self-sufficient but will also be able to mobilize resources and advocate for other community members to overcome poverty and other barriers to success.



# GEP Goals

- The GEP will support 70 participants in 2013 and 80 participants over the course of 12 months in 2014.
- Through the GEP, young women will be empowered to access new information, skills, and economic opportunities. GEP participants will demonstrate increased self-confidence and capacity for decision-making, problem solving, and teamwork.
- Participants will also demonstrate increased knowledge of gender-based violence and sexual assault issues, HIV/ AIDS prevention, and community resources.



# Miriam's Story

- As an unaccompanied minor, Miriam was forced to live with abusive host families in the slums of Kawangware, located just outside of Nairobi. With these families, Miriam was subject to abuse and was forced to work long hours to complete all of the household chores, including caring for each family's many children.
- Fortunately, in 2009 Miriam found Heshima Kenya. She truly believes Heshima Kenya has changed her entire life, finally allowing her to access education, obtain shelter and food, and achieve a feeling of security and safety. She stresses that while living in the community she was constantly fearful, but is finally free of attacks – like rape and other assault.
- Miriam is currently working very hard in school, where her favorite subjects are Kiswahili, Science, Social Studies, English and Mathematics. She is grateful for the education, language, and income generating skills she is acquiring to help her achieve these goals. Down the road, Miriam aims to become a journalist but is also inspired by the work of Anne Sweeney and Talyn Good, the founders of Heshima Kenya. She, too, would like to assist orphans from war-torn countries.



Miriam helping out with a Heshima friend's baby.





# Other ways to support us

- Purchase a scarf -  
<http://www.etsy.com/shop/heshimakenya>
- Attend our Events – Yoga Challenge, Fashion Challenge.
- Sign up to volunteer and receive newsletters.
- Follow us on facebook and twitter.

**Jessica@heshimakenya.org**



