



**MAASAI  
GIRLS  
EDUCATION  
FUND**

**Dining for Women: Final Report  
Reporting Period: December 2012 – March 2015**

*1. Project Information*

Name of Organization: Maasai Girls Education Fund  
Program Title: Community Education Program  
Grant Amount: \$32,718  
Contact Person: Zara Bott-Goins, Executive Director  
Address: 5800 MacArthur Blvd NW. Washington, D.C. 20016

*2. Recap briefly what outcomes the program was designed to achieve.*

The primary objectives of the Community Education Program (CEP) are to end forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and other forms of violence against women, as well as teen pregnancy, and the spread of HIV, all significant factors preventing Maasai girls' from getting an education in Kenya. The ultimate goal is to increase the enrollment and completion rates of Maasai girls in school by addressing these barriers, thereby helping them achieve economic independence.

The components of the CEP supported by DFW consist of: Life Skills Workshops for girls, Life Skills Workshops for women, the annual Mentoring Workshop, and Business Training for Rural Maasai Women.

**Life Skills Workshops for girls and women:** The objectives of the Life Skills Workshops for girls is to reduce early marriage and prevent teen pregnancy, FGM, and the spread of HIV by giving girls information about their bodies and reproductive functions that is not otherwise available to them. The objectives of the Life Skills Workshops for women are similar but additionally focus on dispelling age-old beliefs and introducing a new role for mothers to explain the facts of life to their daughters and to provide supervision once they reach puberty.

**Mentoring Workshops:** The objectives of the Mentoring Workshops are the same as those for the Life Skills Workshops for girls but targeted to MGEF scholarship recipients. These workshops also aim to strengthen the community of MGEF students and alumni who provide emotional support and encouragement to each other, and the alumni network which works to promote women's rights in Kenya.

**Business Training Workshops:** The objectives of these workshops for rural Maasai women is to help them become self-sufficient, and therefore able to provide better health care and nutrition for their families, afford school fees for their children, as well as have ability to escape abusive relationships with their husbands. In their generation, less than 20% of girls enrolled in school, and they and their families now live in extreme poverty.

### *3. What was accomplished in connection with this project?*

#### **Life Skills Workshops for Girls and Women**

Between November 2012 and March 2015, DFW grant funds allowed MGEF–Kajiado to organize and conduct a total of 34 Life Skills Workshops for girls and 22 workshops for women which took place in the Namanga, Central, Isinya, and Mashuru Divisions in Kajiado County. Including the eight Life Skills Workshops for girls completed during the last six months (October 2014-March 2015), a total of 1,433 girls have attended the Life Skills Workshops and 813 women have attended the Elders and Mother’s Workshops.

The workshops conducted over this period raised awareness about many key issues affecting girls’ education, with post-workshop questionnaires from the girls’ workshops showing an increased understanding that in Kenya, it is against the law to circumcise a girl and to marry under the age of 16 and that a child has a right to be protected from violence. The girls also learned that using drugs contributes to the spread of HIV, that abortion and FGM/C can lead to death, and that a girl can (and should) say no to a boy or man who wants to have sex with her. In general, boys and girls initially are uncomfortable talking about FGM/C, but with the facilitator’s help, become engaged and better educated on this important topic. In one workshop, the facilitator encouraged the girls to make education their rite of passage, not the humiliating and harmful act of FGM/C.



**Life Skills Workshop for Girls - Iltareto, February 12, 2015**

The Elders & Mothers Workshops for adults cover the same topics as for boys and girls, dispelling myths about FGM/C, emphasizing the greater economic benefits of educating daughters, and discussing the role of mothers and fathers in sex education, preventing teen pregnancy and the spread of HIV. The women are encouraged to assume a new role, that of teacher who can explain the facts of life to their daughters, and provide supervision once they reach puberty. Among the Maasai, women traditionally have no voice, not even in decisions affecting the health and well-being of their daughters.

The Life Skills Workshops for women continued to provide important insights into the changing

Maasai culture as it relates to the education of girls. Although all men attending these workshops agreed that FGM/C is a harmful practice and they would not support it, the women were more ambiguous, a finding that highlights the importance of and need for MGEF's workshops. While the women recognized the harmful effects of FGM/C, and said that the Kenyan law against FGM/C is having an impact, they also said that changing this practice is challenging because, especially among older women, it is culturally still considered a rite of passage. In one workshop, a woman said that FGM/C should stop *"because they are suffering in silence."*



**Elders and Mother's Workshop - Naudot, August 6, 2014**

The women clearly recognized that the lack of monitoring of girls, especially at night, during cultural activities (e.g., Manyattas), and during school breaks is a major challenge to keeping girls in school and preventing early pregnancy. And while both men and women agreed that provision of safe housing for girls is an important need, the women's sense of power and ability to affect change was highly variable, and depended on the area where the workshop was held. The most impactful aspect of these workshops for adults is that it allows for an open dialogue between the men and women on sensitive topics. This spirited debate is the first step towards making important changes in the lives' of Maasai girls and women.

Due the ongoing drought in Kajiado County, Maasai communities are relocating frequently in search of water. As a result, turnout for the Elders and Mother's Workshops was low over the last six months, forcing MGEF staff to postpone new adult workshops until participants are in a more secure situation. This situation is only a concern for Elders and Mother's workshops because they are conducted within Maasai communities. The Life Skills Workshops for girls take place in primary schools, which facilitates daily attendance and participation.

### **Mentoring Workshops**

Since the DFW grant was provided in late 2012, MGEF has held three annual Mentoring Workshops as planned. The most recent three-day Mentoring Workshop took place on December 9-11, 2014. Speakers included post-secondary MGEF student Abigael Sintiyo, who is attending Earth University in Costa Rica on a full scholarship, and who flew back to Kenya to

lead sessions on developing talents and academic excellence. She was joined by Gloria Mumeita Kotente (Medical Student) and Catherine Timanoi Koyiah (Nutrition Student), along with other post-secondary students and alumnae.

These mentoring sessions continue to grow and have become a part of the foundation of MGEF's work to empower scholarship students and their families. There is growing evidence that the support and encouragement received by participating students may be leading to lower drop-out rates, fewer teen pregnancies amongst MGEF scholarship students, and better grades overall. MGEF students are now being accepted to better colleges and universities as a result of their improved secondary school performance.



**MGEF scholarship students at Annual Mentoring Workshop, December 10, 2014**

### **Business Training Workshops for Rural Maasai Women**

Since the start of the DFW grant, MGEF has conducted eight Women's Business Training Workshops and 240 new businesses have been created. During the past six-months, DFW funds were applied to three new Women's Business Trainings held in January, February, and March (Cohorts Six, Seven, and Eight). Margaret Mereyian facilitates these workshops, with each training cohort consisting of 30 rural Maasai women.

The impact of this program cannot be understated. Although not all businesses have been successful, most have developed to the point where the women have more control over their finances, better ability to provide for their families and send their children to school, and a strong new support group. At a recent six-month follow-up that I attended, the excitement and pride women demonstrated when opening up their home banks for the first time in 6 months was palpable and inspiring.



**Home Bank, Women's Business Training - Lorgosua, November 13, 2014**

Margaret Mereyian and other MGEF-Kajiado staff continue to monitor the progress of these businesses. To date, the business training reports indicate progress amongst the three newest cohorts' businesses, but also outline some challenges. In particular, the current drought has significantly affected buying behaviors due to the migration of men in their communities in search of jobs in urban centers, leaving the women alone to handle all family matters.



**Oloigosuani Women's Business Training - 2<sup>nd</sup> Follow-Up, March 27, 2015**

*4. What challenges did you face in connection with this project? How did you address these challenges?*

The drought that is ongoing in Kajiado County has been a big challenge this year. It has forced us to reschedule or postpone many workshops, particularly the Elders and Mother's Workshops. As a result, MGEF's Kajiado staff has decided to work with the regional leaders in each district to have them organize and gather participants for the workshops. In the past, we had utilized mobilizers to go into these communities to gather participants. The hope in this new approach is that the strong influence that local leaders have on the communities will lead to higher turnout.

The pre and post workshop questionnaire method used to monitor and evaluate the Life Skills Workshops is also a challenge. The questionnaires do provide some information about what students understand before and after the workshops, however, they do not fully demonstrate the impact of each workshop. For example, the ages of participating students vary across workshops, preventing facilitators from covering some information that normally would be acceptable to older students. On occasion, headmasters have an incomplete understanding of what sensitive subjects the Ministry of Education has approved, forcing facilitators to remove some subjects from each training. These factors, along with the fear some students feel when expressing thoughts about often taboo subject matter, create inconsistencies in the data derived from the pre and post questionnaires. To address this, we continue to administer the questionnaires, but have also decided to conduct follow-up meetings with headmasters from each school visited in the year following every workshop in an effort to gather any information about students drop-out rates, pregnancy, and early marriage.

*5. Is your organization or program situation different than presented in the approved proposal?*

As explained in previous reports, with the passing of MGEF's Founder and President, Barbara Lee Shaw, the Maasai Girls Education Fund has been adjusting to the loss of a visionary philanthropist and leader. Despite this great loss, MGEF strives to bring new levels of program growth and to carry on Ms. Shaw's legacy by helping Maasai girls receive an education and pursue their dreams. Executive Director, Zara Bott-Goins, who is assisted by an active board of directors and by numerous volunteers, has been leading MGEF's programs.

The MGEF-Kajiado organization, which carries out MGEF's programs on the ground in Kenya, has continued to be ably led by Lucy Ntayia and has benefitted from the addition of two new staff members. Former MGEF Board member, Margaret Mereyian, started in early 2014. She helps organize and implement MGEF's programs, manages and facilitates the Women's Business Training programs, and provides mentorship and support. Pacific Ombwera began as an intern at MGEF-Kajiado in August 2014 and has since been promoted to a full-time staff member. She assists the office in many capacities and provides welcome support for MGEF students and staff.



**MGEF Kajiado Board of Directors and staff with Executive Director, Zara Bott-Goins, November 2014**

*6. What were the most important lessons learned?*

Challenges are inevitable when working in another country, particularly one like Kenya, which faces continuing political, environmental, and social struggles. The most important lesson we have learned is to be flexible and always have a back-up plan. We have also learned that our relationships on the ground in Kenya are vital. The sustainability of MGEF's programs relies on the knowledgeable input of staff and board members in Kajiado. We continue to strengthen these relationships, taking numerous trips per year to ensure that our ties are strong.

*7. What has changed within your organization as a result of this project?*

As a result of the immense success of the Women's Business Trainings, MGEF has decided to expand this program and seek more funding to sustain it through other grants and funding sources. MGEF-Kajiado staff member Margaret Mereyian has been newly tasked to focus on identifying ways to improve this program. She is currently preparing a revised program design based on the original approach, which will aim to increase the long-term positive impact of these trainings.

*8. Describe the unexpected events and outcomes, including unexpected benefits.*

The loss of MGEF's Founder, Barbara Lee Shaw, in October 2013 was a sad and unexpected event. The investment of the board, staff, and other partners did not allow this loss to stunt the growth of the programs that Barbara was so passionate about. The appointment of a new Executive Director and increased commitment from the Board of Directors facilitated a smooth

transfer of responsibilities and allowed for continued growth of programs in Kenya.

On a positive note, the success of the Mentoring Workshops has highlighted the substantial beneficial impact that these types of gatherings have on MGEF scholarship students and their families. They have also strengthened the growing group of impressive MGEF alumni women who continue to act as key role models for MGEF's scholarship students and provide support when they can to the Kajiado office.

*9. Did you change your strategy as a result of obstacles encountered? How will you address these challenges in the future?*

As discussed in number 4 above, we were forced to change our strategy for the Elders and Mother's Workshops due to prolonged drought. In the future, we will work with regional leadership, as opposed to MGEF-hired mobilizers, to gather participants at the time and location that is best for them under the ongoing threat of water scarcity.

*10. Approximately how many lives have been touched, both directly and indirectly, by the program?*

Almost 3,000 lives have been impacted directly by this program and approximately 2,000 lives have been indirectly impacted by the trainings and workshops held over the last two years.

*11. What are the measurements used to monitor success and how was this information measured?*

For Life Skills Workshops, we use pre- and post-workshop questionnaires to record the level of understanding gained from each workshop supplemented by written reports prepared by workshop facilitators. This allows us to cover subject matter differently if it is not being retained or understood. While helpful, the questionnaires are not sufficient on their own to quantify impacts, not only due to the basic challenges associated with questionnaire-based survey methods, but also because some schools do not allow our facilitators to cover certain pieces of the curriculum (FGM/C, early marriage, etc). To improve our ability to measure impacts, we also follow-up with each school's headmaster to assess if their drop-out rates due to early marriage and pregnancy have decreased since our visit with them.

The Women's Business Trainings have proven easier to evaluate as we have 2-week, 4-week, 3-month, and 6-month follow-up sessions following the initial trainings. These follow-ups are conducted by Margaret Mereyian who records savings from each group's bank and ensures that the money recorded is physically in the bank. She provides mentoring and support to those who are finding the process challenging, and keeps detailed records of how the businesses are progressing and what each woman is using her new bank account for. For example, at a recent six-month follow-up in the Isinya Division, one woman's recording of her savings was less than what was in her actual account. To explain this difference to Margaret, she brought a receipt for school fees from her daughter's school, proving that she used her new income to keep her daughter in school. This is a powerful example of what we are starting to see at all of the trainings and follow-ups.

MGEF measures the impact of the Mentoring Workshops by the rate of drop-outs that occur each year from our roster of students. In 2014, we only saw two drop-outs, which is less than in previous years despite the fact that our roster of students has grown.

*12. If the program is ongoing, provide plans and expected results, including projected timeframe.*

We are currently conducting Life Skills Workshops in the Mashuru Division. We have three workshops remaining in this Division, which will take place in May. We have not scheduled the next round of Life Skills Workshops yet, but these will likely take place in the Loitokitok Division of Kajiado County starting in June 2015. It is expected that this will be a challenging area to work in, as the Maasai in this rural area are more reticent to discuss some of the topics covered. However, we are receiving invitations from numerous schools there to visit and conduct the trainings, so it is expected to be a high impact area.

The Elders and Mother's Workshops are currently on hold while we gather support from local government to assist with our efforts. The next round of these workshops is expected to begin in June, also in the Loitokitok Division.

The Women's Business Trainings are ongoing as MGEF-Kajiado staff continue to facilitate new trainings and follow-up sessions. The next cohorts to be trained (Cohorts Nine, Ten, and Eleven) will take place in the Loitokitok Division as well, with the first training to take place in May.

The next Annual Mentoring Workshop will occur in December of 2015. It is expected that participation rates will be very high this year due to the increase of students on the MGEF roster this year.

*13. Provide a detailed list of all expenses incurred during the grant cycle, which have been paid for with the Dining for Women grant.*

See separate attachment.

*14. Did this grant and relationship with DFW assist your organization in obtaining other funding, partnerships with other organizations, or public recognition in some capacity?*

The strong and greatly appreciated support provided by DFW for these programs and the evidence of their success has helped MGEF obtain additional funding in 2015 from the Arthur B. Schulz Foundation, Bennack-Polan Foundation, and Princeton University. While these grants provide critical support for MGEF's various programs, they are not sufficient to fully cover the costs associated with the Community Education Programs we plan to conduct in the coming year. Additionally, through DFW's social media activity, we have received interest from individual donors, helping us to gain more support and recognition across the U.S. and abroad.