

## **SIMANJIRO SVD CATHOLIC MISSION**

### **CHILD WELFARE PROGRAMME**

Simanjiro SVD Catholic Mission serve the local indigenous Maasai people. The Maasai people are still very marginalized and secluded in terms of education and development. This is mainly because of their way of life, which is mainly pastoralism. They also maintain their male dominated cultural practices which are very discriminatory towards women and children. Some of these traditions include:

1. Child marriage – children are given out (sold out for cows - dowry) when they are as young as below 10 years. Men pay cows either to get another wife or a wife for their sons. Once they have completed paying the cows, they can take the girl any time they want. This leads to many cases of child marriages.
2. Teenage pregnancies – once the child is taken, they are subjected to sexual intercourse by their husbands until they give birth. Thus, many children give birth as soon as they start ovulating before even, they get their first period.
3. FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) – Though outlawed by the law, the Maasai people continue to mutilate their women as a right of passage. FGM is the removing of the clitoris of the female sexual organ. Apart from being a very painful procedure mostly done in unhealthy conditions and using untreated tools such as kitchen knives and razor blades, FGM leaves a woman with a lot of physical traumas. Many women have confessed that because of FGM, sexual intercourse is a painful activity. Doctors have associated many delivery complications with FGM.
4. Polygamy – Maasai people practice polygamy as a way of expressing male dominance and status. The first wife is given to him by the parents, but the rest one can acquire on their own depending on his wealth. There is a lot of pressure from the elders on men including those well-educated to add more wives. It is difficult to get elected in a political position if one has only one wife.

### **Parish Intervention**

1. As a way of transforming the community, we have decided to invest in children education through building nursery schools in remote villages, Early Childhood Catechesis, child protection in collaboration with other like-minded leaders and the government.
2. We have also invested in the catechist equipping them with knowledge and mobility (motorbikes) to be able to visit the Small Christian Communities and teach the children.
3. Children Christmas festivals: In 2021, we started children festivals on Christmas day. The children from our 25 stations gather in one place for a singing competition. The song for competition carries a specific message to the community. Last year 2024, the message was about Child Marriage, FGM, and Teenage pregnancy.

### **Appeal for support**

Though we are doing all we can, and our efforts are bearing fruit, there is still a lot that can be done. The big problem is resources.

1. We have 7 more catechists who do not have motorcycles. We need to train more catechists because they are the one who link us with the communities.
2. We need more classrooms in remote villages, and training teachers.
3. A technical Centre where we can train the youth who are not able to proceed with their formal education on practical knowledge such as welding, carpentry, mechanics, etc.
4. Women empowerment projects such as chicken keeping and kitchen gardening to earn income for themselves.



Fr. Lawrence Muthee, SVD

Parish Priest.