

Naretoi NEWSLETTER

April
2020

Naretoi means in the language of the Maasai people:

Many people help together to achieve a common goal

Today we would like to tell you about what happened in the Naretoi student project last year.

Right at the beginning of the year we were able to organize a camp for young girls from the Masai Mara together with local organizations. The camp served to provide health education and information on FGM (female genital mutilation), monthly hygiene, early marriage, contraception/family planning, and on the rights of girls. 18% of Kenyan girls between the ages of 15 and 19 become pregnant. Most of these pregnancies are unwanted, are the result of ignorance and lead to early marriage. (Source: Fact Sheet Teenage Pregnancy Kenya, Government of Kenya 2017)



Among our Naretoi students, too, we already have cases where girls have become unintentionally pregnant during their school years. Therefore, it was very important for us to support this event. In the tradition of the Massai, pregnant girls are married as soon as possible. Usually, however, not with the father of the child, since it is usually also a boy who is still attending school, but as a 3rd or 4th wife with a much older man.

Although Kenyan law stipulates that girls have the right to continue attending school after delivery, in reality this hardly ever happens.

Old patterns of behavior, but also ignorance, usually lead the girls into an unwanted role, of which they are very afraid of, as we have learned from very personal conversations with the girls.



We are especially pleased about one case in which we succeeded in convincing the family to let the girl continue to go to school. Silvia had already finished her second year at secondary school with very good marks when she gave birth to her little daughter Sinty. A world collapsed for the girl. She told us that it was all over now, that she had such big plans, and that she felt guilty towards Naretoi and her sponsor, who had such high hopes for her, and that she was very afraid of the future.



Silvia's family attached great importance to finding out what Naretoi thinks about the situation. During a personal meeting in the family's village we assured our further unrestricted support as long as the family takes care of the baby when Silvia is at school. The grandmother of Sinty immediately offered her help to take care of the baby and said that as soon as the little girl can walk, it will not be a problem anymore anyway. Then she would run around with the other children from the village. The male members of the family also agreed and Moses Sikona from Naretoi Team Kenya promised to talk to the school to make sure that Silvia can continue seamlessly with form three at the secondary school. Silvia herself assured that she will repeat the material from the past 2 school years at home to be able to follow

the lessons again. So, we said goodbye after a long afternoon of discussions with the hope that Silvia's life is not "all over" as she said herself. We hoped that despite the small detour she made in her school career, where she gave birth to a wonderful daughter, she would take the chance to graduate so that her little daughter could be proud of her mother later on. It was also very clear to all of us that further school attendance would not be easy for Silvia and that our agreement with her family was on very shaky ground.

After the first term in form three of the secondary school, Silvia had immediately regained position 15 of 50 students in her old class, with very good marks. We are very happy for her and we thank the brave women of her family who risk to break with traditions and support her daughter in doing so.



In the meantime, more and more primary schools are offering **school trips** for their students. These usually last several days and lead to other areas of Kenya. We support and pay the school trips for Naretoi students from standard 4 and above. A 2- to 3-day trip costs about 40 EUR per child. The stories that the children tell us enthusiastically when we meet them after an excursion make one thing very clear: "Travel educates", even if it is only a small excursion in their own country. Most of the Naretoi Kids leave the savannah of the Masai Mara for the first time and visit big cities, such as the capital Nairobi. Or they visit the lakes in the Great Rift Valley and the cities of Naivasha and Nakuru. Others travel to the fertile area around Kericho and tell about the tea plantations, which are reach as far as the eye can see. Still others visit the geothermal power plants in Hell's Gate National Park and learn that Kenya's power supply, which is currently being built, will later be largely supplied by renewable energy sources.



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In August we were accompanied to Kenya by a group of 9 people, consisting of 5 adults, 3 children and 1 teenager, family and friends. Great helpers for our planned **Watoto Day**, to which we had invited all Naretoi students from preschool and primary level: 71 children! It should be a day full of games, fun and mutual exchange.

Already two days before, two boys and two girls from the Naretoi project arrived from the 50 km distant area Naikarra / Ildugishio, two of them are sponsored by our guests. So, there was time for joint activities and the possibility to get to know each other a little.



This was a great adventure for the Naretoi kids, because two igloo tents had already been set up for them on the Aruba Mara Camp site in Talek, equipped with sleeping mats and children's sleeping bags that our travel group had brought from Germany as a guest gift.

The time flew by quickly during game drives in the Masai Mara National Reserve but also with the preparations for the Watoto Day. Together with the cooks from the Aruba Camp, the recipe and the shopping list for the sheep stew were discussed and the others made toys from the items they brought along. Chinese jump rope and hand-and-string game were tried right away. It was nice to watch how the children made friends with each other, at first a little hesitant, but with great interest and openness from both sides.

On the evening before the big day, each of us was assigned a task, so that the children could divide themselves into different groups for the planned games.

The next morning the campground filled up with happy babbling children, who quickly turned the large meadow into a playground for football and Indica. As usual, everyone got a name tag attached so that we could address each other with our names. As soon as the children arrived, we took the opportunity to take pictures of them. We know that the sponsors are happy about such pictures so that they can follow the development of the godchild from a distance. But also, the children themselves are happy about the photos, which we will give to them again at our next meeting.

After the welcome and a funny get-to-know-each-other-game the children could visit the stations Chinese jump rope, tag game (which we played according to Massai rules, which the children taught us), Skubbidoo craft group, hand-and-string games, Indica and football one after the other.



But the absolute highlight was the station Glitter Tattoos!

All the Naretoi team members glittered and the kids never tired of picking out stencils and the glittering colors. The whole table was permanently surrounded by bunches of kids. One or the other of them managed to get a second tattoo with a little trick.



Lunch interrupted the colorful hustle and bustle. Everyone enjoyed the delicious stew and took the opportunity to rest a little in the shade.

A relay race was planned for the afternoon. We had brought small prizes that we had collected (baseball caps, caps, small backpacks, colored pencils) from Germany. But since these were quite different, we thought that the winners of the relay race could choose something first, then the second, and so on.

What we didn't expect was that the children had never done a relay race before and didn't know what it was at all. Nobody knew exactly what it was about, but everybody wanted to take part. Even the placement of the kids in the different groups was a fun challenge due to the different ages and heights.



But at some point, everyone stood in their rows and off they went! The first few children of each group, still ran the planned way, clapped each other off in front and ran back. Then it became a little bit more confusing and at some point, everyone just ran back again, screaming and laughing. Even with the best intentions, it was not really possible to determine a winning group. But none of the children left empty-handed, each got something to take home as a souvenir of the beautiful day. So that all the children could be home before nightfall, we said goodbye to each other in time after a happy day.

Happy, full of impressions and experiences, but also a little tired, we sat together in the camp and told each other what we had experienced with the children, while they were on their way home in all directions.



For the second time we organized the **Naretoi holiday program** during the school holidays in November/December 2019. 4 weeks we rented a classroom, the dormitories as well as the kitchen at the primary school in Talek, hired the necessary staff and invited 41 Naretoi students of primary classes 5, 6 and 7 to the holiday program. The children were looked after by 3 teachers, among them again Shukunai Pesi, himself a former Naretoi student and in the meantime head teacher of the Naretoi holiday program. The primary objective of the event is to repeat the material of the previous school year in a relaxed atmosphere. From the children's essays we can read that they only understand one or the other thing during the holiday program, because the teachers have more time to explain it to them in detail and perhaps in other words.



The children have a lot of fun, because there is a lot of time for playing next to the daily lessons.

Another point that the children always mention to us is the varied and delicious food during the holiday program. This is a great and welcome change from the standard meals at the state schools or the often simple meals at home. Once or twice a week the children are given a meal with meat and for dessert there is fresh fruit.



Like last year, our friend Vreni Pulfer gave German lessons to distract the kids.

In the meantime, she opened the café-restaurant "Tasty Talek" in Talek, she offered the children the opportunity to get an insight into the tasks of a restaurant manager. In small groups the children came to the restaurant and helped to bake muffins, learn to fold napkins, set the tables and serve the guests at the tables. Of course, the children were allowed to eat their home-made muffins later on.

We thank Vreni very much for her support.

This year the final trip took place to the botanical garden in Nkoilale. During a guided tour through the garden the children learned a lot about native plants, flowers, bushes and trees, as well as fruits and the use in the kitchen or as medicine.



This year the holiday program was again a great success. The children love this break from everyday life, enjoy being looked after and reward themselves with better marks in school. Since everyone is already looking forward to it, it will take place again at the end of 2020.



At the end of the year we got an **unexpected increase in the student project**. Already in August, Moses Sikona from Naretoi Team Kenya had told us about a Swiss organization that planned to stop its student project in the Masai Mara at the end of 2019. In plain language, this meant that 12 students would have to terminate suddenly and in the middle of their school education. 9 children of them already in secondary school, 3 still at primary level. As all of us from the Naretoi team were affected by the fate of the children, we started to look for solutions immediately after our return from Kenya. Thanks to generous donors, new sponsors and last but not least a successful sale of our Naretoi Advent Calendar 2019, we were able to send the message to the families and the children in December, so that all of them can continue to go to school in January as normal. We were able to completely integrate the 3 younger children into the Naretoi student project, all of them already have a school sponsor. We were able to promise the 9 children at the Secondary School that all costs up to the graduation in form 4 will be covered by the organization. So, this story ended with a happy end for now.

At the beginning of the new school year in January, our student project had grown to 156 children.

It is a big task for the Naretoi team in Kenya, which makes the payments of the school fees, three times a year, each time at the beginning of a new term. The team helps the primary graduates to find a secondary school and explains to the parents what there is for them to do. The "shopping" for the children alone is a big task. From mattresses for new boarding students, school clothes for everyone, to soap and shoeshine kit, everything has to be thought of and bought. Furthermore, it is important not to lose track of the secondary graduates and to support them in making a career choice and then to find the right course at a vocational training school, college or university.

And in the middle of this busy and hectic time at the beginning of the year came **the big rain**, which made the Talek River rise over its banks like it had never happened before, so the old Massai report. At the peak of the catastrophe the bridge between Talek and the entrance to the Masai Mara was washed away and for a few days Talek was cut off from the outside world. Moving forward with vehicles was sometimes impossible or involved great effort and material input.



So, after this eventful start into the new year we are glad that in the meantime the tasks in the student project are back on track and that all students, except for two or three cases where decisions are still pending, are back at their schools.

Unfortunately, we had to postpone our trip to Kenya, which was planned for the turn of the year, into the new year, and so the planned meeting with the Naretoi students from secondary level on was cancelled. In the meantime, we also had to postpone the trip planned for the Easter holidays 2020 for an indefinite period due to the Corona crisis.



We thank you very much for the great help we receive from you in the Naretoi projects. All this is only possible because you believe in the work of the Naretoi teams and in the children of the Masai Mara. Ashe Oleng!

Many greetings from Kenya and Germany

Moses, John, Julius, Joseph, Heike and Birgit

You can also find more information at www.naretoi.org, on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#)!