

<b>Project Name</b>	FGC Abandonment in the Loita Hills
<b>Organisation Name</b>	SAFE Maa (S.A.F.E.)
<b>Project Start Date</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2018
<b>Project End Date</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2021
<b>Reporting Period</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2018 - 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2019

1. What are your main achievements to date? Give details of number of beneficiaries reached and any changes that have occurred in their lives as a result e.g. increase in income per person.

#### **People reached**

Engagement of the Steering Committee: 35

Location Meetings: 184

Public Meetings: 298

Village Meetings: 79

Women's consultation meetings: 66

Youth Leaders Meetings: 138

Schools Engagement Meetings: 1250

Morans Outreaches: 560

Declaration of Abandonment: 4000

Event Thank you Meetings 206

Public Meetings - 178

Mixed Workshops - 375

Moran Outreaches - 350

Performance Tour - 1640

Youth Forums - Participants: 140

Manyatta Women's Workshop - Participants: 100

**Total: 9,456**

#### **Year Achievements**

##### **Organisation at the Declaration of Abandonment**

This year SAFE Maa reached the pinnacle of their FGC programme - After almost 10 years of campaigning, they brought the community together under the guidance of the cultural leaders for a Declaration of Abandonment. More details of the event to be found on the separate attachment.

**High turnout of community members at Declaration of Abandonment:** The Declaration of Abandonment saw almost 4000 community members travel long distances to come to Olmesutie and watch the Cultural Leaders Declare that FGC was no longer within the culture and bless the Alternate Rite of Passage (ARP) as the culturally approved graduation into adulthood for girls. This alternate rite has now been renamed as the Loita Rite of Passage (LRP) as it is no longer an alternative. The high turnout was evidence of the success of SAFE Maa's mobilisation activities, but it was also a wider reflection of the community's appetite for change, which had been created by SAFE Maa's work over the last 10 years.

**High Profile Visitors and Speakers:** A lot of the feedback from the community after the event was that they had not realised how important the issue of FGC abandonment was, and how many people are working on it – both in other communities in Kenya and overseas. There was surprise that so many people gathered to watch the Cultural Leaders make this announcement. The Declaration event raised the profile of FGC Abandonment within Loita, moving SAFE Maa closer to their goal of total abandonment.

**Youth Engagement in the Declaration Event:** Three schools were given the opportunity to perform at the event. Their performances were a highlight of the day - an opportunity for the young girls and boys of the community to talk about their desire to end FGC, and what this significant event meant for them. The invitation of the schools ensured the engagement of the next generation of educated youth, who in Loita society will have significant potential to help the campaign towards abandonment. Educated girls have more power over which rite of passage they pass through, and although their fathers still make the final decision, an educated girls opinions are taken into consideration. The youth now know that the Cultural Leaders are supporting the transition to abandonment, giving them greater powers to influence their families and the decisions being made about graduation.

**Elevation of Women’s place in the community following the Declaration:** The SAFE Maa team particularly targeted women during the mobilisation activities, and many became very involved in ensuring a high turnout on the day. During the mobilisation the women praised the team for their efforts to include them fully in every stage of the event planning and execution, and that through doing this, they were giving women a high profile in the community. In the months following the event, the team reports that the status of women has increased, and there are some cases noted where girls are being given more decision making powers over who they marry.

**Acceptance of Uncut Women following the event:** Prior to the Declaration Event, around a third of girls were going through the ARP, but they were not being fully included in Maasai cultural life, and were often stigmatised by other women. However, now it is reported that uncut women are socialising easily with cut women. There are also reports of women ‘coming out’ as uncut. SAFE Maa had suspected that some women were secretly uncut, but the declaration has meant these women now feel unafraid to acknowledge their status.

**Increasing attendance at SAFE Maa’s workshops:** In the time following declaration, SAFE Maa have noticed a significant increase in attendance at their community meetings and workshops. The team will mobilise twenty people for a workshop or meeting, but in some places up to forty or fifty people will turn up. There is an increased appetite for discussions around FGC abandonment since the Declaration, as people are keen to learn and understand the decisions made by the cultural leaders.

2. Please provide information about activities undertaken during the **reporting period** by reporting against your **work-plan**. Where you have not completed an action please tell us why and by when you will complete these activities. You can adapt your work-plan as follows.

The activities which were funded by the J.A.C. Trust were completed as per the budget submitted. The variances in the work plan occurred in activities which were funded by other donors. In the proposed work plan, SAFE Maa had planned to carry out their normal activities alongside preparation for the Declaration. However, at a meeting with the Declaration Event Steering Committee in July 2018, it was

decided that the team needed to focus fully on the mobilisation activities to ensure a successful event. Therefore, the planned workshops and tours in the second half of 2018 were replaced by additional community meetings.

**Steering Committee Meetings:** The steering committee was made up of prominent leaders from within the community, both those from different zones and those from different social groups within Loita. There was an equal balance of men and women. They contributed to SAFE Maa's mobilization strategy and the design of the day - making sure as many of the Loita community as possible would be included in the event. Alongside the preparation, they supported SAFE Maa at important meetings with the community leadership, and their presence showed leaders that the event had the backing of the community. This helped to secure a shared ownership of the event between SAFE Maa and the community, inspiring many people to join SAFE Maa to make the event as successful as possible.

**Location Leaders Meetings:** Location meetings were held with the elders in the different Kenyan and Tanzanian zones of Loita. During the meetings, the team explained the reasoning for the declaration and the move to the LRP, and encouraged the local elders to mobilise their communities. SAFE Maa emphasised that this event was about protecting women and girls, and therefore it was of critical importance to have a strong female presence at the declaration. The outcome of these meetings was securing the support and approval of the leadership in each of the locations.

**Public Meetings:** Public meetings were held in Kenya and Tanzania. These meetings were a follow up from the location meetings and together with the elders, SAFE Maa informed the larger community about the Declaration event, and the forthcoming blessing of the LRP. These meetings were a key part of SAFE Maa's mobilisation strategy and were a major contributor to the high turnout at of people from all of the Loita Divisions at the event.

**Village Meetings:** The village meetings were designed to reach out to the more remote communities. They were suggested by community members in the larger zones during the public meetings. In these locations, it was hard for people from every village to attend and some participants requested that SAFE Maa visit their locations to ensure that everyone heard the news. During November the team travelled into the remotest parts of the Loita Hills to carry out three village meetings, which were particularly helpful to women who found it harder to travel to population centres for public meetings.

**Women Leaders Consultation Meetings:** At these meetings the team presented the ideas for Declaration event, asking for contributions and feedback from the different women's groups, making sure that all expectations were going to be met on the day of the event. The women leaders were enthusiastic participants and reported that SAFE Maa had helped boost their self-esteem and that they were impressed at the lengths SAFE Maa had gone to include them in the preparations and planning.

**Youth Meetings:** Two youth meetings were carried out. The first targeted the youth in the immediate locality of the office where the event was to take place. It was felt that a good turnout in this area was a critical component of the day. This meeting was attended by youth leaders from across the Olmesutie location, and two members of the steering committee and a cultural chief joined SAFE Maa to encourage and empower the youth. The second larger meeting of the Loita youth was held in Entesekera, supported by local leaders it reached out to youth throughout the hills. The acceptance and participation of youth from throughout Loita was critical to the success of the day.

**School Health Clubs Activities:** To engage with the educated youth, as mentioned above, SAFE Maa tasked the students in all of the school health club programmes to create performance pieces which could be included as part of the Declaration event.

**Morans Outreach Activities:** Using their unique position within the community, the morans were well placed to travel long distances and engage with people who the team would have had difficulties accessing. Their target group was particularly the other morans, but they also were able to target the young girls and their mothers, for whom they carry a lot of influence. It was reported that many attendees of the event travelled long distances to be part of the day after this intervention by the warriors.

**Post Declaration Planning:** Following the Declaration event, the SAFE Maa team met with S.A.F.E. HQ to talk through the Declaration event and plan out the next six months of work. It was agreed that the focus of these activities should be to make sure that the messages from the Declaration were heard and understood throughout the entire community. These activities were arguably as important as the event itself.

**Post Declaration Thank you Meetings:** The thank you meetings brought together all of the key leaders and participants who had supported the event and made it a success. During these meetings, the team collected feedback from the participants, asking what needed to be done in their home areas to ensure that the whole community understood the messages from the Declaration event. Recognising the huge community effort that went into the Declaration event, ensured the continued support of these influential Loita leaders as the abandonment message was embedded within the wider community.

**Post Declaration Public Meetings:** Feedback from different parts of the community, highlighted in the thank you meetings, had shown that there was some confusion amongst those who were not at the event. Certain community members requested that they wanted to understand how and why the cultural leaders had made this decision. There were also some who, despite all the pre-declaration activities, felt ambushed by what they thought was a sudden announcement from the cultural leaders. They wanted the chance to hear from the leaders themselves and from SAFE Maa, the rationale for the abandonment declaration. Identification of potential pockets of resistance, allowed meetings to target these areas, and allow those community members to ask the leadership any questions they had, and overcome their concerns.

**Mixed Gender Community Workshops:** The mixed gender workshops were an essential part of the post declaration work giving an opportunity for men and women to talk frankly about the decision, and recognise each others commitment to the change. In these workshops, the team focused on discussions around the Declaration of Abandonment, the promotion of the LRP, and very importantly the continuing role of the Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) in these important ceremonies. SAFE Maa recognise that if these TBA's (who rely on the income from their work as circumcisers) are not involved in the new ceremonies they might retract their valuable support for the LRP.

**Moran Outreaches:** The Morans were employed for full time for four months at the end of the grant period to carry out one on one interventions with people in the most hard to reach and remote areas of Loita – and this was where the most opposition was found. The Morans were able to engage these

remote homesteads and talk about their pledge to marry uncut girls, and also how the LRP protects the culture.

**Performance Tours:** With an updated FGC performance the performance tours for this period were carried out to spread information about the declaration event within the wider community and make sure that the abandonment message and blessing of the LRP was heard and understood by all who were not in attendance on the day. The performance tours allowed the team to discuss the day and create debate publically with large groups of people from all over the Loita Hills.

**Youth Forums:** The youth forum brought together the youth in the community during the school holidays. This forum was part of the continued work to keep the youth engaged in SAFE Maa's work to embed the message of the Declaration within the community. The youth are some of the most enthusiastic supporters of the communities move towards the LRP.

**Emanyatta Women's Meeting:** The Emanyatta was a cultural event happening in August, where the morans were graduating to Junior Elders. The team used this opportunity to meet with the women who were taking part in the ceremony, to talk about the Declaration of Abandonment and the blessing of the LRP. Many of the women in attendance had been active in the Event and were keen to support SAFE Maa in promoting the LRP.

3. How have you monitored the project's progress? How do you know you are making progress towards achieving the outputs and outcomes?

The success of the declaration event was measured by the high turnout of people from all of the different zones of Loita and the different social groups within Loita society. The team also measured the success from the reactions of everyone involved in the day. The Chair of the Government Anti-FGM Board said that the event was the first truly community led Declaration that she had ever attended. One of the TBAs who has been working with SAFE Maa since the beginning of their campaign reported her joy in seeing the Cultural Leaders come together and publically bless the ceremony that she helped to create.

SAFE Maa have measured the longer term impact of the programme through close contact and communication with the community leaders and the individual community members themselves. Their feedback has guided the team's understanding of what has been successful and what areas need more focus and work.

At the thank you meetings following the event, the leaders threw their weight behind SAFE Maa, praising the event and confirming their continued dedication to helping the team communicate the important messages from the event to all within the community.

These sentiments were echoed by the community members during the post declaration public meetings, where people were proud to say people within their areas had already started to abandon FGC, prior to the Declaration. They encouraged SAFE Maa to continue educating the community to make sure cases continued to fall in the area. People were also taking the opportunity of the public meetings to promote girl's education and think twice about early marriage.

These conversations showed the positive impact that the Declaration of Abandonment and SAFE Maa's project are having not only on the campaign to end FGM/C, but also to raise the position of women and girls within the community.

As mentioned earlier, the Morans reached the remotest parts of these hills, their work revealed that a significant amount of people were not happy about the wider community's move towards FGC abandonment. Some did not believe it was genuine, and stated that they wanted to see evidence of Morans marrying uncut girls before they were ready to make the change themselves. Others said they just did not feel ready, and wanted time with the Cultural Leaders to properly understand why they had made this decision. This feedback has been essential in SAFE Maa's planning for the next twelve months, as engagement with these scattered and remote families will be essential.

Other areas of opposition came from the church. In the public meetings, members of the church community advocated for an end to all Maasai cultural practices, saying that not only cutting should be abandoned, but the entire ceremony. This rejection of all aspects of Maasai culture is highly controversial, and not supported by SAFE Maa.

But of course, the most critical measurement of impact of SAFE Maa's progress will be collected in January/February 2020 when the SAFE Maa outreach team do an evaluation of the type of rite of passage girls pass through during the December 'cutting season'. The results from this will also heavily influence the planning for the next stage of the grant.

4. What are the main challenges/obstacles you have faced during the reporting period? How have you responded to them?

### **Pre- Declaration Challenges**

#### **Mining activity at Olorte**

##### **Challenge:**

The mining activity caused a lot of conflict between the community and the leadership. It seemed that the mining rights had been sold without community consultation or approval. This was a huge distraction and the cultural leaders had to spend a lot of time discussing this issue, and therefore were not able to commit to all of the pre-declaration activities.

##### **SAFE Maa response:**

The team were flexible and moved meetings to suit the needs of the cultural leaders and the community.

#### **Drought**

##### **Challenge:**

Drought stopped people, especially the men, from turning out to the events in large numbers, as they had travelled with livestock.

##### **SAFE Maa Response:**

The team were flexible and patient, waiting for people to return from daily activities to start the meeting, or returning to a place another day if the turnout was not good enough.

### **Post Declaration Challenges**

**Uncertainty from the administrative chiefs and others about the role of the LRP going forwards.**

**Challenge:**

Administrative chiefs and others in the community are worried that the LRP will just be a cover for people who want to continue cutting. They believe girls will be secretly cut under the pretence of an LRP ceremony. This has stopped them throwing their full support behind the LRP. Others are saying that they do not see the need for the LRP at all, that everything to do with cutting should be abandoned.

**SAFE Maa Response:**

Meetings to clear up this uncertainty with the administrative chiefs have been planned for the 2019/2020 grant. Additionally, the team will continue to promote the LRP in partnership with the cultural leaders and the TBAs, as the best way to abandon cutting and preserve the culture.

**Pockets of opposition to the Declaration.****Challenge:**

The follow up activities, in particular those carried out by the morans, in the more remote parts of Loita, have further highlighted areas of opposition. Some feel that they have been forced into abandonment before they were ready or before they had the chance to have their opinions on the matter heard. They are anxious about what will happen to the culture and the future of the community if cutting is abandoned.

**SAFE Maa Response:**

SAFE Maa will continue to engage the community with workshops, meetings, performance tours and one on one interventions to help guide the community through the change. The cultural leaders have pledged to continue publically supporting SAFE Maa in the future, reinforcing the message that now the LRP is the culture. SAFE Moran have now been employed full time in order to continue to reach those in the remote areas where most of the opposition and misunderstanding about abandonment and the LRP lies.

**Opposition cultural ceremonies from the Church.****Challenge:**

The church leaders are actively encouraging the community to turn their back on every part of Maasai cultural life. At the most recent Emanyatta Cultural Event, church goers were told they would be banned for six months if they attended. Church leaders have also been opposing the LRP, telling the community that FGC should be abandoned, along with any alternative ceremony that replaces it. People who attend church are actively prohibited from carrying out the LRP.

**SAFE Maa Response:**

The team continued to spread the message of the importance of the LRP to protecting the culture in partnership with the Cultural Leadership. They also engaged church-goers in workshops and meetings, encouraging them to discuss their concerns and fully understand the reasoning behind SAFE Maa promoting the LRP, as well as the importance of retaining and protecting their culture, even within the church, despite what they are being told.