

Vote for an African Hero - and Raise \$250,000 for Girl's Education in Kenya!



In a departure from our normal format, The Advocacy Project (AP) is using this bulletin to ask our readers to nominate Kakenya Ntaiya as CNN's Hero of the year.

Kakenya is a leading educationalist from the Maasai people in Kenya and an AP partner. CNN has named her as one of its Top Ten Heroes of 2013, and has launched an online competition to select one of the ten as the CNN Hero of the Year. The winner will be announced on December 1 at a televised

tribute and receive \$250,000.

You can vote for Kakenya by [clicking on this link](#) and following the simple instructions. **Vote once a day until voting stops on November 17.**

Kakenya's story is inspiring. She grew up in a part of Kenya where genital cutting was common and was betrothed to an older man by her parents at the age of five. Kakenya herself submitted to cutting, which she has described in [painful detail](#). But in return she also extracted a promise from her father that she could finish High School.

Kakenya then persuaded village chiefs to help her study in the US. This led to a [4-part series in the Washington Post](#) and Kakenya's appointment as the first youth advisor to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In 2011 she received a PHD in education from Pittsburgh University.

Kakenya's supporters have helped her to form an organization, [The Kakenya Center for Excellence](#), and to open a boarding school for girls in her home village of Enosaen. The school has taken in 155 girls since 2008, many of them orphans or from poor families.



Last year, girls from the 8th grade achieved the top ranking in the school district, underscoring Kakenya's commitment to quality education.

Kakenya is also using education to leverage deep social change. Parents must agree in writing to reject genital cutting before their girls can enroll at her school, putting her at the forefront of a growing movement to abolish cutting among the Maasai. Kakenya also organizes a leadership camp for over 200 girls from other schools in the area.

Kakenya's achievements have been widely recognized. She was named a [National Geographic Emerging Explorer](#) in 2010, and one of Newsweek's "150 Women Who Shake the World" in 2011. In 2011, Vital Voices honored her with a [Global Leadership award](#). This year, she received the [Global Women's Right Award](#) from the Feminist Majority Foundation and was recognized by Women in the World as a "Woman of Impact." She has appeared on [National Public Radio](#) with the former President of the World Bank and [given a TED talk](#). Her story has been the subject of a BBC documentary, and many magazine article.



The Advocacy Project is proud to have partnered with Kakenya since 2009. AP has sent six Peace Fellows to Enoosaen - [Kate Cummings](#); [Luna Liu](#); [Brooke Blanchard](#); [Charlotte Bourdillon](#); [Cleia Noia](#) and [Megan Orr](#). We recommend you to their blogs, videos and photos.

Charlotte and Cleia (left) also worked with Kakenya to produce [two spectacular Maasai advocacy quilts](#), one made by widows and the other by girls at the Enoosaen school, which have been widely shown in the US.

Kakenya herself has expressed delight at her nomination, but cautions that much still remains to be done: "14 million girls are married each year before they are 18 years old and 3 million girls are at risk of undergoing female genital cutting. With your help, and that of people like you, we can put an end to these practices."

Please vote to boost girl's education and end genital cutting!

- Visit the [KCE website](#)
- Watch Kakenya's [CNN nomination video](#)
- Read Kakenya's [description of genital cutting](#)
- Read the [blogs of AP Fellows](#) who have worked at KCE.