

# Against the odds

## Zoom in

### Part 1

#### 1. Who is Kakenya Ntaiya?

- Age: **27**
- Ethnic group: **Maasai**
- Probable home country: **Kenya**
- Current place of residence: **Pittsburgh (USA)**
- Current occupation: **student (doctorate in international education)**

#### 2. Village life. List the four things people have to do.

- Fetch **drinking water** from the **local** stream.
- Plough the **fields**.
- milk** the **cows**.
- cook dinner** in a **mud hut**.

#### 3. Who exactly is shown working? **The women** → Comment on that.

#### 4. Life in the USA.

- Take down the adjectives the speaker uses to describe:

Kakenya's work: **challenging**

Kakenya's everyday life: **overwhelming**

- What do these words mean?  Easy.  A bit difficult.  **Extremely difficult.**
- Explain these words in the context.

### Part 2

#### 5. Kakenya's childhood.

Tick the right answer(s), then justify your choice by quoting what she says.

- Her teachers were:  supportive.  helpful.  **indifferent.**  mocking.  
→ **They were not encouraging me.**

- Her schoolmates were:  supportive.  helpful.  indifferent.  **mocking.**  
→ **I was always laughed at.**

- The girls in her school were supposed to:

go to high school.  know how to read.  **leave school early.**  
→ **As girls we saw that it's the boys who... will go to high school.**

#### 6. The deal

- What was Kakenya's father's job? **He was a policeman.**

- Fill in the blanks in this passage.

“His biggest **concern** was **marrying** off his oldest **daughter**. And that meant the officially **outlawed** practice of female **circumcision**, the traditional Maasai **rite** of **passage** to **womanhood**”.

c. Is it also what Kakenya wanted?  Yes.  **No**. Explain your answer.

**Kakenya wanted to stay in school. If she had got married, she would have had to stop going to school.**

d. What deal did Kakenya make with her father?

**She agreed to get circumcised under the condition that her father let her continue going to school.**

e. How does Kakenya feel about that deal? Explain your choice.

**Quite proud**.  Rather ashamed.  Bitterly regretful.  Extremely happy.

f. Why didn't Kakenya just leave her village? Explain your answer by commenting on the pictures you see at the end of this part.

g. Explain how *you* feel about that deal.

**Nobody should ever have to trade a part of their body for an education, or anything else. This is horrible. But on the other hand, it was the only way for Kakenya to stay in her village and get an education.**

### Part 3

7. Say what the women of the village want, and why.

**The women of the village would like Kakenya to manage a girls' school because they want the girls to be protected from the boys.**

8. a. Is Kakenya willing to help them?  **Yes**.  No.

b. How? **by giving them a school**

c. Why? "I want to see **girls from my village happy**. That's **my goal**."

9. Describe the final shot and say what message it conveys.

**We can see Kakenya climbing up the stairs to the library. It shows her going up the social ladder, and it conveys a message of hope for her and for all the girls of her village.**

### Look back

10. a. "Against the odds". The title of this document means...

***Contre toute attente***.

*Contre les aînés*.

***Envers et contre tout***.

b. Explain why this title is relevant to Kakenya's story.

**It means that Kakenya was very unlikely to do what she is doing now. Being a Maasai woman was a handicap to her, because she had to fight against male prejudices, then she had to leave her village and her country and adapt to a new life in America, where she seems to be successful. Maybe she is one of the first Maasai women to study in an American university.**