

ASILI

MAGAZINE



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on
Ending
Female Genital Mutilation
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FGM Stakeholders and Partners Hold Strategic Dialogue



Prof. Collette Suda makes her remarks during the strategic dialogue forum in Nairobi

The Ministry of Public Service and Gender and the Anti FGM Board with support from UNFPA hosted a Strategic Dialogue on FGM.

The watershed event brought together development partners and other stakeholders from the private sector and community to deliberate on the National Strategy to Accelerate the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation by 2022.

The strategic dialogue provided a platform for discussion and reflection on accelerating the presidential vision to end FGM in Kenya by 2022, and moving the Nairobi Summit ICPD25 national commitment to action.



Delegation of the partners during the FGM stakeholders meeting

The Permanent Secretary for Gender, Prof. Collette Akoth Suda, inspired the stakeholders by assuring them of the Government's commitment to alleviate the traumatic experiences of women and girls as a result of the FGM practice.

"Our strategic dialogue today is aimed at embracing the road map that will lead us to connecting with attainment of Sustainable Development Goals for women and girls in Kenya through elimination of FGM," she said.

Shariffa Noor, 12-year-old girl from Isiolo County where the FGM prevalence rate is 86% moved the audience with a poem detailing the pain of FGM. The adolescent girl urged parents to abandon the practice as it ruined the lives of young people who exude so much potential.

The national Chairman of the Boda-boda Association of Kenya (Motor Cycle Riders), Kevin Mubadi, stated the group's support to eliminate FGM. He pledged to mobilize the more than one million youthful members of the association to protect girls from FGM and campaign against the backward practice. He appealed to stakeholders and partners to back the efforts by the riders.

Development partners at the meeting lauded the engagement of traditional and religious leaders and youth by UNFPA, terming it inclusive and sustainable.

H.E. Ms. Lisa Stadelbauer, the Canadian High Commissioner and Permanent Representative to the UN, opined that the declining FGM prevalence in Kenya was clear indication that the nation was at the tipping point of final triumph against the practice and should not permit any push back.

“The presidential commitment made in Canada was fantastic. Change is already happening and it is important to accelerate the movement. We need to see what is working and how we could use those successful actions to end FGM by 2022,” she stressed.

The UNFPA Representative, Dr. Olajide Ademola, applauded the vision of His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta, the Government of Kenya, donors and other stakeholders.

“For us, the only number which we can accept is zero. The President’s vision of Ending FGM by 2022 gave us responsibilities as partners and community members to support and sustain the dignity and integrity of women and girls. We appreciate donors who have provided support to us but we need more collective action and resources to end FGM by 2022,” he emphasized.



Dr. Ademola Olajide with anti-FGM youth representatives from various counties

“The presidential commitment made in Canada was fantastic. Change is already happening and it is important to accelerate the movement. We need to see what is working and how we could use those successful actions to end FGM by 2022”



Community elders who have taken a stand against FGM

The Representative called upon the stakeholders to embrace “Strategy and speed! Community and collaboration! Partnership for progress! Reforms for results! And Leadership for leverage!” to realize an FGM free Kenya by 2022.



Dr. Olajide Ademola with Sharifa Mohammed a poet and anti FGM champion who uses poems to create awareness on FGM

Against My Will: State of the World Report Launched in Kenya



CS, Prof. Margaret Kobia, Dr. Ademola Olajide, CS, Hon. (AMB.) Ukur Yattani, CAS Dr. Patrick Ole Ntutu during the launch of the State of the World Population Report 2020 and State of Kenya Population Report



Siddharth Chatterjee, UN Resident Coordinator gives remarks during the launch of the SWOP

The Government of Kenya through the National Treasury and Planning Cabinet Secretary Hon. (Amb.) Ukur Yatani, the Cabinet Secretary for Public Service and Gender Prof. Margret Kobia, and the UNFPA Representative Dr. Ademola Olajide officially launched the State of the World Population 2020 report with a call to end harmful practices against women and girls. This took place in Nairobi on the 11th of July, 2020 on the side-lines of the WPD 2020 Celebrations. A domesticated version of the global report was also launched.

According to the report, every day, hundreds of thousands of girls around the world are harmed physically or psychologically, or both, with the full knowledge and consent of their families, friends and communities. The impact ripples throughout society, buttressing gender stereotypes and inequalities. The harmful practices have been almost universally denounced as human rights violations yet remain stubbornly widespread: FGM, child marriage and son preference.

The report further states that 4 million girls will this year will undergo FGM globally. Further, some 33,000 child marriages occur every day globally and due to the global preference for sons over daughters, more than 140 million girls are considered missing today due to infanticide, kidnapping, trafficking, or other forms of violence against female infants and young girls. These practices the UNFPA reports states are all rooted in gender inequality and a desire to control women's bodies and lives.

UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem, summed up the report in three words respect, protect and fulfill. These rally us to foster respect for women and girls by changing entrenched attitudes and practices that dehumanize and commoditize them, furthermore, we must



CS Prof. Margaret Kobia gives her remarks during the launch of SWOP



CAS Nadia Abdalla gives her remarks during the launch of the SWOP

Harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage are deterrents to achieving gender equality. Harmful practices prevent Kenya from achieving a demographic dividend and the noble goals set in the Kenya Vision 2030, Big 4 Agenda, Population Policy for National Development, and the ICPD25 Kenya country commitments among others. It is therefore important and urgent that harmful practices be laid bare and addressed with a view of ending them.

UNFPA Kenya will continue to support communities by facilitating conversations that help communities, parents and partners understand the physical and psychological toll of these practices and the benefits that accrue to all when these practices are abandoned.

protect women and girls by enacting and enforcing laws against practices like child marriage and FGM and consequently, Governments must fulfil their obligations under human rights treaties that require elimination of FGM and child marriage. These three words respect, protect and fulfil can bring real change and real results for women and girls globally and in Kenya.

During the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, Kenya made commitments towards accelerating the promise on zero harmful practices and committed to eliminating, by 2030, all forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV), including child and forced marriages, by addressing social and cultural norms that propagate the practice while providing support to women and girls who have been affected.



2020 World Population Day

Putting Brakes on Covid-19: How to Safeguard the Health and Rights of Women and Girls Now



STATE OF WORLD POPULATION 2020

AGAINST MY WILL

DEFYING THE PRACTICES THAT HARM WOMEN AND GIRLS AND UNDERMINE EQUALITY

unfpa.org/AgainstMyWill

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Cut, SCRAPED, STITCHED

Female genital mutilation, FGM, is the partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

It takes place in every region of the world, affecting 200 million women and girls alive today.

It violates women's and girls' rights to health, to bodily integrity, to be free from discrimination and cruel or degrading treatment. It can even kill her.

Not all parents, grounded in the misguided belief that it improves fertility, enhances sexual pleasure for men, suppresses female sexuality, complies with religious demands or results in acceptance to the community. It is performed to uphold a girl's purity, honour and chastity, to make her more marriageable.

CHILD MARRIAGE

PROMISED, GIVEN, TRADED, SOLD

When a girl is married for schooling usually ends. Childbearing begins. She is made more vulnerable to pregnancy-related death, and to domestic violence. Ours to the future claim that.

Child marriages are almost universally banned, yet they happen 73,000 times a day, every day, all around the world.

An estimated 650 million girls and women alive today were married as children.

Parents justify marrying girls early as a way to secure their economic future, as they may regard daughters as an economic responsibility and a way of settling familial debts or disputes. Some parents believe early marriage will safeguard their daughters from sexual violence, allocating responsibility for their daughter's safety to her husband and his family. The fact that her husband may be a source of sexual violence is seldom considered. Families increasingly resort to child marriage in times of crisis and displacement.

But the basis of this tradition is usually the desire to govern a girl's virginity for her husband, regarding her body as an object for his possession and use.

SON PREFERENCE

UNWANTED, NEGLECTED, ERASED

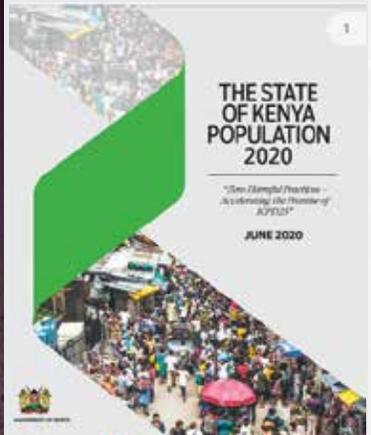
When boys are more highly valued than girls, pressure to have a son can be intense. Couples may go to great lengths to avoid giving birth to a girl (gender-based sex selection), or they may fail to care for the health and well-being of a daughter they already have in favour of their son (postnatal sex selection).

Son preference is not new, but the trend towards smaller families is. Most women today have three children or fewer; fewer children means fewer chances to have a son. About a quarter of all parents with two girls may resort to gender-based sex selection to avoid the birth of a third girl.

Today, it is estimated that more than 140 million females are missing as a consequence of son preference.

The practice can result in coerced or forced abortions for pregnant women, abandonment or neglect of women who give birth to girls, and poorer nutrition, healthcare, education and fewer opportunities for girls.

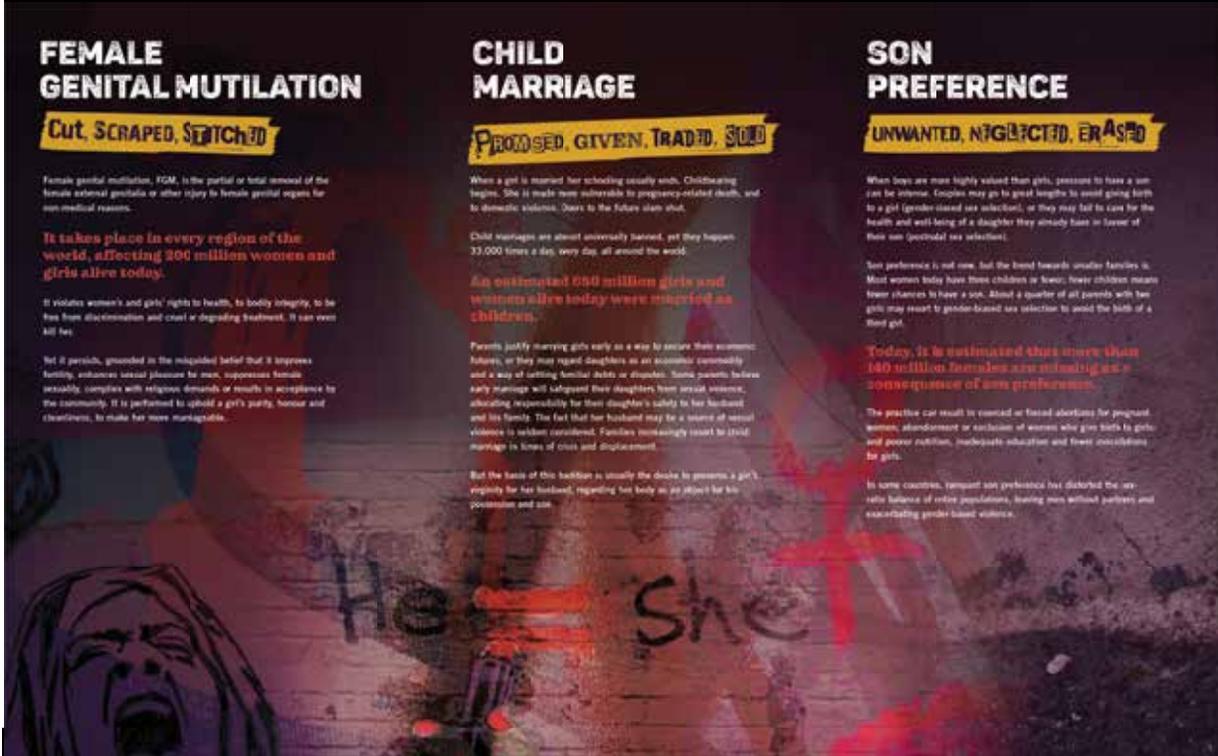
In some countries, rampant son preference has distorted the overall balance of entire populations, leaving men without partners and exacerbating gender-based violence.



THE STATE OF KENYA POPULATION 2020

"See Yourself Thriving in Kenya's Future"

JUNE 2020



Kenya Runs to End FGM by 2022

The First Lady of the Republic of Kenya H.E Margaret Kenyatta on the 8th of March led thousands of Kenyans in kicking off the 2020 edition of the Beyond Zero Half Marathon at the Nyayo Stadium in Nairobi Kenya. This was the Fifth Edition of the event that has become popular in the country. The First Lady reaffirmed her commitment to expand the political good will and resource mobilization initiatives aimed at improving provision of quality healthcare to women and children in Kenya.

The aim of the 2020 marathon was to bring pre- and post-natal healthcare to less privileged women and girls in Kenya and accelerate the end of FGM by 2022. UNFPA Kenya made a contribution of 3 million Kenya shillings and mobilised 20 staff members led by the Country Representative



The President and First Lady of the Republic of Kenya during the Beyond Zero Marathon



Nicholas Kariuki and Mukiza Mwenesi, UNFPA Kenya Staff, run to put an end to Female Genital Mutilation during the Beyond Zero Half Marathon

, Dr. Ademola Olajide, to run for an end to Female Genital Mutilation.

This fifth edition of the Marathon was the first since Kenya hosted the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 that secured global commitments to realize the three zeros. Zero maternal deaths, zero gender based violence and harmful practices, and zero unmet need for family planning. The event was graced by His Excellence President Uhuru Kenyatta who also ran part of the marathon. There were over 20,000 Kenyans from all cadres of society including children and people living with disabilities who

resonated passionately with the call to pursue improved health as the mainstay of national development.

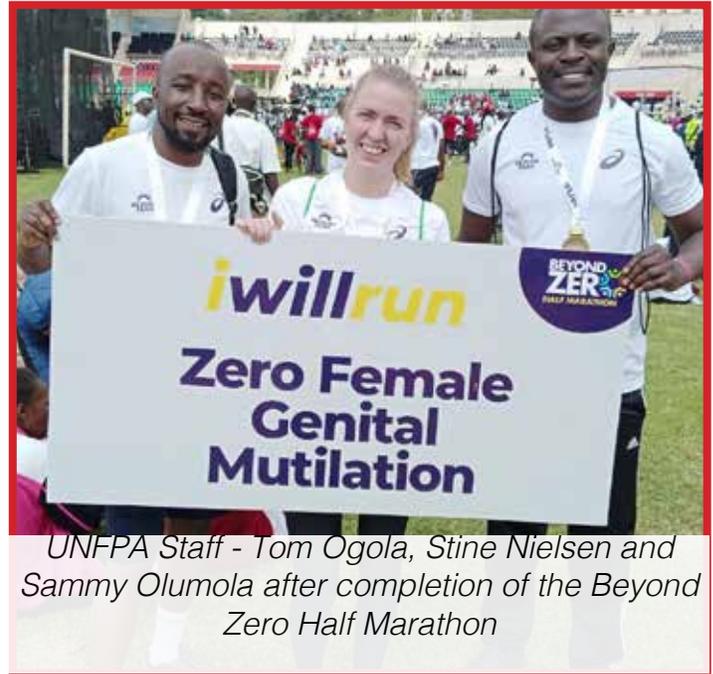
The presence of the President, senior government officials and private sector actors, amplified the centrality of maternal health and ending FGM in Kenya.

“Our advocacy work has brought into the limelight the plight of women as they renew the life of the nation in maternity wards, and ignited the growing urgency to end FGM and eradicate obstetric fistula

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la. We are proud of our collective voice as a nation that recognizes the unique role of women and girls in fulfilling our common vision,” the First Lady said.

“Today, as we commemorate this year’s International Women’s Day, we also want to raise awareness about issues that impede women’s and girls’ opportunities to advance and thrive as equal citizens of the world. Today we run for several causes: we run for zero maternal deaths, we run to end female genital mutilation and obstetric fistula, and we run to end child marriages,” the First Lady reiterated. Beyond Zero is Kenya’s phenomenal event on the resolve to galvanize immense national support towards the advancement of women’s sexual and reproductive health rights, and ending the culture of violence against women and girls in all forms.



UNFPA Staff - Tom Ogola, Stine Nielsen and Sammy Olumola after completion of the Beyond Zero Half Marathon



Caroline Murgor, H.E Margaret Kenyatta, Dr Ademola Olajide and Dan Okoro hold a dummy cheque with a donation to the Beyond Zero Half Marathon



Stine Nielsen UNFPA during the Beyond Zero Half Marathon

A COVID-19 Free Region should also be FGM free : *Dr. Ademola Olajide and Mubarak Mabuya*

The current global Covid 19 pandemic has severely affected countries in every part of the globe. The African region has not been spared the resultant challenges in the economy, public health and socio-cultural systems. Responses to the pandemic in the region have largely focused on prevention of importation of the virus through airport and border closures, suppression of transmission through social distancing, quarantines, virus testing and clinical management of confirmed cases, movement restrictions and other preventive measures.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as a Regional Economic Community serving the east and horn of Africa has an interest, like all its Member States in the free movement of citizens, goods and services with critical infrastructure developed and deployed over years to support Member States to facilitate this process including disease surveillance at border crossings and beyond.

While the human toll of the pandemic is largely viewed through the lens of the mortality and morbidities linked directly to the virus, as well as the economic cost on livelihood; it is important not to miss the other more insidious effects such as Female Genital Mutilation. The Covid-19 pandemic has invigorated an unacceptable resurgence in the incidence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) within the region, including the risk of a spike in it's cross border dimension. The phenomenal progress made over the last decade in reversing the practice, including enactment of laws that prohibit the practice and define punishments for perpetrators, is in jeopardy.

The Covid-19 pandemic has invigorated an unacceptable resurgence in the incidence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) within the region,



Dr Olajide Ademola UNFPA Representative in the field to end FGM in counties

Closure of the protective school environment, increased household indigence due to the widespread economic upheaval, paralysis of community level platforms for transformation of norms, and access to justice mechanisms being in limbo in the region are noticeable drivers of the Covid-19 induced FGM regressive curve. The harrowing possibility of a rapid increase in the number of women and girls maimed by the retrogressive practice should rekindle our zeal and transnational synergies to stem it. Mobilization of public health amenities and security systems for the containment of Covid-19 has constrained anti-FGM surveillance and response actions.

Endemic climatic shocks such as the landslides, floods and droughts experienced in the region; and a devastating pestilence akin to the most severe locust invasion in 70 years weaken community and institutional capacities to embrace and enforce shifts away from harmful practices like FGM and child marriage.

The shared ethnographic identity across many countries in the region predicts virtual uniformity in the rise in FGM victimization during this period of a unique global emergency that militates against social cohesion

The burden of FGM and the entire spectrum of gender-based inequalities on a region where most countries are still in the nascent stages of post conflict regeneration is staggering. The practice impedes and disrupts access to education and training for women and girls causing a decline in their productivity.

The launch of the End Female Genital Mutilation Campaign by the African Union in 2019 renewed the impetus to eliminate the FGM practice as a transnational human rights challenge. Subsequently, five countries, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda, forged an alliance that achieved the landmark declaration to strengthen cooperation and coordination in implementation of normative frameworks and knowledge products to promote realization of an FGM free region.

This initiative included concrete actions to put an end to free movement of their citizens across their State borders for the purposes of subjecting women and girls to FGM in neighboring countries.

One of the most notable commitments made by countries during the historic International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25), Nairobi Summit were the commitments to end FGM. In Kenya, the H.E President of Kenya



H.E Uhuru Kenyatta during the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25

committed to “end Female Genital Mutilation by 2022. This would be by strengthening coordination in the area of legislation and policy framework, communication, advocacy, evidence generation, and supporting cross border collaboration on elimination of FGM.

The practice of FGM impedes and disrupts access to education and training for women and girls causing a decline in their productivity.

IGAD fully appreciates the centrality of human capital development to the overall socio-economic development of its member states, especially harnessing the optimal contribution of women. IGAD therefore within its Gender Policy and Strategy, has developed policy briefs to inform regional and national interventions in addressing gender inequality-intensified challenges and vulnerabilities and more so now during the COVID-19 pandemic. The diffusion effect of such high-level political efforts against the practice has been evident in many jurisdictions in the region albeit in contextualized parlance



Mr. Mubarak Mabuya Programme Manager for Gender Affairs at IGAD Secretariat, Djibouti

Covid-19 could potentially slow these strides and push women and girls further and deeper into the gruesome indignity of FGM victimization. The apparent de-prioritization and complacency towards the practice as seen in the understandably loud focus in messaging and advocacy against virus, could breed impunity in the perpetuation of FGM in the region beyond the life of the pandemic. Consequently, the region needs to re-ignite civic vigilance and a rebound in the political push. Indeed, the recent decision of the Government of The Republic of Sudan to criminalize the practice of FGM is a welcome indication that Member states can respond to the Covid-19 challenge while concurrently upholding the rights and well-being of women and girls.

IGAD is founded on the protection and promotion of human rights notwithstanding the nature of emergencies that characterize the region. It is during calamitous moments like the present Covid-19 experience that we are emboldened to firewall violation of rights and freedoms as integral ingredients of peace and stability in the region.

IGAD leverages on global and continental instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) to demand respect and accountability for women's rights as human rights. The institution will therefore seek to leverage its numerous cross border initiatives to enhance vigilance and response to deter the practice of FGM across its borders.

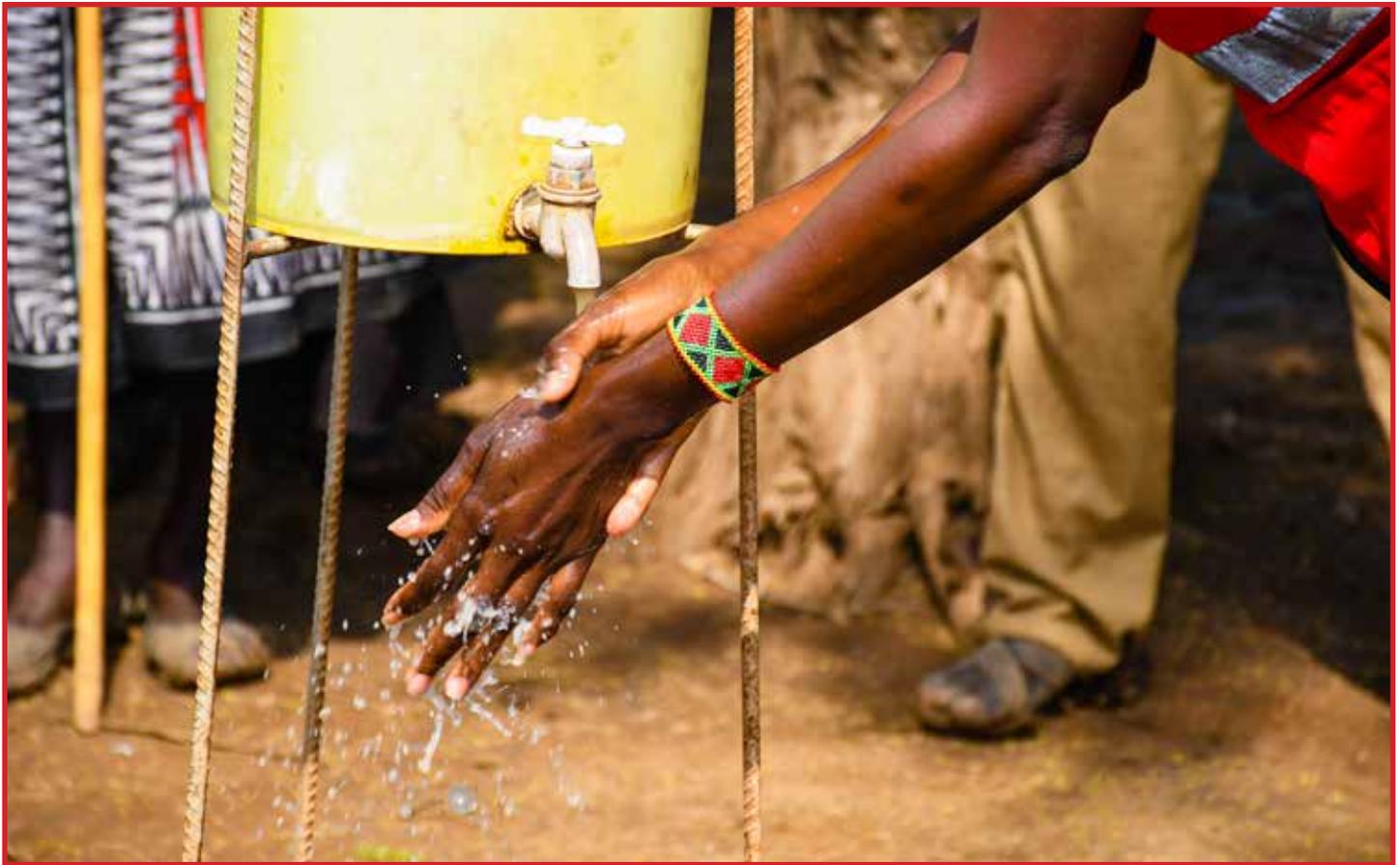
UNFPA's exceptional mandate to broaden rights and choices has never been affirmed more than it is now during the Covid-19 response. Progress in the region is contingent upon fidelity to the collective vision of nations during the ICPD25 Nairobi Summit that redefined the roadmap to achieving sustainable development outcomes on the basis of choice. We implore governments in the region, communities and the private sector to reinvigorate commitments and expand social and economic resources towards ending cross border FGM. It is time to ensure women's and girls' rights are protected, respected and upheld. A Covid-19 free region should be equally FGM free!



UNFPA Kenya Leadership at a meeting in Tana River County with cultural and community leaders



Leaky Tins: Addressing Covid-9 and Female Genital Mutilation



Since the first case of COVID 19 was reported in March 2020, the Government of Kenya spelt out measures including social distancing, high level of personal hygiene by individuals (washing hands thoroughly with running water and soap), covering the mouth when sneezing, avoiding hand greetings among others.

In Narok County, Ilaramatak Administrative Police, maintaining personal hygiene is a big challenge since the community do not have running water. In order to reduce the spread of this disease among the community members, the FGM network embarked on sustained sensitization forums in the villages on how the community could reduce the spread of the deadly virus among the community members. The community members were supported to put up leaky tins using locally available materials that would help reduce the spread of this virus. The community have embraced the use of leaky tins. The leaky tin is available in every homestead/ household as a measure to curb the spread of COVID 19.



Brother helps his sister keep COVID free by practicing Hygiene

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Dignity through Difficulty: Voice of an African Girl Child

"I am Lillian Noeli Koskei, a young woman born in Barpello, East Pokot, Kenya. My tough upbringing was hugely influenced by the rich Pokot nomadic culture – typical rural and traditional tribe.

"At the age of 12, my mother sent me to a boarding school, over 150 Kilometres away from home in a bid to protect and keep me safe from undergoing FGM. I did not disappoint her as graduated from high school top of my class.

"I went on to pursue a University degree in Communication and Journalism at Moi University. I specialized in broadcast journalism, grounded in the real life experience of communicating with rural people.

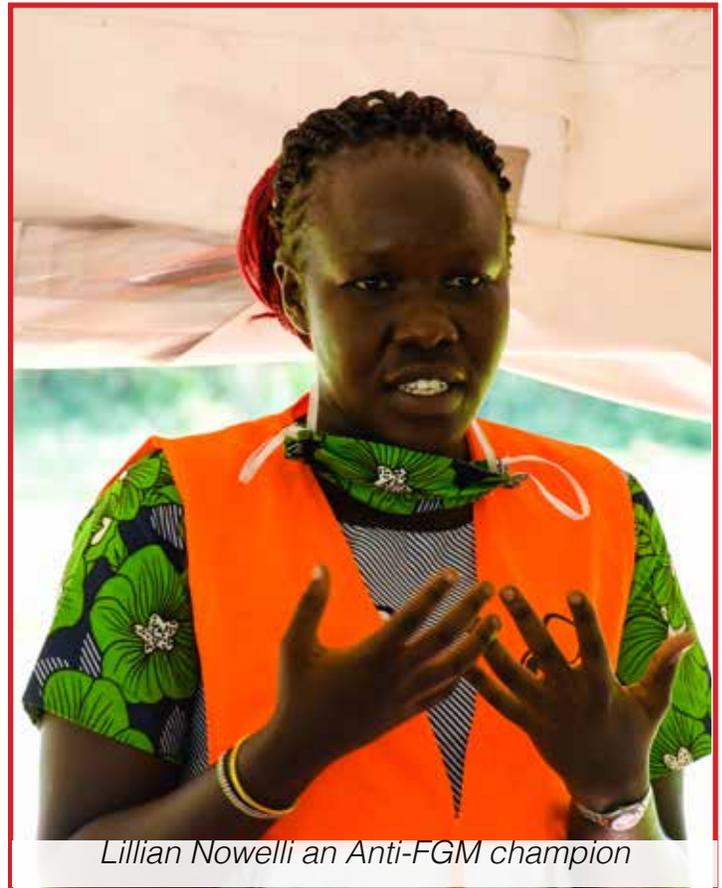
"I was an avid mentor and human rights activist during my time at university. I carried out campaigns with the intention of bringing change to a society that valued the rights of women less. I equally carried out numerous education campaigns to raise awareness on the importance of formal education.

"Over the years, I have supported myself by working as a training assistant at Rotu Primary School and Barpello High School. The training required understanding of tribal norms, human rights and Kenyan laws. This has led me to become a competent and respected facilitator, which influenced my choice of the degree course to study.

"After college, I became a radio presenter with Radio Amani and North Rift Radio. My fluency in Kiswahili, English and Kalenjin, coupled with eloquence and enunciation, made me a much sought-after broadcaster.

"I later volunteered with the Barpello Catholic Mission as a trainer and where I was once again drawn to the needs of young girls who are being forced into practices which are illegal in the modern society. I worked passionately with World Vision Kenya, Samburu Women Trust, Human Right Defenders Coalition and Holy Ghost Fathers to help the young girls and women.

"I established and registered a community-based organization called Sauti Dada Africa, which means



Lillian Nowelli an Anti-FGM champion

"voice of the young girl" in Kiswahili. The organization is strongly dedicated to helping young girls in rural Kenya. We fight harmful traditional practices that solely affect the girl child.

"Female Genital Mutilation has limited girls in my community from enjoying their rights. Our sole responsibility is to rescue girls from FGM and child marriages. Our aim is to create a safe environment that enables girls to strive and achieve their dreams. We empower them through alternative rites of passage trainings which equip them with relevant life skills to face adversities and challenges that they encounter.

"Education is a major tool for change. I look forward to reaching out to all girls to give them a better future. My dream is to see their faces smiling! We are the voice of the African girl child!"



Dividends of Male Engagement and Involvement: Partnership between UNFPA and Boda Boda Safety Association of Kenya



UNFPA Kenya and the Boda Boda Association of Kenya (BAK) early this year announced a partnership that would energize realization of Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and ending FGM.

The partnership also aims to amplify avenues to address other closely related issues such as teenage pregnancy, HIV and AIDS, child marriages, safe motherhood, and family planning throughout the country in a bid to achieve zero preventable maternal deaths, zero gender based violence and harmful practices; and zero unmet need for family planning.

On the 4th of March 2020, the Ministry of Public Service and Gender with support from UNFPA hosted a strategic partners dialogue forum that brought together development partners and other stakeholders to deliberate on the national action strategy (the Roadmap) to Accelerate the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation which would be resourced and executed through a broad multi-actor and multi-sectoral approach.

During the forum the Boda Boda Association of Kenya led by their chairman, Mr. Kevin Badia, committed to mobilize their over one million members to end FGM. Mr. Badia stated that BAK with the support of UNFPA and the Government of Kenya had embarked on a programme to ensure that each and every rider is sensitized on the laws against FGM and play an active role in community surveillance to ensure FGM comes to an end by 2022.

Subsequently, BAK and UNFPA kicked off the first sensitization of 300 riders at Kiminini, Mt. Elgon Sub-County, Bungoma County.

“You cannot even imagine what these girls go through. It is a horrific practice that truly serves no purpose and we must condemn FGM with the contempt it deserves”.

The event started with a courtesy call on the Mt. Elgon Sub-County Deputy County Commissioners (DCC) who was briefed on UNFPA's mandate and the partnership with BAK.

UNFPA's collaboration with the BAK is a male involvement strategy. The partnership is premised on securing the influence of men to catalyse transformation in attitudes towards violence against women and girls in its diverse forms and promotion of sexual and reproductive health rights. Men are often excluded from these critical spheres of development, leading to minimal results.

The Boda Boda Association of Kenya provides a unique platform for engagement with the biggest network of men in the country who command enormous influence on social behaviour and household incomes. The Association is a feasible forum for propagation of information on what men can do to eliminate harmful practices like FGM and support positive health care practices across the continuum of sexual and reproductive health, including family planning.



Courtesy Call to the County Commissioners office in Mt Elgon

The riders showed eagerness to engage and learn more on how to impact the fight against FGM. They showed concern about the impact of the practice on the health of women and girls, and erosion of benefits for their families when girls drop out of school to get married after undergoing FGM. "Most of us are the sole breadwinners for our families because of our wives were pushed out of the education process prematurely by such practices that undermine their human rights and potential for quality life," remarked one of the riders. The riders made a powerful declaration to put an end to FGM and be the champions of change.



Chairman BAK Kevin Mubadi addresses riders in Mt Elgon

During the event at Kiminini, the riders were sensitized on personal safety as being of paramount importance, and their contribution to the presidential vision to put an end to FGM by 2022. "Your safety on the road is the sole insurance for your business. Don't compromise. We need the power and influence of your voices to shape and reform attitudes and norms that normalize violence against women and girls," urged the UNFPA Representative, Dr. Ademola Olajide.



UNFPA NPPP Caroline Murgor addresses riders in Mt Elgon

Accountability for Accelerating the Fight to End FGM: Engaging County Administrators and Leadership

The Chief Administrative Secretary (CAS), Ministry of Public Service and Gender, Hon. Rachel Shebesh visited Nyamira, Kisii, Narok, Kisumu, Kakamega, and Embu counties to engage the county leadership and administrators in monitoring implementation of the Government’s programme to end FGM by 2022.

The meetings were pursuant to President Uhuru Kenyatta’s vision to end FGM by 2022. Relevant Government ministries were tasked with monitoring, coordination and oversight of the campaign against FGM in keeping with Kenya’s ICPD25 Nairobi Summit commitments on ending gender based violence and all harmful practices. Senior Officers from the State Department for Gender and the Anti-FGM Board, in collaboration with county



Hon. Rachel .Shebesh addressing Chiefs in Taita Taveta County



Agnes Pareiyo Chair of the Anti-FGM Board



Religious leader giving remarks on ending FGM

governments and UNFPA have been touring the counties to monitor efforts towards realizing the President’s pledge that he had also made during the Women Deliver Conference in Canada in 2019.

Hon. Shebesh has reached out to over 200 administrators during her county excursions, emphasizing their accountability as duty bearers in addressing FGM. The CAS has been categorical on the role that national and county leaders and administrators should play in ensuring the existing laws and policies on that prohibit the FGM practice are fully implemented.

“We have laws and policies enacted and formulated in our country that call upon your diligent action to ensure efficacious implementation. As a Government committed to elimination of FGM by 2022, we recognize and anchor success on your dedication to the President’s vision. It is your cardinal duty to ensure those subjecting women and girls to FGM including in health facilities face the full and vigorous application of the law,” said the CAS while addressing the administrators in Nyamira, alluding to medicalization of the FGM practice that has been identified as an emerging trend.



An Assistant Chief reads the Policy on Eradication of FGM in Kenya

Alarmed by the mutilation of infants in Taita Taveta County dubbed ‘clitoral pinching’, Hon. Shebesh visited the county twice within a span of two weeks to draw the attention of duty bearers to the heinous act that has led increased infant mortality affecting mostly girls who haemorrhage to death during the act. She requested community members to be vigilant and report cases to the authorities for prompt action to save the children.

The CAS has distributed close to 500 dignity kits provided by UNFPA during meetings with community members in the rural counties and informal settlements in Nairobi to cushion girls against increased vulnerability during Covid-19. She also uses the opportunity to counsel girls who are out of school due to the pandemic on sexuality and reproductive health issues that define their developmental milestones as adolescents and youth.



County Commissioner of Kisii County Mr Amos Mariba



Deputy Governor Nyamira County Hon Amos Nyaribo is handed The Policy on Eradication of FGM in Kenya

The UNFPA Representative, Dr. Ademola Olajide, who has been on most missions conducted by the CAS has consistently relayed the message of readiness to translate the President’s vision of ending FGM by 2022 into the reality of life for women and girls.

“His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta has inspired us to denormalize our targets and seek achievements that are enormously transformative. It is his statement of faith in the results that our partnership can achieve and we can’t seek a different yardstick,” said Dr. Ademola, in Kisii County.

The Ministry of Public Service and Gender under the leadership of Prof. Margaret Kobia, the Cabinet

Secretary, has taken lead in the coordination and convening of stakeholders to adopt a harmonized all-inclusive approach in the 22 counties with a high prevalence of FGM in Kenya.



Meeting with County Administration in Taita Taveta County



Hon. Shebesh hands the Anti FGM policy to women representatives in Kisii County



Hon. Shebesh addressing the top County Administration of Taita Taveta County on Female Genital Mutilation



Hon. Shebesh in Narok County during the county visit



Hon. Shebesh hands the Anti FGM policy to a representative of religious leaders

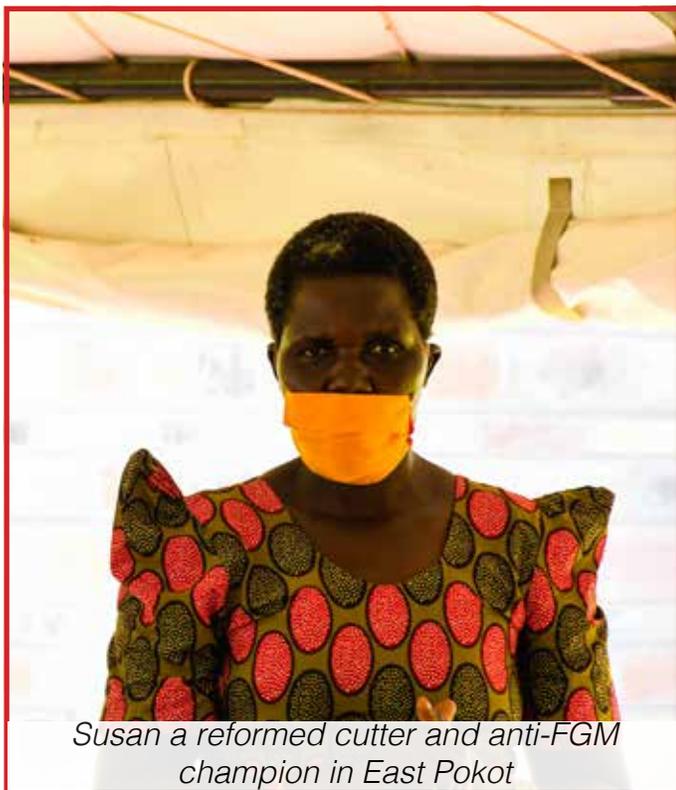
West Pokot Engagement with Anti-FGM Champions



George Ndungu of WVK explains their interventions on ending FGM in Pokot

World Vision Kenya (WVK) with the support of UNFPA Kenya, has implemented gender equality and women empowerment programmes in Baringo County since 2008. The support has included alternative rites of passage for girls at risk of FGM, mentorship and life skills programmes for girls and boys, and community dialogues, amongst others interventions. Through this support, WVK have managed to impact close to 30, 000 beneficiaries in 8 sub-locations.

On the 19th of June 2020, UNFPA led by her Country Representative, Dr. Ademola Olajide joined World Vision staff and other stakeholders in East Pokot, Baringo County. The group included Anti-FGM champions from the community, religious leaders and county officials. Susan, an anti-FGM champion joined the meeting from a nearby IDP camps for East Pokot Flood survivors. Speaking at the meeting Susan said "As a group, we have been trained and now have over 15 champions who are voices of change in East Pokot Sub-County." She added that given the information and trust developed with other champions, they are more emboldened to speak out against FGM in the camps



Susan a reformed cutter and anti-FGM champion in East Pokot

Noweli uses a local radio show to voice issues of FGM and train mothers to embrace change for progress for the progression of her community. Vernacular radio stations with anti FGM messages have been helpful in passing messages in local dialects to communities in East Pokot. Radio has played a key role in ending cultural vices,” remarked Lillian as she passionately addressed the gathering.

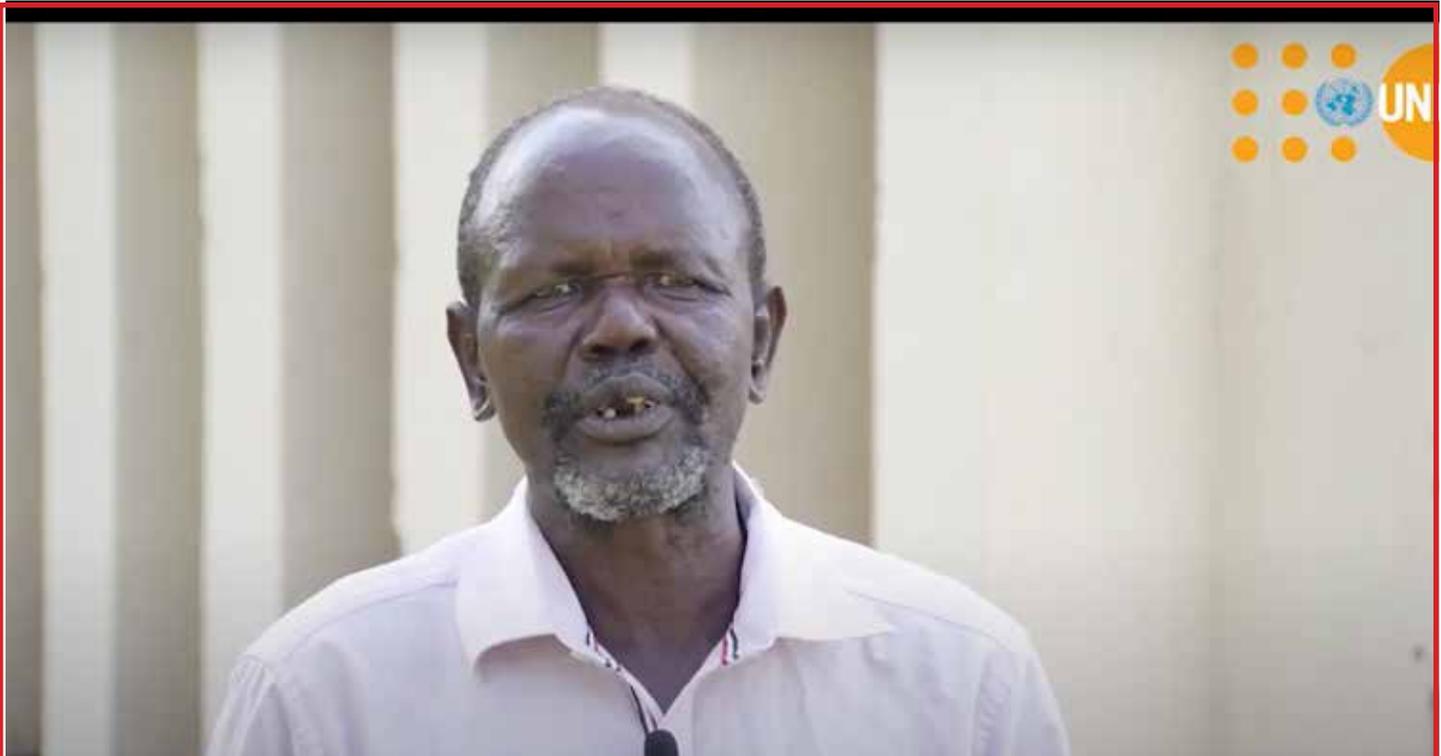
Kenneth Kemoi Tenwach a young male champion in East Pokot, Baringo County, agreed with Lillian. Kenneth joined the Programme in 2019 and now champions the involvement of boys and men in the campaign to end FGM. He has been a champion in changing the mind-set that Pokot men don’t marry uncut girls. He uses activities such as sports during school holidays to bring the community together and as a channel to sensitize them on ending cultural practices such as early child marriages and FGM. Furthermore, Kenneth conducts live performances in schools including use of community dialogues in vernacular language. To reach a wider audience especially youth, the iconic anti-FGM champion uses social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to create awareness and promote access to justice. His commitment to Anti- FGM activities has galvanized more male

Others at the meeting included, Lillian Noweli a community change agent and the first female journalist from East Pokot. Noweli is also the founder of Sauti Dada Africa, an organization fighting against FGM. Speaking hopefully Lillian shared her experience of fleeing from FGM. Through the efforts of her mother, Lillian was rescued in 2007 when she was destined for the cut. Her mother sent her to boarding school over 150 km away from her village to protect her from undergoing the FGM. She emerged top of her class in high school and later joined university where she obtained a degree in journalism.

“As a group we were sensitized by WVK and through their efforts we are thankful that we now have over 15 champions who are voices of change in West Pokot County.” Susan - Anti FGM Champion



Lillian Noweli the first ever Female Journalist from East Pokot



Pastor Edward Tamar a religious leader in East Pokot who fights for the end of FGM

agents in East Pokot who urge other young men to marry uncut girls whilst safeguarding the rights of girls who have already been cut.

Participants of the forum appreciated the support that UNFPA has provided in the campaign to end FGM as well as committing to support eradication of GBV and other harmful practices perpetrated against women and girls. They included the Member of County Assembly, Hon. Hunington Kakimon who assured the gathering of effective and rigorous implementation of laws and policies that shield women and girls from practices such as FGM and child marriage. “A win against FGM and child marriage will usher in prosperity for all,” he remarked aptly



Kenneth Tenwatch an Anti-FGM champion in East Pokot

Reaching those Left Far Much Behind: Visit to Meru and Tharaka Nithi Counties



*Ms Beverly Opwara County Commissioner
Tharaka Nithi County*

Over the last few months, the Covid-19 pandemic has emerged as the defining global crisis of our time. Though the health sector remains the epicenter of the pandemic, its social and economic ramifications are pervasive and continue to disrupt every facet of society, calling for increased support systems to mitigate the detrimental effects and harness opportunities.

In a bid to alleviate the suffering of Kenyans and ensure no one is left behind in the wake of the devastating and multidimensional impacts of Covid-19 the Government of Kenya with support from various partners has been ramping up social protection measures including access to cash transfer and provisions especially for low income households. UNFPA has been part of the initiative through donation of food and non-food items including dignity kits to especially women and girls whose pre-existing vulnerabilities have been aggravated by the pandemic.

On the 9th of July 2020, a government delegation led by the Ministry of Public Service and Gender Cabinet Secretary, Prof. Margaret Kobia, accompanied by the UNFPA Representative, Dr. Ademola Olajide,

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visited Meru and Tharaka Nithi counties to assess the effects of the pandemic and deliver relief provisions.

In Meru County the delegation was received by the County Commissioner Mr. Alan Machari. The County Commissioner assured the delegation of the Government's resolute measures to stamp out FGM as an unlawful practice that posed grave health risks to women and girls. The UNFPA Representative echoed these sentiments, promising to invigorate the momentum to eliminate FGM by 2022 as pledged by His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta.

The Cabinet Secretary, Prof. Margaret Kobia, urged the County Commissioner to ensure a watertight strategy to address all forms of violence is in place and passionately implemented. She acknowledged the increased protection risks for vulnerable members of society especially women and girls in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and stated the Government's multipronged measures to cushion populations exposed to social and economic challenges.

"The Government of His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta is committed to seeing an end to the pandemic and regeneration of the national development vision.

Our partnership with friends like UNFPA and others enriches our certainty that the future ahead of us shall be different from the challenges that we face today," she said. Prof. Kobia donated food stuffs, household items and dignity kits provided by UNFPA to residents of the county who continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience against the pandemic.

His Excellency Hon. Muthimi Njuki the Governor of Tharaka Nithi County welcomed the delegation to the county where concerted efforts by the National and County governments have sustained an impressive campaign to eliminate the FGM practice. Ms. Beverly Opwara, the County Commissioner has been indefatigable in confronting the retrogressive practice, which has seen many hitherto diehard practitioners, among them circumcisers, abandon it and become agents of change. "The President's resolve to usher in a non-FGM practicing era for Kenya by 2022 is the best gift to women and girls. We shall do whatever it takes to enable realization of this vision," remarked Ms. Opwara.

Dr. Ademola and Prof. Margaret Kobia applauded the county leadership for the milestones in delivering on the President's vision of an FGM free generation in Kenya. They emphasized the role of the community in sustaining the impressive results and pledged support to ensure the gains are not eroded by challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic.



From Left - Right : Women Rep Tharaka Nithi County Beatrice Nkatha, CS Prof Margaret Kobia, UNFPA Representative, Dr Olajide Ademola, Governor Tharaka Nithi. Hon Muthimi Njuki , Chair Maendeleo ya wanawake Rahab Mwikali



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