



**Enhancing Community  
Approaches to Ending FGM**

**act:onaid**

Kapchorwa Cluster

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# About the Project

The project code named Enhancing Community Approaches to Ending FGM is a one year project that ActionAid Kapchorwa has implemented.

The project seeks to end FGM and violation of human rights through awareness creation. ActionAid engages different actors such as religious leaders, elders, cultural leaders, surgeons, mentors, youths, victims and survivors among others to end FGM.

## JUSTIFICATION

“This project is part of and contributes to ActionAid work since the anti FGM law was passed in 2010” says Moses Okello. It’s based on the fact that FGM besides being outlawed is a violation of human rights and in particular women rights. So ActionAid seeks to amplify the fact that FGM is a violation of women rights.

The project focused on Kapchorwa and Kween districts with more focus in Kween during the resurgence of FGM at the end of 2018 and start of 2019. Kween has had higher incidences of FGM than the other two districts of Kapchorwa and Bukwo.

ActionAid implemented the project using the community driven approaches like child rights clubs, Communicator monitors, cultural and religious leaders and use of alternative livelihoods options. The interventions which involved a range of stakeholders such as District leaders, cultural leaders, opinion leaders, religious leaders, children in schools, other civil society organisations and communities.

ActionAid moved to a full blown implementation where we have engagements with communities through dialogue, awareness creation on the dangers and health implications of FGM and also engagements with children through exhibitions in different schools where children developed messages and popularized these messages on FGM.

We have also had an Anti FGM Marathon which attracted athletes and the general public to drum support against FGM.

Moses adds that “We have also trained and maintained community monitors who identify and report FGM cases as they arise. This has enabled us to respond to incidences. We have specific activities in schools such as enabling them to conduct outreaches in their communities to create awareness”

We engaged different duty bearers especially the district political and technical actors, the religious leaders, cultural leaders. As we started the implementation, we did a study to map out the hot spots of recurrent scenarios and shared with the stakeholders.



David Moses Okello  
ActionAid Coordinator Kapchorwa Cluster

We have also done monitoring and information collections to build a data base of the current scenarios which we shared with others.

We have supported income generating activities for former surgeons who were selected from the areas of the project including victims and survivors. We put them in groups (7) and we have supported them with IGA's as an alternative to FGM. But also a form of resilience especially for victims and survivors. We took them through the different enterprises that they would like to undertake and supported feasibility analysis before giving support to different enterprises.

We have done campaigns especially during the International Day of Zero tolerance to FGM where all stakeholders were involved. We came up with the Kwozir declaration on the 6th of February.

We formed a young women leader's platform that enables young women to drum up the support in the fight against FGM. Mainly women leaders like CDO's, the volunteers, the Activista Network and CSO's and other Local Government young women leaders especially the teachers to engage with women especially girls to sensitize them on the dangers of FGM. “This has created much needed momentum in the fight against FGM” Moses adds.

We have also developed some Information Education and communication (IEC) materials and we have done documentation of different voices highlighting successes of the project.

# Victims Testify

I am married with six children and hail from Kipnarongo village Binyiny town council Kween District. I was circumcised in 1992 December. The reason why I chose to get circumcised was because of the culture which prohibits uncircumcised girls from picking cow dung from the kraal and climbing the granary to get food. I wondered what would happen if there was no one around to get for me food, Certainly i would starve.

So I went back home leaving my young child behind and got circumcised. I was circumcised at 7:00 am when it was still cold as tradition demands. However, I over bled and even fainted. "After fainting, i was unconscious for close to six hours and When I came to my senses I saw i had been tied with traditional herbs and medicines to stop the bleeding" remembers Sauda.



Sauda Yariwo (Victim)

I suffered a lot of pain during my long recovery and suffered a long separation from my young baby. However, God was on my side and I recovered. I returned to my husband's home and life continued as normal. I was now allowed to pick cow dung from the kraal and climb the granary to pick food.

However, I conceived my second child and the child birth was so painful as compared to the first child because there was a tear. "This made me regret undergoing FGM to this day. I advocate against it when I get a chance" she concludes.

**A**m twenty-five year old mother of with one and currently a resident of Sosyo village Kwosir Sub County. When growing up we were very poor and my parents often quarreled and fought a lot. My father and mother separated when I was still young.

"My mother left us with my father; we were six children in

total. I studied slowly due to lack of fees and eventually dropped out of school when I was in primary six. I stayed home for a long time until when I got married" she recalls I went to live with my husband at my father-in-law's compound. I gave birth to my child. But my father-in-law always wanted me to get circumcised. He refused me from collecting dung from his kraal (used for smearing on walls and floors of huts) and also to climb into the family granary to get food for I was still a girl in his eyes.

However, my husband did not complain about my being uncircumcised and in fact never wanted me to get circumcised. My father-in-law pressurised me so much that early this year, I decided to get circumcised. We were three girls who got circumcised. After circumcision, I bled a lot from the cut. I also took long to heal. I was given hospital medicine but never at any one time did I go to the hospital because we were in hiding. Apart from that I have not yet seen any side effects since I have not conceived or given birth.

When I healed, I went back to my husband but he chased me away saying that, 'my father wanted you to get circumcised and you allowed. For me, I don't want a circumcised woman. You go to him and he marries you.' My father-in-law tried to plead with him to keep me but he refused. So I left and came to stay with my aunt here in Kwosir. Since then, he has re-married an uncircumcised woman.

"I strongly advise those who have not yet been circumcised not to go for it because I for one bled a lot and took very long to heal" she advises.

Here at my aunt's home, I support myself by hiring out labour. But it is still difficult to meet my basic needs. If am to be supported, I need to acquire skills such as tailoring or any other. Also support to start up a business would be very welcome.



Winnie Chelangat (Victim)

# Escaping the Surgeon's Knife

**A**m a 35 year old mother of four children. I grew up in a very poor home. As a result, education was very tough and slow. “Eventually I dropped out in P.6. I was made to look after cows just to buy time as I got ready to be circumcised. When time came, my father put a lot of pressure for me to get circumcised but I vehemently refused” Lucy reminiscence. I started doing voluntary work with the Muppet Road show with the REACH project. That’s when I met a Langi soldier who was willing to marry me. I saw this as a chance to escape being circumcised. He took me to Lira where I had my three children. After that, my then husband chased me away claiming that I might run away and come to get circumcised. I swore to him that that’s the reason why I ran with him in the first place but he refused to listen. He married a Langi woman (his tribe mate) I left and came back home. “Now my father has come to his senses and has even given me a piece of land as my own. Am really lucky and happy that I escaped being circumcised and I beg all those girls who are not circumcised to resist the practice” adds Lucy with a smile



Chebet Lucy (Survivor)

**A**m twenty four years, married and with one child. I thank God that am a survivor. Am a teacher having graduated from Uganda Christian University Mukono in 2015. Am a teacher at Kaptum SS. When growing up, the environment was not conducive, people were illiterate and many girls were being forced to get circumcised. Lucky for me, my father is a staunch Christian who did not support FGM.

I was also lucky to be in school and I could not accept to get circumcised because what would I tell people out there that would be sheer stupidity. Through the education I was undergoing, I got to know the health related dangers of FGM including over bleeding, painful scars among others.

“The communities still practicing FGM should be thoroughly sensitized. The government should build more schools especially for the girls as most victims of FGM are either school dropouts or the uneducated” she advises.

The pressure for girls and women to be circumcised comes from grandparents and aunts who always claim that they were circumcised and yet still alive. Pressure also comes from neighbors and friends who burry you at water sources (by not allowing you to fetch water before them and at every given opportunity. Some of my friends got circumcised out of ignorance. They drop out of school and because they want to get married, they go for circumcison because once a girl has been circumcised, she is considered a woman and therefore can be married.

Over time, community sensitization has reduced. This could also be one of the reasons the practice has surged up. Here the surgeons and mentors had been given grinding mills ad other support. But there have not been sustainable this could also be why the practice is returning.

“I have been participating in ActionAid activities in the area especially during the Zero tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation campaign at Kwsir seed secondary school. And as a teacher I had to go back and sensitize my students at Kaptum SS. Later ActionAid came to our school to sensitive the school and the community around. At our school, we take time off to talk to the students during assemblies and after classes. We also incorporate FGM talks during lessons. We also carry out debates on FGM” she adds.



Yeko Masyline  
Sab Village Kwsir S/C (Survivor)

**A**m thirty six years old from Chemugengen village Kwosir Sub County. I come from a family of twelve children from two mothers. I have four children. I studied at Kere Primary School from primary one to primary seven then I went to Gamatui Girls from Senior one to Senior three. Then because of lack of fees, I moved and sat for my 'O' level from Kapchorwa Senior Secondary School. After senior four I dropped out of school because my father chose to educate my other five brothers who were also in secondary over me.

"In 2004, I got married to my first husband and in that year I had my first child. However, I was rejected by his family and they chased me away because I am very small and would produce for them very small poor quality children. I then returned to my father's home and stayed there" narrates a tearful Betty.

In 2007, I got married to my second husband and in 2008 I produced my second girl. However, like in the first marriage, I was rejected by my husband's family for the same reason and I was sent away. I again returned to my father's home.

In 2010, I again got married to my third husband and bore a son in 2012. Like in the first two marriages I was again rejected by my husband's family. However, this time I had bought a plot near the trading centre with my own money I had saved in the village savings and loans group. So I built my house and did not return to my father's house. However, my husband followed me to my new house. He married another wife but would visit once or twice every three months. I then produced my fourth child, a boy in 2016.

Early this year, my husband preferred me to get circumcised saying that he wants a "pasuben" (a special friend who attends a wife's or child's circumcision as a honored guest. This produces a lifelong friendship and special bond). I however vehemently refused his proposal.

"One day he came home in anger and burnt the main hut which I use to store all my useful items. Then he ran away across the border to Kenya. When the house got burnt, I lost my tailoring machine, many clothes for my clients some of which the clients had deposited money, I lost 3 mattresses, and other household items".says Betty amid sobs.

When my husband ran away, he did not care about the children anymore. In fact one of my children is now being taken care of by my sister.

I then relocated to the kitchen house which is in a very dire state. It leaks and the walls are crumbling. To make ends meet, I started ferrying fire wood from the forest to a collection Centre about 3 kilometers apart.

To fill a truck which can earn 150,000 shillings, I need to carry fire wood six times a day from morning to evening for two weeks. When a project called REACH (Reproductive Health and Community Health Project) heard of my plight, they gave me 20 iron sheets, nail rafters and poles which am using to construct a house on my plot.

*"The main reason why I refused to get circumcised is that we are a poor family with little resources. We have children in school who must get an education, so it would be a wastage of resources to have a circumcision ceremony"*

*The second reason is that am a very small bodied woman who has complications giving birth, so getting circumcised would worsen an already bad situation.*



**I have heard about ActionAid Involvement in human rights, I urge them to advocate for stronger laws and seriously sensitise girls against FGM. And I urge all girls out there who may want to get circumcised to desist from the practice.**

**Kusuro Betty (Survivor)**

# Taking Anti-FGM Crusade to Schools

**K**wosir Girls Senior Secondary School was started in 2013 as a presidential pledge to stop female genital mutilation. The location of the school was chosen because this area was and is still the most notorious for FGM.

“We have an enrollment of 280 students, girls only. Here, we do our best to ensure that girls stay in school and avoid FGM. We also encourage those girls to be ambassadors in their communities and pass on the Anti-FGM gospel” says Douglas.

We use assemblies and set aside Friday as a special day when issues regarding FGM are discussed. Also we use every opportunity during lessons to pass on FGM information.

“AAIU has really enriched the teacher’s capacity through workshops and seminars. They also visit the school and educate the girls” adds Douglas.

We have never had any of our girls becoming a victim of FGM. Our students may drop out because of other reasons such as pregnancy or early marriage but not because of FGM, even then, when 1 girl becomes pregnant or is married off, we encourage them to come back at the appropriate time and resume school.



**KAKWANI DOUGLAS**  
Assistant Director of Studies at Kwosir Girls Senior Secondary School.

The school is doing its best and as we speak of now, those who are getting circumcised are either school dropouts or other generations who attained little or no education at all. The surprise this year was a girl I heard about from Chemwonyu S.S who had sat for her S.6 but then got circumcised even then she had been out of school for someone. This was shocking.

The government has done its level best but more needs to be done. For example, government only set up structures for this school and that’s it. Nothing else is being done no other funding we need facilitation to do community sensitization to counter pressure from the old generation that is pushing the FGM agenda.

We have only one seed secondary school to combat FGM and its here in Kween District. If it is possible a minimum of two other schools one in Kapchorwa and Bukwo need to be set to make our work easier.

Some schools have learnt from us and are allowing girls who have either gotten pregnant or have been married to return and continue with their education. We are also expanding the school infrastructure so that by next year, A level starting with S.5 can commence.

**A**m a 20 year old student at Kwosir Girls Seed Secondary School.

In this school unlike the previous school where I was, the environment is very friendly and you can read and learn without distractions from fellow students. Here we receive many visitors who teach us about FGM. We are encouraged to stay and complete our studies. We are also given a lot of information concerning FGM during regular lessons and on Fridays during assemblies.

What I know about the side effects of FGM is that it leads to school drop outs, early marriages, death, diseases and it destroys the female reproductive organs.

Last year, many girls got circumcised but none of the students from this school was circumcised because we all want to focus and complete our education. “I have five older sisters and none of them is circumcised because we are aware of the dangers” Nelly says confidently.



**Chebet Nelly,**  
student at Kwosir Girls Senior Secondary School.

# Partnering for better results

**R**eproductive Health Uganda (RHU) is an NGO providing Sexual Reproductive Health Rights Services targeting the Youths through medical and advocacy services on HIV/AIDS.

“ActionAid has helped us reach a larger number of people. Whereas our work is medical, we invite ActionAid to provide legal support to the people we serve. During medical camps where we help victims and survivors of FGM, ActionAid helps them through linking them to better services and shelter at the Women Protection Center.

When ActionAid conducts community dialogues, we are called to sensitize people on the medical dangers of FGM. FGM affects obstetric aspects of women. When women are cut, the scars make it difficult for women to deliver. They can also easily contract infections and since the circumcision is not medically done, they don't know how to handle over bleeding” says Hamidu.

We have been able to reach populations in areas where we are not operating in like in Kwasir Sub County. We have also been able to offer services to women at the Women Protection Centre.



**KYAGAMO HAMIDU –**  
Service Provider Reproductive Health Uganda- partner

“Though there's the Anti FGM law, communities are mild and resistant and continue to practice FGM behind closed doors, bushes and caves. Many say that there's no FGM but it is underground unlike those days when it was done in the open. In December last year, the male circumcision was being done. However, FGM came in disguise. In January after the circumcision of boys, girls were seen in the open. They were being provided for security by armed community members carrying machetes, stones, sticks among others and no one could intervene” reveals Aisha.

We rushed to the police but they said they did not have enough resources. The practice was done so much in the open here in Binyiny and they were even passing just outside our office. Even in other areas like Cheminy, Kwasir, ranch and we heard of some cases in Ngenge. However in Ngenge some girls were arrested but they claimed they were escorting the boys who were to be circumcised and they were set free.



**CHEMUTAI ASHA, Programme Officer-CEDOVIP**

## REASONS FOR THE SURGE

Members of the community say that there was a discussion between President Museveni of Uganda and Vice President Ruto of Kenya ( A Kalenjin a tribal grouping the Sabiny belong to) and they agreed that the sabiny should be allowed to practice FGM. Politicians during campaigns had promised to fight for their culture. This gave them confidence to go ahead and do it in open. It is alleged that, in sabiny culture, there's a tree that when it flowers, the even year when boys are usually circumcised, that year they will not be circumcised. This was the case in 2016. So when the elders consulted oracles, they were told that girls had to be circumcised so that the tree doesn't flower again and thus the boys' circumcision will never be interrupted again. That's why so many girls were circumcised in December and January.

After the surge in girls undergoing FGM, we together with ActionAid took the initiative and visited the town council with the presence of the mayor. We discussed the practice and agreed that something needed to be done. We also met the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) the president's permanent representative at district and came up with a resolution to meet all the local council chairpersons from Kween District. During the meeting with the LCs, some admitted to have supported the practice. However, they all promised to report any further incidences regarding FGM. We have trained activists, opinion leaders, surgeons and mentors on how to sensitize the communities about violence against women including FGM. “We also collaborate with ActionAid in terms of referral Network. If victims are reported to us, we refer them to the Women Protection Center operated by ActionAid. Survivors who are escaping persecution are referred to the centre for shelter” adds Aisha. We have also participated in Women Empowerment Programmes together and we pay courtesy calls to each other to come to speed on what is happening as regards to women rights.

We are also partners on the SURGE Programme which supports every Ugandan to access equal opportunities for both men and women.



# FGM, Local and Religious Leaders weigh in

**F**GM has been practiced here as a culture from time immemorial. But in 1994, government realized that it impacted on girls and women negatively. So government through the Reproductive Educative and Community Health Project (REACH) started preaching against it. I fact I was the person charged with Benet and Kwsir and Kitowoy sub counties to preach the gospel against FGM and we drastically reduced the practice. REACH disappeared and ActionAid came in. the efforts yielded good results as there were few incidences of the practice and there were rumors of the practice being done in secrecy.

There was not a single case of FGM in Kitowoy sub county. This was because of continued sensitization by the local and church leaders who have talked to them about the dangers of FGM. We also talked to them about the law stopping FGM.

“ActionAid has been coming to us to mobilize people. In my sub county, there’s a community hall where ActionAid frequently meets people to sensitize them about FGM. They have also been involved in home to home visits to see victims and survivors” says fred.

I would like to thank ActionAid for the support and they need to be supported with more funds to continue sensitizing people especially about the dangers of FGM and the law stopping it.



Chebet Fred,  
Local Council Chairman three of Benet sub county.

**W**e have fought Female Genital Mutilation for a very long time and we had begun to think that it was being eliminated until the recent upsurge in late December and early January this year. Some people who supported FGM allege that the president had removed the law on FGM and people were free to practice.

The common understanding is that law on FGM was not taught thoroughly to the common man. When we heard of the incidence, we liaised with the police and the district leadership. In Kaptum Sub County, the perpetrators were arrested and taken to court. These arrested people are now testifying to others. “People need to be sensitized more. What happens is that people are taken for workshops in hotels and restaurants in towns yet those who are practicing are deep in the villages” she advocates.



Chelimo Jocylene  
District Speaker Kween District

Statistics from the community office indicate that in recent years few cases ranging from one to three were reported every year however last year that number rose to over twenty. So we need to go back to the grassroots and talk to the people.

There’s need to target those in schools, school dropouts and the uneducated populations, the surgeons and mentors. The government had promised houses and income generating activities especially cows but failed to deliver on their promise. I think this is also partly to blame for the resurgence.

## Activistas take up the fight against FGM

Am still relatively new having reported to the district in October 2018. FGM is practiced in this region however, it was found not to be developmental and thus government put in place measures to reduce and eventually eliminate it. The challenge with Kween District is that those who are susceptible to FGM are the school drop outs and women who are illiterate and had not undergone the knife.

The practice had gone down but late last year and this year, there was an upsurge in girls and women undergoing FGM. The culture of barring girls from picking dung, climbing granaries plus other attachments is what is forcing many girls and women to undertake the practice. Since most of the victims are school drop outs and illiterates, the education system the government has put in place, the more educated girls and women we have, the less FGM will be practiced.

“Government has carried out sensitization of communities and their leaders. Recently, the speaker of parliament the Right Honorable Rebecca Kadaga herself championed the sensitization. Advising people to encourage girls to go and remain in school. She also told them to replace such barbaric cultural practices with other ceremonies like graduations and introductions” says The RDC.

The law was put in place to mitigate the negative effects of FGM. But I believe that there is need for more of the sensitization and education.

I appreciate ActionAid, whereas the government through the REACH Project have been sensitizing people. ActionAid complementation has enabled us reach the furthest corners of Kween.

“More funding to ActionAid is needed so that the message can be spread everywhere” concluded the RDC.



Balwamiregha Denis Ephraim Resident District Commissioner Kween District



Joyce Chelangat (Activista)

*“I do volunteer with ActionAid. Activistas are young people between the age of 13 and 35 years who have the passion for their communities and can report cases of corruption and monitor service provision and fight for their rights as young people. ActionAid has brought us together to chart a way of how to be included in the government of Uganda. We as youths are not happy with the resurgence of FGM in Sebei because it affects us youths especially the women. We have come as a team and we had an activity in Kwosir where we petitioned the women leaders whom we thought had not raised their voices against FGM. We tasked them to go and decampaign the practice so that the local person can listen” Joyce.*

**F**GM was initiated by the elders and reason was that; in the older days. “Men would go hunting for long periods of time. When they returned, they found their wives pregnant. They argued that the main cause was high libido so as a prevention mechanism. FGM was prescribed” Reverend Fred reveals.

However, much as this culture was introduced by the elders, it is no longer viable. For example today, there’s no where the bible prescribes FGM. It’s in the book of Genesis that God told Abraham to circumcise only his male descendants not women or female descendants. Medically, there’s no reason as some women over bleed leading to death, it causes difficulty during child birth, FGM also violates and disrespects (There are a lot of abuses and obscenities) it encourages the spread of HIV due to overnight dances. Increases early pregnancies as girls stay out late.

It is also not cost effective as family resources which could have been put to productive activities like education are wasted on many days of festivities.

It also leads to early marriages as parents who want to get bride price resort to mutilating their girls so that they are deemed fit for marriage after so girls end up getting married early, pregnant early and have to contend with the difficulties of child birth.

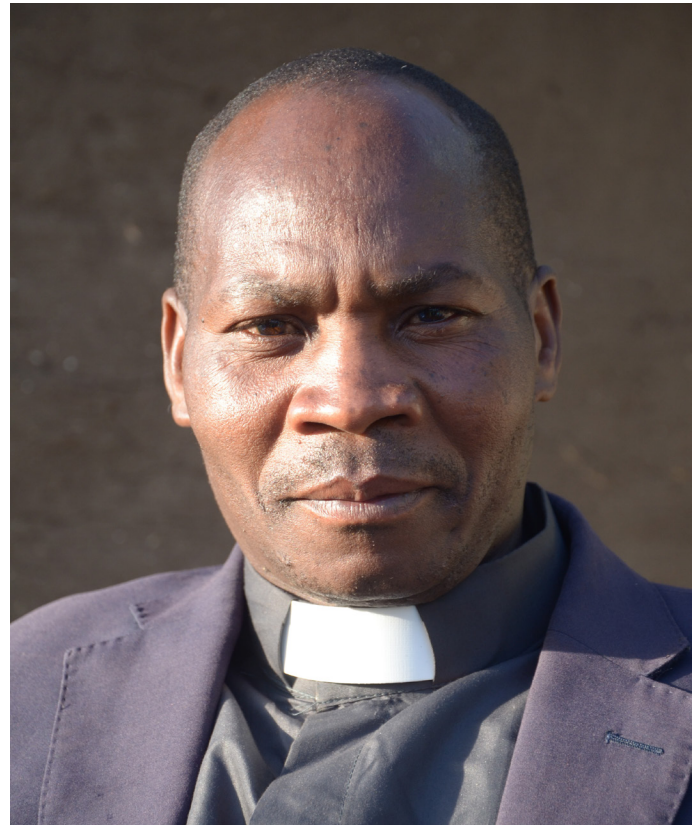
There was a lot of mutilation of girls late last year and early this year. In fact at Kamwating (some 300 meters from the church) some girls were circumcised. Its true that in the past, the rates of FGM had significantly dropped. However immediately after the December boy’s circumcision in January, girls began being mutilated. I got to know from one of the Christians who called me to inform me that 7 girls were cut. I then called the LC3 chairman to find out if he was aware. I also called the District speaker and she told me was going to inquire.

“I really challenge our political wing because for example, the dancing and cutting is done in villages overnight and there are Local Council ones. They should report. Besides that if the local council three and district speaker had reacted immediately, they would have stopped the exercise in its tracks” says Reverend Fred confidently.

The law came on board and police given powers to implement. If the law would have been implemented effectively (Arresting perpetrators) the practice would have been curbed.

Another factor keeping the practice alive is folk language that is demeaning to a girl/boy not circumcised. And other practices such as barring uncircumcised girls from picking dung from kraals and climbing to get food from granaries.

FGM is not generally acceptable as many are condemning it. We as a church are carrying out weddings every day and we do not wed mutilated girls.



Rev. Alaska Fred Kipsang  
Parish Priest Benet Church Of Uganda

## **ROLE OF THE CHURCH**

As a church we sensitize people in church and during fellowships and tell them about the disadvantages of mutilating girls. I also encourage government or other organizations to use the church as a tool to pass on information.

“We encourage girl child education. The church has opened Benet Senior Secondary school which had been closed for sometime. This is because Kwasir Girls Seed Secondary School is far. We also support the needy. For example students who have stopped at Senior can be encouraged to go back to school or go for technical vocations” Reverend Fred adds.

Recently, I was invited by ActionAid to a stakeholder’s workshop. This was a good step because we were able to share good ideas on how to fight FGM. For example the church has many schools in the region. We can use the schools and fill them with talking compounds.

However, I must stress that that is not enough we need to focus on massive community sensitization at the grass root.

# Former Surgeons cry for help

I don't know when I was born but I was circumcised in 1966. I started circumcising girls in 1980. "Since then, I have circumcised countless number of girls until when I was eventually arrested. When I was arrested, I had no source of income. I lost my husband to wild fires down there in the plains" says Rofanis.

I am now helpless as I do not have any other skills. I have never had children so there's no one to assist me. My house is in a very poor condition and will be collapsing soon.

"If there's any one who can help me financially or otherwise please help me because I can't go back to circumcising girls" she cries.



Cheptoyek Rofanis (Fgm Mentor)



Kokop Chemutai Rosa (Surgeon)

I don't know my age very well but I was circumcised in 1966. I have been a surgeon since 1980 till about four years ago when government through the REACH project stopped and put a law against FGM

I have since 1980 circumcised many girls across the greater part of Kween district including Blnyniny town council. It was my only source of livelihood as every girl at the time I stopped would pay between 20 and 30,000 shilling for my services. I had managed to build for myself an iron roofed house using the proceeds.

"When I was stopped I lost my source of income and am now very poor. My house is almost collapsing. Am very desperate because I have lost my eye sight and cannot do anything to earn money" cries the former surgeon.

I ask government and other organizations to come to my rescue and build me a house and support me financially.

## IMPACT

- The project has strengthened our coordination with the enforcement teams especially the police and the RDCs.
- It has strengthened response mechanism by civil society organizations by pulling resources in the fight against FGM.
- Some of the former surgeons and victims have coping mechanism through IGA and we hope they will not go back to the practice.
- The project enabled us to have many local policy discussions especially on the prohibition of FGM Act. We have been able to make many copies and disseminated them as many people did not have it.
- The project has changed attitudes of some people on FGM. We have been able to reach over 2000 people through community engagements to challenge some of the attitudes.
- The mapping exercise provided additional information for research and appropriated interventions for local governments and civil society organizations.
- Some women and activists have been able to drum up support against FGM.

Where we have reached is plus because we are dealing with a cultural aspect which we cannot end in a day or a project. This leaves room for future engagements. But the structures established will provide solid ground for further future interventions.

We thank ActionAid Australia through AustAid that was able to support this project. The first gap as we started the project was that people claimed to hear that there's a law but we don't know it. So we provided copies and during sensitization discussed provisions of the law. Also religious leaders were able to incorporate a few aspects of the law in their sermons. The work we do is incorporated. We have a women Protection centre in Kween and the legal aid clinics that work with the community liaison officers and law enforcement officers who go an extra mile to explain each section and the legal implications in the local language but we still have more work to do.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- As actors we need to review approaches in the fight against FGM.
- Community support is critical because this is a cultural issue. Our communities in Sebei are highly patriarchal meaning male dominance affects everyday lives especially women rights and women rights should be dealt with in that aspect.

## CHALLENGES

- From the political perspective, there has been delays in enforcement which has not been forthcoming. For example when we had the resurgence, no leader was willing to speak against the practice claiming that we are going into an election period and this will affect their votes.
- This work requires a comprehensive effort beyond the civil society organizations approach of doing work in a projectised manner. So when a project comes to an end, there are no resources to support other processes, and yet local governments may not have resources to combat FGM.
- There is a lot of silence surrounding the practice. People fear to give information for fear of being arrested. You have to convince someone that you are not police and even when the person talks the information is shallow yet we need more information to tackle FGM.
- The law enacted is alleged by some members of the community to have not been widely consulted on and is claimed to be very harsh to the community. This partly drove the practice underground and makes people to fear volunteering information.
- People have also not been sensitized on the law. That's why when they see police, they go into hiding.
- We need to come up with a softer language and methods until when people come to a self realization. For example using victims as ambassadors as people who have experienced the same or are planning to get mutilated can easily identify with their pain and suffering.

## SUSTAINABILITY

- The community structure such as the community monitors, child rights clubs are there. It has strengthened the working relations with the enforcement actors such as the police and office of the RDC.
- The CSO networks response mechanism have been strengthened.
- The IGAs have made it difficult for former surgeons (beneficiaries) to go back to the practice. However we are looking for resources to continue with the process of community sensitization.
- The end of project meeting deliberated on what approaches to venture into. We learnt that the power relations prior and during circumcision are centered around the age sets. So we need to engage them. The clan heads need to be included as Sebei region has no centralized cultural institution. So there's a need for a robust network to challenge and shift power.

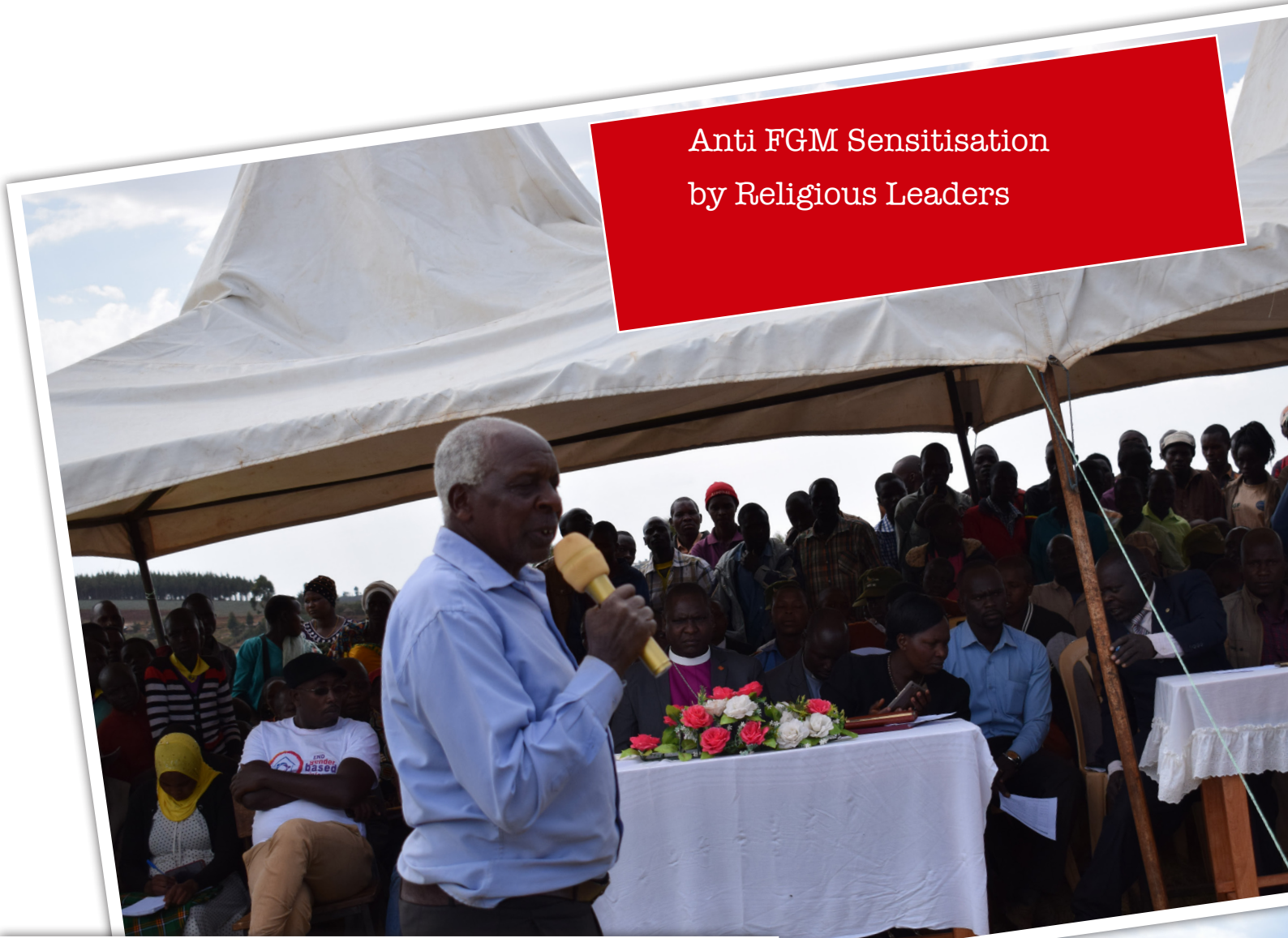
Pupils display Anti  
FGM Messages during  
sensitisation campaigns  
organised by ActionAid



BREAK THE SILENCE  
AROUND FGM/C AND  
SAVE "INDIGENOUS GIRLS"  
FROM THE KNIFE

WE CAN  
GIVE UP FGM  
WITHOUT GIVING UP  
OUR CULTURE !!!

Anti FGM Sensitisation  
by Religious Leaders





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**ActionAid** is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.