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Empowering Women, Reshaping Economies: ActionAid Kenya's Commitment on International Women's Day



ActionAid Kenya team and partners at the launch of the Young Urban Women (Phase II) Project. The event was held on 8th March 2024 at Pridelnn Azure Hote in Nairobi.

In commemorating International Women's Day this year, ActionAid Kenya made a resounding statement with the launch of Phase II of the Young Urban Women Project. At the heart of this initiative lies a steadfast commitment to reject neoliberal economic policies and champion a transition towards a feminist well-being economy. Under the theme "Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress," this launch signifies more than just an event, it symbolizes a powerful movement towards gender equality and economic justice.

ActionAid Kenya's approach is rooted in grassroots activism and community organizing. By actively engaging women at the grassroots level, mobilizing communities, and fostering accountability and justice, the organization empowers women to amplify their voices and advocate for their rights. Through this work, women are not just beneficiaries; they are leaders and agents.

"The Young Urban Women Project is a testament to this commitment. By providing a platform for dialogue and collaboration, it seeks to address the systemic barriers that hinder women's economic empowerment. Through innovative strategies and inclusive partnerships, the project aims to create tangible pathways for women to thrive in urban environments." Samson Orai, Programmes and Strategy Lead, ActionAid Kenya



Samson Orai, Programmes and Strategy Lead, ActionAid Kenya speaks during the event held at Pridelnn Azure Hotel

But beyond the launch event itself, the significance of this initiative lies in its broader impact. By bringing together diverse stakeholders and amplifying their voices on International Women’s Day, ActionAid Kenya is catalyzing a larger movement for women’s rights and equitable economic systems. Through collective action and solidarity, we can challenge the status quo and create a more just and inclusive world for all.



The Young Urban Women Project Coordinator, Judy Oduor makes a presentation during the launch of the projects’ phase II.

As we reflect on the theme “Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress,” let us remember that investing in women is not just a moral imperative—it is also a strategic one. Studies have shown that when women are empowered economically, entire communities and economies flourish. By prioritizing gender equality and investing in women’s leadership and well-being, we can unlock untapped potential and accelerate progress towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

On this International Women’s Day and beyond, let us recommit ourselves to the cause of gender equality and economic justice. Let us stand in solidarity with women everywhere and let us work together to build a world where all women can thrive, prosper, and lead with dignity and respect.



Lina Moraa, Programme Manager – Women’s Rights and Governance joins participants in singing the feminist song.

Finding Voice and Choice through Girls Forums



Girls forum session in Kamuthe, Garissa County

In the Somali community of Garissa County, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) has long been ingrained as a cultural tradition. However, a glimmer of hope emerged when ActionAid International Kenya, through The Girl Generation Programme, initiated boys' and girls' forums in schools in Fafi Sub-County. These forums aimed to shift beliefs about FGM/C and ultimately end the harmful practice by equipping learners with knowledge, awareness, and confidence.

Abdia (not her real name), a 10-year-old grade four pupil at Kamuthe Primary School, emerged as a beacon of change after participating in these forums. Despite growing up in a community where FGM/C is considered a rite of passage into womanhood, Abdia's life took an unexpected turn when her mother encouraged her to join the girls' forum in 2023.

"Growing up in a community where female genital mutilation (FGM) is considered a rite of passage into womanhood, and it is often carried out without a girl's consent. It feels like an inescapable fate for many girls, including me. However, my life took an unexpected turn when my mother joined the Kamuthe Women Rights Network where she learnt of the girls' forum in primary schools, and she encouraged me to join the one in my school in 2023." stated Abdia.

"I timidly joined the girls' forum, not knowing what to expect. It was a space where we could openly talk about FGM/C, its consequences, and our dreams beyond this practice. I felt a glimmer of hope for the first time," registered Abdia.

In this safe space, Abdia and her peers openly discussed FGM/C, its consequences, and their aspirations beyond practice. Through these discussions, she gained a deeper understanding of FGM/C, consent, and the power of her voice.

Participating in interschool debates on FGM/C further bolstered Abdia's confidence as she became a vocal advocate for change. With each debate, she challenged her community's beliefs and urged others to reconsider the practice of FGM/C.

"When I was urged to participate in my first interschool debate on the topic of FGM, I was initially terrified. How was I to publicly speak about this harmful practice that my community has held on to for so long? But with the support of my peers and girl' forum patrons, I began researching and building my arguments up. Standing on the debate stage was nerve-racking, but as I spoke about the need to end FGM, my confidence surged. I could see the impact my words had on the audience, and it was empowering. After several sessions of the girls' forum, the urge to protect other girls in my community grew. I no longer hesitated to express my thoughts in school, at home, or within my community. I feel like a different person, a confident advocate for change."

"As more girls like me shifted their beliefs and attitudes about FGM through these forums and debates, we started to challenge our community's beliefs of practicing FGM/C. We speak to our families, friends, and neighbors, urging them to reconsider the practice of FGM/C.

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Thanks to Abdia's courage and the collective efforts of girls like her, attitudes towards FGM/C began to shift. She witnessed firsthand the impact of girls finding their voices and uniting for change. In 2023, girls who were once lined up for the cut were spared, marking a significant victory for the community.

"Through our collective efforts, we began to see a shift in attitudes, and girls who were lined up for the cut in 2023 were not subjected to it. When girls find their voices and unite, they can be powerful agents of change," she continued.

Abdia's journey exemplifies the transformative power of girls' forums and debates in ending FGM/C. As she continues to speak out, she believes that her advocacy will have a lasting impact on her community, empowering girls to embrace their voices and choices.

Men Leading the Charge Against FGM/C in Garissa



Men for Change session in Garissa County

In the heart of Garissa County, a profound shift is underway, led by the Men for Change movement. Recognizing the urgent need to protect women and girls from the scourge of Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C), this coalition of dedicated individuals has sparked a transformative movement that is reshaping community attitudes and behaviors.

With unwavering commitment, the Men for Change champions, supported by The Girl Generation (TGG) program, have embarked on a journey of collective action to eradicate FGM/C. Armed with empathy and determination, they have engaged men across Garissa County in open dialogues, challenging entrenched cultural norms and advocating for gender equality and human rights.

At the forefront of this movement are respected figures like Mzee Bundid, whose wisdom and compassion have inspired profound change. Leveraging their influence, Men for Change leaders have worked closely with religious leaders, elders, and community influencers to amplify their message of abandonment of FGM/C.

“We recognized the pivotal role that men play in shaping community attitudes and behaviors and believed that by mobilizing them as allies, they could bring about meaningful change in no time. We engaged the community through dialogues, where we shared stories of the harmful effects of FGM/C on women and girls in our community and fostered discussions about the importance of ending the practice,” said Hussein Ali Muhumed, popularly known as Mzee Bundid, a respected elder known for his wisdom and compassion.

The impact of these efforts is undeniable. In mosques and community gatherings, religious leaders now preach against FGM/C, signaling a seismic shift in societal attitudes. What was once a taboo subject is now openly discussed, empowering women and girls to speak out against FGM/C without fear or shame.

Mzee Bandid added: “We also leveraged our influence to work closely with religious leaders, elders, and community influencers, encouraging them to speak out against FGM/C and promote gender equality. Lately, the religious leaders during their sermons in the mosque preach about the need to abandon the FGM/C. This has been our biggest breakthrough as a movement in achieving to end FGM/C. Young men have also been very active in social media and radio campaigns, advocating for the end of the practice.”

“I see a future in our community where every woman and girl could live free from the shadow of FGM/C, and where men could protect them from any form of violence,” noted a hopeful Mzee Bandid.

Through innovative social media and radio campaigns, The Men for Change movement has made significant progress, reaching 27 locations in Garissa and engaging 1420 men in conversations to eradicate FGM/C. This surpasses their initial target of 800 men, indicating the effectiveness of their approach.

As the momentum grows, so does the vision for a future where every woman and girl in Garissa County can live free from the shadows of FGM/C. With each conversation, each sermon, and each act of advocacy, the Men for Change movement is forging a path toward a more just and equitable society.



Hussein Ali Muhumed popularly known as Mzee Bundid engages other cultural leaders on ending FGM/C.

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