



About **act:ionaid** Kenya

Since 1972, ActionAid International Kenya (AAIK) has had operations in Kenya as a non-religious, non-partisan development organization to end poverty and injustices.

AAIK works in solidarity with communities living in poverty and exclusion to shift power to the communities and facilitate their own leadership by holding duty bearers accountable to Protect, Respect and Fulfill their rights in line with the constitution of the Republic of Kenya.

We have presence in twenty five counties working closely with local organisations and partners. The counties include: Baringo, Garissa, Homabay, Isiolo, Kajiado, Kilifi, Kisumu, Kitui, Laikipia, Makueni, Meru, Murang'a, Nairobi, Nakuru, Siaya, Taita Taveta, Tharaka Nithi, Turkana, Wajir, Marsabit, Elgeyo Marakwet, West Pokot, Embu, Mombasa and Migori.

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EDITORIAL TEAM

Ezra Kiriago, Communications Coordinator, AAIK

ActionAid Kenya Joins the World to Mark International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM

ActionAid Kenya joined national and county governments, community leaders, and partners at Rekeke Primary School in Taveta to observe the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

The event brought together leaders from national and county governments, cultural and religious institutions, and community representatives from multiple counties, including champions supported by ActionAid Kenya from Kajiado and Garissa. Among those present were Hon. Hanna Wendot Cheptumo, Cabinet Secretary for Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage; Hon. Christine Saru Kilalo, Deputy Governor of Taita Taveta County; Hon. Lydia Haika, Women Representative; and Hon. Anne Wang'ombe, Principal Secretary.

ActionAid Kenya, with support from its partners, continues to spearhead initiatives aimed at eliminating FGM and other forms of violence against women and girls. The organization engages girls, women, and men as allies and works closely with community leaders to create safe spaces for girls while challenging harmful cultural practices.



Hon. Hanna Wendot Cheptumo, Cabinet Secretary for Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage, visits the ActionAid Kenya booth during the event and is guided through ActionAid Kenya's programmes by Pauline Atieno, Local Rights Programmes Coordinator.

“ActionAid Kenya programmes focus not only on ending FGM but also on addressing the broader spectrum of gender-based violence that infringes on the rights and opportunities of girls,” said Jane Kigen, Programme Manager, Partnership and Local Rights Programme Coordination, ActionAid Kenya. “Through collaboration with communities, policymakers, and duty bearers, we are making steady progress in protecting girls across high-prevalence counties.”

Speaking at the event, CS Hanna Wendot Cheptumo emphasized the importance of collective responsibility.

“The government remains focused on ensuring that girls are fully protected, including sealing loopholes associated with cross-border cutting and strengthening enforcement measures to prevent perpetrators from exploiting gaps in the law. It is only through strong partnerships with communities and civil society that we can eradicate this harmful practice,” she said

The event also highlighted Kenya’s progress in reducing the prevalence of FGM, which has declined nationally from 38% in 1998 to 15% in 2022 (KDHS 2022). In Taita Taveta County, the prevalence stands at 17%. Leaders stressed that sustained commitment, community empowerment, and multi-sectoral approaches are essential to safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of girls.



Jane Kigen, Programme Manager for Partnership and Local Rights Programme Coordination at ActionAid Kenya, delivers a statement on behalf of the organisation during the event.

As Kenya and the world mark this global day, ActionAid Kenya reaffirms its unwavering commitment to advancing gender equality and ending Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in eight high-prevalence counties: Garissa County, Wajir County, Marsabit County, Isiolo County, Baringo County, Elgeyo-Marakwet County, West Pokot County, and Kajiado County, where the organization is implementing targeted projects to eradicate FGM.

These programmes, which focus on ending FGM, combating other forms of gender-based violence, and promoting gender equality, are made possible through the generous support of European Union in Kenya, through United Nations Population Fund Kenya, Irish Aid, and ActionAid’s funding affiliates under its child sponsorship programmes.

Together with communities, partners, and supporters, ActionAid Kenya continues to champion the rights of women and girls, working toward a future free from FGM and all forms of violence.

Where the Blade Once Ruled, Rights Now Rise

In Tikit Village, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was never spoken about in whispers. It was spoken of as duty. A rite of passage. A responsibility quietly handed down from one generation to the next. For years, Repeep was one of the women families trusted when it was time for their daughters to undergo “the cut.” Mothers came to her in confidence. Fathers relied on her discretion. In her community, she was not seen as causing harm, she was seen as preserving tradition.

At the time, Repeep believed she was doing the right thing.

“I thought I was helping families. I thought I was protecting our culture,” she says quietly. “No one told me I was harming children.”

FGM was rarely questioned. It happened mostly during school holidays, when girls were home and the risk of outside scrutiny was low. Families feared social rejection. Parents worried about their daughters being excluded from marriage or community life. And women like Repeep carried the weight of expectation.

When the Komesha FGM Sasa! programme reached Tikit Village, conversations that had long been avoided were finally brought into the open. Community forums, household dialogues, and sensitization meetings created space for honest discussion.

For the first time, Repeep sat among parents, elders, and young people, not as a cutter, but as a listener.

She learned about the severe health consequences of FGM. She heard about the psychological trauma. She listened to survivors speak about the pain that followed them into adulthood, into marriage, into childbirth, into every stage of life.

“That is when it broke me,” she says. “I saw that the pain does not end on the day of cutting. It follows girls for years.”



Reep stands before her community not with a blade, but with a voice that protects girls. Photo Credits: Jamas Murray. Blossoms beyond borders Community Based Organisation (CBO)

The realization was painful. But it was also powerful. Repeep made a decision: she would never cut another girl again. Today, in the very same community where she once carried out FGM, Repeep stands with empty hands and a determined voice. "I no longer use the blade," she tells community members during dialogue sessions. "I use my voice so that no girl has to go through what I helped cause."

Through activities facilitated by Blossom Beyond Borders CBO and supported by the Komesha FGM Project, she now speaks during barazas, household visits, and public forums. She challenges long-held beliefs and urges families to rethink traditions that harm children.

Her message is simple: culture should never harm a child. Because she once practiced FGM herself, people listen. Elders listen. Mothers listen. Fathers lean in.

One parent shared after a session

"When Repeep spoke, I believed her. If someone who used to cut can stop, then we can protect our daughters."

Even Repeep herself now reports suspected cases and warns families against cutting.

"I cannot undo my past," she says. "But I can make sure it does not repeat itself."

Ending FGM is not only about stopping a practice. It is about changing hearts, challenging beliefs, and choosing courage over conformity.

Repeep's journey shows that transformation is possible, even in communities where FGM once felt untouchable. When people are engaged with honesty, accountability, and compassion, change takes root.

As the world marks the International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM on 6th February 2026, Repeep's voice now stands where the blade once did; protecting girls, challenging harmful norms, and proving that redemption can become resistance.

"Let my story be a warning and a hope," she says. "No tradition is worth a child's pain."

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