
Press release

Working to End Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting in Tanzania

Tuesday 06 February, 2018; Dar es Salaam: The Head of Delegation of the European Union to Tanzania and the East African Community, H.E. Roeland van de Geer and the Deputy Country Director, Plan International Tanzania Ms. Gwynneth Wong hosted a joint event to commemorate the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation. The event which was held at the EU Info Point - Alliance française was attended by representatives from diplomatic missions, development partners, national and international organizations and civil society organizations.

FGM is a violent practice that endangers girls' lives, depriving them of their rights while denying them their ability to reach their full potential.

In Tanzania, FGM is illegal. It was first criminalized in 1998 in the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act (SOSPA) which amended the Penal Code. It is estimated that 7.9 million women and girls in the country have undergone FGM (UNICEF, 2013). According to the Tanzania Demographic Health Survey (DHS, 2010), the estimated prevalence of FGM in girls and women (15-49 years) is 14.6%. The overall rate has not changed from the 2004-05 DHS which recorded the same rate, but has decreased by 3.3% from 17.9% in 1996 (DHS, 1996).

According to the DHS, there are significant regional variations in prevalence rates in Tanzania ranging between 20 - 70%. Manyara leads by 70.8% followed by Dodoma 63.8%, Arusha 58.6%, Singida 51.0%, Mara 39.0%, Morogoro 21.0%, Kilimanjaro 21.0% and Tanga 19%. The DHS 2010 report shares that the cutting of young girls is increasingly carried out at an earlier age between 10 to 13 years, with girls cut before their first birthday increased from 28.4% in 2004 – 5 to 31.7% in 2010.

The EU Head of Delegation to Tanzania, H.E. Roeland van de Geer said in his speech that *“In Tanzania, the EU is strongly committed to its assistance to Government and civil society to combat violence against women and children. In the last four years, the European Union has supported projects for a total amount of more than 16 billion TSH. Plan International, Save the Children, HelpAge Tanzania, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF are among our trusted partners and implementing agencies. This initiative is in line with the new Five Year National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children in the period 2017-22, that was launched by the Government in 2016.”*

Plan International Tanzania with support from the European Union has made significant project interventions on ending FGM in high risks communities from 2015 to date in Tarime, Mara Region.

Miss Gwynneth Wong, Plan International Tanzania Deputy Country Director urged stakeholders to continue the joint efforts in raising awareness on FGM to help decrease the number of girls and young women from this epidemic.

“We must work together to raise awareness and speak on behalf of thousands of young girls and women who are not able to do so for themselves with a continuous focus on shifting social norms in affected communities while working with governments to put in place viable solutions.”, said Ms Gwynneth during the event.

Plan International with funding from the European Union works with Children’s Dignity Forum and NELICO in Geita and Mara regions to help fight Child Marriages and FGM in the two regions to create a future where girls experience inherent dignity, human rights and equality by 2030.

“We work with communities especially leaders; parents and girls to raise awareness on FGM to help encourage them abandon FGM. However, we need to work with larger numbers to support more women and girls who have undergone FGM to overcome the trauma they went through and encourage them to speak out to make their voices heard, empowering other girls in Tanzania and call out to put an end to FGM”, shared the Plan International Tanzania Project Manager, Ms Emma Mashobe.

Girls who have undergone FGM share their life experiences, and during the event, an FGM victim shared what she went through, asking stakeholders and the Government to continue their fight to end FGM to girls and young women like her.

“We are made to believe that if you have not undergone FGM no man will marry you, but some die or have major health problems after undergoing FGM. We are powerless when this is done to us, I would like to ask you to continue your efforts to help save girls in our communities and Tanzania as a whole”, shared Ms Paulina Daniel.

On this day, we are urged and reminded on the impact that FGM has on our girls and young women. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promises an end to this practice by 2030 and commits to intensify global action against this brutal human rights violation for the sake of all affected girls and young women and communities at large for a better world where girls' rights are respected.

Background Note

International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM was designated in 2012 by the UN General Assembly to be held annually to raise awareness and monitor progress made towards eliminating the harmful practice and to encourage concrete actions. More than 193 nations unanimously agreed to a new global target of eliminating FGM by 2030 during the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, recognizing FGM as a global concern and committing to protect the wellbeing and dignity of girls. Nations agreed to take responsibility as a global community for ending FGM.

Up to 200 million girls and young women around the world have undergone this harmful practice, which can cause lifetime serious health and emotional consequences. FGM is recognised internationally as a human rights violation.

FGM is known to affect more than 100 million girls and young women across Africa, Asia and some parts of Middle East. It is a cultural practice that has contributed to other Human Rights violations

such as early marriages. FGM denies girls and young women their dignity, threatens their health and causes pain and suffering which can be fatal.

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