



THE LINK

A Newsletter By Women's Empowerment Link
Naivasha GBV/FGM/C Working Group Edition

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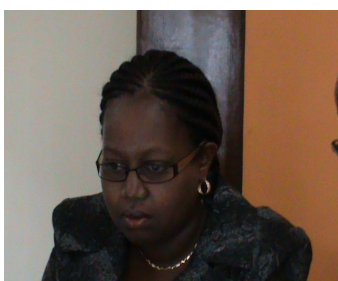
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The Constitutional Gender Gains

As Kenya takes the big step into implementation of the new constitution the gender gains therein empower women. But the big question is *“What structures will monitor the gains for women?”*

Though women of Kenya adequately participated in



Grace Mbugua, WEL's Organizational Director

the constitutional reform, they still have to face challenges of having inadequate structures to facilitate the implementation.

Previously the National Commission on Gender and Development which hosts the National GBV working Group and coordinates the community working groups has been instrumental in advising the government on gender related issues .

The government need to enhance the capacity of the commission to a constitutional commission that has wider mandate for the well being of women and minority groups as provided for in Article 59(4)

Women of Kenya have the mandate and responsibility to

ensure that this opportunity to pursue gender equality is realized.

WEL in collaboration with the Naivasha Working group has been focusing on skills building for women leaders.

“It is imperative that we breathe life into our constitution and make it into our own as Kenyan”

When elected, female officials in particular will enhance the legitimacy of the devolved government, improve service delivery and facilitate communication with the local population. Yet too often women are not given the information, training and support necessary to run successfully for office.

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The Inhumanness That is

She sits in the dining room in the shelter she now calls home, eating her lunch as she stares into space, lost in her own world, thinking to herself, I presume why this had to happen to her.

Wanjiru (not her real name) is barely 15 years old yet she looks like she carries the whole world on her shoulders.

Wanjiru had just delivered a baby who was barely one week old by the time we saw her, a child borne from an act of incest by her father.

After the death of her mother, Wanjiru was left in the care of her father who instead of seeking another wife took his daughter as his wife, a situation that was discovered by

the Children's department albeit after she had fallen pregnant.

She was however removed from the home and the father taken to court as Wanjiru waits as she ponders what life has in store for her and her newborn child.. She was violated in her home which should be her safety net! Her dreams were shattered now she has to fetch for her fathers child!!

Special points of interest:

“FGM/C is still practiced in Naivasha and it's environs by communities that have traditionally practiced it as part of their cultural heritage”

(Information courtesy Baseline Assessment/Surveys for FGM/C Interventions in Marakwet, Kuria, Migori, Naivasha and Mt. Elgon Districts by Gender Ministry, UNFPA and UNICEF)

The Strength of the GBV/FGM/C Working Group

“There’s a need for safe shelters and safe spaces to be established in Naivasha area and especially those that cater for women survivors.” This is according to the Naivasha area Gender Officer, Lucy.

According to the Gender Officer, wife battery cases are a daily occurrence and especially in the Maai Mahiu area which is why it is important for there to be safe shelters where the women can seek solace from.

Madam Lucy also added that they also received a lot of sexual defilement cases and rape with most of these atrocities being carried out by either the parents or guardians.

She also added that once a parent or guardian abused a child, then the other couple or the rest of the family would cover up for them for fear that they would break up the home or worse, ex-communicated from the community.

“It is necessary for the community people to be trained, empowered, on how to deal with responding to sexual and gender based violence matters. The opinion leaders are especially the ones to be focused on during these empowerments since they are the backbone of the community”, she



Lucy, Gender Officer, Naivasha

says.

She is however quick to add that the police in the area are very supportive in dealing with GBV perpetrators.

Madam Lucy adds, “I have only been in Naivasha for a few months, and it’s one of the most challenging areas I have ever

worked on but luckily for me, I found the GBV/FGM/C working group, a group that is strong and very active and I am grateful that I get to work with people dedicated to putting an end to Gender Based Violence.

Excerpts From the Children Act No. 8 of (2001)

According to the Children Act 2001 Part II:

4. (1) Every child shall have an inherent right to life and it shall be the responsibility of the government and the family to ensure the survival and development of the child.

(2) In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a

primary consideration.

(3) All judicial and administrative institutions and all persons acting in the name of these institutions, where they are exercising any powers conferred by this Act shall treat the interests of the child as the first and paramount consideration to the extent that this is consistent with adopting a course of action concluded to;

a) safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of the child;

b) conserve and promote the welfare of the child;

c) secure for the child such guidance and correction as is necessary for the welfare of the child and in the public interest.

(4) In any matters of procedure affecting a child, the child shall be accorded an opportunity to express his/her opinion and that opinion shall be taken into account as may be appropriate taking into account the child’s age and the degree of maturity.

Young Men Championing Gender Based Violence

“I joined the Naivasha GBV/FGM/C working group last year and I am proud to be a member of this initiative that is dedicated in ensuring that we prevent GBV and FGM/C in Naivasha”, says Charles, chair to the Young Men Ambassadors of Change Group.

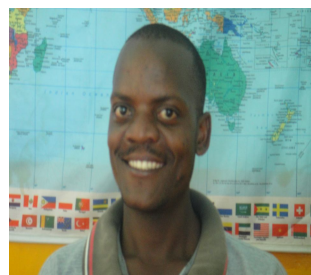
His line of work is championing for the rights of children and so in the working group, he networks with the rest to ensure that the rights of children are met.

Charles says that the young men who are members of the working group re-

spond to cases promptly and this a major boost in the fight against SGBV in the area, something that should be adopted by young men who he says there is a short of in the working group.

He also adds that the relationship between the GBV/FGM/C working group and the police is very good and especially the gender desk which handles any case presented to them by the working group promptly.

Charles adds that he is proud of the



Charles Omwanro, Young Men Network Chair

work done by the working group.

“Charles is also a representative of CHAPP; An organization that provides basic education for children from very poor families or orphans as well as a feeding program. They hold discus-

sions with the children and help familiarize them to the environment.

Training of Women Leaders—Naivasha

Women play a major role in development and their zeal and passion is critical in ending GBV. WEL with support from UNFPA once again sought to empower women this time around In Naivasha through training them on prevention and response to Gender Based Violence as well as empowering them to be leaders in the society.

During the three days of training, the women were equipped on GBV & FGM/C prevention and response, Women Human Rights and legal frameworks including the gender gains in the constitution, Economic Empowerment, Reproductive Health as well as the gains for women in the New Constitution which enabled the women to draw

up an Action Plan for Naivasha.

WEL carried out the training in partnership with the TOT's trained on GBV/FGM/C which included the members on Naivasha working group; the Ministry of Health through the Coordinator for Reproductive Health.

The women took the challenge of spearheading a campaign against SGBV & FGM/C in their work and further planned to organize sensitization forums. The leaders accented on the challenges women experi-



Women Leaders in Naivasha pose for a group photo

ence and as leaders they have a duty to prevent and respond.

The training equipped the leaders with information they planned to disseminate through their social networks,.

By building the women's capacity on their rights, then their vulnerability to Gender Based Violence is reduced.

ENHANCING WOMEN SOCIAL NETWORKS TO ADDRESS GBV AND FGM/C

“The Coffee Bar”

Each month, young people from the community of Naivasha as well as young men trained by WEL on Gender Based Violence prevention and response convene together to share information and discuss the issues that affect their day to day lives.

During one such coffee bar held on the 24th of March at the YMCA hall, the young people came together to sensitize each other on women human rights and strategize on how to sensitize women in the community on their rights in order to effectively ad-

dress GBV.

Negative masculinity however came out strongly with most men feeling that women should not be empowered at all citing that women leaders were more of a hindrance to the society, a point that was vehemently opposed by most of the gathering.

The point of emphasis during this coffee bar however was that women had equal rights compared to those of men and the new constitution especially emphasized on the equal rights for both men and women under the bill of rights.

Article 27 (3) “Women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres” (Constitution of Kenya)

The Dilemma in the Flower Farms

According to the Children's Officer in Naivasha, the largest number of cases they receive in their department are from the flower farms scattered all over Naivasha.

Njagi, the Children's Officer says that most women who live in these flower farms bear children with multiple partners so as to get child support from each one of the partners, a situation which he terms as sad and a new trend and noted its unfortunate since this makes both the

women and children vulnerable to SGBV. “These women need to be sensitized on their legal rights, responsibilities and economic empowerment so as to stop their reliance on men”, he says.

Mr. Njagi also adds that it is imperative for more emphasis to be put on family planning for both the men and women working in the flower farms to avoid having children that they might not be able to support.

He added that it is also very important

that the people who manage the flower farms provide better and more comfortable accommodation for their employees so as to help reduce cases of incest, rape and sexual abuse.

“Parents should not share rooms with their children because the children who are old enough to understand that their parents are having sex end up doing the same thing and even worse, fathers defile their children when the mothers are on night shift”, he said.

Women's Empowerment Link

P. O. Box 22574–00100
Nairobi, Kenya
Muringa Rd. & Elgeyo Marakwet
Junction
Off Ngong Rd.
Opposite Red Cliff Gardens

Phone: 0711 907 132/ 0732 574 060
E-mail: info@wel.or.ke
Facebook ID: Women's Empowerment
Link
Twitter ID: Women's .E. Link



*For the Strength of Women; For
the Strength of Africa*

ABOUT WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT LINK

Women's Empowerment Link (WEL) is a non-profit, non partisan non-governmental women rights organization committed to empowering women and girls to realize their potential, worth and strength politically, socially and economically through advocating for opportunities that explore their potential. WEL recognizes that the survival of women and girls is increasingly being challenged by economic dependency, illiteracy, Sexual & gender based violence (SGBV), HIV/AIDS, gender inequalities & marginalization, conflict, insensitive laws & policies which underscore WEL's purposeful programming on five key thematic areas:-

- Women Economic Empowerment
- Access to Education
- Reproductive health and rights
- Sexual & Gender based violence & HIV/AIDS
- Transformative leadership & Governance

WEL's Mission: To empower women to realize, exercise their rights and freedoms, and access opportunities and privileges towards gender equality.

WEL's Vision: A society that is gender sensitive where women and men have equal rights and opportunities for a just society

International Women's Day Celebrations in Naivasha

It was yet another day in the marking of the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future as people from Naivasha came out in droves in joining WEL and members of the Naivasha GBV/FGM/C working group and the Ministry of Health in celebrating this memorial day.

As a day meant to celebrate women, the GBV/FGM/C working group members started off the day by visiting the pediatric and women wards at the Naivasha District Hospital where the members donated flowers and baby diapers to the women in the maternity wards and those who had newborn babies.

This year's theme which was **'Equal access to education, training and science and technology: Pathway to decent work for women'** was coined

for the purposes of encouraging women to adopt the use of Information and Communication Technology in their day to day lives as this would help open up more and more opportunities for them both in the national and international markets.

After the visit, the Working group members then in a procession marched to the Municipal park where the proceedings of the day were to be held.

On the new constitution, the participants, especially the women were informed on the gains that the new constitution had made for women captured in the bill of rights with women for the first time having the right to pass direct citizenship to their children, a major milestone for women in Kenya.

The IWD was a huge success as apart from celebrating the gains for women, it



Naivasha GBV/FGM/C Working group members in a procession during the International Women's Day

also highlighted the role the Naivasha GBV/FGM/C working group plays in the area in their responding and prevention of GBV and FGM/C.