

African Women Rights Advocates (AWRA)

16 Days of Activism 2024 – West Pokot County Engagement Report

Introduction

As part of the 2024 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, African Women Rights Advocates (AWRA), in partnership with I-Rep Foundation and the Anti-FGM Board Kenya, implemented a series of community-centered activities in West Pokot County. These initiatives focused on raising awareness, building capacity, and strengthening local efforts to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The activities directly engaged key community stakeholders including local leaders, women, youth, administration officers, police, religious leaders, and prison personnel.

Activity 1: Engagement Forum with Community Resource Persons and Anti-FGM Champions

Date: 5th December 2024

Venue: Chepkogho Location, West Pokot County

This forum brought together over 50 Anti-FGM Champions and community resource persons including administration officers, youth, religious leaders, elders, and women advocates. The objective was to reflect on progress, review past strategies, and identify actionable approaches to eradicate FGM, especially during school holidays when girls are at increased risk.

Key Objectives:

- Assess the current status of FGM in the region and gather perspectives from local champions.
- Strengthen the capacity and morale of community resource persons in the anti-FGM campaign.
- Generate strategies to prevent FGM during school holidays.
- Explore effective approaches to end the practice permanently.

Stakeholder Reflections:

- **Senior Chief:** Reported a 25% reduction in FGM cases, attributed to increased vigilance, collaboration with elders, and warning letters to suspects.

- **Elders Representative:** Noted ongoing campaigns and collaboration with administrators.
- **Religious Leaders:** Highlighted transformation post-training, with many families abandoning FGM and supporting girls' education.
- **Youth Representative:** Cited positive behavior change among youth; emphasized the need for cross-border monitoring and scholarship opportunities for at-risk girls.
- **Women Representative:** Recognized reduced stigmatization, advocated for continued education and psychosocial support for survivors.
- **I-Rep Foundation:** Reaffirmed commitment to grassroots engagement, girls' education, and protection from harmful cultural practices.
- **Anti-FGM Board:** Commended progress, urged continued law enforcement, and emphasized the Prohibition of FGM Act.

Recommendations from Group Discussions:

1. Chiefs to issue warning letters to suspected perpetrators.
2. Conduct regular community reconnaissance meetings.
3. Mobilize fathers to protect daughters from FGM.
4. Prioritize girls' education.
5. Strengthen collaboration between *Nyumba Kumi* and other stakeholders.
6. Recruit and train additional community champions.
7. Encourage prompt reporting of suspected cases.

Activity 2: Training of Administration Police in Sigor Sub-County

AWRA and I-Rep Foundation facilitated a training session with administrative police officers in Sigor on FGM, GBV, and the legal framework surrounding these issues. Many officers, unfamiliar with the cultural context, gained new insights into the dangers of FGM. This session was crucial in strengthening law enforcement's role in prevention, protection, and prosecution.

Activity 3: Dialogue with Masol Women Group

Over 100 women from the Masol Women Group convened to take a collective stand against FGM and GBV. Trained and supported by I-Rep Foundation, the group has embraced income-generating activities and table banking as pathways to financial independence. Their powerful testimonies revealed a shift in community attitudes, as they launched the **"Mother-Daughter Campaign"**, supported by the Anti-FGM Board, emphasizing education over harmful traditions.

Activity 4: Elders and Nyumba Kumi Meeting in Kapenguria

This engagement brought together elders, *Nyumba Kumi* leaders, and other community influencers – the custodians of cultural norms and local security. The session emphasized the importance of cultural gatekeepers in preventing FGM and established a joint commitment for them to act as "watchmen" against the practice.

Activity 5: Kapenguria Prisons Training

AWRA and its partners conducted a sensitization and training session for inmates and prison wardens at Kapenguria Prison. The session focused on GBV, FGM, and the impact of patriarchy. Led by AWRA East Africa Lead, Domtila Chesang, the training debunked myths around FGM and gender roles. The presence of inmates charged with FGM-related offenses highlighted the urgency of addressing these harmful practices even within correctional facilities.

Conclusion

AWRA's collaborative interventions in West Pokot during the 16 Days of Activism 2024 reinforced the power of community-driven advocacy and survivor-led change. From chiefs and elders to women and youth, the momentum to end FGM is growing. These initiatives not only contributed to tangible reductions in reported cases but also laid a foundation for long-term community resilience and protection of girls' rights. AWRA remains committed to amplifying grassroots voices and supporting transformative change in partnership with I-Rep Foundation, the Anti-FGM Board, and the broader movement to end FGM in Kenya and across Africa.
