

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



**THE PRESIDENCY
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, YOUTH AND GENDER AFFAIRS**

**SPEECH BY PROF. MARGARET KOBIA, PhD MGH CABINET
SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC SERVICE, YOUTH AND GENDER
AFFAIRS DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE ANTI-FGM STRATEGIC
DOCUMENTS HELD ON FRIDAY 14TH DECEMBER 2018 IN
NAIROBI**

SALUTATIONS

**Hon. Rachel Shebesh, Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of
Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs**

**Hon. Safina Kwekwe, Principal Secretary, State Department for
Gender Affairs**

Ms. Agnes Mantaine Pareiyo, Chairperson of the Anti-FGM Board

Board Members of the Anti-FGM board

Mrs. Bernadette Loloju, CEO Anti-FGM Board

Development partners present

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning for the launch of the Anti-FGM strategic documents. The launch of these documents underlines our commitment towards ending FGM/cutting in the country.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the board of directors led by their Chairperson, Ms. Pareiyo, for the hard work that has gone into the preparation of these strategic documents. I also wish to appreciate the input of development partners and other stakeholders who have contributed to the development of the documents we are launching today.

Ladies and Gentlemen

THE FGM CHALLENGE:

The challenge of FGM is not unique to us as a country. According to UNICEF, there are more than 200 million girls and women alive today who are living with the negative effects of Female Genital Mutilation. Globally, FGM is considered a violation of the rights of women as it interferes with the health of the victims. The practice violates **SDG 3** which advocates for “**good health and wellbeing**” for all. It is common knowledge that FGM adversely affects women’s health especially during child birth leading to medical complications such as fistula. Socially, in patriarchal societies, FGM has been used to subjugate women’s rights. It runs counter to **SDG 5** that advocates for gender equality. In a nutshell, Female Genital Mutilation remains one of the worst forms of gender-based violence and the worst form of human rights violation.

In Kenya, according to the Demographic and Health Survey 2014, the national prevalence of FGM remains high at 21%. Data available on the

geographical distribution points to a cultural driven practice. The leading nations in FGM practice include:

- Somali Community at 94% of all females undergoing FGM/C.
- Samburu (86%),
- Kisii (84%), and
- Masaai (78%)

Overall in Kenya, it is estimated that more than 9.3 million girls have undergone the cut and are living with the negative effects of the cut. More women and girls are at the risk of undergoing the cut and our efforts to eliminate the vice has therefore become ever more urgent.

Ladies and Gentlemen

BROAD GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS

The Government of Kenya takes FGM to be one of the forms in which Gender Based Violence present itself in our society. The government, in partnership and collaboration with non-state actors has undertaken measures to respond to incidences of GBV prevent including FGM. We have developed requisite policy, enacted pertinent legislation, provided technical support and capacity-building of service providers, and carried out awareness creation and advocacy campaigns. Allow me to highlight some of our key interventions.

First, my Ministry, in collaboration with the United Nations have signed a four (4) year GOK/UN Joint ***Programme on Prevention and Response to Gender Based Violence in Kenya***. The program is grounded in the National Policy on Prevention and Response to GBV and seeks to

accelerate its implementation by prioritizing key interventions through ongoing initiatives by other state and non-state actors. The Joint Programme is anchored on the **five pillars of prevention, protection, prosecution, programming and partnerships.**

Second, to front the empowerment of women, the ministry has put in place the **national policy for prevention and response to Gender Based Violence (2014)** and the enactment of the **prevention against Domestic Violence Act (2015).**

Third, the ministry is developing the **National Policy on Eradication of FGM.** Once ready and approved by February next year, all stakeholders will be expected to use the document to intensify campaigns against FGM.

Besides the programmatic interventions, my ministry will further delve into social and behaviour change programming to handle the socio-cultural challenges that have hindered the success of current interventions. Further, we plan to enhance collaboration with various partners, and devise methods devoted to public education and community dialogues. We plan to engage the youth, religious and traditional leaders in an effort to promote girl child education practice.

Ladies and Gentlemen

CURRENT INITIATIVES

In Kenya we have robust policies and laws to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV). We are signatory to international and regional human rights frameworks that aim to prevent and respond to GBV. Despite the policy and legal framework, statistics show that FGM

remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations in our country equally in times of conflict and stability.

The Government supports initiatives by all actors that will help accelerate the abandonment of FGM/C. We have provided technical and financial support to institutions, enacted requisite legislation and put in place policies that protect human dignity and address harmful practices.

Following the enactment of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, 2012, the government established the Anti-FGM Board in December 2013 to ensure enactment of the Act. The board was charged to achieve the following:

- i. Coordinate public awareness campaigns and programmes on FGM.
- ii. Design, supervise and coordinate campaigns against the practice
- iii. Advise the Government on matters relating to female genital mutilation and the implementation of the Act
- iv. Provide technical and other support to institutions, agencies and other bodies engaged in the programmes aimed at eradication of female genital mutilation and
- v. Facilitate resource mobilization for the programmes and activities aimed at eradicating female genital mutilation.

I am pleased with the progress made by the Ant-FGM board since its inception. The board has worked in collaboration with all the stakeholders and partners. Through its efforts, the government engaged the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development to develop FGM content for inclusion in educational materials in the new school curriculum. We are here today to launch the strategic documents so developed. They include:

- a) Baseline survey on FGM and Child Marriage
- b) Anti-FGM Board report
- c) Guidelines for conducting Community dialogues
- d) Guidelines for conducting Alternative Rites of Passage
- e) Anti-FGM resource mobilization strategy
- f) Human Resource Policy Instruments
- g) Kenya Anti-FGM stakeholders' Profiles and Mapping
- h) The FGM Resource Handbook
- i) Simplified version of the Prohibition of FGM Act 2011 in English and Kiswahili
- j) The Anti FGM Board Service Charter
- k) First End FGM Conference Report

I am confident that the launch of these strategic documents will serve the immediate and long term needs of the various state and Non-state actors in the anti FGM campaign. I have no doubt that it will contribute to the success of the campaign against FGM in the country. I note with utmost satisfaction that these documents have been specially prepared for use in the Kenyan context. They are sensitive to and address the unique socio-cultural challenges that affect our anti-FGM programs. I urge all our partners and stakeholders to make effective use of the strategic documents to accelerate the pace the elimination of FGM in the Country.

As I conclude my remarks, I wish to express my appreciation to all the stakeholders and partners who have contributed to the content and made the development of the materials possible. I also wish to thank the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development for their technical input and expat contribution in the development of the materials.

Let me also reiterate on the need for partnership in the design and implementation of social and behavioural change programmes of this magnitude. Without collaboration and partnership from all sectors, we may not make a significant difference. We must learn from the experiences of others facing the same challenges and copy the best practices that they have developed over time. I believe that our concerted efforts under the coordination of the Anti-FGM Board will lead to substantial reduction in the prevalence of FGM in the Country. The partnerships between the State and Non-state actors has yielded the results we celebrate now.

Finally, ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to declare the strategic materials on the Eradication of FGM in Kenya, officially launched.

(And knowing that we are unlikely to meet with some of the stakeholders and partners before Christmas, let me take this opportunity to wish each one of you a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.)

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS