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Gabra clan members after an engagement meeting held in June 2018 during Loiyangalani Cultural Festival, in Marsabit County. These reunions organized by Koota Injena's Adult and Youth facilitators during clan-led events helped ensure the clan buy-in to the intergenerational dialogue approach to question female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child early and forced marriage (CEFM), normally considered 'taboo' subjects. ©Amref Health

KENYA, EAST AFRICA REDEFINING THE VALUE OF THE GIRL

USAID engages clans¹ and builds youth capacity to discuss and promote normative and behavioral change around the value of a girl. We promote abandoning female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

- FGM/C and CEFM negatively impact development efforts
- Kenya is among six African countries with the highest possibility of eradicating FGM/C by 2031²
- National FGM/C prevalence rate: 21% (2015³)
- National CEFM prevalence rate: 23% (2017⁴)
- Higher prevalence of FGM/C and CEFM among semi-nomadic communities (Samburu, Borana, Rendille, Gabra) at 76% and 70% respectively⁵

KOOTA INJENA -- "COME, LET US TALK"

Koota Injena is a three-year USAID funded proof-of-concept learning activity that engages clans to change attitudes and norms for the abandonment of CEFM and FGM/C and re-define the value of the girl. The activity targets 40 clans of Samburu (nine clans), Borana (seventeen clans), Rendille (nine clans) and Gabra (five clans) communities in Samburu and Marsabit Counties

¹ A clan is a close-knit group of interrelated families united by kinship and ancestral descent. They share a cultural identity with set norms and values. They are bound by affinal and consanguineal relations and have a common stand on sociocultural issues. They are the building blocks of the tribes. In nomadic settings, they tend to live somehow close from each other and meet after long periods of migration.

² 2013 UNICEF FGM/C Report

³ Down from 27% in 2009 after the adoption of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act of 2011

⁴ UNICEF, State of the World's Children, 2016

⁵ Koota Injena, Baseline Study, September 2018

Lasting and sustainable change to end harmful socio-cultural practices must be led by the communities themselves as they re-envision norms and values for girls, safety, rights, and empowerment. Koota Injena is training men, women, boy and girl champions to facilitate structured dialogue, hold intergenerational discussions, and achieve agreement among clan members to end CEFM and FGM/C. To establish supportive and enabling environments for adolescents, Koota Injena will work with county authorities and clan leaders to establish or revitalize Child Protection Committees and develop County anti-FGM/C and CEFM policies. The activity will build the capacity of in-school and out-of-school youth on health education, life skills, dialogue facilitation, and advocacy so they can participate meaningfully in community-level change.

Koota Injena will generate new information, evidence, and learnings that will provide an effective, efficient, and sustainable strategy to address traditional practices. The four communities selected share a similar patriarchal clan structure, similar religious practices and belong to larger cultural groups across much of East Africa (Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania), providing an opportunity to replicate and scale the intervention.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Twenty-four initial buy-in meetings** with clan elders, influential women and local administrators, **sixteen targeted dialogues** with various age/sex groups and **five clan elder dialogues held** enabling the whole community to discuss FGM/C and CEFM, normally considered ‘taboo’ subjects, as well as identify and approve champions who will question FGM/C and CEFM practices
- **One hundred and forty champions** (male, female, in school and out-of-school youth), and **forty-two school health club patrons from twenty schools trained** on public speaking, thematic debates, peer-to-peer dialogue and life skills on FGM/C and CEFM to facilitate structured community dialogues
- **Twenty-five members of area advisory committee (AAC)⁶ trained** to enforce existing FGM/C and CEFM laws
- **Twenty religious’ leaders (Muslim and Christian) trained** to influence the attitude and norm change of their congregation to abandon FGM/C and CEFM

Total Funding: \$3,725,000

Period of Performance: October 1, 2017 - September 30, 2020

Activity Location: Samburu and Marsabit Counties, Kenya

Implementing Partners:

Amref Health Africa
Food for the Hungry (FH)

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⁶ Formed in 1992 through a Presidential Administrative Directive to address issues affecting children at the District level, AAC’s objectives are to supervise and control the planning, financing and coordination of child rights and welfare activities and to advise the government on related matters in their areas of operation. They are comprised of governmental (representatives from the departments of Children Services, Gender, Culture and Social Services, Education, Security and Health) and non-governmental actors (representatives of clan elders, non-governmental organizations and community health workers).