

Support initiatives in fight against FGM

Today is International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The day which is observed annually on February 6, reminds us that even if there is a law, the Prohibition of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010 that outlaws FGM, it is still practiced in parts of Sebei and Karamoja sub-regions. Unfortunately, according to authorities, most of these cases are not reported and therefore culprits cannot be prosecuted.

The World Health Organisation lists a number of health risks such as severe pain, excessive bleeding (haemorrhage), genital tissue swelling, fever, infections, wound healing problems, injury to surrounding genital tissue, shock, death, urinary problems (painful urination, urinary tract infections), psychological problems (depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, etc.)

This is only but a fraction of the risks of the practice which has absolutely no health benefit.

According to the UN, the theme this year which is, "Towards 2030: No end to female genital mutilation without sustained commitment and investment," highlights the need to have sustained engagement from governments, civil society, communities, philanthropic foundations and the international community.

It is therefore important that efforts to end FGM are not forgotten or stopped due to lack of cases being reported. As has been suggested before, legislation alone is not enough.

There must be constant community dialogue, sensitisation and awareness drives. And because it is mostly the elders in these communities whose belief systems in regard to FGM influence the younger populations, engaging them in constant dialogue with equally elderly change agents is important.

Because cultural practices are deeply rooted and intertwined with the history and values of communities, causing change in practice even for the good of the community has to be done long-term before real tangible change can be seen.

Trust cannot be built in the short-term. It must be cultivated overtime.

Any initiative or project that is contributing to the fight against FGM must be supported to enable it succeed.

All stakeholders, especially community leaders, must be committed to this fight for it to yield fruit.

As we observe International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, we hope that there will be renewed efforts to make sure that this harmful practice is eliminated.

The issue:

FGM

Our view:

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