

External Evaluation of our project with ECAW - Ending FGM/C in Kuria: Promoting a Culture of Change and Positive Choices

External evaluation undertaken by Kamila Wasilkowska, Gender, Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant

Orchid Project and Feed the Minds, commissioned a Final Evaluation of our FGC abandonment project in Kuria, Kenya, which was funded over two years by the Wallace Global Fund. The main goal of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the project has met its objectives, to learn what has worked and why and what can be enhanced. The evaluation was conducted between November 2015 and January 2016 by Kamila Wasilkowska, Gender, Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant. The evaluation used a mixed method approach consisting of a quantitative staff survey, participatory Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews with 80 stakeholders.

The results of this evaluation are summarised below. Orchid Project, Feed the Minds and ECAW are in the process of developing a new project to commence this year which builds upon the previous project and incorporates learning and recommendations from this evaluation.

Background

The project is a partnership between Orchid Project, Feed the Minds and the Education Centre for the Advancement of Women (ECAW), a Community Based Organisation (CBO) with activities and a base in Kuria. The main activities were:

- Community forums: discussions with 75 – 100 community members, led by a community member and a Paralegal or ECAW's Project Coordinator
- Girls' Empowerment Programme (GEP): a two-day workshop for 40 girls aged 11-18, covering topics such as FGC, reproductive health, human rights and career choices
- Stakeholder training and influencing: group training of Paralegals, teachers, health professionals, religious leaders and the clan of elders

Main findings

The service delivery model provides good value for money, is rooted in community networks, is adaptive to local needs and has the long-term potential to bring about a move towards abandonment of FGC. Through this model over 25,000 conversations were initiated on FGC abandonment and girls and women's rights (this includes repeat conversations with the same people). There were over 3,000 attendees at Project activities, at least 1,000 of whom were distinct individuals.

The project goes too broad, and not deep enough into follow-up and sustained dialogue. With current resources the model will not be able to affect behaviour change to bring about an abandonment of FGC among the high number of stakeholders groups (8) and large geographic area (5 villages) it covers. Achieving high-level impact to reduce prevalence rates could be achieved if the project activities are scaled-up across all areas, or the number of villages is scaled-down.

The **Paralegal model** works in delivery, though the wider team of Paralegals could be more engaged and responsible for other project activities such as delivery of training and M&E. Between 2014 and 2015, 26 Paralegals were trained by ECAW, 20 women and 6 men. Paralegals are very well respected

trusted members of the community and provide the 'link' between the community and the organisation. ECAW presents good value for money in its model that deploys Paralegals only when they are needed but not receiving payment detracted from the work of some paralegals, especially male Paralegals. The model is flexible and can be adapted, e.g. a male Paralegal was brought on in response to not being able to access the clan of elders, providing a 'bridge' to the clan.

Overwhelmingly the community spoke highly of **community forums** and requested they continue, stating that women and men, old and young people are now able to talk about FGC in the same room. Mini-forums were developed in 2015, reducing the numbers of participants to c.25 to allow for 'more dialogue, where all community members could join in the discussion'. There were some long time gaps of around 9 months between the first and the second forum taking place in a village and some Paralegals found challenges in facilitating forums (e.g. lack of confidence challenging senior community members). 461 community members attended community forums in 2014, 932 in 2015 and 95 attended mini-forums in 2015.

In 2014, 40 girls and in 2015 178 girls and boys attended the **Girls Empowerment Programme**. In 2015, following demand from the community in Masaba, the GEP was extended to include boys to develop young male FGC community activists. Opinions varied as to whether girls and boys should attend the same sex, or mixed sex (G)EPs. Participants were recruited through school and church networks and activities often happened in a church venue, facilitating a good link between existing community networks and the GEP. There were examples of the process of diffusion of FGC dialogue that can happen once the community starts to be more engaged and own the activities. The main issues raised by girls were that: two days was not sufficient; age groups should be divided; and there should be a programme for girls who have been cut to become champions. Cut girls were turned away and this stigmatisation needs to be addressed in future programming. Some fathers reacted with anger and sometimes violence on hearing what their daughters had learnt during the GEP or attended the ceremony on face value, but intended to cut their girls. Fathers should be engaged in discussions about what is covered during the GEP.

Stakeholder training

- 120 teachers were trained. Their relationship with 'other stakeholders in the programme like pastors and parents has been reinforced'. Teachers mobilised girls for the GEP and conducted follow-up activities, maintaining discussion during classes and school clubs. ECAW staff noted that some challenges exist, e.g. the expectation by some of monetary incentives.
- 120 parents were trained in 2014 and 80 in 2015. The least data could be located on the training of parents who were more vocal about community forums which may be linked to the fact that training of parents did not constitute a large part of ECAW's activities or that through community forums were able to stimulate a broader and more exciting discussion.
- Between 2014 and 2015, 75 Christian religious leaders were trained. Materials should be adapted to support leaders to advocate and training needs to focus on developing skills to bring about change in leaders (e.g. facilitation, listening skills), rather than FGC education.
- Between 2014 and 2015, 81 health professionals were trained. Health professionals said they had used information from training in their practice. Although part of their current job, there would need to be additional incentive for this group to do more (e.g. certificates).
- Between 2014 and 2015, 19 Champion girls, and 1 head Champion girl were identified and trained. The majority of the girls involved have not been active, however the Head Champion remains very active, running Sunday school sessions each week where she talks about FGC and supporting ECAW with project activities. The lack of retention is likely linked

to few resources to maintain contact, follow-up and mentoring. If this could be improved, retention would likely increase.

- Communication Materials have been well received and helped: teachers and health professionals talk more to the community about FGC; give the project a level of validity by professionalising materials; and provide useful and context specific materials to Paralegals.

Community attitudes were changing faster in towns than in rural areas. Working with urban areas may be the low hanging fruit, accelerating change and leading to a knock on effect but this may run the risk of increasing disparities between communities. The use of role models was a very effective way of bringing about a change in attitudes. Health professionals, religious leaders then teachers showed the most readiness to change. Parents' attitudes remained mixed and attitudes among fathers have been hard to change. The clan of elders and grandparents were furthest away from abandoning FGC. Each member of the clan of elders received benefits (alcohol, meat) and around £68 (one to two months' salary for the average agricultural labourer) every cutting season. For elders, being engaged in Income Generation Activities to supplement income lost from not cutting girls was more work for the same or less money. The group did not see the wider or long-term benefits of not cutting girls. This group has considerable control over community behaviours.

Monitoring and evaluation activities are currently focused on measuring changes at the level of activities; outcomes and impact are not being measured. The project met its activity targets but there were no clear targets or Key Performance Indicators for outcome and early signs of impact. There was no systematic way of recording data from the field. Although weekly check-ins took place with between Paralegal and ECAW staff, this data was captured in a notebook, rather than directly into a printed document. Direct verbatim quotes are collected from beneficiaries but amalgamated together and usually not shared with FTM and Orchid.

There have been some **changes in the wider context**:

- parents cutting their girls at a younger age (7-13 years)
- the type of cut performed is said to have become less extreme
- criminalising cutters, parents or grandparents has not worked at changing mind-sets or behaviours: in response to a cutter being imprisoned, elders brought a Tanzanian woman to Kuria to perform the cut and girls now cross the border to be cut in Tanzania
- Since the work of major NGOs in Kuria, there has been an expectation that NGOs will provide participants with cash and/or lunch for attending trainings
- The community perceive there to be a reduction in the number of girls being cut and in the rates of non-cut women from other ethnic groups (e.g. Kikuyu, Luo) being cut when they marry a Kuria man.
- Community members and ECAW staff noted that women and men shared greater parity in voice and took up more equal amounts of space and time in community forums. These changes cannot be solely attributed to the programme as the changing policy and legal environment and the presence of other NGOs are likely to have had an impact

Recommendations

Programming:

- Continue to engage the whole community – the approach is the most effective and value for money strategy in the long term. Focus on long-term goals and early signs of impact
- Develop additional role models for men to stimulate behaviour change

- More fully involve fathers, boys, mothers and grandparents in the programme as a whole and in the GEP
- Support Paralegals to work with girls clubs (and other school clubs which boys attend) to make the approach more sustainable
- Couple FGC discussions with the needs of the community
- Hold mini-forums over community forums where the Paralegal travels to the community to ensure greater community dialogue, and that everyone gets a chance to speak
- Go deeper rather than broader across villages, reduce the target number of villages
- Pay Paralegals Sh. 1,500 (£10)/ day for their work, number of days to be decided once activities are confirmed and villages are selected
- Monitor and react to changes in and implementation of legislation on FGC as this may likely create a backlash to FGC discourse
- Focus on developing the capacity and incentives for Champion girls, including cut girls and un-cut girls
- Increase the capacity of Paralegals so they gradually take on more responsibilities for facilitating discussions. Continue to refresh paralegals and provide intensive training, e.g. on the importance of not ostracising cut girls and how to resolve issues. Paralegals could be issued with an ID for accountability and to build professionalism and morale.
- Do not concentrate resources on working with the clan of elders but retain a 'bridge' with this group

Communications:

- Share service delivery model as a solid model for moving towards abandonment of FGC
- Publish methodological top tips in the Overseas Development Institute Humanitarian Practice Magazine to share best practice on community research and FGC evaluations

Resource mobilisation: Apply to the UN Women Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls for a joint grant with FTM and Orchid Project.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Build the capacity of ECAW and Paralegals to develop M&E systems, including an Excel data storage sheet for KPIs
- Use Paralegals to collect M&E data systematically, providing them with a hard copy of this recording sheet. ECAW staff to input data directly into this excel sheet during weekly calls with Paralegals, including direct verbatim quotes from beneficiaries
- Only collect baseline data that can be used and replicated throughout the project, or at the end line. Future projects should aim for the log frame to be a working document used by all partners, including the implementing agency in the planning of activities

Conducting future research on FGC in Kuria: Draw on a trusted member of the implementing agency to initiate discussions; develop creative and engaging tools for working with very young girls and boys, e.g. a doll in this case, to break down the barriers between researcher and researched, to create a non-threatening environment to talk about sensitive issues such as FGC, to create an environment that was 'less like school' and to facilitate a more open and informal discussion and to provide anonymity; use warm-up games before FGDs with girls and boys; and conduct separate Focus Group Discussions with parents and grandparents, as age was more important than sex when having group discussions on the cut.