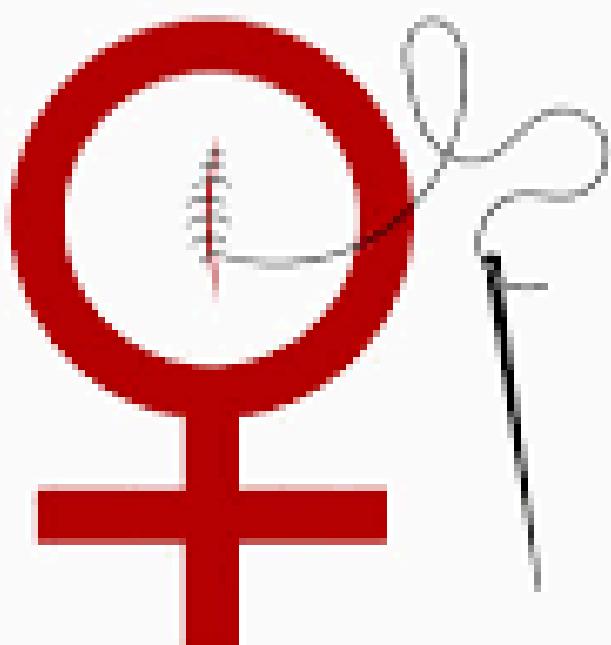


FEBRUARY 2024

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# ACTIVITY REPORT:

WEBINAR TO COMMEMORATE THE



INTERNATIONAL DAY  
OF  
ZERO TOLERANCE  
FOR  
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Prepared by Thelma Ringnwi Lamnda , Programs & MEAL Lead at Safe Haven

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation webinar co-organized by Safe Haven Cameroon, Lead Child Africa and Beauty for Ashes, Kenya was organized to commemorate and raise awareness about the global issue of female genital mutilation (FGM). The webinar, held on February 24th, 2024, brought together a diverse range of stakeholders, including experts, activists, policymakers, and community leaders, to discuss the current state of FGM from an African perspective, share best practices, and advocate for the eradication of this harmful practice.

The event supported by the UNICEF Office to the African Union, began with a keynote address Ms. Dinayen B. Emilien, the founder of Safe Haven Cameroon, highlighting the historical, cultural, and health implications of FGM. This set the stage for a series of panel discussions and interactive sessions that explored the multifaceted aspects of FGM, including its impact on physical and mental health, human rights, and gender equality. Participants engaged with speakers in thought-provoking dialogues, sharing personal stories, and shedding light on the challenges and successes in combating FGM within their respective communities.

Key themes that emerged from the webinar included the importance of education and awareness, community empowerment, African legal frameworks, and healthcare interventions in addressing FGM. Speakers emphasized on the need for a holistic approach that involves grassroots outreach, advocacy at the policy level, and access to comprehensive support services for survivors aligning to the this year's theme; *Her Voice. Her Future.*

The webinar also showcased innovative initiatives and campaigns by young Africans that are making a tangible difference in the fight against FGM. This included community-led interventions, educational programs, and partnerships between governments, NGOs, and international organizations and establishment of specific laws/policies against Harmful Practice. The success stories presented served as a source of inspiration and demonstrated the potential for positive change when stakeholders collaborate and take action.

In conclusion, the webinar was a resounding success, fostering meaningful dialogue, and forging new connections among individuals and organizations dedicated to the eradication of FGM. It underscored the importance of collective action and amplified the voices of those advocating for the rights and well-being of women and girls worldwide.

This executive summary captures the key highlights and outcomes of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation webinar, reflecting the shared commitment to ending FGM and promoting gender equality.

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# INTRODUCTION

This one-day webinar held on Saturday, 24 February 2024 is a Pan-African initiative, organized by Safe Haven Cameroon in partnership with Lead Child Africa and Beauty for Ashes Kenya. The webinar established a platform for young Africans to address the pervasive issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) across the African continent centered on the theme of the 2024 International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, "Her Voice, Her Future. Investing in Survivor-Led Movements." The primary objective of this event was to commemorate the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation through a lens that embraces the pan-African diversity of experiences, challenges, and solutions. Additionally, the webinar built on fostering awareness, dialogue, and advocacy to accelerate the movement toward the eradication of FGM in Africa.

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**FGM is seen as a right  
of passage to  
adulthood. Use  
alternative rights of  
passage that will not  
be harmful to women  
and girls**

Pauline Wacu Mwenja, Attorney of the High Court of Kenya

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# BRIEF ACTIVITY NARRATIVE

The Webinar was held on Saturday, 24 February 2024, and convened a few minutes after 11:00 AM - the initial start time. The Webinar had two main discussion sessions with expert panelists consisting of; a medical expert, an SRHR advocate/ FGM Survivor, legal experts, and expert working on FGM.

**LET'S TALK FGM**  
From an African Perspective

**Speakers:**

- Asha Bonaya**  
SRHR advocate  
Kenya
- DR. Njimi Fru Ning**  
Medical Expert &  
Practitioner, Cameroon
- Pauline Wacu Mwenja**  
Advocate of the High  
Court of Kenya

**Moderators:**

- Mmathabiso Khalema**  
Attorney of the High  
Court of South Africa
- Emediong Akpabio**  
Founder and UNICEF Youth  
Champion, Nigeria
- Lorine Kajwang**
- Aleatanu Noela**

**Date:** 24 FEB, 2024    **Time:** 11:00AM-CAT

**ZOOM LIVE**

**Partners:**

- LEAD CHILD AFRICA
- Beauty for Ashes

**Contact:** safehavencmr@gmail.com | Safe Haven Cmr | Safe Haven Cmr | safe haven

Communication visibility material introducing the speakers and moderators of the webinar

The discussions during the webinar touched on Cultural Contexts of FGM: A Pan-African Overview, Impact on Women and Girls: Narratives and Realities, Intersecting Issues: FGM and Gender Equality, Innovative Approaches: Using Technology and Media. We equally had the speakers share on Legislation and Legal Frameworks: Progress and Challenges, Role of NGOs and Civil Society: Driving Policy Change, Men as Allies: Changing Perceptions on FGM, International Partnerships: Supporting Local Advocacy.

In the course of the sessions we were able to gather some key challenges faced by these experts in mitigating FGM within their various communities.

- The Absence of data/statistics on FGM;
- The fact that FGM is associated with some cultural and traditional practices which render efforts to curb FGM almost impossible;
- There is also the issue of inadequate capacities of advocates who are at the forefront of the fight against FGM;

**It is religion and culture  
that is impeding the  
process of solving FGM in  
our regions**

*Emediong Akpabio, Founder of Child Solidarity,  
Nigeria*

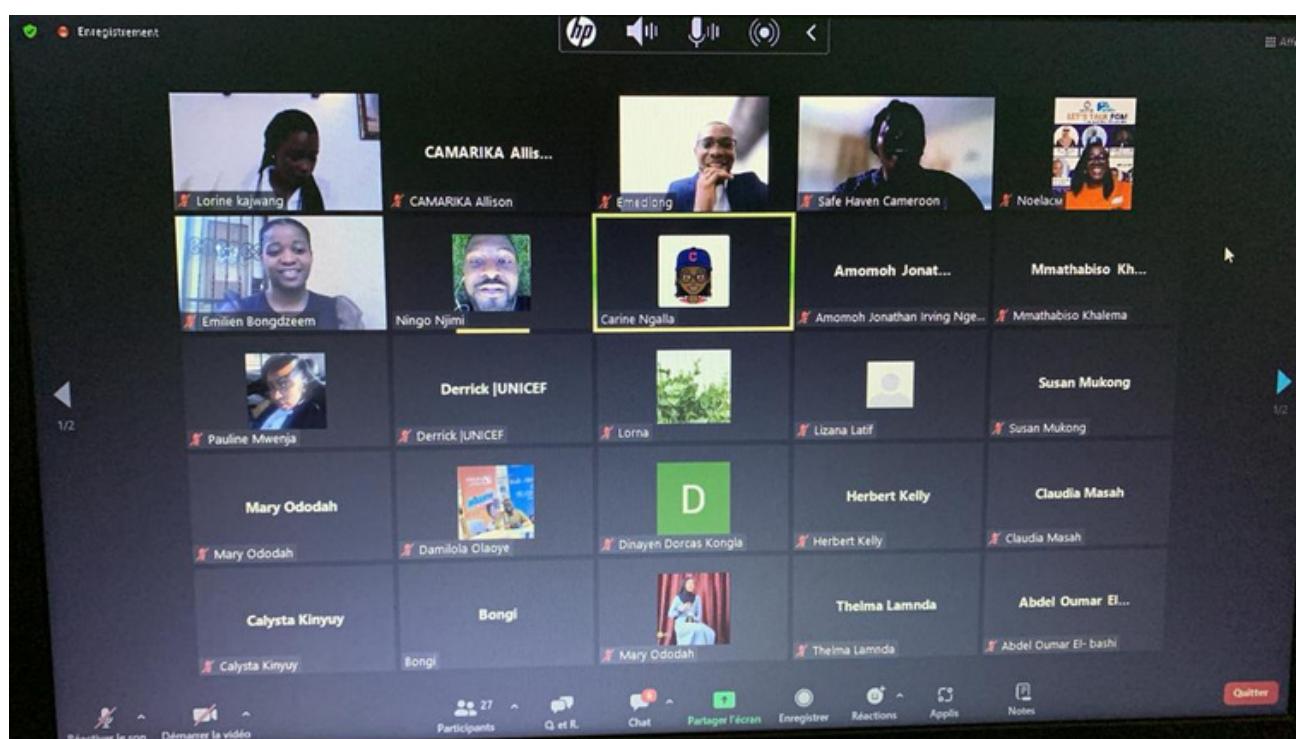
**Build the capacities of the  
medical personnel to record  
cases of FGM. The data from  
hospitals will help make  
advocacy possible**

*Dr. Njimi Fru Ningo, Medical Expert*

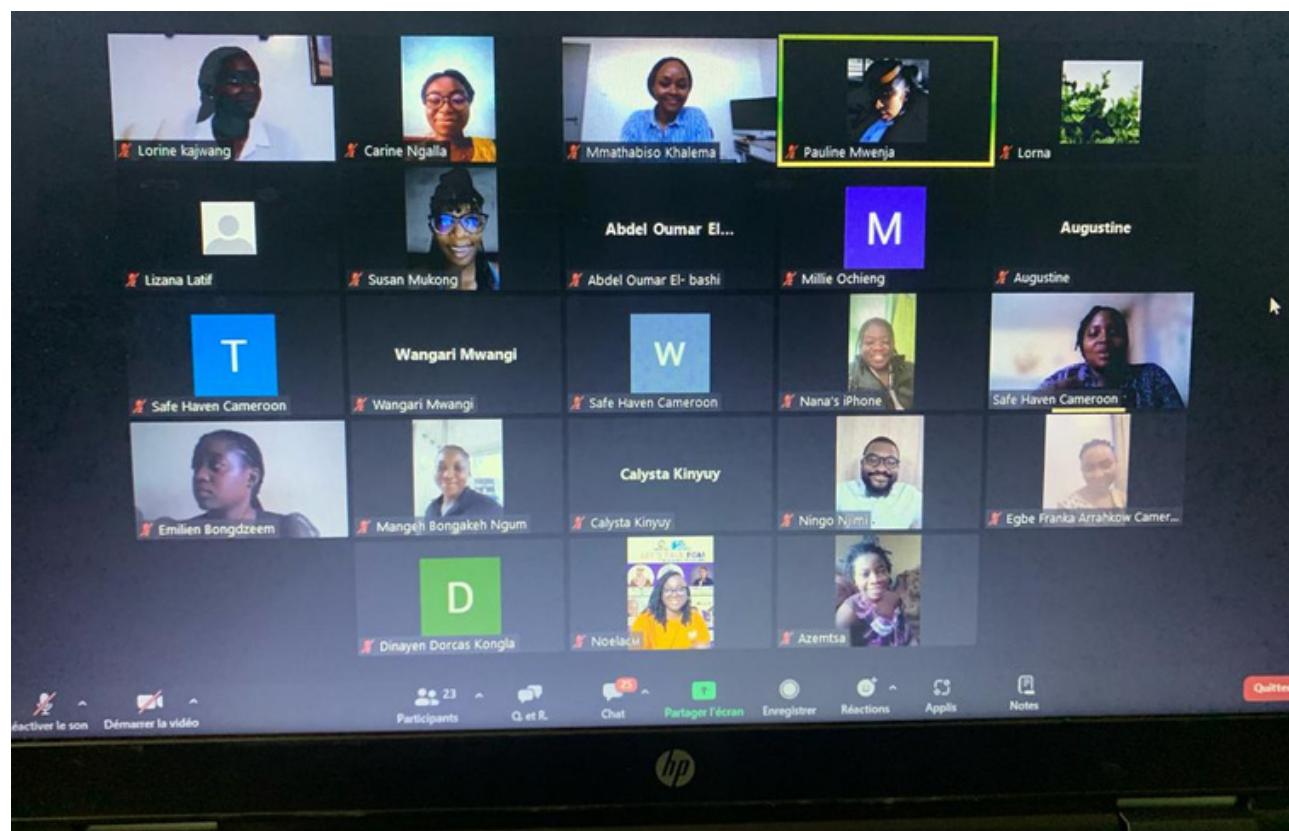
# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

To match these challenges faced in their various fields, the speakers highlighted a number of recommendations essential to policymakers and advocates in mitigating FGM amongst other harmful practices. These recommendation include the following;

- A critical recommendation for addressing absence or inadequate data on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), as proposed by the speakers, is to prioritize the standardization of data collection methodologies, fostering collaboration among healthcare professionals, researchers, medical personnel and organizations to share best practices, and advocating for the importance of data collection to inform evidence-based policies, interventions, and resource allocation. This approach can help in establishing comprehensive surveys and reporting mechanisms, addressing knowledge gaps, and promoting awareness and education to effectively combat this harmful practice.
  - Furthermore, in addressing the challenge of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) being associated with deeply rooted cultural and traditional practices as is the case in Africa, is to implement comprehensive community-based interventions that involve targeted engagement with local leaders, community elders, and influential stakeholders. These interventions should prioritize culturally sensitive communication strategies, education, and awareness programs aimed at challenging harmful norms and beliefs, while also promoting alternative rites of passage and empowerment initiatives for women and girls. Additionally, fostering partnerships with grassroots organizations and utilizing community-led advocacy can help in gradually shifting societal attitudes and perceptions, ultimately contributing to the abandonment of FGM within affected communities.
  - In addition, with regards to inadequate capacities of young community advocates is to prioritize the provision of comprehensive training, mentorship, and capacity-building programs tailored to the specific needs of advocates and frontline workers. This involves collaborating with established organizations and experts to develop specialized training modules on FGM prevention, survivor support, advocacy skills, and trauma-informed care. Additionally, fostering networks for knowledge exchange, peer learning, and professional development can enhance the effectiveness and resilience of advocates, ultimately strengthening their capacity to drive sustainable change and support affected communities in the eradication of FGM.
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*Participants of the webinar smiling for a quick photo as the webinar came to an end*

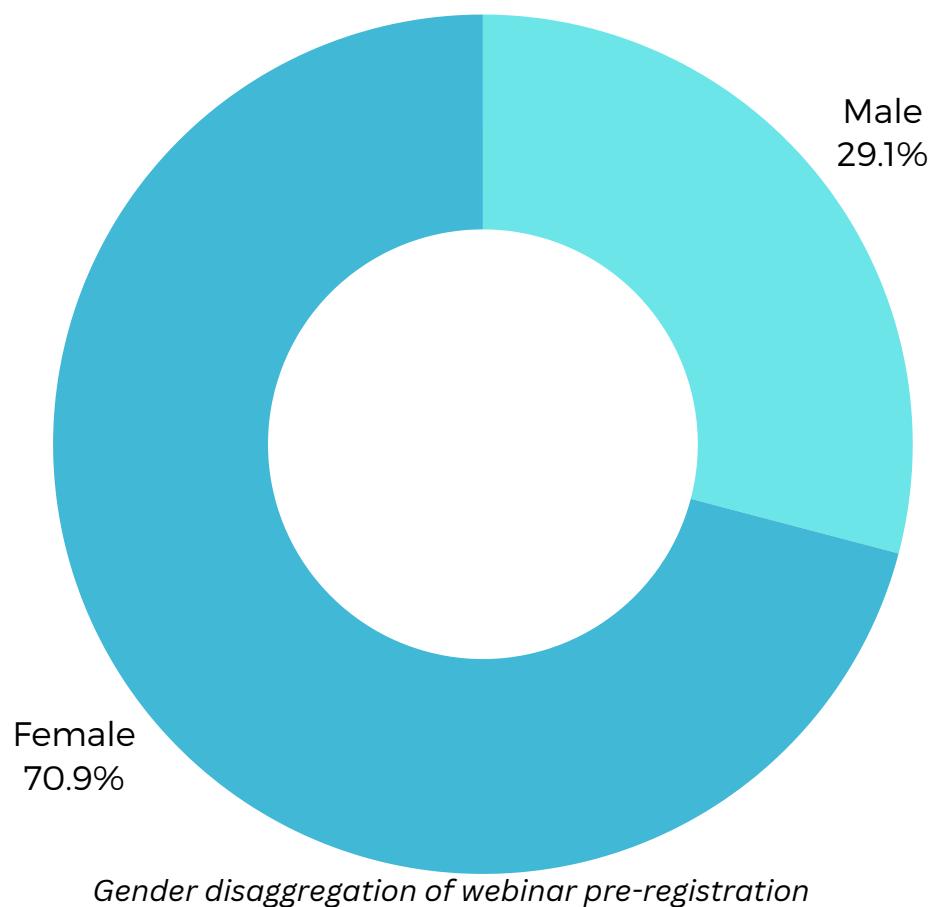


# MONITORING & EVALUATION

For this webinar, we made use of a few basic M&E tools to capture participants' understanding of FGM in alignment with the themes that were discussed in the webinar. We also created a registration form that collected essential data on participants profiling prior to the webinar.

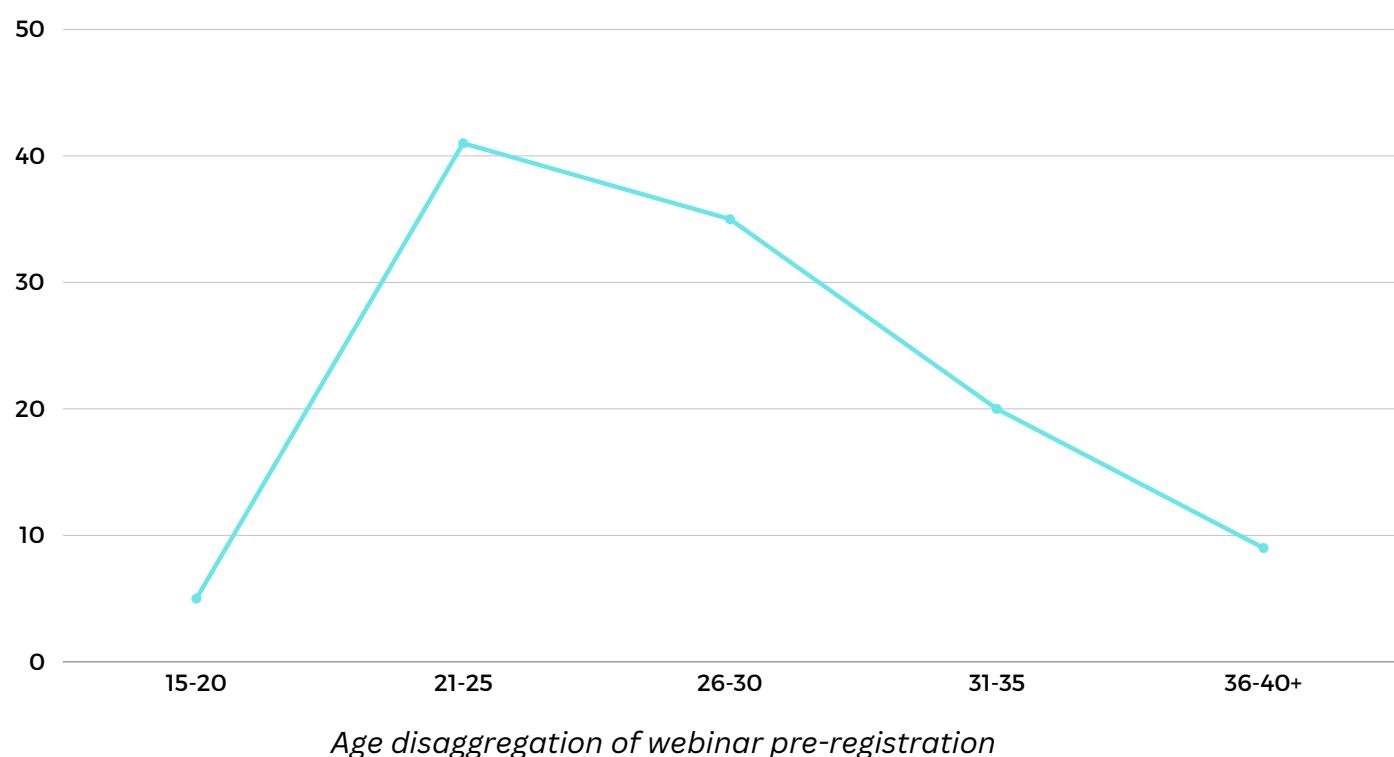
## PARTICIPANT PROFILING

The registration form for the webinar witnessed the registration of a total of 110 entries (78 Females, 32 Males). Disaggregations of these entries are recorded as follows:-

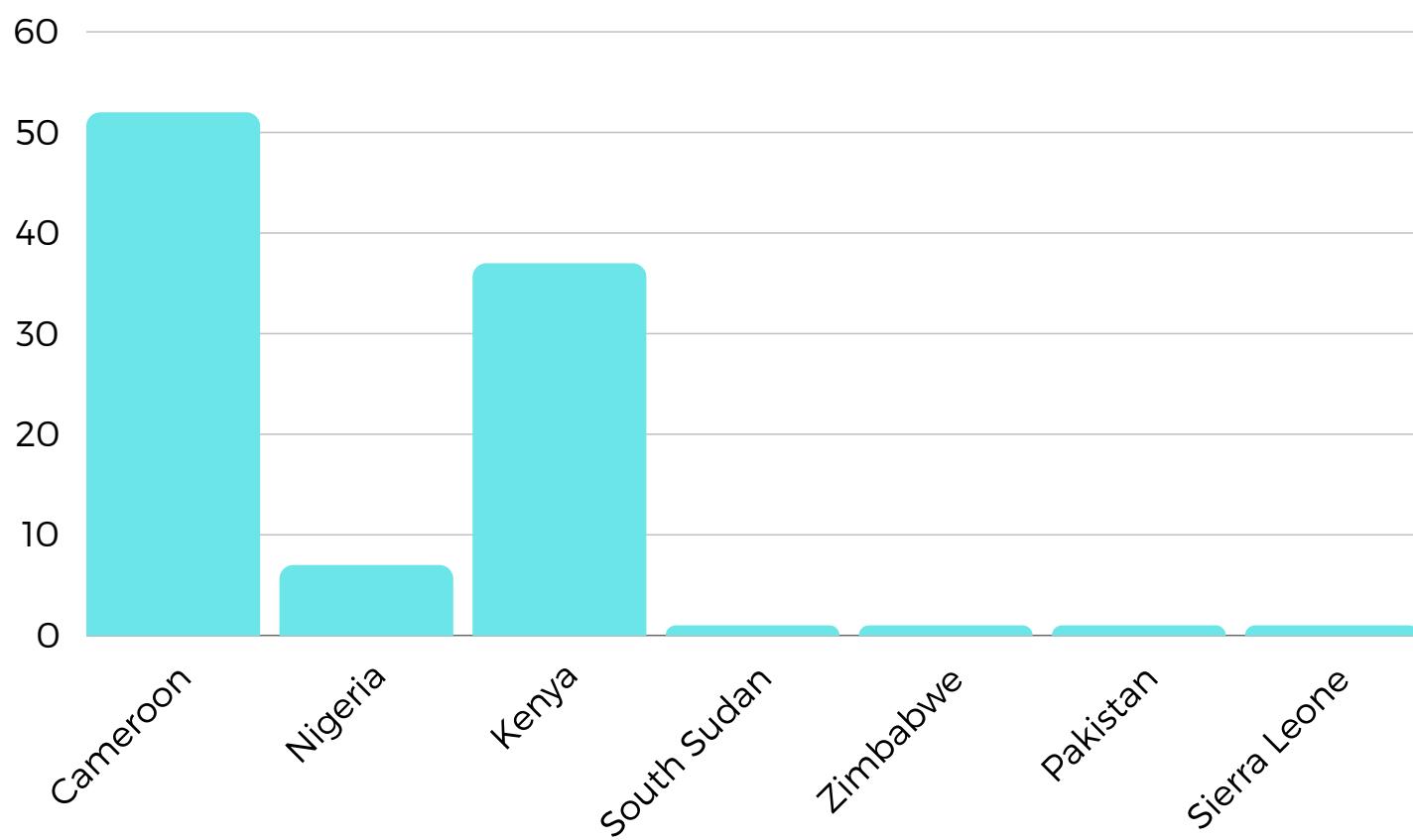


We equally recorded the age disaggregation of pre-registration entries. The age groups ranged from 15-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40+. This evaluation of participants' ages is graphically represented below:

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Given that the webinar aimed at capturing a Pan-African perspective of Female Genital Mutilation, our data gathered also consisted of the countries(origin or residency) of these entries. This is explained in the graph below:



# ACTIVITY SUCCESSES RECORDED

We recorded some successes in the planning and organization of this event, as highlighted by participants of the webinar . Some of these successes are as follows:-

## **RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC**

As already mentioned, the webinar was co-organized to mark the 2024 edition of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation. Given that it is a common harmful practice carried out throughout the African continent, it was also pertinent to discuss this practice from an African perspective and also because most FGM practices in Africa are promoted by some primitive African traditions and customs. Hence, the relevance of the topic.

## **SPEAKERS' GOOD MASTERY OF THE SUBJECT MATTER**

Participants also appreciated the fact that the speakers were fluent and had a good mastery of the subject matter in relation to their various areas of experience (medical, legal, advocacy/survivor to name a few). Put differently, it was easy for participants to gain improved understanding of FGM through the panel discussions wherein the selected speakers discussed on. It is worthy of note the fact that the speakers of the webinar came from Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, respectively.

## **THE SUPPORT FROM UNICEF AUO**

The technical support offered by the UNICEF AUO is another area of success for the activity in that it offered the activity some form of credibility. The fact that this activity was held using the UNICEF AUO zoom platform made the activity credible and most definitely exposed the activity to a larger audience.

# CHALLENGES FACED

We also collected participants' thoughts on areas of the activity which required some level of improvement. They are summarized in the paragraphs below:-

## **INSUFFICIENT TIME ALLOCATION**

Participants felt that for a topic as pertinent as this, the time allocated for the activity was rather insufficient. Speakers were not given ample time to share on questions they were asked and because we were unaware of how long the Zoom link was set for, we had to hastily go through the agenda.

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## **LOW LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

We witnessed a staggeringly low level of participation and engagement from participants during the webinar. A major reason for this was because, the activity was poorly communicated, especially the zoom link announcement that on such short notice and even after series of reminders between Friday and Saturday, most participants did not react to the email and did not show up for the event.

Participants also expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that they were not granted enough opportunities to share their thoughts on the discussions that were going on during the webinar, except during the last five minute Q&A session.

## **INTERNET CONNECTION ISSUES**

Most attendees of the webinar, participants and speakers alike, complained of poor connection issues which hampered their full participation and engagement during the webinar.

## **INCOMPLETE OR MISSING DATA**

Majority of the data collected during pre-evaluation ended up being of little or no use because less participants were engaged in the post test evaluation. This made analyzing results very challenging (we recorded 110 entries for pre-evaluation and only recorded 14 entries for the post evaluations).

# **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UPCOMING EVENTS**

Participants of the webinar made the following recommendations for upcoming events:-

- Sufficient time allocation and proper time management;
  - More experience sharing from Survivors of FGM;
  - Effective and timely communication of event details;
  - Moderators of panel sessions should be more flexible;
  - Participants should be engaged in the discussions;
  - Awareness/sensitization campaigns of this nature should be frequently organized;
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# ABOUT SAFE HAVEN

Safe Haven Cameroon is a survivor-led organization dedicated to promoting the mental well-being and empowerment of survivors of all forms of gender-based violence. We believe that every individual deserves a safe space to heal and thrive, and we are committed to providing comprehensive support to survivors through therapy, psychosocial assistance, and empowerment.

At Safe Haven Cameroon, we understand the devastating impact that gender-based violence can have on individuals. That's why our organization is built upon a foundation of compassion, empathy, and a strong belief in the resilience of survivors. We strive to create a nurturing environment where survivors can find solace, regain their strength, and rebuild their lives.

In addition to therapy, we offer psychosocial support services that address the holistic well-being of survivors. Our support programs include workshops, support groups, and educational sessions on self-care, empowerment, and life skills. We believe in empowering survivors to reclaim their identities, regain their self-esteem, and develop the confidence to pursue their dreams.

Furthermore, we recognize the importance of technological skills in today's fast-paced and evolving world. Through our empowerment initiatives, we provide survivors with access to technological resources and training. By equipping them with digital literacy skills, we aim to enhance their employability, promote financial independence, and enable them to thrive in a digital society.

Safe Haven Cameroon is also dedicated to raising awareness about gender-based violence, advocating for change, and promoting a society free from violence and discrimination. We collaborate with local communities, partner organizations, and government agencies to create a network of support for survivors and work towards the eradication of gender-based violence.

Together, we strive to create a future where survivors of gender-based violence can heal, flourish, and lead fulfilling lives. Safe Haven Cameroon is committed to making a lasting impact on the lives of survivors, one step at a time.

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# CONTACTS

