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REPORT ON A VISIT TO MARY IMMACULATE GIRLS RESCUE CENTRE

VENUE: SUGUTA MARMAR WARD, SAMBURU COUNTY

COME TOGETHER WIDOWS & ORPHANS ORGANIZATION
10 DEC 2023
P.O. Box 34664-00100, NAIROBI
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DECEMBER 10, 2023
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"ADVOCATE. INSPIRE. EMPOWER"

A VIST BY THE ANTI- FGM BOARD KENYA AND COME TOGETHER WIDOWS AND ORPHANS ORGANIZATION TO MARY IMMACULATE GIRL RESCUE CENTRE, SUGUTA-MARMAR WARD, SAMBURU WEST CONSTITUENCY ON 10TH DECEMBER 2023

Photo Courtesy: Rescued girls at Mary Immaculate Girls Rescue Centre carrying UNFPA dignity kids presented to them by UNFPA Kenya through the Anti-FGM Board Kenya and Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization

INTRODUCTIONS

Mary Immaculate Girls Rescue Centre is a haven and a Centre for Hope to 90 girls of various ages who have escaped the perils of **Early Marriages**, **Gender-Based Violence**, and **Female Genital Mutilation**. These courageous girls receive not only accommodation but also essential provisions such as food and clothing, as well as education, generously sponsored by well-wishers. Hailing from both the entire county and Turkana County, these girls find shelter under the guidance of the current director, **Terecia Nduku**, who leads a dedicated team that includes three sisters, a matron, a secretary, and a watchman.

In a bid to achieve sustainability and financial independence, the center has implemented various projects. Notable among them including a greenhouse cultivating sukumawiki, indigenous vegetables, cabbages, tomatoes, and onions. Additionally, there is a garden used to cultivate sorghum, bananas, and mangoes, along with a poultry section housing chickens and turkeys. The girls also engage themselves in beadwork making during holidays.

The visit provided a platform for various girls to share their compelling stories of resilience and the journey that led them to the center. Some had fled directly to the center to escape the harrowing practice of Female Genital Mutilation, while others were rescued by police officers and other local administration officers when found in distress.

The girls expressed their disturbing experiences through recited poems, shedding light on the profound impact of cultural norms and traditions that had made them victims. It became evident that the fight against female genital mutilation faces significant challenges due to prevailing negative cultural practices. Girls who have gone through the post-mutilation, are often traded for cows and blankets in marriage arrangements therefore exacerbating the struggle against this harmful practice.

Furthermore, morans, assigned the duty of reclaiming girls attempting to escape early marriages, add an additional layer of complexity to the situation. Tragically, even during holiday visits home, rescued girls risk falling prey once again to the very practices they sought refuge from.
In light of these challenges, the center's director appealed for assistance in building a computer room and acquiring beddings. This call not only underscores the immediate needs of the center but also highlights the broader imperative of collective action in combating entrenched cultural practices and providing a secure haven for these resilient young girls.

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SPEECHES

MS. IPATO SURUM-CHAIRPERSON ANTI-FGM BOARD KENYA

Anti-FGM Board Chair Ms. Ipato Surum addressing the girls at MARY Immaculate Rescue Centre.

Madam Ipato Surum urged the rescued girls to become champions against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in their communities. She specifically called upon those girls who have pursued college and university education, emphasizing that they hold a respected position in society and should lead the fight. Madam Surum also appealed to the Samburu community to

reject outdated traditions that view women as wealth only after marriage, as this belief encourages FGM when parents rush to have their daughters cut in order to get them married.

Anti-FGM Board Kenya CEO Madam Bernadette Loloju addressing the girls at Mary Immaculate Girls Rescue Centre.

Madam Bernadette Loloju called for involvement of men in the fight against FGM. She noted that since men are the cultural custodians of society, their voices are crucial. She also called for boys to be protective of their sisters undergoing the cut. As the visit marked the World Human Rights Day as well as the end of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign 2023, she educated the girls on their fundamental human rights as enshrined in the constitution especially the right to dignified life and freedom from all harmful health practices where the Anti-FGM Board draws its mandate.

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DR. DIANAH KAMANDE-BOARD DIRECTOR, ANTI-FGM BOARD KENYA, FOUNDER &EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CTWOO

She began by congratulating the girls for being brave and confident by standing firm against FGM. She encouraged them to let the flame of Anti-FGM Champions to continue thriving in them so that they can all make sure that their Rights are Protected, Respected and Safeguarded. She affirmed that as the Founder of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization and as a Board Director at the Anti-FGM she will remain at the forefront in the fight against the harmful practices that violate Women's and Girls Rights.

She urged the staff at the Rescue Centre to stand united in the shared commitment to upholding the Rights of every Girl, fostering an environment where freedom, dignity and empowerment reign supreme.

Dr. Dianah Kamande addressing girls at Mary Immaculate Rescue Centre during the World Human Rights Day

CONCLUSION

The visit we paid was very meaningful to the center since we were able to extend our support in partnership with the Anti-FGM Board through a donation of assorted foodstuffs, encompassing cooking oil, rice, unga, and refreshments, along with dignity towels.
We were also able to champion for the Protection for the future of the Girl Child and to inspire hope to these brave girls.

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REPORT ON THE WIDOWS' ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT TRAINING

VENUE: SILALEI HOTEL, MARALAL WARD, SAMBURU COUNTY

COME TOGETHER WIDOWS & ORPHANS ORGANIZATION
11 DEC 2023
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DECEMBER 11 &12, 2023
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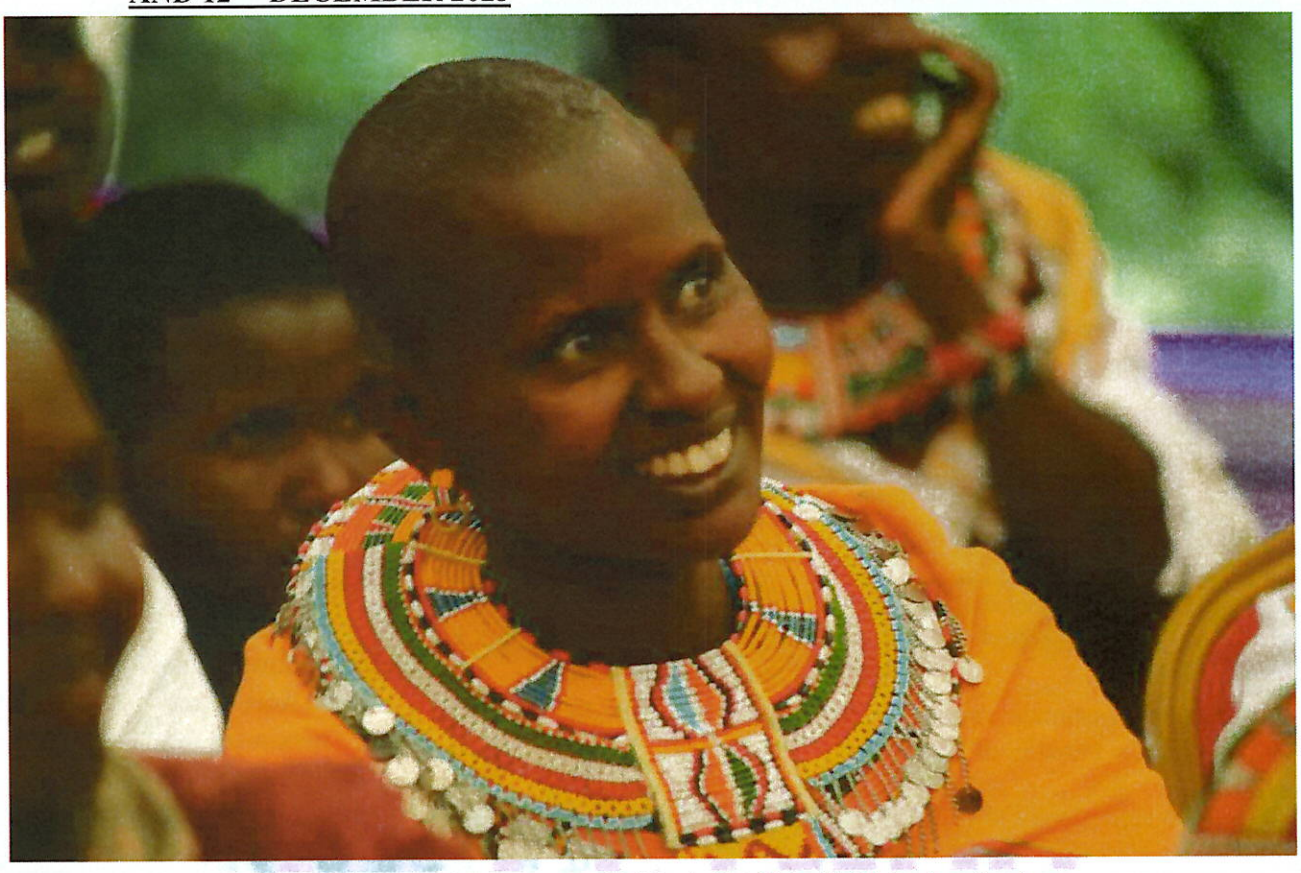
REPORT ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT MEETINGS AT SILALEI HOTEL ON 11th AND 12TH DECEMBER 2023



Widows listening attentively during the Economic Empowerment Training held at Silalaei Hotel, Samburu County

INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment has seen notable progress in recent years with efforts focusing on Education and Economic Inclusion. Our organization in partnership with Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAS) has been in the forefront to the Gender Gaps that widows face but still challenges persist.

On **11th and 12th December 2023**, we held an Economic Empowerment Training for widows within Maralal Ward in partnership with the **Anti-FGM Board Kenya**. The event brought together a total of 100 widows with each day hosting different groups of widows who showed interest in becoming Economically Independent Women. The training was officially opened by the **MCA of Maralal Ward Hon. Joseph Loloju** who encouraged the Widows to form support groups and also promised them his full support through his office and all well-wishers. The aim of this Transformative training was to Economically Empower widows by helping them explore the different ways of earning a living, how to reinvest and save their money. By joining efforts with the Anti-FGM Board Kenya, we also focused on raising awareness against FGM practices since most of the widows present during the training were Survivors of FGM Practises.

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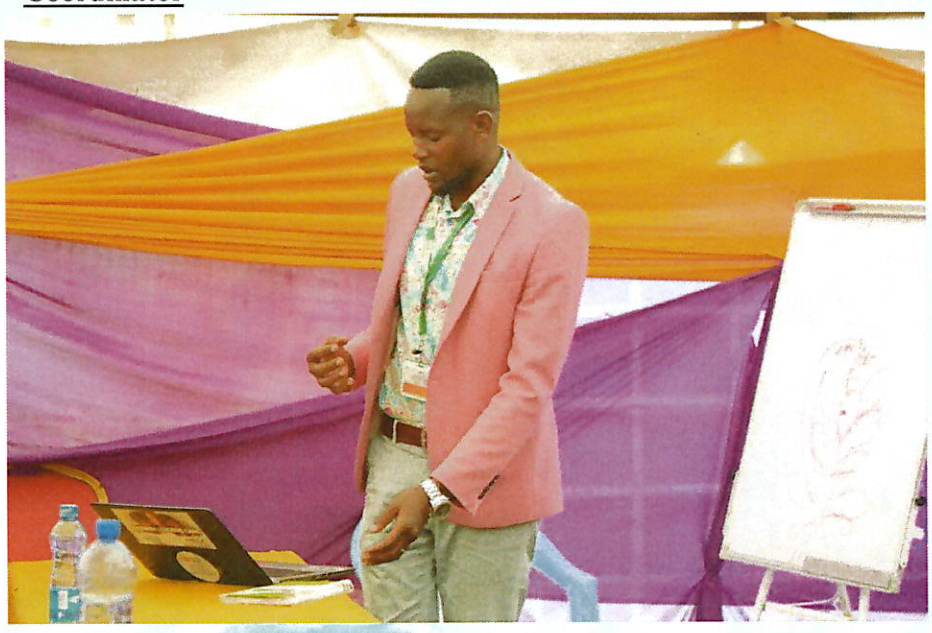
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT SESSIONS

Mr. Domnic Lesimale-Samburu West Constituency Women Enterprise Fund Coordinator



Mr. Domnic Lesimale training Widows on the WEF Products and how to maximize the benefits of the products

Mr. Domnic began by encouraging the widows to venture on other financial avenues other than charcoal burning because the environmental harm caused by charcoal burning. He trained the widows on how to Access and maximize the benefits of the Women Enterprise Fund. He also emphasized on the benefits of forming groups and advised widows who have not organized themselves into groups to form their own groups so that they can benefit from the funds.

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Ms. Gladys Lenyarua-Joyful Women Organisation (JOYWO)

Ms. Gladys Lenyarua educating widows about the JOYWO loan products and how to utilize the products

The Joyful Women Organisation in Kenya is a non-profit founded by Rachel Ruto. The organization focuses on empowering women through various programs, including Entrepreneurship Training, Mentorship and Access to resources. The organization aims to uplift women economically and socially, fostering positive change in communities across Kenya.

Ms. Gladys informed the widows on the loan products offered by JOYWO as she also inspired them to make good use of the loan products to help them achieve self-reliance. She also taught them about table banking which is a financial empowerment strategy that involves a group of individuals with women, coming together to pool their savings and collectively manage a fund. These funds are then loaned out to members in need, creating a rotating system of financial support.

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SPEECHES

Ms. Ipato Surum –Chairperson, Anti-FGM Board Kenya

Ms. Ipato Surum addressing widows during the Economic Empowerment Training

She encouraged women to venture into business for them to be able to support their family and assist in educating the Girl Child for a better tomorrow. She noted that Economic Empowerment not only benefits individual women but also contributes to societal progress. She also challenged them to excel in their businesses in order to challenge Gender Stereotypes and promotes a more inclusive and equitable society.

Mrs. Bernadette Loloju-C.E.O Anti-FGM Board Kenya

C.E.O Anti-FGM Board addressing Widows during the Economic Empowerment Training

She encouraged women to venture in business in order to alleviate poverty and also assist in providing for their families.

She mentioned that by venturing into entrepreneurship, the widows will be able to educate the Girl Child and this will reduce the rate of Early Marriages and teenage pregnancies. She also noted that when women have economic resources, they often reinvest in their communities, leading to improved education, healthcare and overall community development.

Dr. Dianah Kamande-Independent Board Director, Anti-FGM Board Kenya & Founder, CTWOO

Dr. Diana Kamande addressing widows during the Economic Empowerment Training in Maralal Ward Samburu County

She emphasized that economic empowerment is not only a financial endeavour but a means of restoring Dignity, Rebuilding shattered dreams and Redefining the narratives of their lives. She emphasized that her passion as a Widows Rights Champion is to create a world where every widow is not just a survivor but a thriving contributor to society. She said that her aim is to illuminate a path towards empowerment, independence and renewed hope. She gave them hope to stand up and reclaim their power.

REPORT COMPILED BY:

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REPORT ON A TREE PLANTING EXERCISE HELD AT KIRISIA FOREST, SAMBURU COUNTY ON 13TH DECEMBER 2023

Photo Courtesy: Anti-FGM Board Kenya Chairperson, Anti-FGM Board Kenya CEO, Founder and Director-CTWOO, Anti-FGM Board Directors, Maralal Ward MCA, Suguta Marmar Ward MCA, Wamba North Ward MCA, and Kirisia Forest Manager and Widows present during the Tree-Planting Exercise in Kirisia Forest

Introduction

On 13th December 2023, we joined the Anti-FGM Board Kenya for a Tree Planting Exercise in Kirisia Forest located in Samburu County. This exercise was a commitment to **President William Ruto Government Agenda on Climate Change Action** which is to grow **15billion trees by 2032**. The aim of this Agenda is to increase the forest cover from the current 12% to 30% and also save the country from disastrous effects of climate change.

We were warmly welcomed by **Mr. Douglas Leboyiare, Chairman Kirisia Forest and Mr. Tiko Leng'uro- Chief, Ngari Sub-location.**

Gracing the exercise were; **Ms. Ipato Surum**-Chairperson-Anti-FGM Board Kenya, **Ms. Benadette Loloju-** CEO Anti-FGM Board Kenya, **Hon. Joseph Loloju-**Maralal Ward MCA, **Anti-FGM Kenya Bord Directors, Hon. Silapia Lelemonatia-** Nominated MCA, Wamba North Ward, **Hon. Osman Adam** - Nominated MCA and **Hon. James** – MCA, Suguta MarMar Ward.

This exercise was also part of our **Economic Empowerment Initiative** to support **Namataru Women Group** who manage and run a Tree Nursery Project within Kirisia Forest and also to **Spread Awareness against FGM practices**. This project has served as an alternative source of livelihoods especially for them since majority of them used to depend on Charcoal burning and FGM Practises to cater for their family needs. They now run this project because they are aware of the harmful health effects and environmental effects of charcoal burning and this makes them to be at the forefront of ensuring Kirisia Forest is protected. They are not just Environmental Conservation Champions but also Anti FGM champions.

We also supported the group's project by their products which included, **Hand-made shangaas, bracelets and necklaces**, **Kitchen Farm products**, **Honey and Tree Seedlings** that we planted in Kirisia Forest.

Chairperson- Anti-FGM Board, CEO-Anti-FGM Board, Board Director and Founder CTWOO buying vegetables from the Namataru Women Group's Farm

SPEECHES

MS. IPATO SURUM-CHAIRPERSON ANTI-FGM BOARD KENYA

Chairperson Anti-FGM Board Kenya watering a tree at Kirisia Forest

Speaking after the tree planting exercise, the Chairperson reminded the residents present that FGM is a deeply rooted cultural practice that poses severe physical and psychological consequences for women and girls. She added that its crucial for everyone to collectively condemn the violation of human rights and work towards eradicating such harmful traditions. She thanked Namataru Women Group for their bold step in standing out as FGM champions by shifting from engaging in FGM practises to owning a recommendable project that preserves the environment as an alternative and sustainable source of livelihood that does not cause harm to both the environment and health of Women and Girls.

MRS.BERNADETTE LOLOJU-C.E.O ANTI-FGM BOARD

CEO Anti-FGM Board Kenya watering a tree at Kirisia Forest

After participating in the tree planting exercises, the CEO urged everyone to stand united in promoting a world where every individual regardless of their gender is free from such harmful experiences. She also acknowledged the resilience of survivors who speak out against FGM, as their stories are powerful catalyst of change. She affirmed that creating a world where an individual has a right to live free from the physical and emotional scars of Female Genital Mutilation is possible.

DR. DIANAH KAMANDE-BOARD DIRECTOR, ANTI-FGM BOARD KENYA, FOUNDER &EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CTWOO

Dr. Dianah Kamande planting a Tree at Kirisia Forest

Dr. Dianah focused her speech to the widows present during the tree - planting exercise. She encouraged them to emulate an example from Namataru Women Group by organizing themselves into Widow Groups.

She emphasized that the Widow Groups will help them to benefit a lot from the Government projects that are tailor-made for Widows. She also added that the groups will act as their social support system where they can learn and share together as widows as they walk through the journey of Widowhood. She emphasized that Widow Groups help in giving

Voices to the widows because it is through their collective action that they can Speak Out Against Violence that they face including FGM.

HON. JOSEPH LOLOJU & HON. JAMES- MCAS, MARALAL WARD &SUGUTA MARMAR

Hon. Joseph Loloju-MCA, Maralal Ward and Hon. James- MCA Suguta Marmar Ward during in a Tree Planting Exercise at kirisia Forest

In their impassioned speeches, the members of MCAS declared their dedication to combating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) within their respective wards. With a shared commitment to championing the cause of Forests Conservation, they pledged to join forces with the Anti FGM Board to push the Anti-FGM Policy for Samburu County. By forging this alliance, the MCAS created a formidable force that will safeguard the Well-being and Rights of the Girl Child, paving the way for a brighter and more equitable future for Samburu County.

CONCLUSION

The harmonious blend of Environmental Activism and Community Empowerment, our collaboration with the Anti FGM Board at Kirisia Forest was very inspiring. The commitment of the MCAs, led by Hon. Loloju, to combat FGM and champion Forest Conservation reflected a profound dedication to a better future. Their promise of joining forces to Protect Women and Girls echoed a powerful narrative of positive change therefore promising a flourishing Samburu County where both its people and its natural treasures thrive.

EPORT ON THE POST-16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM CAMPAIGN AND ANNUAL GOAT-GIVING CEREMONY HELD IN MARALAL WARD, SAMBURU COUNTY ON 14TH DECEMBER 2023

INTRODUCTION

On December 14th, 2023, our organization actively participated in an **Advocacy Campaign Against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** held in **Ngari Secondary School in Maralal Ward, Samburu County**. This engagement was part of our commitment to the **Post-16 Days of Activism Campaign 2023**, aiming to transform community perceptions surrounding FGM. FGM, a harmful practice, not only poses a threat to the health of Women and Girls but is also a severe form of violence that strips them of their Dignity and Respect for their bodies. **Samburu County is among the 22 counties** that have high FGM prevalence in Kenya according to the **Kenya Demographic & Health Survey (KDHS)**. KDHS 2022 reveals that there is a 15 percent prevalence of FGM in the country which covers the percentage of females aged 15 to 49 who have undergone FGM.

This significant event coincided with our **Annual Goat Giving ceremony**. The Goat Giving Ceremony is one of our cherished celebrations that is often dedicated to celebrating the resilience and bravery of our **unsung heroes—the widows/ers within our community**. The Goat Giving ceremony symbolizes our deep appreciation for their courage and serves as a tangible expression of our love and support for them. It reinforces our **Mission of Leaving No one behind** by celebrating and empowering every widow/er in the community including the elderly who often go unrecognized.

Through this, we had the opportunity to extend our Early Merry Christmas wishes to widows and widowers through food donations, clothes, and goat-giving. We had the opportunity to put smiles on their faces, especially the elderly widows/widowers. The goal was clear and that was to ensure that every widow and widower felt valued and economically empowered

SPEECHES

DR. DIANAH KAMANDE- BOARD DIRECTOR ANTI-FGM BOARD KENYA, FOUNDER & DIRECTOR CTWOO

Dr. Dianah Kamande- Founder & Executive Director CTWOO gifting an elderly widower with a blanket during the Post 16 Days of Activism Campaign 2023 in Maralal, Samburu County

In her passionate speech as the main host of the event, Dr. Dianah Kamande highlighted the urgent issue of economic struggles faced by widows and widowers, especially the elderly. She emphasized that Economic Exploitation due to Economic Vulnerability is a silent form of violence that many do not know about. She mentioned that Economic Vulnerability often forces widows to engage in harmful FGM practices because they have no alternative source of livelihood.

She stressed the importance of helping widows/ers to achieve economic independence. She emphasized that Financial Stability is key to building resilience and breaking the cycle of Economic Vulnerability.

In her speech, she also called for cultural change and a commitment to ending FGM through the shift in the mindset of the Samburu residents especially the elderly who still hold firm to FGM practices. By emphasizing the detrimental impacts of FGM on both the Dignity and Health of Women and Girls, she aimed to cultivate a collective understanding that could pave the way for transformative change.

Through her words, she purposefully ignited a shared commitment within the community, recognizing that true transformation requires the active involvement of every individual, particularly men, in dismantling harmful practices and fostering an environment of Equality and Respect for the Dignity of Women and Girls.

She later shifted focus to the yearly Goat-giving ceremony, portraying it not just as a symbolic celebration but as a powerful tool for Economic Empowerment. She explained how providing goats offers a practical and sustainable solution to the various challenges widows and widowers in Samburu encounter.

HON. JOSEPH LOLOJU, MCA MARALAL WARD

Hon. Joseph Loloju-MCA Maralal Ward giving a speech during the Post 16 Days of Activism Campaign 2023 in Ngari Secondary School, Maralal Ward, Samburu County

In extending a warm welcome to all participants, **Hon. Joseph Loloju** expressed his heartfelt appreciation for the impactful role of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO) in driving positive change within Maralal Ward.

Recognizing the urgent need to address the intricate challenges faced by widows and widowers, he highlighted the prevalent issues of **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Economic Exploitations** as forms of violence that have always demanded immediate attention.

HON. NAISULA LESUUDA- SAMBURU WEST MP

Hon. Naisula- Samburu West MP addressing Widows and widows during our Post-16 Days of Activism Campaign in Ngari Secondary School, Maralal Ward, Samburu County

With a resolute spirit, Hon. Lesuuda's words echoed a call for collective action, emphasizing the imperative of safeguarding the well-being and dignity of every individual.

She highlighted the shared responsibility in dismantling deep-rooted cultural norms that perpetuate harm against women and girls. By stressing the significant role of men, she called for a sense of empowerment and accountability among the male members of the community. She encouraged them to actively contribute to an end to FGM practices within Samburu County by placing a strong emphasis on the vital task of shifting cultural perceptions surrounding Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

In her vision, Samburu County could transcend the shadows of the past, embracing a future where the rights and safety of women and girls are upheld with dedication, commitment, and respect.

CONCLUSION

The support from UN Women, through the provision of IEC materials (T-shirts and lesos and reflectors) played a pivotal role in the success of this campaign. These materials were instrumental in spreading the crucial message of **Uniting to Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls**. The significance of this message resonated with our elderly Widows and Widowers by emphasizing the gravity and seriousness of Gender-Based Violence. This message served as a catalyst for Awareness and Unity in our collective efforts to End Violence Against Women and Girls in our communities.

The Goat Giving Ceremony provided a valuable opportunity for these resilient individuals to generate income through the sale of milk and offspring thereby promoting economic self-reliance.

In combining these initiatives, we not only Advocated for Change and Raised Awareness against harmful practices specifically FGM. This campaign also helped us in honoring and uplifting our Widows and Widowers who have stood tall amidst life's trials. It reflected our commitment to fostering a community that is informed, compassionate, and dedicated to the well-being of all its members.

PHOTOS

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