Girls as active agents of change by Msichana Empowerment Kuria, Kenya.

The NAWEZA Project

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SVRI FORUM 2022
Cancun, Mexico.
NAWEZA- means “I can” in Swahili

- NAWEZA utilised girl-led advocacy and self affirmation skills to strengthen girls voices and agency to end child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation.
- All work is informed by girls lived experiences of child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation.
The Problem: Why NAWEZA means so much to girls in Kuria.

• 8 in 10 girls below the age of 18 years are subjected to FGM every cutting season and More than 50% of this number are married off.

• For thousands of girls in Kuria, this was reality they were born to and some were already due to be cut by December of 2017 when NAWEZA began.
Girl-led advocacy to shift norms and attitudes

Girls leadership in the programme and organisation ensured the girls had decision making power through the Girls Council (20 girls, 10-18 years).

Key Activities all co-designed with girls and shaped by their experiences:

- Co-developed dynamic 16-week skills learning sessions
- Engaging parents in quarterly workshops
- Village-wide house to house campaigns
- Letter campaigns to MoE
- Organized ‘rescues’ for at risk girls
- Cash transfers to vulnerable families
- And more!!
Challenges faced in NAWEZA.

• Backlash & targeted attacks on girls & girl advocates
• ‘Punishing of girls’
• Inconsistent participation of the girls.
• Removal of girls from NAWEZA.
• Push back on the girls movements.
• Together we faced and are overcoming the challenges.
3000 girls and a 70% reduction in FGM
NAWEZA made a difference.

• More than 600 girls and their families have stopped FGM.
• More than 300 girls have graduated Primary School and currently pursuing Secondary school without undergoing Female Genital Mutilation.
• Established a girls safe house & rescued 200 girls at risk of FGM and child marriage.
• Built the largest girls and young women’s rights movement in the region.
Lessons from NAWEZA

• Girls have power to advocate for themselves, their ideas matter and they more than ready to lead.

• Girls leadership ensured the programmes is adaptable & contextualised.

• Feminist funders, like FRIDA who are willing to listen, respond and adapt support better programming.

• Girl centred multi-stakeholder collaboration supported linkage and access to services.
Thank you!

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