

An All New FORWARD!

This year, FORWARD has seen significant changes on the staffing and management front.

We are extremely sad to have lost, Adwoa Kwateng- kluwitse after four years as the Director of FORWARD. Adwoa left at the end of March and is the new Country Director for Action Aid in Ghana. Enshrah Ahmed the UK Programmes Manager also left and has joined the UN in Sierra Leone. Over the years, both have demonstrated considerable dedication and commitment to the elimination of FGM and all forms of violence against African women and girls and we are so sorry to see them go but know we still have good advocates to support the advancement of the rights of African women and girls. Sarah Fisher our Information and Communication Officer also left in October to pursue a new career in London. FORWARD wishes them all the very best in their respective new positions.

FORWARD welcomes Maureen Salmon as Interim Director. Maureen, who previously

worked with FORWARD as a management consultant, has within a very short time successfully helped to bridge this transition with operationalising the new strategic plan and communication strategy. Maureen's mission is to ensure that FORWARD's transition maximises outreach within the UK and in Africa. Maureen will provide leadership and strategic direction, facilitate the re-branding process and recruitment of a new leadership to the organisation. We would like to thank Maureen for her hard work and commitment to FORWARD.

FORWARD also welcomes new members of the staff team, Yasmin Aktar; Administrative and Finance Officer; Mari-Claire Price the Youth Co-ordinator for the Young People Speak Out Project and Khalda El Hafiz the Community Development Officer. We are delighted that the new members of the team have settled in well and supported the transition very efficiently, we are truly proud of their achievements within this short time frame.

FORWARD would like to take this opportunity to thank the following volunteers and interns for their hard work and commitment: Michael Coulston, Emilia McIlveney, Olabisi Shei, Nana Mensah, Amina Begum, Sara Tescione and Muna Dol.

Finally we are proud to announce that FORWARD has recruited a new Director-Naana Otoo-Oyortey who will start her term in November 2007. Naana Otoo-Oyortey has previously served as the Chair of the Council of Management and joins FORWARD from the International Planned Parenthood Federation. She has a passion for African women's health and rights and brings in years of experience on gender and rights issues. Naana holds an MPhil in Development Studies. We welcome Naana who will be instrumental in leading FORWARD into the next phase of change and will oversee the leadership and organisational functions to help advance the health and rights of African women and girls.

The Foundation for Women's Health Research & Development

FORWARD is an African Diaspora led non-profit organization with a mission to advance the health and human rights of African girls and women in the UK and Africa. We tackle harmful gender based discriminatory practices such as FGM and child and forced marriage by enabling our partners and key stakeholders including

women and young people to help shape the health and rights of African girls and women. Through advocacy, training and advice, research and resource development we seek to influence government and other statutory bodies in the area of policy development and implementation.

FORWARD Needs Your Support To Continue It's Valuable Work!

Help us stop discriminatory practices affecting African women & girls in the UK and Africa by becoming a sponsor today.

Yes, I want to support FORWARD's campaign to stop harmful gender based discriminatory practices. I wish to make a one off donation of:

£100 £50 £25 £10 £

Please enclose a cheque or postal order payable to FORWARD.

Gift Aid

I want FORWARD to reclaim tax on all donations I have made since 6 April 2000.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

YES, I would like to make a regular donation to FORWARD's FGM Fund.

Banker's Order

Please fill in name and address section opposite

Please pay FORWARD £ _____ each month starting from

/ / until further notice and debit my account:

Account Number: _____ Sort Code: / /

Signature: _____

To Manager: _____ Bank: _____

Bank Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Like To Make A Difference? You Can!

- Help to promote awareness of gender-discriminatory practices. Why not write an article for a local magazine or newspaper or hold a discussion or seminar in your local area?
- Become a supporter of FORWARD. You could organise fund-raising events with family, friends or colleagues, or take part in a sponsored event.
- Write to your local MP to raise the issue of FGM. For example, ask for awareness-raising initiatives concerning the 2003 FGM Act amongst practicing communities.
- Become a Peer Educator and Community Mobiliser. Run information seminars at the community level to encourage communities to take action to discourage harmful gender discriminatory practices.

Or you can simply make a donation!



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FORWARD

Safeguarding rights & dignity

NEWSLETTER

Issue 7

September 2007

Editorial

Dear friends,

This year FORWARD celebrates its 24th birthday. Over the years FORWARD has led on the campaign in the UK to tackle female genital mutilation and has become a valued source for influencing statutory sector policies and services and promoting innovative programmes. We have continued to expand and consolidate our work in the UK and in East and West Africa to advance the health and rights of African girls and women.

In 2007 our priority areas will focus on transforming the organisation including a new logo and image, new leadership and strengthening staff capacity and governance capacity even further. We are well positioned to push on the UK government agenda on children's rights. The UK FGM Prevalence study which will be launched in October is another example of our determination to produce evidence based solutions to safeguard rights and strengthen services. Additionally, we will seek to progress on supporting the implementation of UK government legislation and policies relating to FGM, women and children. In Africa our new observer status at the African Union places us in a strategic position to spearhead the role of African women in the Diaspora in advancing the rights of African women and girls.

We are proud to showcase our new programme with young people in the UK as advocates for change. We aim to create a network of young people in the UK and in Africa who are ambassadors for social change. These young people will help take the mission of women's rights into the 21st century and help to end generations of harmful practices against women and girls.

We hope you enjoy this update on our current work. We would also like to thank the many supporters and funders whose support and funding has kept our work going, we will continue to welcome your views, ideas and support to advance the health and rights of Africa women and girls.

Best Wishes

Maureen Salmon
Interim Director

New Study on the Prevalence of FGM in England and Wales

FORWARD has undertaken a study in collaboration with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and City University Midwifery Department to estimate the prevalence of FGM in England and Wales. Funded by the Department of Health, the study addresses the lack of reliable data on FGM, which has made it difficult for policy makers in the UK to respond effectively to this gross human rights violation. The report on the study conducted in 2006, estimates that nearly 66,000 women with FGM were living in England and Wales in 2001. The report is based on statistical analysis using the 2001 UK census results and seems at best a conservative estimate; this is because the numbers of women have increased since 2001. Over 20,000 girls under the age of 15 are at high risk or may have already been subjected to the most severe type of FGM and almost 9,000 are at high risk or may have undergone type II FGM (excision of the clitoris with partial or total removal of the labia minora).

The results presented in the report are the most rigorous estimates for England and Wales to date and support the view that action is needed to prevent FGM being passed on to the younger generation. In conjunction with the study, FORWARD has also assisted the Department of Health to produce a CD-ROM, which is aimed at healthcare professionals and provides guidance for the mainstreaming of preventative and support measures for those affected by FGM. To obtain a clearer picture and provide more reliable estimates of the prevalence, further surveys need to be undertaken. Further research on FGM is also needed on the health complications particularly the psychological and the sexual aspects of FGM and on the experiences of women with FGM on health services. The summary report of the study is now available on our website.

TRIBUTE TO OUSMANE SEMBENE, FILM DIRECTOR AND SCREENWRITER WHO DIED ON 9 JUNE 2007

FORWARD will forever remember Ousmane Sembène for having done a great service to the global campaign to eliminate FGM. We will strive to push forward his vision to use his film Moolaadé as a tool to support the cause. Our deepest sympathy goes to his family and staff.



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An All New FORWARD!

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YOUNG PEOPLE SPEAK OUT

The Young People Speak Out project was launched in August 2006 with a consultation meeting in London. The three year project is a partnership initiative and is funded by the John Lyon's Charity. This innovative project is a strategic alliance with young people from FGM practicing communities. It is a young people-led campaign to respond to gender based violence, in particular female genital mutilation (FGM), child and forced marriage and relationship violence. The project uses peer to peer support, training, skills building and mentorship to develop young advocates.

The project has made significant progress in demonstrating the potential of working with young people as advocates for change. The 'Peer Educators' initiative has created a dedicated and committed group of young men and young women. The involvement of young men in the project has been an important success because to achieve real change in communities men must begin to play an active role. The project has helped to improve communication between girls and their mothers, giving them confidence and support to have real conversations.



To help build confidence the young peer educators were assigned a series of tasks. This included conducting interviews with selected professionals as well as the general public to ascertain their views on gender based violence. The workshops took place over a period of six months and in a safe environment the young people could openly discuss a range of issues. Another part of the project was to develop the young peoples creative skills, they wrote poems and stories, many of which have been published in the project magazine – Bridges. One of the key successes of the first year was the DVD produced by the group. The young people developed the initial concept and

story line. Some were involved in acting out the stories while others were part of the technical team behind the scenes. The DVD entitled "Young People Speak Out – This is Our Voice!" will be used as a training tool by FORWARD for developing the project further and to engage the next set of young people.

The next phase of the Young People Speak Out project will begin in October 2007. FORWARD will work with more young men and women from FGM practicing communities, learning skills in Peer Education and becoming campaigners against FGM and other Gender Based Violence within their communities.

INTERNATIONAL ZERO TOLERANCE DAY

On 6 February, the International Zero Tolerance Day of FGM, FORWARD met with Muslim communities to raise awareness of FGM at the London Central Mosque. The training day was a collaboration between FORWARD and the Islamic Cultural Centre and the London Central Mosque (ICCCM). The event was supported by a grant from Westminster Primary Care Trust.

The participants were predominantly Muslim community and faith leaders, including Imams. The training helped the delegates to understand the UK Child Protection Policy and the implications it had on their roles in the community. Imams were encouraged to raise awareness of gender based violence particularly FGM and child marriage in their sermons and Fridays prayers. They were also asked to reflect the UK laws and Child Protection Policy when approached for advice. Adwoa Kwateng-Klutitse the former FORWARD Director said: "The event was a great success and we would like to thank all of the staff based at the ICCCM, particularly Dr. Ahmad Al Dubayan. Without Dr Al Dubayan's immense help and support this important partnership would not have been possible."



Make FGM history in Sudan

In December 2005 a four-year-old girl died as a result of bleeding from FGM in Khartoum, Sudan. Following this tragic death, FORWARD launched a campaign to make FGM history in Sudan. Sudan has had a law since 1946, which bans the most severe form of FGM, however the law is clearly insufficient, as it does not ban all forms of FGM and fails to protect Sudanese girls and women. An estimated 89 per cent of Sudanese women are subjected to FGM. Sudan has not ratified, nor even signed, the Convention on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, nor the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

FORWARD called upon our supporters to join the campaign, increase mobilisation and demand effective legislation against all forms of FGM in Sudan. Appeal letters were sent to the Sudanese Ministry of Justice and the Sudanese Embassy in London, demanding that immediate action be taken to eliminate all forms of FGM and hold the Sudanese state accountable for protecting women's rights. Online petitions in English and Arabic were created in collaboration with the Sudan For All discussion website.

On the third International Zero Tolerance to FGM Day in February 2006, FORWARD took the opportunity to re-launch the initiative. In total, over 2,000 signatures to the campaign were collected, which along with a formal appeal letter signed by both FORWARD and Sudan For All was submitted to the authorities in Sudan in December 2006.



Promoting the health and well-being of girls and women in Northern Ghana

FORWARD is in the third year of the partnership with the Association of Church Development Projects (ACDEP), Maata-N-Tudu (women of the North) and Navrongo-Bolgatanga Diocesan Development Office in Northern Ghana. The project, funded by Comic Relief, aims to put girls' and women's gender and reproductive health issues on the public agenda and to provide information, skills, knowledge and tools to local institutions and communities to work toward the promotion of girls and women's rights. The project promotes the rights of young women and girls in Northern Ghana and addresses gender based discriminatory practices that affect their sexual and reproductive health and well-being. These practices include widowhood rites, forced and child marriage, female genital mutilation and non-education of female children. A trip to Tamale in July highlighted the role of young women beneficiaries on the projects decision-making body. Ayisha Iddi and Charity Adongo represent beneficiary groups on the Project Implementation Committee of the FORWARD partnership project. Both women have experienced the phenomenon of 'Kayayoo'. Kayayoo refers to the migration of girls and young women from northern Ghana to southern Ghana to engage in menial jobs in particular to carry head loads in markets. Kayayoo is a manifestation of the level of deprivation and poverty among women and girls in the three northern regions. It is estimated that about 87 per cent of the young girls in Accra and Kumasi that are into kayayoo, come from the northern Ghana.

Ayisha is 18 years old from the Tolon district- Northern Region. She completed her senior secondary school in July this year and is currently awaiting her results. She is the first in her family to attend secondary school and proudly says that her determination to go to school required her to migrate to Accra on three occasions to work as a Kayayoo. This was the only way she could pay her school fees. Moreover, Ayisha says that her membership of the Project Implementation Committee has helped her improve her leadership skills, while her allowances as a member of the committee have come in handy to support her education. Ayisha's ambition is to become a lawyer and is hoping that she will get the grades to enable her make it to university. However Ayisha also confined in me on her fears: "How do I fund my university education?" Through the project community mobilization activities, 12 girls have been enrolled for the first time in the community junior secondary school in Kalgun, a village close to Ayisha's village. All the girls are members of the young women, gender and reproductive health club.

Charity is 24 years old, from Dakeo in the Upper East Region, and works as a Secretary with the Ghana Health Service. Charity says her role in the Project Implementation Committee is to bring the reality of young women and girls from her community. She also says that the project has given her new confidence and leadership skills. Charity says: "I have learnt a lot for example, much about leadership roles and working with groups. At first when I was young, I was afraid to speak in public freely, but now I am changed, I am able to share my views with others, advise fellow young women about gender and reproductive rights issues and I feel really positive about myself".



Moolaadé

At a consultation with FORWARD after the premiere of Moolaade in London in 2005, Ousmane Sembene gave FORWARD the green light to use the film as an advocacy tool to advance the rights and health of African women and girls in the UK and in Africa. Moolaade which won the prize for Best Film in the Certain Regard Section at the Cannes Film Festival in 2004, brilliantly tackles the controversial subject of FGM and other gender based discriminatory practises and highlights women as necessary agents for change at the community level. An Advocacy Guide for Facilitator's has been developed by FORWARD and will be translated into French, Arabic and Swahili. This aims to support the effective screening and discussion of the film with a range of audiences. An FGM fund has been launched by FORWARD and we welcome contributions.



Well Women and Children in Northern Nigeria

The Well Women and Children's Centre project in the Kano and Jigawa states is currently in its second year. In partnership with FORWARD-Nigeria, we are working to improve service delivery for mothers and children and raise awareness on HIV and Aids issues. The project has established two Well Women and Children Centres. They provide information and services on immunisations, anti-malarials, antenatal and postnatal care, and work with mothers to ensure children are not malnourished. FORWARD Nigeria has developed a high-protein weaning food named Soyalac – a mixture of local, highly nutritious grains milled together and cooked into a pap. Tested and approved by the Nigeria authorities, it has proved to be excellent for helping the children (and the mothers) to develop and grow well. FORWARD UK visited the project in January, and was extremely pleased with the commitment of the staff to the girls and women within the project local areas in Kano Northern Nigeria, particularly those affected by fistula, one of the most debilitating and humiliating consequence of lack of adequate obstetric care during birth.