

## Features

**N**agla Naguib, a member of FORWARD, participated in two triathlons on 24 March and 26 May 2008, and raised over £6,000 for FORWARD. We are tremendously grateful to Nagla for sharing her experiences of FGM and putting herself through rigorous training, braving rain and snow to raise money for FORWARD's work. We are truly proud of her efforts! Here is an interview with Nagla.

### What has been your inspiration to choose such a stance against FGM?

Having been through FGM myself when I was six years old, I felt that it was about time for me to share my experience and do something about it.

### Is there some advice you would like to give victims of FGM?

I consider myself an FGM ambassador. I believe every single woman who has been circumcised should show her solidarity by sharing her experience and educate her entourage. Don't let FGM make you powerless; use FGM as the source of your own strength.

### Why did you choose to work with FORWARD as opposed to other groups working on FGM?

I attended, on 6 February 2008 at the Soho Screening Rooms, the Zero Tolerance to FGM Day event that FORWARD organised. I found the screening of Moolaadé and the monologue shared by Ms. Zahrah Awaleh so powerful. I found 'home' in FORWARD and I particularly had a special bond with Naana Otoo-Oyortey, FORWARD's Executive Director. I absolutely respect and adore what the FORWARD team has achieved, not only in the UK but also abroad, in Africa.



## Upcoming Events

### SEMINAR ON WOMEN AND GIRLS HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN ISLAM, 11 OCTOBER 2008

This open day event aims to bring together community stakeholders, students and religious leaders and women's groups to explore a range of topical issues pertaining to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls and Islamic laws and teachings. This is a joint programme with the Islamic Cultural Centre and London Central Mosque. For more information contact *Khalda El-Hafiz* on 020 8960 4000 or via e-mail: [khalda@forwarduk.org.uk](mailto:khalda@forwarduk.org.uk)

# F → FORWARD

Safeguarding rights & dignity

NEWSLETTER

Issue 8

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## Editorial

**F**ORWARD moves another step forward in 2008 in tackling gender-based discrimination. In my short term as chair, I note that FORWARD has made progress in increasing networking, collaboration and partnerships within UK and Europe. We supported the Young Women's Leadership Institute which took place this July in Senegal, Africa, and initiated new projects in Ghana. The FORWARD International network is taking shape; we hosted FORWARD Germany this July to exchange experiences and examine ways of working together to strengthen the activities of the network. I would like to commend the efforts of the Young People Speak Out programme in developing cutting edge materials to progress the work of the young advocates in the UK.

Our vision is to ensure equality in access and safeguard rights of African girls and women. This will only be possible where the UK government is able to meet its obligation to protect and fulfill rights through the provision of resources and mechanisms to achieve this. We are part of the process for developing the national action plan for FGM. We aim to have zero tolerance to FGM and all forms of gender-based violence in the UK, and call for strengthened action at the community level where change is most needed.

Gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence will only be achieved when all African girls and women are empowered, have information, real choices and are free to access needed services with dignity. This will ultimately support their health, social wellbeing and economic status. I ask that you share our progress along the way!

**Mrs Margaret Nyuydzewira**  
FORWARD Chair

## What's New at FORWARD?

**T**HE Information, Services and Support Guide for Young People in the UK (ISS) is a comprehensive, 13-page booklet funded by Tower Hamlets PCT. It discredits myths surrounding FGM, emphasising it is not an isolated practice of Muslims. The guide also includes information regarding the law and child protection, health consequences, what to do if you or someone you know is at risk, as well as contact information for clinics which provide specialist services for those who have undergone FGM.

A new **FGM Campaign Poster** has been launched this summer as part of the second year of activities in the three-year project, Young People Speak Out, funded by John Lyon's Charity. The youth advocates spent months developing the FGM Community Poster which details the UK law and helpline contact details. The poster is being launched as part of the Pan London FGM Campaign this summer. Contact FORWARD for copies of this poster.

**Research on perceptions, attitudes and experiences on FGM in the UK:** FORWARD is collaborating with Options Consultancy to undertake in-depth participatory research on FGM in London, and selected cities in the UK, from this July. It follows up the recommendations from the 2007 'FGM Statistical Study to Estimate the Prevalence of FGM in England and Wales'. The research will use the Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research (PEER) method; an innovative approach to conducting qualitative research based on training members of the community to carry out the research. The aim is to investigate beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and experiences of women and young women affected directly or indirectly by FGM. This research is being funded by the Camelot Foundation, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Westminster PCT. The PEER will form the first phase of the research and it is anticipated that the results will be ready in early 2009.

## Recognition FORWARD Executive Director honoured in Queen's birthday list

FORWARD Executive Director, Naana Otoo-Oyortey, has been awarded an MBE for her services to human rights issues for women in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours list.



## FORWARD

**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!



For More Information: **Post:** Unit 4, 765-767 Harrow Rd, London, NW10 5NY **Email:** [forward@forwarduk.org.uk](mailto:forward@forwarduk.org.uk)

**Tel:** 020 8960 4000 **Fax:** 020 8960 4014 **Charity Reg. No** 292403

## FORWARD in Action

### Berne Conference on FGM



UNICEF held a conference on 'Action Strategies for Overcoming Female Genital Mutilation: Lessons Learnt in Africa and Europe' in Berne, Switzerland, from 21 to 22 February 2008. Naana Otoo-Oyortey, Executive Director, represented FORWARD at the conference. She shared lessons on tackling FGM in the UK, drawing on FORWARD's experiences with policy, advocacy and support work. The conference was attended by over 130 international experts in the fields of health, social science and law, and representatives of international organisation and national non-governmental organisations.

Photo: UNICEF

### 6th February - International Zero Tolerance Day on FGM

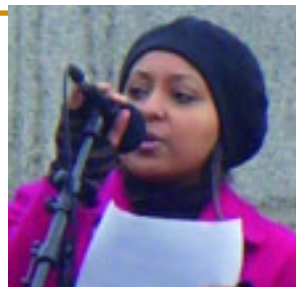


This year's theme of Zero Tolerance Day was on the role of the media. FORWARD partnered with Janet Narh from Ben TV's Woman's Hour to highlight the role of both print and broadcast media in increasing public awareness of FGM. The highlight of the day was a performance of a monologue *The Gift* by Zahrah Awaleh. This is part of an exciting new collection of work by young British Somali writers called *Silent Voices*. *The Gift* is a dark, angry and moving monologue describing a young Somali woman's account of her feelings about FGM and her decision to have a de-infibulation operation.

*The Gift* is available from Amazon.

FORWARD screened the film *Moolaadé* and launched the publication *Moolaadé: A Facilitator's Guide to Advocacy* - see the new resources section.

### Million Women Rise & Young People Speak Out



Awet Yohans, a member of the FORWARD Young People Speak Out programme, made a moving speech at the Million Women Rise event. This was a national demonstration in protest of violence against women which took place on 8 March 2008 in London. Awet addressed the misconceptions of FGM and shared her personal story: "I was lucky enough not to be mutilated, but some of my friends have not been as lucky and I am here because I want to see an end to this dangerous practice". Awet's speech was featured on Youtube.

To view this speech go to [Youtube.com](http://Youtube.com) and type 'International Woman Mutilation' in the search box.

### Engaging with communities in Northamptonshire

Naana Otoo-Oyortey, Executive Director, facilitated a one-day session for FGM Northamptonshire on 12 April in Northampton. The event was attended by over 50 young people and adults from FGM-practising communities and statutory agencies working in the area. The event included a dance drama, presentations on key areas of FGM, personal testimonies, a film screening, and group discussions on values, attitudes and experiences pertaining to FGM, the law, religion and child protection. At the end of the event, participants called for support for further dialogue and discussions with communities on FGM-related issues, in particular health. Many thanks to the FGM Northamptonshire group for their fantastic food and brilliant organisational skills in generating interest in the event. Community engagement is truly critical for the prevention of FGM and should aim to bring together diverse stakeholders and interests.

### Advancing the health and rights of African girls and young women

Hajia Alima Mahama, the Minister of Women and Children's Affairs in Ghana, opened FORWARD's two-day conference 'Advancing the Development, Health and Rights of Girls and Young Women in Northern Ghana', held in Tamale, Ghana, from 29 to 30 May 2008. This was in collaboration with ACDEP-Ghana.

The conference brought together over 100 gender practitioners and development workers from key government agencies and NGOs to share lessons learnt and develop strategies. A communiqué was developed at the end of the conference as a tool for policy advocacy. This conference marked the launch of FORWARD's new West Africa programme - *Advancing the Rights of African Girls* - which will be implemented in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. We are grateful to Sigrid Rausing Trust for their financial support.



Hajia Alima Mahama and ACDEP partners

### New Resources

#### TAKING ACTION TO END CHILD MARRIAGE: RESOURCE KIT

This Resource Kit was developed by four key members of the Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls: the International Planned Parenthood Federation, FORWARD, the Enabling Education Network and Womankind Worldwide. It provides practical information, tools and training ideas to support policy-makers, programmers, researchers and activists to respond effectively to child marriage.

#### FACILITATOR'S GUIDE TO ADVOCACY: MOOLAADÉ

The facilitator's guide provides a framework and additional information to organisations using the film for advocacy and raising awareness. In order to address the themes of the film, the guide advises how to respond to issues that emerge from the discussions concerning *Moolaadé*.

### Partnerships & collaborations in Europe

#### Valencia, Spain

In May 2008, FORWARD attended the second meeting of the Steering Committee of the European DAPHNE Project on implementation of FGM legislation and policies in Europe, held in Valencia, Spain. The five-country project aims to propose recommendations for the implementation of law(s) regarding FGM. As part of this project, FORWARD is undertaking a review of policy and practices with regards to FGM and asylum in the UK.

#### Dublin, Ireland

FORWARD attended a meeting organised by Amnesty International in March 2008 in Dublin, Ireland which brought together selected specialists and activists working on FGM in Europe. The consultation discussed Amnesty International Irish Section's new FGM campaign strategy. The three-year initiative, which is being funded by the Human Dignity Foundation, aims to ensure the delivery of an EU Commission-led strategy to eliminate the practice of FGM in Europe and to lobby for other related mechanisms for implementation. FORWARD welcomes this initiative, which will help to raise the profile of FGM at the EU level and help to address the lack of a comprehensive FGM strategy at the EU level.

#### AkiDwa

FORWARD's Information and Communication Officer, Estelle Robinson, attended another consultation on FGM in Dublin in June 2008. The forum, which was organised by AkiDwa in Dublin, brought together health professionals to form an expert advisory group for the FGM project. Estelle gave a presentation on FORWARD's work in the UK and shared information on UK legislation against FGM. FORWARD is exploring further collaboration with AkiDwa.

#### TANZANIA REPORT ON CHILD MARRIAGE

The Tanzania Report was a product of a three-day consultative meeting held at the Russia-Tanzania Cultural Centre in Dar es Salaam. FORWARD was one of 50 NGOs invited to the event which aimed to strategise how to make child marriage 'a thing of the past' in Tanzania.

If you would like a copy of any of the mentioned materials please contact FORWARD on 020 8960 4000.