

20 Years and Still Moving FORWARD!

On Saturday the 21st of April, many months of hard work, persistent phone calls and frayed nerves culminated in a truly memorable celebration at the Royal Opera House. The 20th anniversary celebrations created another opportunity to raise public awareness on FGM and other harmful traditional practices that adversely affect African women and girls.

FORWARD invited musicians from South Africa, America and Europe, the drama troupe "Collective Artistes", and

a contemporary African dance youth group from London, to contribute to the event. Interrupted only by the interval, where the audience could enjoy the delicious snacks on offer, the show continued without a hitch. Though the audience was thoroughly entertained, the message of the day was not lost. We have since received donations for which we are most grateful, and are confident that through the pamphlets we distributed on the night, more people have gained a better

understanding of FORWARD's work.

Again, on behalf of FORWARD, I would like to thank all those involved in the organising of the event, as well as Skin, Black Sonshine and Movement Angol. And most importantly, thanks to those who support FORWARD, because your support enables FORWARD to continue its work.

Tuleka Prah, Event Organiser



The South African band, Blk Sonshine tells the crowd to keep moving FORWARD!



Skin, FORWARD's patron, performs her new single.



Sally, Marie, Naana and Manama enjoying the evening

Ghana Project

GOOD NEWS!! FORWARD received a grant of £200,000 from Comic Relief for a 4-year project in Northern Ghana. The key objectives of the project are to:

- Raise the issues of early (and forced) marriage in the regions identified
- Put girls' and women's human and sexual rights on the district health agenda by mobilising public support and discussion
- Raise awareness of the human rights dimension of practices like early and forced marriage, non-education of the girl child, FGM, domestic and sexual violence, reproductive health among communities and professionals (police, teachers, health workers, police etc)
- Strengthen networking and inter-agency collaboration on issues affecting the health and well-being of girls and women, and to build the capacity of local organisations working in the field.

FORWARD will be working with two partners based in northern Ghana,

Maata-n-Tudu (which means 'women of the north' in Hausa) and the Association of Church Development Projects (ACDEP). Maata-n-Tudu will be driving the project activities in the Tolon and Kumbungu districts and ACDEP will be working in the Bolga district.

Key activities included in the scheduled period are to:

- Map out on-going work on harmful traditional practices and key stakeholders and conduct a base line survey of levels of early marriage, non-education of the girl child, FGM in 4 districts and conduct a consultative workshop with key stakeholders and beneficiaries
- Conduct school outreach programmes and provide training on advocacy, lobbying, networking and communication
- Identify and train peer leaders, community champions and groups to undertake community based advocacy to establish a men's peer education initiative, to campaign against early marriage
- Develop IEC materials on gender rights, human rights

and reproductive health issues

- Build up a database of partners, NGOs, community based organisations (CBOs) working on issues of gender discrimination, gender violence and reproductive health.

The Chair and director of Forward went to Ghana in August and spent four days discussing the modalities, detailed timetable and implementation with partners. We are expecting to make a positive impact on attitudes and behaviour in respect of child and forced marriages, FGM, non-education of the girl child and on various aspects of gender violence not only in the identified districts but also in surrounding areas.

For more information on the project, please contact Adwoa Kwateng-Kluyitse, Director, FORWARD.



Adwoa & Maata-n-Tudu staff taking a break from their hard work.

European Research

FORWARD is part of a 5-country research on 'FGM and legislation' funded by the Daphne line of the EU budget. The other countries involved are Spain, Sweden, Belgium, and France. The UK country report attempts to document the UK situation in respect of what is known about the prevalence of FGM, the legislation and the factors that aid or impede the implementation of legislation in the United Kingdom.

The methodology employed was to identify five key informants and to hold semi-structured interviews with them. The aim of the interviews was to ascertain their knowledge, views and experiences in relation to FGM, FGM legislation and the factors that adversely affect or assist the implementation of legislation.

Adwoa interviewed Naana Otoo-Oyortey (Technical Support Officer), Christian Bekoe-Tabiri (a solicitor who has won several cases relating to FGM), Comfort Momoh (the UK's only FGM specialist midwife), Rahmat Mohammad (Nigeria project coordinator) and Anita Gibbons (Head of Child Protection - Social Services) who served as the key informants. Other individuals were contacted and their contributions added flavour to the research.

The project should be completed by early 2004 and should offer a fascinating overview on legislation in the countries involved.

FORWARD's UK Work

Peer Educators

As part of my Masters course in Public Health, I was an intern in FORWARD for eight weeks. I worked on the peer education programme.

Eight new peer educators joined the FORWARD team after a two-day orientation course. They originate from Zambia, Cameroon, the Gambia, Sudan and Somalia.

The results of the evaluation from the training indicated that the peer educators had acquired the relevant skills and confidence to operate within their communities to stop FGM.

All the peer educators were given notebooks to record any contacts made within the community and were encouraged to keep in close contact with

the organisation for continued support

I would like to thank Amira, Rahmat, and Adowa for their support and continued friendship and for making my time with FORWARD a very enjoyable experience.

Florence Acquah, Organiser



FORWARD's New Peer Educators & Trainers.

FORWARD Supporters Walking Forward for FORWARD!

At the end of July 2003, Northampton Amnesty International group did a sponsored walk to raise funds for FORWARD.

The group comprised of present and past members of Amnesty International, Northampton, family and friends. The walkers ranged in age from Sarah Hague (2 years) to Angela O'Dwyer (82 - sorry Angela!) Most of them walked the length of the Malvern Hills. The highest point was 1395 feet. Apparently Angela did 3 of the highest peaks in the pouring rain!

We would like to say a big thanks to all of the walkers (Matthew Hague & family, Wenol Blackman, Grace Murphy, Angela O'Dwyer, Helen

Miller, Pat Miller and Lynn Fuller) who helped in raising a total of £1,121.00 towards FORWARD's work.



Beth leads supporters on a fundraising walk, 2002

FORWARD at the London Central Mosque

On 12th-13th July, 2003, FORWARD attended a health awareness event at the London Central Mosque and Islamic Centre. This was the third time since 2001 that we had participated in a health fair at the Central Mosque.

The general response to our presence was very positive, and it proved an excellent opportunity to distribute information packs and talk to women, as well as men, about the harmful effects of FGM.

Upcoming FORWARD Events

Video Launch:

"The Broken Silence" by Heller Films
22nd January, 2004 at the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, County Hall, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7BP.
Please contact FORWARD for more information.

Book Launch:

"Female Genital Mutilation: Understanding the Health & Social Care Needs of Women" by Dr. Haseena Lockhat (forthcoming, March 2004), Middlesex University Press, to be held in February.
Please contact FORWARD for more information.

Training:

'Child protection & FGM'. 3rd Feb, 2004, Birmingham. ACPC training for health professionals and members of the statutory sector.
Please contact Amira Malik, Training Project Co-ordinator, FORWARD, for more information.

FORWARD Nigeria

The FORWARD project in Dambatta addresses issues of prevention, treatment, rehabilitation as well as the re-integration of girls and women who have suffered from the trauma of vesico-vaginal fistulae (VVF) and recto vaginal fistula (RVF). It is estimated that there could be as many as 700,000 cases of VVF in Nigeria alone, with over 70% of these in the northern States.

VVF and RVF are often caused by unrelieved obstructed labour, resulting in the breakdown of tissue between the vaginal wall and the bladder and/or rectum. It can also be the result of FGM. The consequences of such damage are urinary and faecal incontinence.

VVF occurs as a result of poverty, under-development, harmful traditional practices, low status and educational level of women, lack of primary health networks and maternal and child health (MCH) care, and lack of accessible Caesarean services. The prevalence rate is higher in rural areas, because of inadequacy of facilities for pre and post-natal care. In such areas, long distances combined with high cost of care; ignorance and poor nutrition make women more vulnerable to VVF.

In addition to surgical repair, the project provides literacy classes, religious education, health awareness sessions, income generating skills development, including sewing, knitting, livestock rearing, and soap and pomade making.

FORWARD Nigeria's project has helped to transform the lives of women within the project area, not only increasing their health and nutritional status, but also empowering them socially, economically and emotionally, allowing them to participate on a number of levels when they return to their communities. In the past four years, FORWARD has helped over 100 women and girls in the VVF centre and over 400 others in the surrounding areas enabling them to be literate, healthy and empowered to contribute to the development of their communities. All the clients, past and present agree that their stay at the centre has transformed their lives.

For more information on the Dambatta Centre and FORWARD Nigeria, please contact Dr Rahmat Mohammad, FORWARD.



FORWARD has Moved!

In September FORWARD moved to larger offices in Kensal Green. Our new offices will give us space to improve our resource area and to conduct small training sessions. Our new address is:

**Unit 4, 765-767 Harrow Road
London NW10 5NY
Tel: 020 8960 4000
Fax: 020 8960 4014
E-mail: forward@forwarduk.org.uk
Web: www.forwarduk.org.uk**

If you are aware of a health centre or clinic where patients may benefit from this information please contact FORWARD.

FORWARD'S STAFF NEWS

Adwoa Kwateng-Klavitse - Director
Rahmat Mohammad - UK National Co-ordinator
Amira Malik - UK Training Project Co-ordinator
Naomi Reid - Administration & Finance Officer
Staff who have left: Sabrina Lee & Zahrah Awaleh. We would like to wish them all the best for the future.
Interns over the past year: Tuleka Prah & Kweku Blay
Volunteers wanted! FORWARD is looking for volunteers to do various different tasks, mainly for someone with relevant skills to log and arrange a resource library for us. We welcome new volunteers as our new office is spacious enough for more than just the four of us (unlike our last office!)
If you would like to work with us then please contact us on - 020 8960 4000 or e-mail us at - forward@forwarduk.org.uk stating your relevant skills and contact details.

Best wishes for the festive season!

From the Staff and Council of Management at FORWARD

Want to make a difference? You can....

- Help to promote awareness of gender-discriminatory practices. Write articles for local magazines and newspapers and hold discussions and seminars in your area.
- Become a FORWARD supporter. Raise funds by organising events with friends or colleagues, or taking part in a sponsored activity.
- Write to your local MP to raise the issue of FGM and encourage governmental support for intervention activities.
- Help FORWARD to distribute information to health clinics, educational institutions and community organisations;
- Become a 'peer educator' running information seminars at the community level to discourage harmful cultural practices.

Or you can simply give us a donation!



FORWARD

FORWARD

is an international not-for profit organisation dedicated to promoting African women's and girls' reproductive and sexual rights.

FORWARD

supports the elimination of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriage, and promotes reproductive rights, by supporting local health, socio-economic and educational programmes in the countries concerned.

FORWARD

provides training, information and advice to professionals in health, education, child protection and social work in the UK and Africa and supports services for women and children affected by FGM.

For more information contact:

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FORWARD Newsletter

FORWARD 1983 - 2003 20 Years and Still Moving FORWARD



Issue 5

Editorial

Twenty years ago, FORWARD was established.

We started the year with a celebration and marked the end with a technical meeting on child and forced marriages.

FORWARD's new strategic plan addresses other gender-based violations

that impact on the well-being and dignity of African women and girls. In particular child and forced marriages, obstetric fistulas, HIV/AIDS and violence against women.

Greetings to all our supporters and may we wish you all a happy new year.

Technical Consultation on Child and Forced Marriages

The Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls and FORWARD organised a joint Technical Consultation on Early and Forced Marriage from 13-16 October 2003 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The four-day technical consultation was attended by 24 representatives from six African countries and selected members of the Forum. The representatives were selected from non-governmental organisations working in the area of child marriages from Burkina Faso, Ghana, The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria and Sudan. The Forum members who attended this consultation were from FORWARD, the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Women Living Under Moslem Laws (WLUML).

The inter-agency Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls was set up in 1998 to share experiences on research and programmes on the rights of women and girls within marriage, and to identify common agendas for advocacy and policy development at the national, regional and international levels. Early marriage and gender-based violence are currently the two main concerns of the Forum. The idea for the Forum came about following several meetings between Save the Children UK (SCF), Anti-Slavery International (ASI), CHANGE, Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and FORWARD.

The overall goal of the Ouagadougou technical consultation was to contribute to actions to stop early and forced marriages, particularly amongst African young girls and women.

The consultation adopted the Ouagadougou Declaration and agreed to use child marriage as a

more appropriate terminology to replace early marriage. Child marriages draw attention to this serious violation of the rights of the child.

We declare to our governments and the international community:

- That while poverty and socio-cultural reasons are the primary contributing factors that push parents and guardians to marry girls at an early age, the resulting denial of education and access to vocational and life skills disproportionately affects girls from poor, marginalized, rural and less-educated families and communities. Thus poverty becomes a cause and consequence of child and forced marriages.

- That our Governments and the African Union adopt a clear and unambiguous position on child and forced marriages and rectify the legislative loopholes between religious, customary and civil marriages, and to ensure that special measures are taken to help end this practice.

To obtain a copy of the **Ouagadougou declaration**, please contact FORWARD.



Participants at the technical consultation on child marriages, held in Burkina Faso.

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New UK Law on FGM

The new FGM Act 2003 was passed into law by the government on 30th October, 2003. The law was initiated as a private members bill proposed by Ann Clwyd MP. NGO's had been in discussion with Christine McCafferty MP who as chair of the All Party Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health, had hosted the all-party hearings on FGM in 2000. At the hearings nearly thirty recommendations were made for the UK in respect of FGM. Two of these recommendations were that the name of the law be changed from the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act to include the term female genital mutilation and that the law look at sanctions against those parents and carers who take their daughters outside the UK for purposes of genital mutilation.

The FGM Act 2003 addresses these two issues.

The law makes it illegal for FGM to be performed in the UK and for any UK national or permanent resident to aid, abet, counsel or procure FGM on any UK national or permanent resident anywhere in the world, even if it is not illegal in that country. The law also increases the penalty for performance of FGM to 12 years or a fine or both.

It is important to note that a genuine fear of FGM is still legitimate grounds for women to seek asylum.

The law will be brought into effect at the end of January. FORWARD supports this development of the law and will continue to work to ensure that practising communities understand why the law had to be changed to protect girls from this type of gender violence. FGM is a cultural practice that is not required by any religion, and cultures and traditions can and should be changed when they act against the best interests of sections of the community.

A CHRISTMAS APPEAL

FORWARD needs your support to continue its work to stop gender based discriminatory practices affecting African women and girls in the UK and Africa. You can become a sponsor of FORWARD by giving a regular or single donation towards our work.
Please remember to complete the GIFT AID Declaration if applicable.

YES. I want to support FORWARD's campaign to stop harmful gender based discriminatory practices.

I wish to make a donation of £100

£50 £25 £10 £ _____

I enclose a cheque or postal order payable to FORWARD for £ _____

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 work.

BANKER'S ORDER

Please fill in name and address section opposite

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: _____