Working Together to Safeguard Rights and Dignity

FORWARD

Safeguarding rights & dignity

ANNUAL REPORT 08

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Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development

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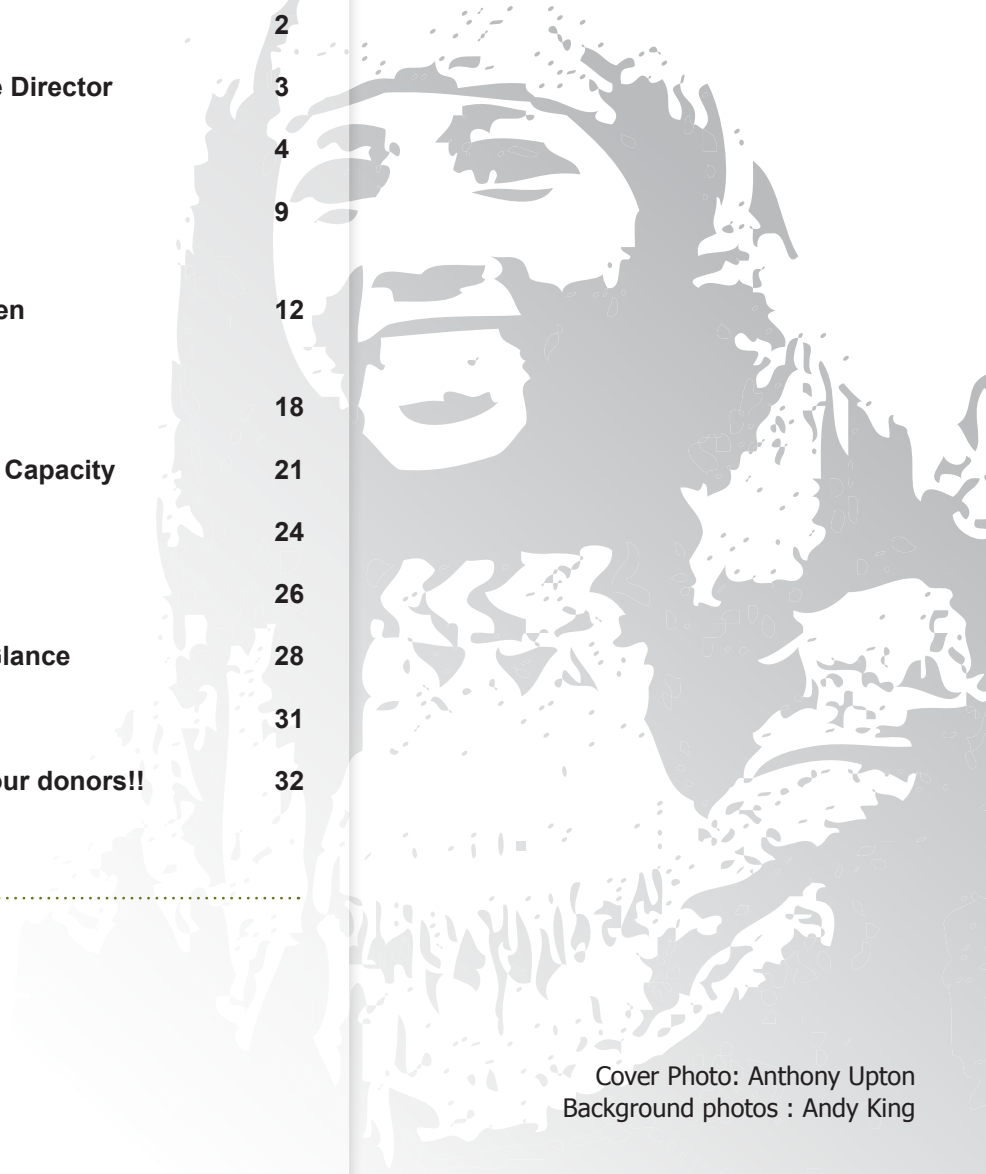

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Background photos : Andy King

Message from the Chair

A successful year for FORWARD

ON behalf of FORWARD staff and Board of Trustees, it is my pleasure to present to you the Annual Report of FORWARD UK, which demonstrates our achievements during 2008.

The year witnessed positive operational and strategic developments for FORWARD. The extension of our Africa programme and the recruitment of more staff have greatly increased our ability to help women and girls affected by female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. We look forward to extending our services in the coming year to more European and African countries through partnership and networking. These successes are thanks to the energy, commitment and passion of FORWARD staff and Trustees, and in particular FORWARD's Executive Director.

I would like further to express the highest praise, thanks and immense gratitude to all our funders, supporters and members. Also, I would like to extend my thanks to the beneficiaries for the trust and support they have shown us. Our mission is to continue to move forward. This principle guides our decision-making and drives us all to do more for women and girls around the world – regardless of the challenges and obstacles we face. This report tells you about some of the remarkable accomplishments this year.

As 2008 comes to an end I look forward to New Year 2009 and all that this will bring to FORWARD.

May I also take this opportunity to wish everyone a peaceful and rewarding year in 2009. Let us all continue to Give, Care, and Support.

Margaret Nyuydzewira
Chair, Board of Trustees, FORWARD

Reflections from the Executive Director

Safeguarding the health, rights and dignity of African women and girls is, without doubt, a collective venture. Over the past year we have prioritized working through partnerships and collaboration with policy-makers, statutory agencies and non-governmental organisations at national and local level.

We all have a duty to make change happen or to be part of the change process. FORWARD's role has centred on facilitating this process through bringing together key actors. We have strengthened engagement with African Diaspora communities and stakeholders, particularly young people and women, to build bridges and a movement for change.

There has been an increase in requests at the local level for awareness raising, information, support and training, from community organisations, Local Authorities and statutory agencies. This is real evidence of a positive shift in engagement on the issue. Safeguarding girls and young women at risk of FGM and child and forced marriage is achievable. Prevention efforts should go alongside the provision of specialist and support services. We have continued to generate evidence to inform policy, through new community research on women's experiences, perceptions and concerns in relation to FGM. FORWARD worked with a number of experts to undertake participatory ethnography evaluation research (PEER) at the community level. This innovative process built the capacity of the women from the community to articulate their problems and priorities, and enabled dialogue and a movement to start around these difficult issues.

FORWARD has continued to work with partners in East and West Africa on the programme on "Advancing the Health and Rights of African Girls and Young Women". We have facilitated sharing of experiences and programme lessons, organised a regional youth empowerment and leadership training, and supported work on responding to obstetric fistula. Engaging with young women and men forms a critical component in safeguarding rights and dignity.

This report shares the work of these partnerships with policy-makers, funders, statutory bodies, partners and individuals in Africa, Europe and the UK. We would like to express our appreciation particularly to the trusts, foundations, government agencies and individuals that have funded our work. We say thank you to the FORWARD Board of Trustees, members, staff and interns. We are in this together and hope to continue to rely on your support in the coming year.

Naana Otoo-Oyortey MBE
Executive Director, FORWARD

Empowering Young People

"I participated in Young People Speak Out (YPSO) and was exposed to advocacy action against FGM, gender-based violence and child marriage. This helped in the creative work that I do in the field of women's rights."

Subsequent to this training, I moved back to Kenya (my birthplace) and was contacted by FORWARD to attend a youth empowerment workshop in Ethiopia for "Advancing the Human Rights of African Girls Project". This workshop was led by one Betty Makoni who has pioneered girls' and women's rights in Zimbabwe through the formation ofgirls' clubs. They embolden girls to through knowledge of their rights through knowledge of their legal rights and the right to education. The experience was life changing and built my confidence, not only in myself, but in a movement to expand on research-based work carried out by girls and communities themselves, resulting in real change at grassroots levels.

"I have brought my experiences together from YPSO, the Youth Empowerment workshop and my artistic work to support FORWARD's partners in Ethiopia. The creative workshops and PhotoVoice use digital photography. We hope to extend these activities to other African countries."

(Atokena, YPSO year 2 participant)

Skills Building in Ethiopia

"I have learned a lot about the prevention and elimination of FGM and other harmful traditional practices. Now I know my rights so that I can help myself and others too. The confidence-building session was very useful to understand different practical ways how I can build my confidence. [The workshop] was very interesting and it increased my knowledge about confidence, gender-based violence, and FGM. It taught me that if you work hard, everything is possible! So I want to bring behavioural change to girls by sharing my experience with my teachers, my family and friends, and my community."

(Eyerusalem the youngest participant)

One representative from the YPSO programme participated in FORWARD's Workshop on Youth Empowerment held in Ethiopia this summer. The workshop aimed to: increase the knowledge of youth on the human rights implications of FGM and other harmful traditional practices; expand and reach out to young people with the film Moolaadé and, using the accompanying facilitation guide produced by FORWARD, to implement a rights-based advocacy strategy; build the confidence of young people and motivate them to establish gender clubs; and finally share information and experiences in individual countries on youth involvement in the campaign against FGM and other harmful traditional practices.

Tanzanian participants at the workshop

"I would like to support the rights of girls in my country and be a better man. I will share my knowledge gained from this workshop with members of SNCTP youth committee [IAC-Sudan national chapter], my friends, family and neighbours; and work hard to translate the manuals into Arabic."

(Azha, participant from Sudan)

National Youth FGM Research in UK

"I took part in the research as I became aware of the inhuman acts carried out on women in various parts of the world. I had a little knowledge of the subject so I chose to take part in the research to find out what exactly happens and why it is done. The whole experience was beneficial, because it enlightened me and gave me more insight of why such an unjust act is conducted. Also the training we received gave me skills on how to approach people and interview them and gain their confidence to talk about sensitive issues.

Muna Dol (c) and friends at Goree Island

Life as a FORWARD Intern

I was first attracted to FORWARD because it fought against FGM and child marriage, two human rights issues that I have studied and have an interest in as it detrimentally affects the progress of Africa.

However, as a summer intern I expected to do nothing more than a few administrative tasks. Surprisingly, my time at FORWARD has profoundly enhanced my development as a person and my commitment to human rights.

FORWARD provides interns with responsibility, for instance, within my first week I was allowed to organise the East African project which involved liaising with dependent NGOs and generally making sure that the money went directly to where it was required. The highlight of that particular summer was that I was given the opportunity to attend a highly publicised national conference on child marriage law reforms in Tanzania. As a student of law I was given the chance to see the legal process in practice whilst enjoying the paradise that East Africa had to offer.

It is difficult not to become a dedicated member of FORWARD, so I returned the following year and was assigned the role of a legal researcher. However, once again I was given the great opportunity of going to Dakar, Senegal… The international programme for African women Diaspora that I attended brought together exceptional people from the Diaspora. The programme consisted of lectures and debates within a human rights framework. My experience in Senegal focused my view of the world and I reconnected more strongly to Africa, a continent which we, as the African Diaspora, are intimately intertwined with and owe a duty to. The message that resonates strongly from my experiences with FORWARD is that of banishing ignorance for knowledge and compassion.

(Muna)

The research was carried out in a very organized, relaxing way… I found it quite fun as well as educational. It was such a pleasure to meet the staff members of FORWARD, and I really appreciated the fact that they are working to embrace change in women's lives and health – not just for British women but also for those who immigrated and are suffering from such catastrophic experiences.

"I don't know how it will help me in my future plans, but I am so sure that if I get to work in any women's health fields, the fundamental teachings I received on the subject will make certain matters easier for me, and I will know how to approach women's issues with the right level of understanding and sensitivity."

(Karim, young PEER researcher, Middlesborough)

Given the success of the adult women's research, FORWARD applied the same research method to canvas the knowledge, attitudes and experiences of young men and women towards FGM.

Thanks to this research, young people have acquired advocacy and research skills, and through the process have built their self-confidence and raised their voices to be heard. In Middlesborough, this research was carried out within a refugee and asylum-seeking prism, and helped empower young men and women who have felt neglected, ignored, isolated and invisible since their arrival.

This research, soon to be released, has shed light on the struggles of young people within the asylum-seeking process. Part of the workshop's success lay in the fact that these young people, for the first time, felt that they had had the chance to be heard and that some people were making that effort to hear them out. They were empowered, and the whole process gave them the chance to think about things and to question a practice that was deeply embedded in their cultures.

The initial findings of the research indicates differences in young people's experiences in Middlesborough, Bristol and London. In discussing their daily lives and issues of relationships and sexual health, what is clear is that young people in each of the cities face their own struggles and difficulties. The research captures the uncertainty faced by young asylum seekers who have recently arrived in the UK, the pressures on young Somali males to achieve highly in education, and the challenge young Londoners experience with their cultural identity being both British and Sudanese.

The young people have developed a powerful pledge and have set up their own FGM support group.

Working on the pledge, Middlesborough

PLEDGE

No to domestic violence!

No to child and forced marriage!

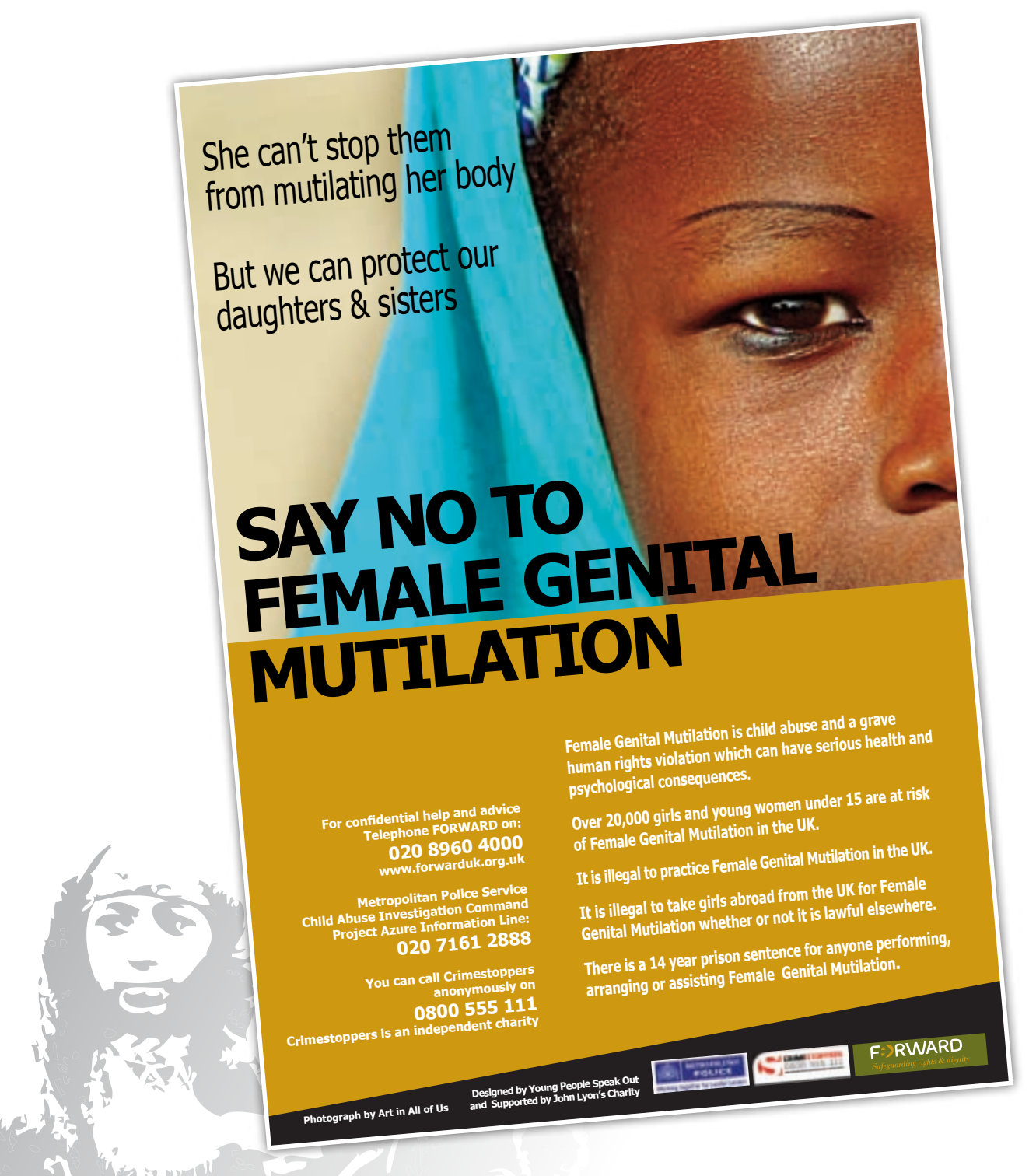
No to female genital cutting!

Yes to young people's rights

Yes to education

Yes to equality

Gender Based Violence ENDS HERE!


She can't stop them from mutilating her body
But we can protect our daughters & sisters
SAY NO TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION
For confidential help and advice
Telephone FORWARD on:
020 8960 4000
www.forwarduk.org.uk
Metropolitan Police Service
Child Abuse Investigation Command
Project Azure Information Line:
020 7161 2888
You can call Crimestoppers anonymously on
0800 555 111
Crimestoppers is an independent charity
Female Genital Mutilation is child abuse and a grave human rights violation which can have serious health and psychological consequences.
Over 20,000 girls and young women under 15 are at risk of Female Genital Mutilation in the UK.
It is illegal to practice Female Genital Mutilation in the UK.
It is illegal to take girls abroad from the UK for Female Genital Mutilation whether or not it is lawful elsewhere.
There is a 14 year prison sentence for anyone performing, arranging or assisting Female Genital Mutilation.
Photograph by Art in All of Us
Designed by Young People Speak Out and Supported by John Lyon's Charity
FORWARD
Safeguarding rights & dignity

Engaging with Communities

Facilitating Dialogue with Communities and Stakeholders

"The training from FORWARD helped raise my awareness on how to respond to FGM as a paediatrician."

(Dr Andrea Goddard, Consultant General Paediatrician, St Mary's Hospital)

As part of FORWARD's strategy to strengthen the capacity and voices of hard-to-reach communities, FORWARD (with kind support from Westminster PCT) organised a one-day community consultation. The aim of the event was to raise the profile of FGM and related issues with key community stakeholders. Workshop sessions included FGM and sexual and reproductive health; FGM and child protection; and challenges to working with Arabic-speaking communities.

This workshop was the first building block to establishing new links with key stakeholders. FORWARD particularly welcomed the participation of certain specific communities and also the participation of community men. This highlighted advancements in FORWARD's campaign to engage all members of FGM-practising communities, as it is FORWARD's belief that in order to eliminate FGM the whole community needs to be integrated in the involvement and provide support.

The workshop also helped define the parameters of the Community Advisory Board which is to be established in 2009 and which will advise and further FORWARD's programme of community engagement.

Westminster Communities Engagement Day

Nigeria Project – Restoring Women's Dignity and Pride

"There were 18 young ladies who graduated this year. Their average age is between 15 and 29. All of them were married at 13/14 years old and had fistula during their long labour in their village and not being able to go to hospital. Child marriage is a common practice in Kano, Nigeria, and most of the girls will be at least engaged by the time they have their first menstruation period. Even though it is a taboo to talk about the side-effects of child marriage in the region, most of the clients explained that they prefer to send their daughters to school rather than get them married early just like they did. Some of the clients explained how they feel relieved and proud after being cured and spending some time in the rehabilitation centre. It was very emotional seeing them saying goodbye to each other, most of them were crying and hugging

The Nigeria Projects

each other. One of the clients said 'I got skills and best friends for life in the last few months'."

(Extract from 2008 FORWARD graduation report)

Working with our Nigeria section – FORWARD-Nigeria – and with grateful support from BIG Lottery, FORWARD has been actively safeguarding and empowering women in Northern Nigeria thanks to the Well Women and Children's Clinics (WWCC) in Dambatta and Jahun, which provide general maternal health.

Every year, FORWARD-Nigeria welcomes an average of 20-25 clients to its Rehabilitation Centre in Dambatta for women who suffer from obstetric fistula – a debilitating yet preventable complication to prolonged or obstructed labour.

This holistic ten-month course provides each client with physical, psychological and emotional help and support, allows for their fistulae to be repaired, and equips each client with life-long skills.

Having arrived at the clinic ill, weak and often rejected by her husband, family and village, each client is able to return home after graduation a happier, healthier, stronger and more empowered woman. The programme also allows for follow-up care and provides the women with access to micro-finance.

London PEER research strategy day

Preliminary findings from community women's PEER research

"When I got the invitation for the research, I thought it will give me a chance to support raising awareness regarding FGM among our community; help women to speak about their problems; get training which will help me in the future; and meet others to learn how they feel and think and what their problems are.

During the training, it was very interesting for me to learn how to carry out good interviews and make others feel confident and secure to answer these probing questions. I also learned to look at the wider issues of the problem and the ethics of research.

The best thing about this research method is that it lets people feel more confident to tell their stories."

(Somia, adult researcher in London)

During the summer months, FORWARD – with technical support from the PEER Unit, Options Consultancy and the University of Wales, Swansea – undertook in-depth, participatory research to investigate beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and experiences of women affected by FGM. Using the PEER method, this research aimed to produce a detailed understanding of issues around FGM and health in particular the continuing impact of FGM on the lives of affected women, how women affected by FGM perceive and interact with health services, and how women feel about the practice of FGM – for themselves and younger generations.

FORWARD was particularly keen to use the innovative PEER research method as it entailed the community women's complete integration into the study. This participatory approach meant the women

themselves defined the interview questions and interviewed other women to collect the data. This proved effective for working with hard-to-research groups and the process itself provides better understanding of the health behaviours from an insider's point of view. Equally important, this project provided a space for women to articulate their problems and priorities, building the women's self confidence and capacity and strengthened FORWARD's dialogue with these hard-to reach community stakeholders.

The detailed report of the findings, conclusions and recommendations will be published in 2009 and will have serious implications for national policy, support services, local government and advocacy groups.

"There is this woman who has Pharaonic type circumcision. When she went to the hospital, the trainee doctor who was treating her was very surprised when he saw her. He asked her if she had an accident and what happened to her. She told him she was circumcised and explained everything to him. He started to cry and she ended up feeling sorry for herself. It was the first time she felt she had a problem."

(Voice from community women's PEER research)

Preliminary findings illustrate the factors that motivate the support for FGM as well as the moves to cease the practice; the experiences of women who have undergone FGM and its emotional and relationship effects between partners and within families; the power dynamics and struggles within extended families; the experiences of and interactions with the UK health services; and calls for more information on all aspects.

"Finding information is not easy, as it is not available, and also if you go to the GP for example you do not find any information leaflets or handy information which you can take with you."

(Voice from community women's PEER research)

Summary of research recommendations:

1. Raising awareness and discussions within communities: breaking the cycle of silence, bringing men's voices into the debate, questioning assumptions, and supporting families who choose not to circumcise.

2. Improved communications channels between communities and professional sectors: ensuring people have readily available and accurate information, which is sensitive and available for all educational levels, with GP surgeries identified as key point for information.

3. More information on areas including understanding negative effects of FGM and physical consequences, understanding the law, and better information on maternity care and delivery in the UK.

"The question now is really what about our daughter's futures? How can we protect them and protect their honour without circumcision?" (Voice from community women's PEER research)

Partnering to Advance the Rights of African Girls & Women

EGLDAM staff, Ethiopia

AT FORWARD, we fundamentally believe that we can best promote the interests of all girls and women by working in partnerships with other organisations. Partnerships allow us to build bridges with communities, empower key stakeholders, and build the capacity of smaller organisations which in turn will allow them to better respond to the needs and demands of their key stakeholders.

Through these partnerships, we are able to build capacity at grassroots level, and share best practice and lessons learnt. Working in partnership also enables greater networks of voices and lends power so those voices can be heard.

Partners' Reflections

ACDEP, partner in Ghana

"ACDEP (Association of Church Development Projects, Ghana) first began working with FORWARD in 1996 to implement an advocacy project on FGM in the Upper East Region of Ghana, which led to the inclusion of FGM awareness training in ACDEP's Health and Social Sector Projects curriculum. Following this, a sensitisation workshop on FGM was held in the Bawku area with traditional leaders and governmental organisations, which successfully resulted in a public declaration against FGM by the Chiefs and opinion leaders and their pledge to abandon the practice. Many more interventions followed and now the practice of FGM has reduced drastically in those areas.

In 2003, another project begun was on gender and reproductive health in Northern Ghana and FORWARD's international expertise in documentation, advocacy, case studies and training materials have greatly benefited the programme.

FORWARD has provided ACDEP with invaluable technical advice and capacity-building support. As an organisation, working with FORWARD has impacted on our work in several ways. They provided professional input into the development of several proposals on issues of gender violence and gender-based discriminatory practices and the Unit has implemented health, human rights and gender programmes based on these proposals. Thanks to this, we have developed strategic partnerships at local, district and regional levels with policy-makers and traditional leaders. This has strengthened collaborative links between ACDEP, government institutions and relevant NGOs working in the area of gender, both in the Northern and Upper East Regions.

Working with FORWARD has also benefited other partners that we work with. It is through FORWARD's contribution that the Northern Ghana Gender Network was established. The network consists of individual gender specialists and advocates from the three northern regions of Ghana interested in promoting gender equity and in spearheading the discussion of gender related issues affecting all aspects of development in the north. The network currently plays a leading role in advocacy issues in the north and is gradually establishing itself as the premier group in advocacy on these issues."

CDF, partner in Tanzania

"The FORWARD-CDF (Children's Dignity Forum-Tanzania) partnership began in 2007 after FORWARD provided funding to CDF's campaign against child marriage. This funding helped shape the vision and mission of CDF.

The initiative convened a National Consultative Conference which brought together different expertise, knowledge and skills to address the complex problem of child marriage in Tanzania. The conference designed a strategic framework to fight against child marriage, and the Dar es Salaam Declaration on child marriage, and allowed CDF to build a network of key stakeholders to further our campaign.

The CDF-FORWARD partnership has impacted different CDF sections such as institution support, capacity building, resource mobilization, advocacy, research and publications. FORWARD has added to the capacity of CDF in terms of planning and developing strategies towards ending child marriages. CDF has learned from FORWARD how to plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, share relevant information and establish a resource centre.

FORWARD has also played a significant role in CDF's funding by becoming the primary point of contact with funders and being responsible for disbursing funds, reviewing and consolidating narrative and financial reports. FORWARD facilitated CDF to meet its research objective. It enhanced the child marriage survey in Dar es Salaam and Coastal regions which revealed the deeply rooted tradition and customs which need urgent intervention. FORWARD also facilitated publication of the National Consultative Meeting report and a combined report on child marriage conducted in Dar es Salaam, Coastal, Mwanza and Mara regions.

Working closely under FORWARD, CDF has managed to attract other sources of funding which enables CDF to follow up on the recommendations of the survey completed under FORWARD technical expertise. The partnership brings CDF credibility and increases CDF opportunity to have other working partners such as UNICEF Tanzania and Southern Africa Human Rights NGO Network (SAHRiNGON)-Tanzania Chapter.

The CDF-FORWARD partnership is really a necessity in tackling child marriage in Tanzania. CDF still needs technical support from FORWARD to ensure that child marriage becomes a national agenda item and is consigned to history in Tanzania."

AkiDwA, partner in Ireland

"FORWARD has been a wonderful support for the AkiDwA Migrant Women's Health Services Project. This is the first project in Ireland looking at the health care needs of women who have undergone FGM. We have been delighted to welcome Estelle Robinson to address our FGM Health Forum. Her presentation gave us many insights into the work of FORWARD and how we in Ireland can best address the issues related to FGM now emerging in Ireland. The FORWARD website and Statistical Study have been key information sources for our work and we are excited about future AkiDwA and FORWARD collaboration."

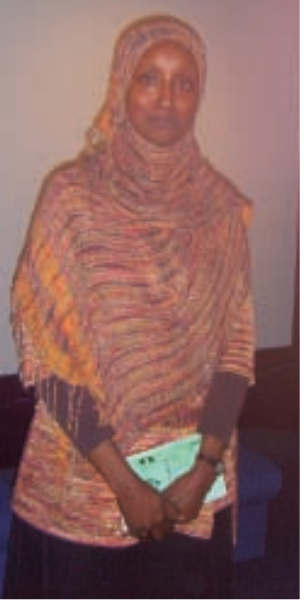
Project Azure, Metropolitan Police, partner in the UK

"Project Azure is the Metropolitan Police Service, Child Abuse Investigation Command's response to the harmful traditional practice of FGM. The main aim of the project is to prevent this happening to girls in London. Awareness and education, in partnership, is at the forefront of the work of the team which regularly trains professionals and voluntary agencies alongside strategic partners.

Protecting the girls of London from this practice, and being able to identify those having already been subjected to FGM, involves understanding and co-operation from key agencies such as Education, Health, Children's Services and Police as well as other NGOs which need to be aware of how to identify concerns and what steps to take to safeguard the child.

Practising communities need to be identified and agencies need to engage with them around their traditional values in respect of FGM as part of the awareness raising and education.

Since 2004, the Child Abuse Investigation Command, Project Azure and FORWARD UK have worked in partnership, focusing on protecting children from FGM, educating professionals and engaging with communities. FORWARD was a major contributor to the Stop FGM Now! DVD, has provided powerful resources such as posters and literature for use in the annual campaign, and has facilitated several meetings of the pan-London FGM Working Group. In addition we have been working together, with others, on the FGM National Action Plan for the UK."



ETHIOPIA

Irish Aid

bridges
FORWARD'S YOUNG PEOPLE SPEAK OUT PROJECT

Supporting and Sharing Global Initiatives and Actions

En route to Goree Island, YOWLI

Young Women Knowledge and Leadership Institute (YOWLI)

"Like many of the experiences I have encountered I try to keep an open mind about situations, and this experience has been no different. I believe that everything has some value to it, if you just look hard enough and remain patient. I am learning about things I never know existed – obstetric fistula for one, and meeting such empowering personalities that I cannot help but overlook what shortfalls come my way."

(Jemila Adbulai, YOWLI 2008, Blog archive)

FORWARD participated in The African Women Millennium Initiative on Poverty and Human Rights (AWOMI), "Young Women Knowledge and Leadership Institute" (YOWLI) held in July 2008 in Dakar, Senegal. The one month programme brought together over 60 African young women and men activists from the Diaspora and the African continent. The youth leadership training programme adopted a human rights and gender based participatory approach. There were ample opportunities for sitting under the skies in Goree Island to debate the economics of development, gender based violence, girls' social rights and sexual and reproductive health issues. The training created opportunities for great networking, mentorship, raising awareness and confidence building.

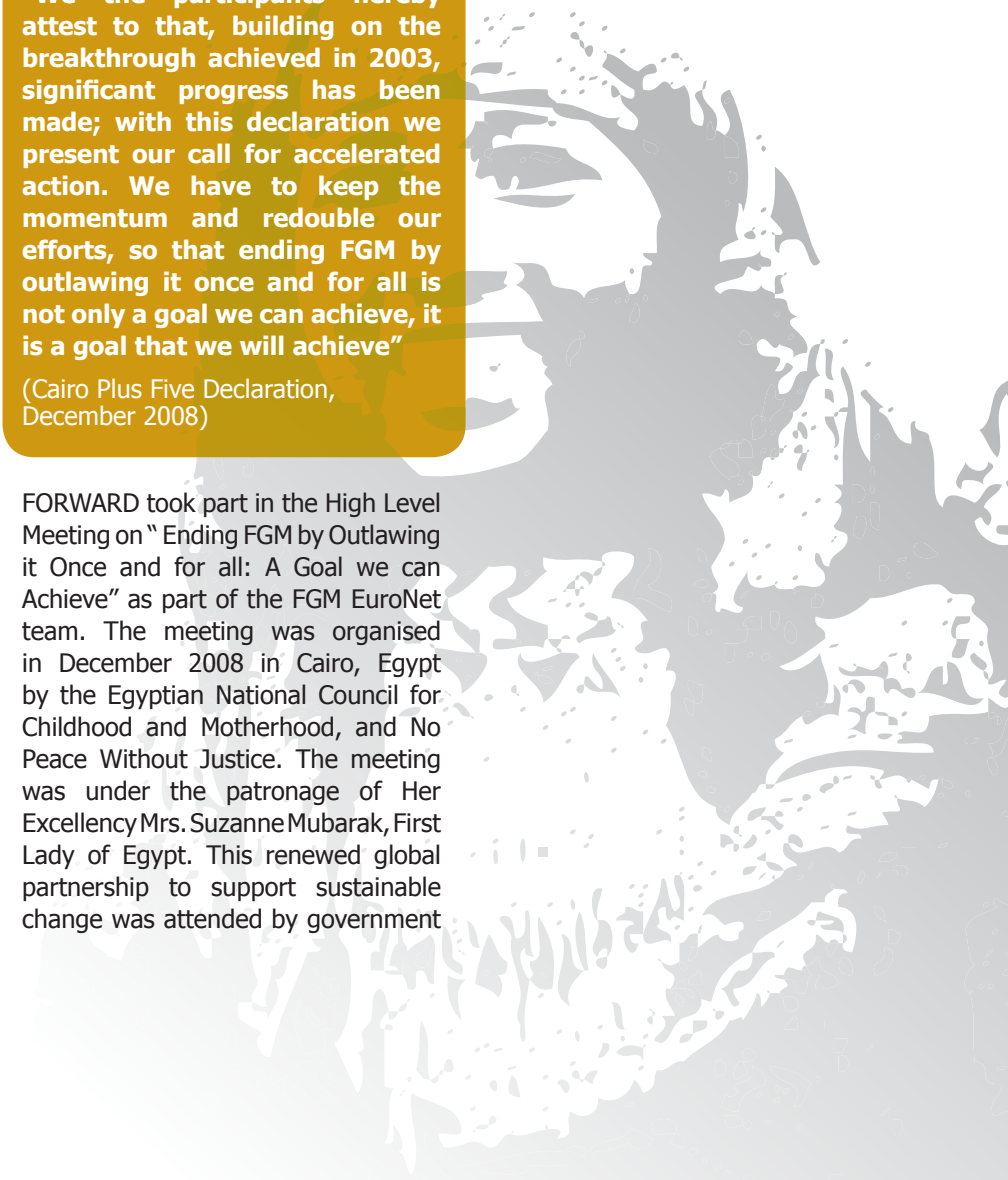
The YOWLI experience has demonstrated the added value and catalytic nature of working together at all levels. Senegal was a global experience which helped to bond young people and supported them to develop a common agenda for change. FORWARD's role in facilitating this process of building new leadership has highlighted the importance of sharing and collaborative efforts.

High Level Meeting – Cairo Declaration on FGM + 5

"We the participants hereby attest to that, building on the breakthrough achieved in 2003, significant progress has been made; with this declaration we present our call for accelerated action. We have to keep the momentum and redouble our efforts, so that ending FGM by outlawing it once and for all is not only a goal we can achieve, it is a goal that we will achieve"

(Cairo Plus Five Declaration, December 2008)

FORWARD took part in the High Level Meeting on " Ending FGM by Outlawing it Once and for all: A Goal we can Achieve" as part of the FGM EuroNet team. The meeting was organised in December 2008 in Cairo, Egypt by the Egyptian National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and No Peace Without Justice. The meeting was under the patronage of Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt. This renewed global partnership to support sustainable change was attended by government



Celebrating at the Cairo meeting

representatives, policy-makers, parliamentarians, civil societies from Afro-Arab countries and the African Diaspora in Europe affected by FGM as well as international and regional organisations.

The three thematic sessions focused on FGM legislation as a tool for behavioural change; measuring successes and sharing knowledge useful in understanding trends on FGM; and reaching FGM communities: the role of outreach, public information and media campaigns. The three day conference highlighted the role of sharing policy and programme lessons and creating spaces for collective reflection and dialogue between civil society, policy-makers and international UN agencies.

The highlight of the conference was a tour of an FGM-free village outside Cairo. The Egyptian government has demonstrated that with commitment and coordinated action it is possible to end FGM in one generation. This requires collective effort, commitment from policy-makers, an enabling policy environment, resources, engagement with stakeholders at the community level and coordinating actions.

Raising Awareness & Building Capacity

Group discussion, Westminster

"There is this lady who has been circumcised. When she was pregnant, she attended the local health centre. When she gave birth to her baby girl, they sent her a letter telling her not to circumcise her daughter and that if she circumcised her, it would be against the law and she could go to jail. The woman found the letter threatening, and she was very angry because she did not intend to circumcise her daughter. She was angry that the authorities assumed this just because she was circumcised. She wished the authorities had confronted her about her intentions instead of threatening her without knowing anything."

(Voice from the Community women's PEER research)

Making FGM history requires protecting girls and women at risk, and supporting those affected. Key professionals have statutory obligations to safeguard all children living in the UK. This means that responding to FGM is a statutory duty and professionals should have the capacity and motivation to respond appropriately. FORWARD's training and skills building aims to support professionals to address FGM within immigration, police, health, education and social services procedures. FORWARD's training is often in response to requests, however over the past year we have provided advice and support to a number of Local partnership initiatives and steering committees.

"When one lady in an east London hospital came to deliver, there were two doctors and a midwife who had no idea what to do or how to deal with the situation. In the end they decided to do an emergency caesarean section although it was unnecessary and she could have delivered a vaginal delivery." (Voice from the Community women's PEER research).

Sample of Organisations Trained

Luton Primary Care Trust
Northampton Primary Care Trust
Metropolitan Police Academy
Harrow London Safeguard Children's Board
Gloucestershire Domestic Violence Forum
Soroptomist International – different chapters
Kensal Rise Primary School
West Mercia's Women's Aid
Birmingham City Council
Bristol Primary Care Trust – Children's Services
Harrow College
Roehampton University
Luton City Council
Nottingham Women's Aid
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

"I've heard wonderful things about Forward, and now I know they are true!"
Meerat Kaur, Community Health and Partnerships, Westminster Primary Care Trust

Working with the media to raise awareness on FGM

"FORWARD were very approachable and extremely helpful in assisting with my research for the popular BBC drama 'Doctors'."

(Sarah Shortt, researcher)

In line with the 2008 Zero Tolerance to FGM theme of working in partnership with the media, FORWARD has been working with various media formats to further the campaign against FGM and child marriage, raising awareness of these issues and other gender-based discriminatory practices and human rights abuses.

Over the past year, FORWARD has collaborated with the media on numerous occasions to raise the profile of our campaign and the experiences of girls and women both here in the UK and abroad. This includes working with print media (local and national newspapers in the UK and Africa), TV, radio and online interviews, and various documentaries. FORWARD has also acted as a consultant for programmes and documentaries which help to raise public awareness.

Seminar on Strategic Interventions to End Child Marriage

This seminar was an initiative of the Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls held in London on 14 March 2008 and led by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Enabling Education Network (EENET), Womankind Worldwide and FORWARD. This was aimed to commemorate 8 March – International Women's Day and demonstrate the global nature of child marriage. The advocacy initiative was aimed at policy makers and programmers working on international development.

Child marriage is a programme focus of FORWARD. The seminar shared new research, policy, and programme responses to tackling this neglected human rights violation. Child marriage negates many international human rights laws and impacts adversely on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The presentations explored legal and human rights challenges, new developments in responding to child marriage, and promising programmes for advancing rights and promoting health and well being. One of the outcomes of the seminar was the call for a more focused global campaign on ending child marriage. FORWARD proposes to lead on this action point in the coming year.

Nagla and Naana after triathlon

Fundraising Highlights

"Having been through FGM myself when I was six years old, I felt that it was time for me to speak out against FGM, share my experience, and do something about it. I cannot tolerate ignorance in our community to pursue this barbaric act any longer; I am deeply convinced that information and education are our strongest weapons to fight this insanity.

I thought hard about how I could help combat FGM. Doing a triathlon was one of my biggest challenges and I knew that friends, colleagues and family

would sponsor me if I ever dared do a triathlon. So I dared, for the sake of raising awareness around FGM. I found training with three very different sports (swimming, cycling and running) more interesting and fun. Furthermore, doing the triathlon boosted my self-esteem, coping methods, management skills and even team-building skills.

I consider myself an anti-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 FMG make you powerless; use FGM as the source of your own strength. We need more schools in Africa and we need more money for the buildings and the teachers, so we need more of you to help. Education creates self-confidence, and self-confidence enables us to say NO.

I chose to work with FORWARD after attending the Zero Tolerance to FGM event on 6 February 2008 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, FORWARD's Executive Director. I absolutely respect and adore what the FORWARD team has achieved, not only in the UK but also abroad."

(Nagla, FORWARD member)

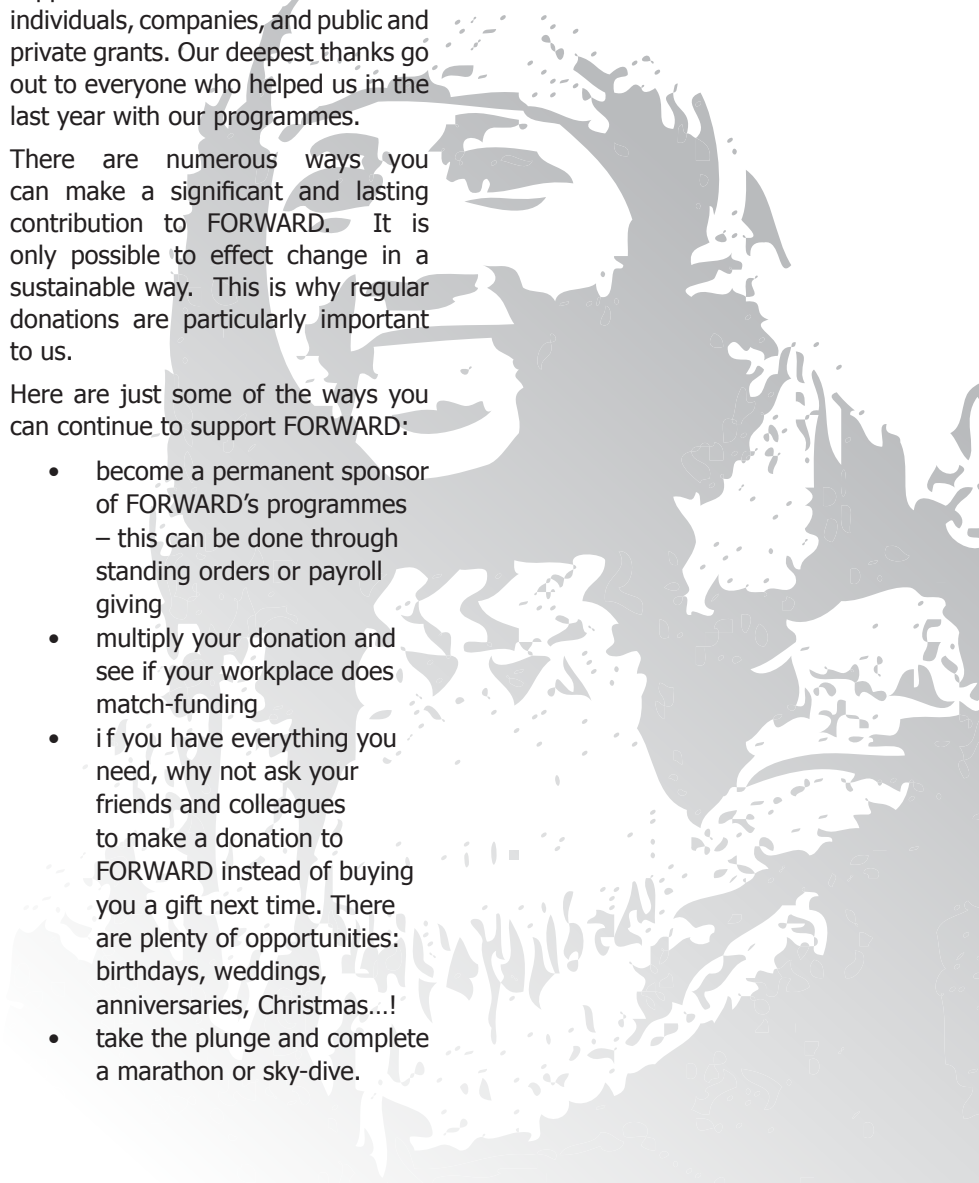
What you can do?!

Our vital work to end gender-based violence and harmful practices is only possible thanks to the wonderful support from donations from individuals, companies, and public and private grants. Our deepest thanks go out to everyone who helped us in the last year with our programmes.

There are numerous ways you can make a significant and lasting contribution to FORWARD. It is only possible to effect change in a sustainable way. This is why regular donations are particularly important to us.

Here are just some of the ways you can continue to support FORWARD:

- become a permanent sponsor of FORWARD's programmes – this can be done through standing orders or payroll giving
- multiply your donation and see if your workplace does match-funding
- i f you have everything you need, why not ask your friends and colleagues to make a donation to FORWARD instead of buying you a gift next time. There are plenty of opportunities: birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, Christmas…!
- take the plunge and complete a marathon or sky-dive.



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Yasmin Aktar	**Finance and Admin Officer (resigned January 2008)**
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Lisa Seto

Website support

Gary Straughan, BRAINBOX

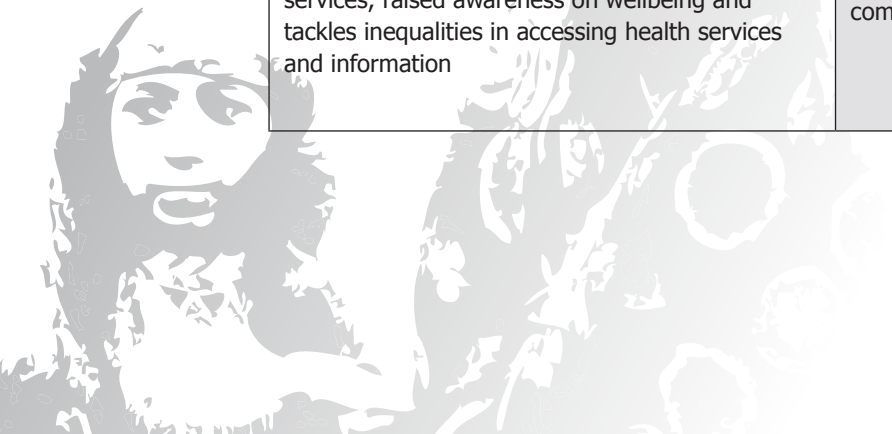
FORWARD would like to say a **MASSIVE** thank you to everyone who has supported **FORWARD** in any capacity over the past year.

We are deeply grateful for all of your support and look forward to continue working with you in the coming year. Together we will be able to continue safeguarding rights and dignity.

FORWARD Programmes at a Glance

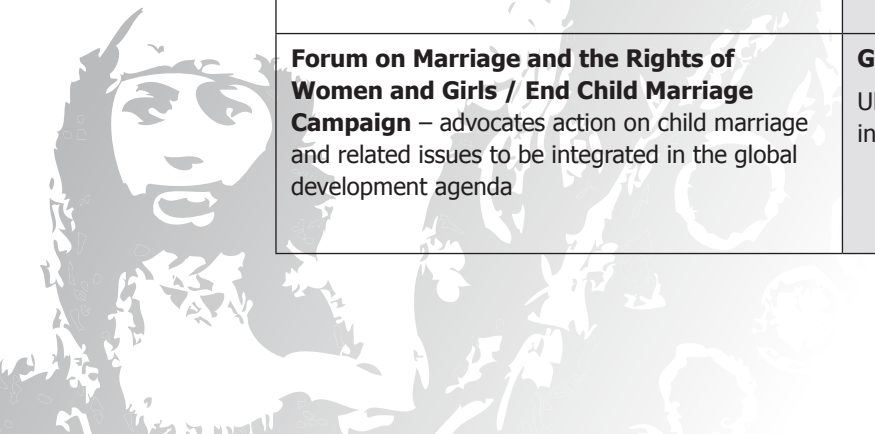
FORWARD programmes

Project title and description	Location and target audience	Funded by
Young People Speak Out (YPSO) – provides youth with skills and confidence in campaigning; participatory advocacy training and support to create awareness of gender-based violence within their community	**London** Young people (16-26) from FGM-practising communities	The John Lyons Charity
End FGM Youth Programme – engages with schools and aims to establish a support group and counselling service for girls affected by gender-based violence and train statutory professionals	**London** Young people (16-25) from FGM-practising communities. Key professionals working with at-risk groups	London Councils
African Immigrants Reproductive Health Promotion Project – delivers information and services, raised awareness on wellbeing and tackles inequalities in accessing health services and information	**London** FGM-practising communities; community organisations	Westminster Primary Care Trust (PCT)



National Youth FGM Research – explores attitudes and perceptions of young people either born in the UK or Africa towards FGM	**UK** Young people aged 16-25 in selected cities in the UK	Camelot Foundation
FGM Community PEER Research – explores experiences, perceptions, beliefs and behaviours of women affected by FGM	**UK** Women (25+) from FGM-practising communities in Bristol and London	Equalities and Human Rights Commission
Promoting Equality and Human Rights –engages communities and statutory bodies to safeguard and protect rights of girls and women affected at risk of FGM	**UK** FGM-practising communities in Bristol, London and Liverpool	Equalities and Human Rights Commission
Improved enforcement of FGM Legislation in Europe – disseminates lessons learnt and builds capacity of actors in the legal, social and paralegal field.	**EU** Partnership project in five countries	European Commission DAPHNE programme
Promoting the Rights of Young Women and Girls in Northern Ghana – advances sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equity	**Ghana** Vulnerable women and girls, community, and community leaders; policymakers.	Comic Relief

Taking action to End Child Marriage in Tanzania – a pilot PEER Research report on child marriage and situational analysis among young married and at risk girls	**Tanzania** The girl child, young women, communities, and decision-makers in Tarime	Comic Relief
Advancing Health and Rights of African Girls and Young Women – promotes the rights and protects the health, development and wellbeing of African girls, particularly the vulnerable and at risk through partnership.	**Tanzania; Sudan; Ethiopia; Nigeria; Ghana; Sierra Leone** Civil society organisations, women, girls, communities.	Sigrid Rausing Trust
FORWARD-Nigeria Women's Health Project – provides access for surgical treatment, rehabilitation, and life skills for women suffering from Obstetric Fistula.	**Nigeria** Girls and women suffering from Obstetric Fistula in Kano and Jigawa States	BIG Lottery Trust
Youth PhotoVoices – Uses visual arts to enable young women and girls express their aspirations and experiences	**Ethiopia** Young women and girls, including street girls	Sigrid Rausing Trust
Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls / End Child Marriage Campaign – advocates action on child marriage and related issues to be integrated in the global development agenda	**Global** UK-based agencies and individuals	Hosted by FORWARD



Financial Statement 2008

Statement of Financial Activities for the year

INCOMING RESOURCES	£
Donations	23754
Grants Receivable	210938
Other Income	6433
TOTAL	**241125**

EXPENDITURE	
Charitable Expenses	336638
Governance	5497
TOTAL	**342135**

NET INCOMING RESOURCES	(101010)
Total Funds B/F	238911
Total Funds C/F	137901

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH 2008	
Current Assets	146981
Current Liabilities	(9080)
Net Assets	**137901**

REPRESENTED BY:	
Restricted Funds	88419
Unrestricted Funds	49482
	137901

This summary financial information has been extracted from the full audited annual financial statements of FORWARD for the year ended 31st March 2008 as directed by the Charity Commissioners, using the SORP conventions.

A full copy can be obtained from FORWARD

A FORWARD thank you to all our donors!!

FORWARD would like to thank all our donors for their support over the past year and recognise their support. Thanks to you all, including those who generously donate anonymously.

Big Lottery

Bromley Trust

Camelot Foundation

City Parochial Foundation

Comic Relief

Equality and Human Rights Commission

European Commission - Daphne Programme

John Lyons Charity

London Councils

Sigrid Rausing Trust

Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust

Westminster Primary Care Trust

Womankind (Women at Risk)

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FORWARD

Safeguarding rights & dignity

Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development
Unit 4, 765-767 Harrow Road, London NW10 5NY
Tel: +44 (0)20 8960 4000
Fax: +44 (0)20 8960 4014
Email: forward@forwarduk.org.uk
Web: www.forwarduk.org.uk

Charity Registration number: 292403
Company Number: 01921508