Saleema

The National Youth Conference for Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), November 2016

editorial

tahany sadan

The Youth and the Movement of Social Change

A number of youth initiatives recently focused on the process of social change, especially with regard to the issue of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in a number of different states of the Sudan with high goals and aspirations for complete abandonment of this heinous practice. This newsletter focuses on the youth rallies held in a number of Sudanese states, with the aim to bring together the Sudanese male/female youth activists to develop their skills in decision-making and give them the opportunity to share their experiences and encourage their participation to mobilize local communities and help them abandon FGM / C in Sudan and to add more momentum to the youth initiatives since the youth are the leaders of change and they account for half the population of Sudan according to the recent population census.

A number of voluntary youth initiatives have been organized to introduce and address the risks of female genital mutilation/ cutting (FGM/C) and the pros of the Saleema (uncut, sound and healthy) girls with the participation of their local communities through education and awareness and community dialogues and the dissemination of Saleema Campaign positive messages.

The youth forums were held in partnership with the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW), the UNICEF Sudan, and the UNFPA Sudan. The youth have their different means of dialogue in universities, schools, social networking, social communication sites and the cultural forums they organized through mobile theaters, singing, folkloric dancing and different folklores with the participation of pop bands and singers.

One of the most important aspects of the youth gatherings is that they avail networking and partnerships, especially those gatherings which include representatives from all the states of the Sudan with their diversity and cultural assortments. So, there was a spirit of acquaintance and remarkable response from male/female participants and notable interest that reflect the experiences through success stories. These positive experiences showed how the great ability that the young people have to bring about change and create a bright future free of all kinds of violence targeting girls and women, which requires integrating them in the different projects for having the ability to influence and raise issues differently and clearly as they are the real leaders who can bring about the community change for Saleemat (uncut, sound and healthy) healthy girls.

Al-Obeid Declaration

Al-Obeid Declaration was issued by youth representatives of the (18) states of the Sudan at the National Youth Conference for Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C) in Al-Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan State, 26-27 November 2016, representing the voice of all the youth of the states of the Sudan.



The youth participants in Al-Obeid Conference put forward a new vision affirming their commitment to stand up and work to curb the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). The document of the Declaration signed by the young people reads: "We, the male/female youth participating in the National Youth Conference for Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) reiterate our firm conviction that our role is, qualitatively and quantitatively, vital for the achievement of the comprehensive development for a better future for our country and our people. We recognize that the social development is the basis of the comprehensive development that requires positive social change led by the society itself.

We also trust our values, traditions and fine customs form an authentic starting point that requires purifying them from some negative habits and practices to reach the goal. We know that change and development require the convergence of visions and objectives and coordination of means and efforts between all the components of the society and the state as well.

As young people, we are committed to working together to mobilize communities to abandon the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) by the various means.

This Declaration, which crowns a process of intensive consultations with the young people from all the states of Sudan to develop a comprehensive and integrated methodology to provide a common vision and a roadmap for abandoning FGM/C under the supervision and efforts of the young people, hence we:

Base our work on Sudan Interim Constitution of 2005, the national legislations, the child rights conventions and human rights principles aiming for the health, safety and welfare of children, youth and mothers, and we underline the importance of recognizing and supporting the role of the youth in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) based on Post 2015 Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) adopted by all the countries of the world.

We invite governmental and non-governmental organizations, trade unions, organization, civil society components and youth-led initiatives to engage in partnership with us to ensure the implementation of our resolution and commit to:

1. Mainstreaming and communicating knowledge and raising awareness of the health and social disadvantages of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) among individuals, families and communities and promoting personal health culture.

2. Adopting a voluntary and continuous change approach to ensure that individuals, families, communities, and community leaders adopt zero tolerance of FGM/C.

3. Conducting scientific research, studies and periodic surveys to support the efforts and plans for FGM/C abandonment.

4. Advocating and working for the inclusion of the scientific knowledge of FGM/C damages and repercussions in curricula in the general and higher education stages.

5. Designing effective, clear, smart and comprehensive media messages and employ the mass and electronic social and popular media to reach to the local communities.

6. Employing the various forms and instruments of theatrical, musical and fine arts to address all the society segments and categories.

7. Networking, coordinating and developing the youth efforts and initiatives for FGM/C abandonment.

8. Advocating the issuance of national and state legislations based on the document of the rights in the Constitution of the Sudan, provided such legislations shall promote and develop reproductive health, raise awareness, build capacities, promote the rights of children and prevent practices and customs harmful to the health of children and women, especially the female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) to be considered a crime in parallel with the voluntary action.

9. Activating, developing and disseminating knowledge of state legislations that prevent FGM/C and ensure their enforcement with ongoing review and evaluation.

10. Advocating and working on exchanging experiences between the states of Sudan represented in their governments, social, youth, legislative and media initiatives to follow the successful experiences and develop efforts to abandon FGM/C.

Building the capacities of employees and activists, especially the young people, to ensure development and sustainability.

11. Call upon the State, the private sector, regional and international organizations and donors to adopt this Declaration and support the youth initiatives, mechanisms and plans for the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

12. Follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the outputs of the National Youth Conference for FGM/C Abandonment through a permanent youth mechanism in which the youth of all Sudan states are represented.

The above points represent some of the basic requirements for developing a policy framework to support the youth participation in support of FGM/C abandonment. To achieve this end, the local authorities, national governments, donors, civil society and others must take urgent action to support the youth as an effective catalyst in mobilizing and persuading the society, to abandon FGM/C and address gender-based violence by applying the points of action set out in this Declaration.

As young people participating in the National Youth Conference for FGM/C Abandonment, we commit ourselves to working together and with all stakeholders for community change. We are also committed to monitor the implementation of this Declaration.

In conclusion, we express our thanks and gratitude to the Governor of North Kordofan State, Ahmed Mohamed Haroun and his government represented in the Ministry of Social Affairs and its active subsidiaries such as the State Council for Child Welfare and the General Directorate of Youth and Sports for sponsoring the activities of this Conference and adopting its recommendations and Al-Obeid Declaration and daring initiatives. Thanks and appreciations also extend to the Secretary-General of the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW), Suad Abdul Aal El-Taher for adopting and supporting this youth initiative, as well as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the people and leaders of the State of North Kordofan for hosting the conference and committing to work with the youth to address the pressing community issues for FGM/C Free Society.

We promise them, as we have committed ourselves and our societies, to join efforts for FGM/C Free Sudan.

Peer Education Network Y-PEER

The Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER) is a network of organizations that promote healthy lifestyles for young people to enable them to make responsible decisions. Y-PEER is a comprehensive youth-to-youth initiative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), working through youth and adults in partnership between UNFPA and other UN institutions, the national and international agencies and government institutions as well as young people. The network is constantly expanding in the Arab countries, East Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.



Members of the peer educators' network include thousands of young people working in multiple reproductive health fields and active peer educators and youth trainers active in reproductive health for adolescents and young people. They contribute and benefit from the available materials, tools, training and otherwise programs provided by the peer educators' network.

The Y-PEER Educators Network has started as a pilot platform for peer education in reproductive health and HIV prevention.

Today, a decade later, the areas of the network have become far more than reproductive health and youth rights, but it still remains a major cross-cutting issue.

The peer-educators network provides specialized training and capacity-building programs on reproductive health, the rights, youth relations, community participation and training on using theatrical techniques.

The Y-PEER Network is keen to maintain the quality of its tools, materials and training courses, as well as building relationships with well-known universities and institutes such as John Hopkins, University of Columbia, Yale and other universities.

Y-PEER Network in Sudan:

Started in 2007 through the training of network coordinators at the international level. In January 2008, Peer-To-Peer was launched in Sudan through the creation of a working group representing a number of NGOs, ministries and networks.

Y-PEER Network Has Branches In A Number of States: Khartoum - Red Sea - Kassala - White Nile - Gedaref - Blue Nile - South Kordofan - Western Kordofan - North Kordofan - South Darfur - West Darfur - North Darfur - Central Darfur - Nile River – Northern and Sennar states.

The Network works among the young people in a number of areas. It works in reproductive health to reduce maternal mortality rate by educating on the components of reproductive health such as safe motherhood, family planning and sexually transmitted infections. It also works in gender by raising awareness of the differences between the terms of biological sex and gender, the rights and duties in gender and working to help renounce underage marriage of child-girls, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and empowering young people through their participation in issues of concern to them and to their communities. The Network works to build peace and to strengthen the social fabric between communities and celebrating diversity and multiculturalism and promoting a healthy lifestyle by encouraging young people to keep away from drugs and dangerous behaviors, and encouraging them to exercise, meditate and have hope.

The Network also provides technical support to its member civil society organizations (CSOs) working in the field of youth programs (by providing various training programs to its youth members)

It works to create qualified members who are keen to mobilize resources, training courses, training programs, campaigns ... etc.

The network also trains its members to become peer-to-peer educators. This training constitutes the foundation of the initiative and is carried out by the Network trainers within their associations on the use of peer education techniques in a specific field or issue.

It also provides the National Training of Trainers (TOT) at the national level to create new trainers capable to transfer and use the techniques of participation, peer-education and influence their peers through advanced training of trainers. The training aims to prepare experienced trainers committed to peer education and enabling them to explore ways of attracting and supervising over the youth and follow up their work.

In addition to the previous level, there is a specialized training that provides new techniques such as training in the use of theatrical techniques in peer education, advocacy training, gaining support and training on writing and developing projects.

The Network issued manuals and training materials. It has a manual for the training of trainers, a training manual on project development and management, and a training manual on theater techniques and work standards in peer education and a manual of appeal to decision-makers, a training manual on violence against women and a training manual for trainers in humanitarian situations.

The Network works to support networking among other networks, whereas, networking constitutes a vital part of its work. It allows peer educators and trainers from different associations and entities to communicate and exchange information and useful experiences, besides it facilitates access to available resources and potentials among partners at the local and national levels and supports the integration of development work among the civil society organizations (CSOs).

The Network provides opportunities for local and international participation and works to provide opportunities for participation and representation in local and international forums to exchange and gain experience from its members, worldwide and helps in presenting different programs and experiences relating to development programs. It also supports the representation of Sudanese youth in local and international forums to present challenges and opportunities facing them to be part of the decision-making process in Sudan and outside Sudan.

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Youth Appeal for Enacting Article 141

Male/female youth participants in Khartoum Youth Consultative Seminar Around Al-Obeid Conference's outcomes pushing for the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), held in the period from 26 to 29 November 2017 presented on behalf of the youth of the Sudan, an appeal to the National Assembly to speed up the ratification of Article 141 of Sudan Criminal Act to ban FGM/C.

The youth appeal reads: The female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a partial or complete cutting that leads to female genital mutilation without a medical reason. The practice of FGM/C has persisted in the society as a tradition observed by many people in the Sudan for cultural, social or religious reasons. This practice is perilous to the health of girls and women causing immediate and future damages and increases maternal and child mortality rates and deprives the victims of safe sexual health. To shed light on this issue to address it for good, we build this appeal on Sudan Interim Constitution 2005 and the international laws and conventions ratified or signed by Sudan and the human rights principles concerning the health and welfare of children, youth and mothers.

We also know that the Sudanese law has addressed the FGM/C issue in the articles concerning the serious harm in Sudan Criminal Act thus we aspire for special enactment in the Sudanese Criminal Code to criminalize and punish the perpetrators of FGM/C, and we trust your concern and firm belief in the need to expedite passing Article (141) to realize the concept of public health, and we note that social change is the basis of comprehensive development that requires positive social change regarding the issue of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) led by the society, especially the youth.

The appeal memorandum carried the signatures of the male/female youth who participated in the Youth Consultative Forum In Khartoum in November 2017 and Al-Obeid Declaration November 2016. The youth handed over the appeal for the enactment of Article 141 to Ustaza/ Muthaba Haj Hassan and Ustaza/Sara Abu, the members of the National Assembly for handing over to the Speaker of the National Assembly.

Khartoum University's DSRI Holds National Youth Forum To Combat FGM/C, Underage Marriage

Khartoum

The Sudanese National Youth Forum organized the National Youth Forum to Address the Social Norms, specifically the Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and Underage Marriage of Child-Girls, 27 April 2018 under the leadership and direction of the Development Studies and Research Institute, University of Khartoum, the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW), and the United Nations Partnership for FGM/C Free Sudan (UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO).

The initiative is based on DSRI Sponsored Sudanese National Youth Forum, which brings together a number of Sudanese youth organizations, university students and activists. The new forum on social norms responds to the significant momentum of action to end harmful customs like female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and underage marriage of child-girls in the Sudan. In a regular meeting throughout the year 2017 to discuss the youth priorities and social actions, the Forum decided to organize a conference with more young people.

The meeting wrapped up with a number of recommendations, the most important of which are:

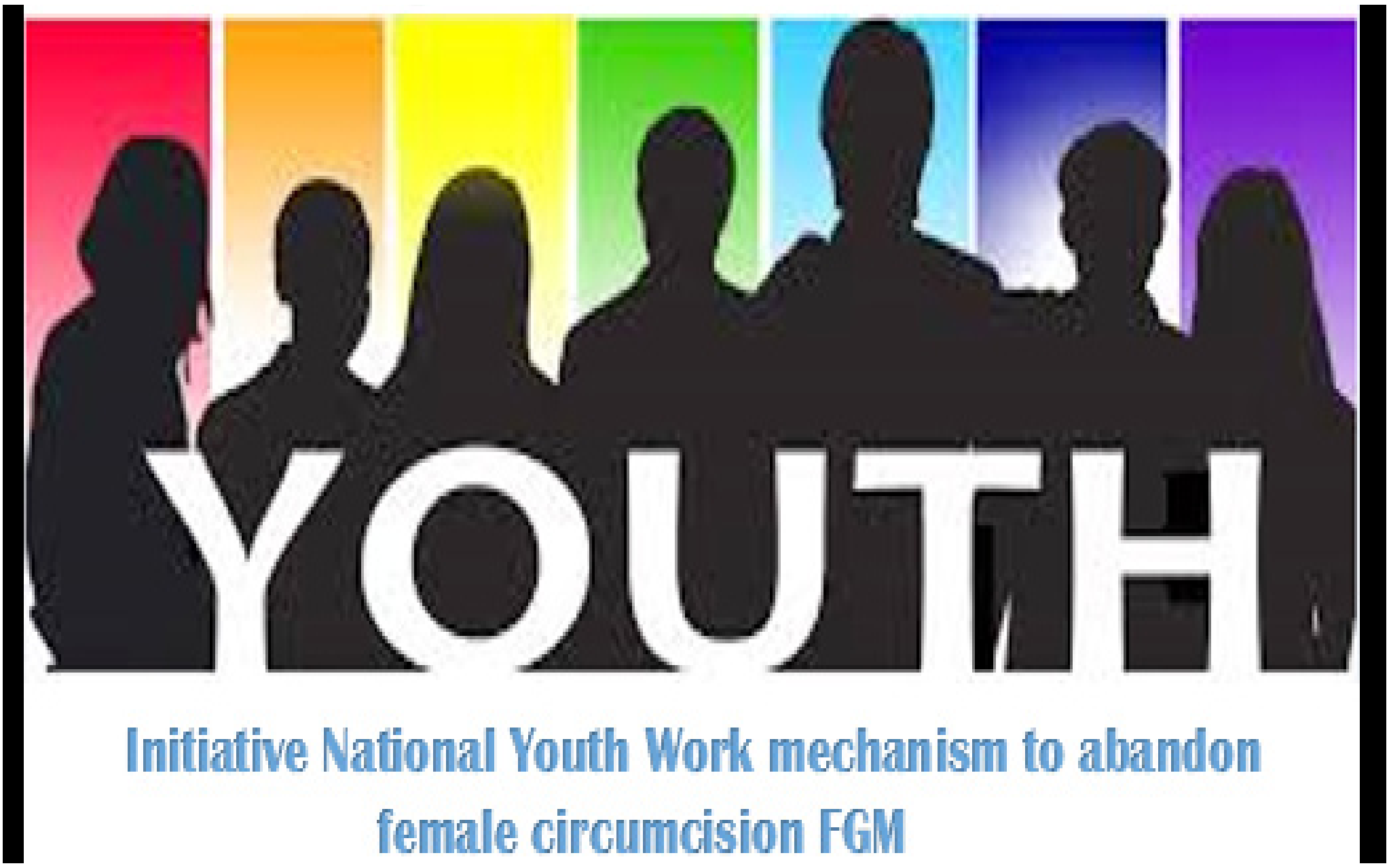
Develop awareness raising programs, encouraging research and studies, and developing the capacities of the cadres fighting FGM/C and underage marriage of child girls, targeting the religious leaders and dignitaries, targeting young midwives in midwifery schools, benefitting from other experiences, pushing for the inclusion of youth participation in drafting laws and policies seeking to reduce the rates of FGM/C and underage marriage of child-girls, training through segmental education (peer education) and the inclusion of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and underage marriage of child-girls in general and higher education curricula.

Analyzing the factors influencing the behavior of communities with regard to FGM / C and Underage Marriage of Child-Girls, reaching out to the local communities through awareness activities using folkloric arts and the local mass media, giving priority to the nomads and working among the community leaders (the civil administration and the people's committees) while targeting the children with awareness programs through off-class activities. Reviewing the media messages of the campaigns fighting FGM/C and Underage Marriage of Child-Girls, coordinating with the youth initiatives combating FGM/C and Underage Marriage of Child-Girls, expanding the circle of partners to include the local executives and establishing a network to link the Forum›s membership in the center and the peripheries, exchanging experiences among the youth in the center and states, using the heritage arts in the awareness activities besides using the local dialects, evaluating the youth participation in previous campaigns and the expansion of the programs of general and high education and introducing sex education in the educational curriculum

The intervention should be based on the extent of the practice in the state, and the participation in youth forums should be limited to young people only, along with continuous follow-up and evaluation of youth participation in anti-FGM/C and child-girls underage marriage activities.

The National Youth Mechanism Action towards Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and underage marriage

The Youth Mechanism was formed during the National Youth Conference to support the abandonment of female genital mutilation / cutting (FGM / C) and underage marriage, in Al-Obeid City, 26-27 November 2016. The conference included a group of youth activists in community issues from different states of the Sudan to sustain the youth role in the progress and development in Sudan.



The Mechanism Overall Objective:

To harness the efforts of young people to push for abandonment of habits harmful to maternal and child health by involving all the society segments to commit to abandon female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) by up to 30% by 2020 in partnership with the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW), the Ministry of Social Security and Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the organizations, institutions and networks participating in the Youth Forum, the Family and Child Protection Unit, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Axes and Activities:

The overall plan dealt with four main axes:
The Media - Social Aid and Advocacy - Legal Aid - Drama and Art
To achieve the overall and phase goals:

Arts & Drama: Used to communicate the idea or the message in addition to writing poetry, training the youth on how to deal with communities and cooperate with the competent authorities and developing methodologies and work manuals to show the manners of work, provide information and dissemination of awareness and debates and lectures.

Legal Aid:

Training the youth in communities to provide support and advice in their communities and establishing a youth council to address the issue of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM / C) and works for abandonment of the practice.

The Media:

The use of social networking sites to push for abandonment of female genital mutilation/ cutting (FGM/C) and partake in all national and state level activities through a mobile exhibition and establish a youth forum for all interested youth in Sudan and in each state and reflect all the activities of the mechanism in all mass media (in print, radio and TV...etc.)

Drama, Fine and Performance Arts:

Include the establishment of an interactive theater and open-air theater and publishing in newspapers (on-air dialogue between young man and woman sitting in a public place), painting, coloring and competitions (drawing + expressive paintings, posters, murals and graphics), filmmaking such as producing specialized movies (drama) or documentaries.

Dance:

It includes folkloric songs with the participation of celebrity dancers (using reflective clothing), forums and poetry contests about the abandonment of female genital mutilation / cutting (FGM / C).

Youth Initiative for Voluntary Support,,

1000 Volunteers Initiative Project

The 1,000 Volunteers Initiative Project is a youth-students voluntary program consisting of 1000 volunteers distributed in Khartoum State's localities and Sudanese universities for humanitarian work in the fields of (children, education, health...etc.).
The Youth Initiative for Voluntary Support aims to spread the culture of voluntary and humanitarian work, reflect the human values in our Sudanese society, provide social services to all needy society segments, promote self-denial to extend social services, whereas 1000 volunteers are ready to render voluntary work in the State of Khartoum and all the states of the Sudan, especially those affected by wars or natural disasters.
It works through the participation of the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) in the voluntary programs in general and the participation of the civil society organizations (CSOs) through the implementation of self service initiatives to the community and contracting with a company to sponsor the initiative.
The Initiative Structure: 1000 volunteers are selected from the Sudanese universities as follows:
Selecting 100 faculties from 10 Sudanese universities to select 10 students from each faculty reaching 100 students from each university and thus the initiative attains the required number of volunteering students i.e. 1000 volunteers who are divided into 20 groups of 50 volunteers each, provided the grouping is based on area or university to facilitate training and follow up.
Target Universities:
The University of Khartoum, Al-Nilain University, Omdurman Islamic University, Rabat National University, the University of Bahri (Khartoum North), Sudan University of Science and Technology, Al-Za'eem Al-Azhari University, and the University of the Holy Quran. The initiative also includes private colleges such as Al-Razi, Al-Wattaniya (National), Eastern Nile, Al-Mashriq and Al-Moghtaribeen (Sudanese Working Abroad))
The Initiative Method of Work: The selection of the universities and faculties is followed by coordination with the faculty-boards and the competent authorities responsible for the establishment of an introductory forum on voluntary work and service through which the initiative is introduced then 10 volunteering students are selected from each faculty and name a supervisor to maintain contact between them and the board. Then the volunteers are registered and each one of them is given a T-shirt carrying the logo of the Initiative and the volunteer's number. Then contact groups are formed for each university, separately under the supervision of the Initiative management. Soon after the completion of the Initiative target number, a program is prepared to launch the initiative under the direct sponsorship of the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) and the participation of all civil society and international organizations, companies and relevant entities and the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC). The 1000 volunteers, ready to work in all volunteer programs, and their data will be handed over to the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) in the inauguration program.
The inception and institutionalization work is carried out through forums in coordination with the faculty administration, then a social forum is held to introduce and present the initiative and select the required number of volunteer-students and register their personal and contact data under the supervision of one of them for intergroup communication and coordination then each member is given tools carrying the logo of the initiative and the name of the entity sponsoring the initiative and the member number 1 - 1000.
The Initiative will be inaugurated upon the completion of the target number of 1000 volunteers who will be trained on the voluntary work in one place (a hall or a club), by inviting all civil society organizations and the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) to announce our full readiness (of all the 1000 volunteers, without borders) in all the fields of voluntary and humanitarian work in general however we specialize in the field of children. Afterwards, we present a proposal to form a voluntary organization to cooperate with all organizations, bodies and institutions affiliated with the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW).

Al - Jazeera Youth Forum

The University of El Gezira, Deanship of Student Affairs, organized in co-ordination with El Gezira State's Child Welfare Council and the UNICEF, El Gezira Youth Forum under the slogan "Towards an Effective Role of Well-Aware Youth" under the patronage and honor of El Gezira University Vice Chancellor, Prof. Mohamed Al-Senoussi, Wednesday and Thursday 20-21 December 2017, in International Conference Hall of El Gezira University's Al - Razi Complex. The Forum was attended by 120 male/female youth and a number of lecturers, students and states representatives of the National Youth Mechanism, media professionals, satellite channels, state and national radio stations, UNICEF representative, Khaled Musa and the El Gezira University Acting Director, Dr. Adel Daif Allah, Minister of Social Affairs and State Governor delegate, Dr. Al-Fatih Hashash and Secretary of State Child Welfare Council, Ustaza/ En'aam Al-Dolaib.



El Gezira Forum is a good opportunity and interacting platform for childhood issues, especially the female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and underage marriage of child-girls in the state. The Forum aims to shed light on the efforts of the state to consolidate the role of the youth in bringing about change and encourage positive social norms and help stop FGM/C and child-girls marriage within FGM/C Free Sudan Project with the support of the British Department for International Development (DFID) in partnership with the Government, the UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Forum activities will contribute to the outcome of the joint program with the United Nations agencies (the social movement with children, adolescents, young people and activists for positive change for abandonment of FGM and child-girls marriage) for the progress of action in the field of childhood to fulfill local, national, regional and international child conventions and agreements. Of childhood and to integrate and highlight the role of El Gezira State in supporting the youth, availing them a wide space to express themselves, exchange experiences on fighting FGM/C and child-girls marriages and raise community awareness towards children's issues and ensuring a healthy childhood through the youth interventions in their communities to confront the challenges and restriction through the exchange of information, skills, experiences, knowledge, best practices and lessons learned from projects to raise the community awareness on the hazards of FGM/C and underage marriage of child-girls and encouraging the organizations and the youth join efforts in fighting FGM/C and marriage of child-girls, mobilize resources and expand the youth network and partnerships.

The event encompassed a number of programs since the arrival of the participating male/female youth on Tuesday, 19 December 2017 including a race between male/female youth Wad Medani Stadium followed by an evening reception. The first day was opened by the representative of the youth, Ahmed Fathi who spoke on behalf of the National Youth Mechanism and urged for rallying around the youth and supporting their issues and activities, saying the youth attending the forum represented a mini-Sudan since all the country states have representatives who are consolidating efforts to combat FGM/C and marriage of underage child-girls.

The Secretary of El Gezira State Child Welfare Council, Ustaza/ En'aam Al-Dolaib welcomed the attendees and stressed the Council's endeavor, through the child support partnerships, to provide service and curb bad habits and practices in the local communities in compliance with the international child conventions.

El Gezira University's Director delegate, Dr. Adel Daif Allah, welcomed the audience and commended the distinguished role of the youth in bringing about change, stressing the concept of the Forum logo "Towards an Effective Role of Well-Aware Youth". He thanked the partners and the UNICEF for supporting the children and declared that the university will support this work so El Gezira State shall be the first state to abandon FGM/C and child-girls marriage.

The Dean of Student Affairs, Dr. Rudwan Ahmad confirmed the support of El Gezira State's government and efforts to combat these negative phenomena, their causes of their survival and the inactivated legal provisions, and endeavors to educate the local communities to stop these practices in the society. He urged the youth to lead for change, vowing that they will continue to support these activities and forums with relevant stakeholders for healthy communities, noting that admitting the disease is the start of treatment.

The UNICEF representative , Ustaz/ Khaled Mousa pledged the UNICEF support to the youth and children's issues through a strategic partnership, saying "we hope that El Gezira will be the first state in fighting FGM/C and marriage of child-girls, citing a number of youth initiatives, Saleema Campaign, Al-Moada and Al-Rahma initiatives which help reduce this phenomenon besides such forums qualify the youth for social change.

At the end of the opening session, El Gezira State Governor delegate, the Minister of Social Affairs Dr. El-Fateh Hashash, who expressed the pleasure of the State government with this participatory event between the government and the partners, the British Development Program, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Ministry of Health and the UNICEF which promote the values however changing the social norms to the better is the most tough job, thus this change needs the active participation of the entire society, especially the youth who top the peak of the population pyramid so we must build their capacities and make use of this advantage in raising awareness of the local communities in all the country states and localities, especially the state of El Gezira and its various localities. He stressed that El Gezira State's government, the State Child Welfare Council and the State's Ministry Education and Ministry of Social Affairs are fully prepared to implement all the outcomes and recommendations of this Youth Forum, enforce the relevant legislations and promote the institutional pivotal role in addition to the technical, economic and social pivots. He concluded by saying El Gezira State government will work with the youth and provide them with all the necessary support.

Strategic Expert, Dr. Samira Amin shed light on the social norms and customs how to consecrate them.

Saleema and the New Social Custom

Dr. Samira Amin said that the social change effected by Saleema Initiative through the establishment of a good tradition creating new customary expectations and creating preferential values in formulating new text of the new tradition (Saleema, clean and balanced). She said the use of the new text as a traditional alternative to the theory of the social change and the visual expectations (visions) of the women who give birth to girls who will be Saleemat, sound and healthy so the change will be by publicly celebrating Saleema and signing the Taga (roll of cloth) and communication through private and public dialogues and the social marketing so Saleema transforms to a healthy social movement through the facilitators in local communities, the religious men, the youth activists and Saleema ambassadors and the most important values and principles held by an ambassador are the commitment, patience and shedding light on the experiences and raising the voices that have not been heard before.

The youth sectors of Saleema forums in the schools, universities and newspapers for Saleema is actually a social movement led by the youth and has become a source of pride now.

Some samples of youth initiatives in El Gezira State were presented like Mobadrat Shari'e Al-Hawadith (Accidents Road Initiative) in Medani under the slogan: "So the eyes of our children, will never taste defeat" and Hagak Alina Ya Medani (Trying To Pay You Back O'Medani) which is concerned with health and environment. The experiences of young facilitators in promoting positive social norms were presented by a number of youth facilitators of Saleema Initiative for Communication from the two localities of Eastern El Gezira and Umm Al-Qura who explained their community roles and Saleema Initiative in the different communities and the impact left by Saleema in those communities which declared renouncing FGM/C and child-girls marriage. The stressed that they had worked within homogeneous and inhomogeneous groups including male/female youth, fathers, mothers, grandmothers, religious men and local leaders.

The themes of the conference were highlighted from jurisprudential, legal, health, social, cultural and media perspectives.

The jurisprudential perspective was presented by Religious Scholar/ Mohammed Hashim Al Hakim, the legal perspective by Judge/ Badawi Awad Al Haj whilst the health aspect was presented by Dr. Mohammed Al-Zain Mohammed.

The representative of the National Council for Child Welfare, Hussein Awad gave an account of the achievements towards FGM/C Free Sudan Project throughout the period from 2014 to 2017. He explained the efforts of the activists, the government officials, the society, the UN agencies and the international organizations towards FGM/C abandonment.

Dr. Samira Mohammed Abdullah Al-Tayeb presented the paper on the social and cultural factors behind FGM/C survival, while the last paper was presented by Al-Shafa Mohammed Abdul Qadir, the media professional in El Gezira Al-Khadhra (the Green El Gezira) on the role of the media toward FGM/C abandonment, saying: "The media has a very important role in changing societies, including El Gezira society and the entire Sudan in general, which is a society based on customs and traditions, so it needs the media to guide it to become a healthy society, with the participation of the mass media and the male/female media professionals in such forums" as the most important achievement of this Forum is addressing the vital youth segment which is responsible for bringing about change and we count on them and their active participation to achieve the full abandonment of FGM/C. She said that El Gezira University can achieve a breakthrough in the local communities and transform them into well-aware and healthy communities.

Finally, El Gezira University Vice Chancellor, Prof. Mohamed Al-Sanoussi underlined the importance of working on the social norms and vowed that the University will adopt such gatherings, stressing: "We in El Gezira University are concerned with all the issues of childhood and we have the Initiative of (Motherhood and Childhood), which has now developed in a research center and we have a close relationship with the Child Welfare Council in the State of El Gezira as we share a common concern and we, in this important event, support all those interested in the issues of childhood to work for the abandonment of this deep-rooted practice, and there are many promising indication that we are on the way to get rid of it through concensus and practical cooperation with the Child Welfare Council in El Gezira State for healthy girls (Saleemat).



Youth Consultative Forum on Outcomes of Al-Obeid Conference 2016

Towards A Framework For A Youth Strategic Plan For Abandonment Of Harmful Traditional Practices





The National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports organized, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Youth Consultative Forum on Outcomes of Al-Obeid Conference 2016 at the Police House in Buri, 27-29 November 2017. Held Under the theme: "Towards A Framework For A Youth Strategic Plan For Abandonment Of Harmful Traditional Practices," the Forum attended by representatives of Sudan 18 states. The Forum was a continuation of the first youth conference held in Al-Obeid, the capital city of North Kordofan State, to push for the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) with the participation of 100 young people aged 18 to 34 from the 18 states of Sudan, 26-27 November 2016, in Al-Obeid, North Kordofan State.

The Forum aimed to bring together Sudanese youth activists to develop their decision-making skills, share their experiences, encourage participation and mobilization of local communities, and help them abandon FGM / C in Sudan.

NCCW Social Protection Secretary, Ustaza/ Amira Azhari opened the Forum and welcomed the distinguished guests and youth participants, hailing the presence of " the youth of today, the men of tomorrow, who will bring about change to end the harmful practices in the society.

The youth›s speech was presented by Ustaz/Hozaifa Al-Fil who welcomed the guests, saying that one of the important recommendations of the youth is to hold the forum annually, forming mechanisms in all the states of Sudan and the execution of the recommendations of the previous conference. He indicated that they as young people should stop the harmful habits in the society. He concluded by expressing his pleasure at his second participation in the Youth Forum.

UNFPA Deputy County Director, Ustaz/ Ahmed Ould El-Mogtaiby, also addressed the conference and welcomed the audience. He said that the FGM/C is widespread worldwide, particularly in the peripheral communities due to traditions and beliefs. He stressed that the UNFPA and partners support the efforts made at the national level, especially as the segment of the youth has joined efforts to fight this deeply rooted habit. He noted that the youth represent 62% of the population with unique capabilities to overcome challenges in fighting such customs and beliefs.

He underlined the importance of investment in the youth and cited important youth activities taking place in different parts of Sudan, such as the Second Youth Forum for renouncing female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), which has disastrous consequences on the victims and society as well. He cited Al-Obeid youth conference which was followed by the implementation of its outputs at the Youth Forum in Khartoum, saying "we are participating in this Forum to pinpoint important strategic objectives for the abandonment of FGM/C.

A documentary film of Al-Obeid Youth Conference 2016 was screened showing a summary of the Conference, which included the women›s initiative for renouncing FGM/C and the signing of Al-Taga (roll of cloth) and wound up with the youth announcement of zero tolerance of FGM/C.

NCCW General Secretary, Ustaza/ Su'aad Abdul Aal El-Taher, addressed the Forum saying "this is the second time to hold the Youth Forum and I salute this beautiful presentation you made in Al-Obeid city for you are the people of resolve and stamina who will bring about change and we sought your assistance in this forum because you are concerned with issues of the family and childhood, especially as you are our real investment for just a few years separate you from the segment of children who represent half the population of Sudan. I hope that your program will culminate with a robust national strategy, and our duty towards you is to train you to gain skills.

She called on all partners to adopt this great work of the youth from all over Sudan, and thanked the youth, the men and women of tomorrow who are mobilizing and raising awareness of society.

She called on all partners to adopt this great work for young people from all over Sudan, and thanked the young people because they are the men and women of tomorrow who are mobilizing and raising awareness of society.

She cited the initiative led by the Ministry of Social Security and Development for reducing maternal mortality rate in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, under the direct supervision of the President of the Republic. She said "we are now in a race against time to catch up with the nations in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs)."

She said they were now on the thresholds of developing the Child National Strategic Plan 2018-2030 and celebrating the NCCW silver jubilee and its sixth meeting, saying: "we are also endeavoring to make 2018 the year of childhood in Sudan which is the last year of the national strategy for renouncing FGM/C. Finally, she thanked the youth on this forum and the initiative of 1000 male/female youth volunteers and urged them to talk about this initiative in the various Sudanese universities.

At the end of the opening session, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr. Abdul Karim Musa Abdul Karim expressed said they in the Ministry of Youth and Sports give the priorities to the youth and then to the sports and hailed the outcomes of Al-Obeid Conference.

He described Al-Obeid Conference as another platform for cooperation among the youth and for sending messages to build the collective thought. The Minister stressed that the youth can overcome great challenges, such as the FGM/C issue which is an accumulative harmful custom dating back to ancient times and it cannot be filtered thus it should be annihilated for good and the men should have an enlightened role in addressing this phenomenon and not to let the women carry the responsibility alone and the Parliament should assume big responsibility for fighting these harmful habit. He confirmed that the Ministry of Youth and Sports is a partner with the NCCW in fighting this habit, and stressed that the First Vice President and Prime Minister, Gen. Bakri Hassan Saleh is concerned with this issue which reflects the state›s concern with the segment of children.

FGM/C Free Sudan Project

Ustaza / Mawaheb Mohammed Ahmed shed light on this project, which is part of the large strategy for Sudan free from FGM/C funded by the British Department for International Development (DFID). This strategy targets women and girls within a global program targeting 17 countries to end FGM/C. Surveys showed that Sudan and Somalia are practicing the worst types of FGM/C. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded Sudan to wipe out this phenomenon in 10 years .

Dr. Amira Azhari cited the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) coordinative role between the relevant bodies, noting that the National NCCW and partners formed joint mechanisms in the eighteen states of Sudan. She touched on the laws criminalizing and punishing on FGM/C which are in full fledge in the states of Gedaref - Red Sea - South Darfur and Southern Kordofan, however an assessment study of these state was unfortunately disappointing due to the lack of awareness of these laws and legislations.

Advocacy and Attraction of Support:

Ustaza/ Mothaba Haj Hassan, the Deputy Chairwoman of Sudanese Women Parliamentarians cited a partnership between the National Assembly and the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW). She proposed to the youth to divide themselves into three groups for raising the community awareness, to include: the group of the Holly Book and Sunnah, the Islamic History Group and the Hadith Scholars Group to compile facts and convince the clergy of FGM/C danger. She also encouraged the youth to benefit by the National Assembly›s experiences in awareness campaigns.

She cited the mechanisms of work that include the schools, sports clubs, mosques' imams, civil administrations, women in general, media professionals, midwives, confirming that the National Assembly is going to amend Article 141 of Sudan Criminal Code.

Ustaza/ Sara Makki Abu, a member of the Sudanese Women Parliamentarians Caucus narrated some experiences of FGM/C in some states in the past and cited the dangers and damages this custom inflicts on victims since the verge of maturity, during pregnancy and at giving birth not to mention the associating psychological, social and economic impacts. She also touched on Article 13 which was deleted from the Child Act.

Dialogue with Decision Makers:

Dr. Hashim Al-Hakim talked about circumcision of the Sunnah and spoke of anatomy of the female reproductive organ, stressing that science and religion are not separated from one another and urged the youth to study the previous experiences of their predecessors in this field since the role of the youth is to communicate the idea to the society and convince the people by any means because the communities do not accept readymade solutions therefore the youth should seek the assistance of the people of experience.

Evolution of FGM/C Abandonment

Dr. Samira Amin talked about evolution of renouncing FGM/C since the 1920s through cultural and popular tales, but the practice survived due to the pressure of grandmothers who used to convince the mothers and fathers that the circumcision helps control the lust and maintain chastity, cleanliness or for the pleasure of men or for health reasons. She explained the difference between communication and reaching out and cited the types of messages used fighting this habit through the community efforts or through the law and listed the four states that have FGM/C combating legislations which are the states of Gedaref - Red Sea - South Darfur - South Kordofan), or through surveys, the mass media and positive messages to end FGM/C.

She also talked about the targeted approach to change negative behaviors, including the culture of positive messages, which led to emergence of Saleema Initiative and its positive messages to bring about change.

Using Social Media

Ustaz / Walid talked about the means of social media describing them as networks that can be used to deliver a certain type of messages to the largest number of participants on Facebook, WhatsUp, Instigram..etc to raise awareness, advocate, promote or support a cause or to influence the public opinion

The Youth Role in Achieving FGM/C, Underage Marriage Free Society:

Dr. Ali Eidam of the Developmental Studies Center, the University of Khartoum talked about his experience when he oversaw a six-month program carried out by young people to reduce the phenomenon of underage marriage of child-girls and FGM/C with the participation of a large number of organizations to consolidate the role of the youth to attain a society free of these two phenomena, noting that the youth are the makers of the future, so they should be integrated into the different projects for tangible influence.

The Importance of the Role of the Youth:

The Deputy Secretary-General for States Affairs, Dr. Fatah Al-Rahman Babikir underlined the great importance of the role of the youth in the societies, therefore the youth should lead and get involved in plans and manage activities, saying accordingly the educational discourse should be changed besides the capacity building and raising awareness of the community issues.

He noted that the FGM/C problem stems of customs and traditions deeply rooted in our society so the youth can help solve the problem using fresh and renewed ideas and innovation, thus they should participate in committees and other entities to make their voice heard, and link the government and the civil society organizations (CSOs) to achieve the desired goal through networking and coordination with the other actors.

He said through this forum we will come up with a number of plans that will be transferred to the states through the secretaries of the councils and the youth and stressed the importance of the cultural development of the youth, intertwining and networking, saying the youth have very significant role in the development in general. He urged for benefitting from the previous conferences and plan for a new conference and developing an action plan. He called for the participation of the youth in the existing entities in the councils like the Higher Committee for Combating FGM/C and Underage Marriage so their voice can be heard and have the right to vote and take decisions.

The secretaries of the councils of South Kordofan, Kassala, the Red Sea, El Gezira and the River Nile highlighted their experiences and unanimously underlined the importance of the role of the youth and their mechanism, saying they appreciate the youth›s ability and called for full coordination with the youth in fighting FGM/C confirming the youth participation in all activities and mechanisms, noting that some societies have already announced FGM/C and underage marriage abandonment. Some proposals were put forward to the youth like developing informational programs to be embraced by the mass media to influence the public opinion, besides networking and coordination. He pledged that the Forum outputs will be adopted, noting that all the youth attendees will be members of the Higher Committee for Fighting FGM/C and Marriage of Underage Child-Girls and asked the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) to write an official letter to address the Supreme Committee of the Council regarding the youth. He stressed the importance of the youth capacity building programs. The attendees unanimously agreed on the great role of the youth in fighting the bad habits in the communities, therefore, they must be involved in decision-making processes and strategies. They stressed the importance of coordination, networking and intertwining and using tribal customs and traditions to bring about change.

(Under the slogan (The Youth Leading Change





The State Council for Child Welfare in the State of Kassala organized, in coordination with the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, the University of Kassala and in cooperation with the UNICEF Sudan, the Fifth Youth Forum for Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), 2-4 April 2018 under the slogan 'the Youth Leading Change' in Amir Osman Digna Hall, under the patronage of the Governor of Kassala State, Ustaz Adam Gama'a Adam and the supervision of Kassala State Minister of Social Affairs, Ustaza/ Aisha Adam Eissa, Minister of Higher Council for Youth and Sports, Ustaz/ Atef Awadh and Secretary of the Kassala State Council for Child Welfare, Ustaza/ Buthaina Okasha in the presence of the representative of the Director of the University of Kassala, Faculty of Medicine Dean, Dr. Awadia Khojaly and the representatives of the UNICEF Sudan, Ustaz/ Abu Obeida Al-Siddig, Kassala State Youth Mechanism, Ustaz/ Eissa Mohammed Ali, Child Parliament, Ustaz/ Imtnan Najmu Eddin and 150 male/ female youth participants from all the states of the Sudan.

Kassala Youth Forum is an opportunity and an interactive platform for all those interested in childhood issues, especially the issue of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in the state of Kassala.

The Kassala Youth Forum aims to shed light on and reflect the state›s efforts to deepen the role of the youth in bringing about the desired change to promote positive social norms on FGM/C within FGM/C Free Sudan Program with the support of the British Aid for International Development in partnership with Sudan government, the UNICEF Sudan, the UNFPA Sudan and WHO Sudan.

The Forum activities contribute to the achievement of the results of the joint program with United Nations agencies (the social movement with the children, juveniles and young people activists for positive change for FGM/C abandonment) to push forward the progress of work in the field of childhood in fulfillment of local, national, regional and international conventions and charters on childhood.

It aims to integrate and highlight the role of Kassala State in the Program of FGM/C Free Sudan as a social movement with children, juvenile and youth activists for positive change to abandon FGM/C, achieve community awareness towards the childhood issues and to ensure physically, mentally and socially healthy childhood by providing a platform and a wide space to support the youth to bring about the positive change and to express themselves, learn from each other about abandoning FGM/C to crystallize visions for future interventions in their respective communities and to clarify the challenges and address the constraints through the exchange of information, expertise, knowledge, skills, best practices and lessons learned from the projects to increase community awareness on FGM/C related issues and provide the forum members with the knowledge and skills necessary to clarify the arguments for abandoning FGM/C and encouraging member organizations to engage in FGM/C combat actions and emphasizing resources mobilization and expansion of the youth network and partnerships.

The Forum included a number of programs based on the previous youth gatherings carried out within the framework of the FGM/C Free Sudan Project (the outputs of the National Youth Conference for FGM/C Abandonment in Al-Obeid city in November 2016 and the recommendations of the Khartoum Youth Forum in February 2017, Khartoum Consultative Forum in November 2017 in addition to the El Gezira Youth Forum in December 2017).

The three-day Fifth Youth Conference aimed to continue the efforts and activities that took place through several programs and projects. It included a number of discussion sessions, whereas Ustaza/ Elham Osman presented a paper on social norms prepared by Dr. Samira Amin. The paper identified the social norms and their components and axes related to the issue of FGM/C, and the religious axis presented by Sheikh/ Tarek Al-Imam and the health axis presented by Dr. Mohamed Al-Zain, anatomy specialist at the University of Africa and the legal side presented by Ustaza/ Khairiya Ahmed and the media aspect presented by Ustaz/ Omer Osman and the social cultural aspect presented by Ustaza/ Buthaina Okasha, Secretary of the Kassala State Child Welfare Council, and a number of youth experiences on how to activate the role of the youth to promote the positive social norms, in addition to art exhibitions and handicrafts including a number of participants (Riera Organization with an exhibition of Saleema Initiative Clothes and an exhibition of Monazamat Shabab Li Bina'a Al-Salam Wa Al-Tanmiya (Youth for Building Peace and Development Organization)), documentaries and photographs of the previous events and presentations to allow the youth to present their experiences.

At the opening session, Ustaza/ Buthaina Okasha, Kassala State Child Welfare Council Secretary, welcomed the audience and thanked the various institutions, organizations, bodies and ministries in Kassala State, the UNICEF Sudan, the UNFPA Sudan, the National Child Welfare Council, Kassala University, the National Youth Mechanism and Youth for Building Peace and Development. She said the main objective of the three days conference is to raise the banner of high advocacy by the youth to lead the change within their communities. She said "we in Eastern Sudan are embarrassed by some terms but behind these terms there is a large issue that threatens the lives of child-girls and women and they need to stance and a partnership for FGM/C abandonment". She described the childhood issues as large, extending and intersecting on all the different walks of life and our presence within this conference is advocating the abandonment of these child targeting harmful practices and called on the youth to benefit from the youth diversity within the forum to reflect their ideas and experiences and work on understanding the mechanisms of change to bring about change within their communities.

The National Youth Mechanism Advocacy

Ustaz/ Essa Mohamed Ali, the representative of the National Youth Mechanism and Kassala State Youth Coordinator, presented the Mechanism speech and welcomed the audience and the members of the National Youth Mechanism from the various states of the Sudan and the participants from all localities of Kassala State and the participating eastern states (the Red Sea and El Gedaref). Quoting The Holy Prophet (PBUH) Saying: «I was supported by the youth when the old let me down,» Eissa emphasized the Forum slogan "the Youth Leading Change". He also talked about the National Youth Mechanism, which was formed in 2016 at the Al-Obeid Conference to include all the states of the Sudan to spread awareness and advocate for the FGM/C abandonment, saying it is striving to achieve the overall goal of reaching 25% of the young who adopt and are committed to push for the total FGM/C abandonment by the end of 2020.

Eissa asked all relevant parties to fully cooperate with the youth mechanism and support the youth in the process of FGM/C abandonment and asked the Child Welfare Councils in the various states of the Sudan and the male/female participants and the relevant parties partaking in this forum to facilitate the work of the Youth Mechanism to achieve the desired goal.

The UNICEF Commitment to Children›s Issues

The representative of UNICEF Sudan, Ustaz/ Abu Obeida Al-Siddig, welcomed the participants and praised the distinguished forum and spoke about the commitment of the UNICEF to the issues of childhood, especially, the Childhood Development Program which leads the change for FGM/C abandonment and underage marriage of child girls. He stressed that there are several initiatives in the Sudan such as the national organizations and the civil society organizations working to reduce these phenomena and stressed the importance of youth assuming the leadership for change and work to end these habits in their communities, but "we need more efforts and wider room for the youth to hear their voice and such forums highlight the exerted efforts and emphasize that the youth are able to bring about the desired change.

Children›s Parliament "Today›s children Are the Leaders of Tomorrow":

Child-girl, Imtinan Najmu Eddin, the Speaker of the Kassala State's Child Parliament and the Deputy Speaker of the National Child Parliament, welcomed the large youth audience at the 5th Youth Forum and paid a special tribute to the sponsor of the forum and the Governor of Kassala State, Ustaz/ Adam Gama'a. She also paid special tribute to mothers, fathers and teachers, saying they are the carriers of light torches and greeted the National Child Welfare Council (NCCW), which seeks with the competent authorities to achieve the goals of the sustainable development of the child and called for the child protection and welfare and stressed the commitment of the Sudan towards the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, saying the attention to the children should top the priorities for the achievement the future development of our promising Sudan because the children represent more than 50% of its population thus they are half of the present and all the future therefore their good preparation means a promising future for the youth and the country altogether. She concluded her speech saying: "We are the children of today and the youth of tomorrow and the leaders of the future and our motto is always "give us the possible and we will give you the impossible.""

The University of Kassala and Social Responsibility:

The representative of the University of Kassala Dr. Awadhiya Khojali, said she is wearing three hats. Speaking wth the first hat, which is a speech on behalf of the Director of the University of Kassal, she recounted the academic roles of the university, which is now participating with the two faculties of (Community, Medicine and Health Sciences). She also spoke as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and emphasized the role of the Faculty of Medicine in fighting the harmful customs, saying it has a large number of researches FGM/C. She said the faculty launched several awareness raising campaigns in various communities of Kassala and "we hope to achieve the goal which we and the entire world calling for, which is the complete FGM/C abandonment by 2030 as defined by the United Nations.

She said "I am using the third hat to take in my capacity as Obstetrician and Gynecologist who encounters so many problems and complications caused by FGM/C amounting to the death of mothers and babies. She said the FGM/C abandonment requires accountability and enactment of effective legislations and laws that criminalize the FGM/C practicing. Finally, she stressed that the University has a role and is ready to intervene in children›s issues in terms of its scientific, research and social role. She called for concerted efforts to issue deterrent laws for the perpetrators of this crime.

The National Child Welfare Council Supports Youth Initiatives:



Fatah Al-Rahman Mohammed Babeker, the representative of the Secretary General of the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW), stressed the importance of the political and societal support for such gatherings, campaigns and initiatives related to the role of women and children. He talked about Saleema Campaign and focused on the NCCW's role and the role of protective laws, noting that the law is now on the parliamentary platform and women parliamentarians are accelerating its enactment. He described the youth as the appropriate category to bring about change, indicating that they need constant awareness, knowledge and experience to support their communities in giving up FGM/C. He asserted that the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) encourages initiatives to protect children and raise awareness among communities to abandon FGM/C and child-girls underage marriage because the young are the leaders of the future and change.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Political and Societal Support

Kassala State Minister of Social Affairs and State Governor representative, Dr. Aisha Adam emphasized the importance of networking, coordination and concerted efforts to combat these phenomena, saying a lot of societal phenomena need change, however the FGM/C issue needs more campaigns and awareness programs, forums and programs that help abandon FGM/C. She said the enactment of laws in some states has had a positive impact on moving the other states to have initiatives to draft and enact national laws that criminalize the practice of FGM/C process in addition to the implementation of the National Strategic Childhood Plan 2008-2018. She said the issue is till being addressed with embarrassment in Kassala State and vowed that the Kassala State government will support the youth and that the society will reap the fruits of your work soon. She cited ignorance as a main reason for the persistence of FGM/C and child girls underage marriage and confirmed in the importance of partnerships to provide support to the community of Kassala to give up the harmful habits, especially the female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

Youth Change Mechanisms

Kassala State's Minister of Youth and Sports, Atef Awad stressed the role of the youth and described the youth efforts and their leadership as a social responsibility and that the youth leadership requires a degree of specialization and called for the importance of training and rehabilitation and polishing the skills and talents of the youth to impact the issues of childhood and bring about the positive change. He said the youth have the ability to bring about change and they are more capable of establishing mechanisms of change in their communities and focused on understanding the needs of the youth to help them to bring about the social change and employ their in transforming their communities into healthy communities and promoting the initiative to win the battle of change pursuant to the slogan of "the Youth Leading Change". He said: "We, as a government, civil society organizations and international organizations must work on developing the spirit of collective action among the youth based on the concept of the collective work and leading it towards the horizons and launch virtuous competitions of creativity and innovation through training to promote the skills and develop the creative energies among the youth in all fields to be adopted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Ustaz/ Atef Awad praised the role of the UNICEF Sudan on its increasing societal efforts in all aspects, especially the issues of childhood. He concluded by reiterating the need for the 'Youth Leading Program' in the State of Kassala for its importance to develop the youth and support them to become leaders capable to bring about change.

At the end of the Forum, the state youth mechanism was formed for the abandonment of the female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in the three eastern states (Kassala, Gedaref and Red Sea). The secretaries of the three states' childhood councils announced the formation of the state youth mechanisms in their respective states and vowed to facilitate the youth action for the abandonment of harmful practices in their communities.

The youth mechanism aims to harness the youth efforts for the abandonment of habits harmful to maternal and child health by involving all the society segments and get them committed to abandon FGM/C and cut the practice to 30% by 2020.

Eight communities have declared the total abandonment of the female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in the communities of Qulsa West and East, Amara East and West, the communities of Kertaiai, Awadh, Mukali and Al Shajarab. All these communities declared FGM/C abandonment in their communities in the presence of community representatives and stressed their support so the other communities in the state of Kassala shall abandon FGM/C, and raise the motto of Saleema "Every Girl Is Born Saleema, Let Every Girl Grow Saleema" so the State of Kassala will be FGM/C free.

An information panel supporting the abandonment of the female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) process was designed with the full support of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and the State Child Welfare Council to the Youth Mechanism in support of FGM/C abandonment.