



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

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# CENTRE FOR AFRICAN JUSTICE

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Photo Credit: Siphwe Sibeko



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## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

One of the biggest disparities in human history is that of gender. Men have constantly exerted power over women and the practice of FGM is a physical manifestation of generations of misogyny.



Joshua Christodoulou





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# FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION: HOW THE CRIES OF WOMEN ARE SHAKING THE WORLD

Photo credit: Friedrich Stark/Alamy

AN ARTICLE BY JOSHUA  
CHRISTODOULOU



*Because I didn't know anything about excision, I was feeling happy inside. Everyone was waiting for their turn. I could hear the screams of the ones who went in before me. I was just there, frozen. I was confused – run away or stay? I couldn't run away because it would mean dishonour for my family. When my turn came, it was atrocious. The second excision is always done secretly. Its very common but little talked about. When I was 15, my grandmother decided to finish the work she had started because she thought the first excision was badly done. I almost died because they cut into a vein. I had massive bleeding, lost consciousness and woke up in hospital. – Teliwel Diallo*

[1] 'The brave woman fighting against female genital mutilation' <[www.unrefugees.org.au/our-stories/the-woman-fighting-female-genital-mutilation/](http://www.unrefugees.org.au/our-stories/the-woman-fighting-female-genital-mutilation/)> accessed 23 January 2020

# FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION: HOW THE CRIES OF WOMEN ARE SHAKING THE WORLD



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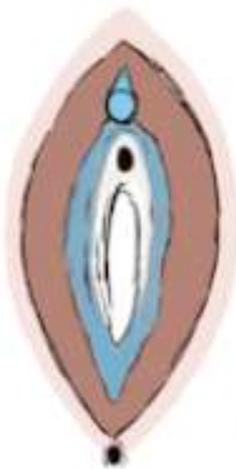
AN ARTICLE BY JOSHUA  
CHRISTODOULOU

## Types of FGM

■ Parts removed + Stiches



TYPE 1



TYPE 2

Photo credit: Medscape



At 8 years old, Teliwel Diallo had joined 200 million other women in the malpractice of female genital mutilation (FGM). A practice rife throughout Africa but can still be found on every continent throughout the world. Deeply rooted in cultural and societal norms, it is viewed as a rite of passage into adulthood and is used (among other reason) as method of safeguarding virginity before marriage. Most frequently occurring in Somalia, Guinea, Mali and Djibouti, this horrific procedure rears its head in four different forms.

Type 1 (clitoridectomy) is the partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce. Type 2 (excision) is a continuation of type 1 but includes the partial removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora. Type 3 (infibulation) is the most extreme and intruding violation of them all. This entails the narrowing of the vaginal orifice with the creation of a covering seal by cutting and appositioning the labia minora and/or the labia majora. If infibulation has occurred and the victim of the procedure needs to under events that would cause hey to be deinfibulated (such as childbirth) then a re-infibulation procedure would occur. Finally type 4 includes all other harmful procedure to female genitalia for non-medical purposes.

These procedures have no known health benefits and lead to negative effects both in the long and short term. And some of the multiple health problems include: difficulties in urinating and menstruating, psychological problems, increased risk of HIV and in worst case scenarios, even death.

Coupled with the fact that these procedures take place in unsanitized areas, without the proper

[2] 'Africa' <[www.28toomany.org/continent/africa/](http://www.28toomany.org/continent/africa/)> accessed 23 January 2020

[3] World Health Organisation, WHO guidelines on the management of health complications from female genital mutilation (WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data 2016) page 1

[4] 'Africa' <[www.28toomany.org/continent/africa/](http://www.28toomany.org/continent/africa/)> accessed 23 January 2020

[5] World Health Organisation, WHO guidelines on the management of health complications from female genital mutilation (WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data 2016) page 1 - 4

[6] 'What is FGM?' <[www.28toomany.org/what-is-fgm/](http://www.28toomany.org/what-is-fgm/)> accessed 23 January 2020

# FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION: HOW THE CRIES OF WOMEN ARE SHAKING THE WORLD



Centre for African Justice,  
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AN ARTICLE BY JOSHUA  
CHRISTODOULOU

## Types of FGM

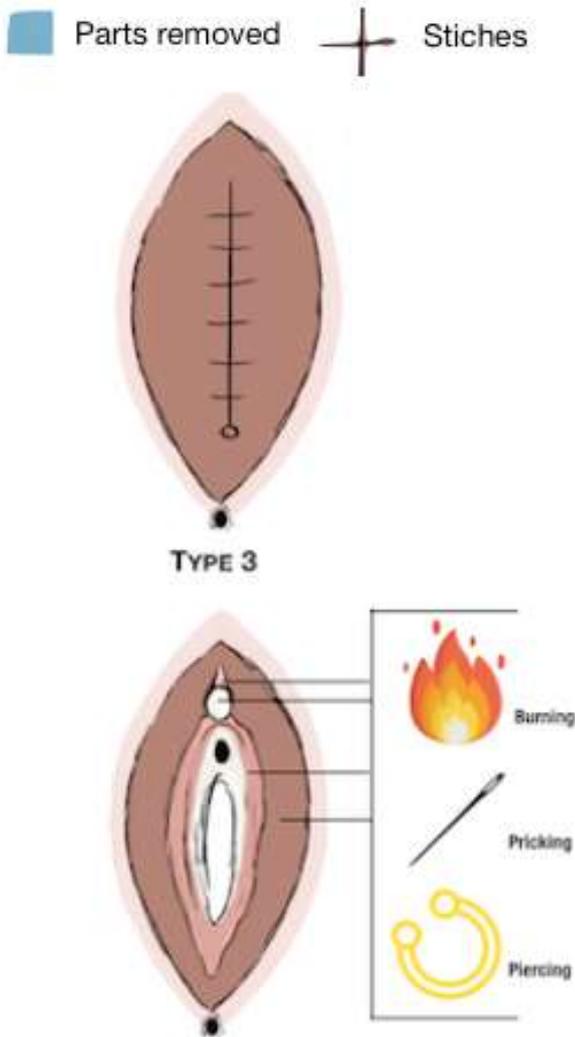


Photo credit: Medscape



medical equipment, the risk of infection is a main contributor to further health complications.

This epidemic has sparked major concern globally and given rise to legislation on a global scale. The UN condemns this practise and has explicitly stated so in not only a resolution calling on the global ban of FGM but also in the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The African Union has also put in efforts when by establishing the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Humans and Peoples right. Contained within is the promotion of the end of FGM. National legislation has also evolved. In Kenya, the adoption of The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act of 2011, criminalises the conduct of FGM. However, even through the adoption and global prohibition of this practise, it is still widespread with an estimated 4.1 million girls at risk of undergoing some form of FGM in 2020 alone.

Even though the war against FGM is ongoing and seems to be an uphill battle, this does not mean we do not have our valiant soldiers and survivors fighting for the end of this inhumane practice. Various intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisation and individual survivors and companies are all doing their part to bring about change.

28toomany is a charity established in England whose main goal is aimed at providing information on the subject. They have a variety of different regional statistics as well as in depth country profiles of all the countries in Africa (of which there are 28) providing information such as the percentage of women subjected to this practice and in which provinces of each country is worst

[7] Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (adopted 18 December 1979, entered into force 3 September 1981) 1249 UNTS 13 (CEDAW)

[8] Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (adopted 18 December 1979, entered into force 3 September 1981) 1249 UNTS 13 (CEDAW) art 2(f)

[9] Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (adopted 13 September 2000, entered into force 25 November 2005) OAU 630 (Maputo Protocol) art 5.

[10] [1] 'International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Mutilation, 6 February' <[www.un.org/en/observances/female-genital-mutilation-day](http://www.un.org/en/observances/female-genital-mutilation-day)> accessed 23 January 2020.

# FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION: HOW THE CRIES OF WOMEN ARE SHAKING THE WORLD



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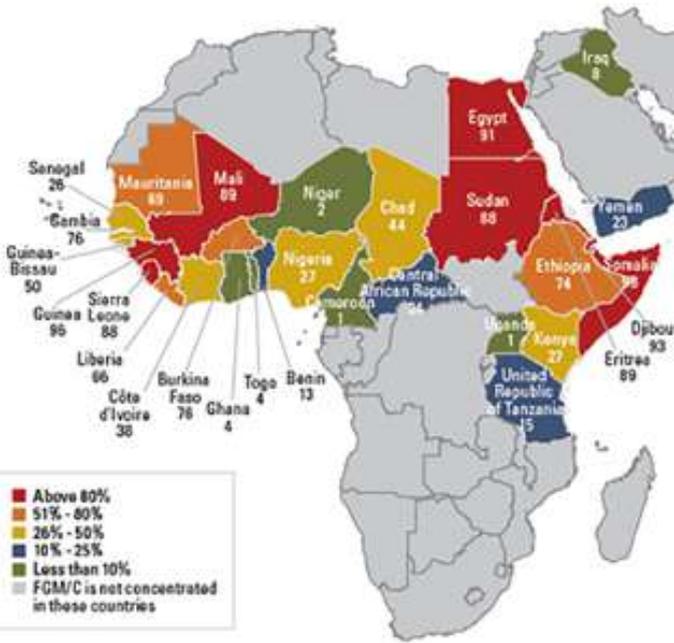
AN ARTICLE BY JOSHUA  
CHRISTODOULOU



affected. Alongside this they use their collected data to encourage the advocacy of change. They also develop and distribute training tools to local communities helping them bring about change without the reliance of external actors.

The UN has through their various bodies are actively and continuously finding new ways and methods to help abolish FGM. The UN Refugee Agency works specifically to eliminate FGM among refugee camps and other urban areas through awareness programs, community engagement and providing safe houses for victims. They also showcase various survivor stories in order to help create awareness on the issue. The UN Population Fund and The UN Children's Fund have joined together, approaching 17 countries in Africa for voluntary cooperation. Through this cooperation they have been able cause national policy in 12 of the countries, training of Health practitioners on FGM prevention, response and care, as well as public declaration of abandonment in over 12, 700 communities. UN women have provided a platform for various survivors to share their stories and showcase their efforts and current campaigns against the violation they have suffered. The UN has also created an international day of zero tolerance for FGM and has declared it to be on the 6th of February of every year. This year the theme centres around the mobilization of the youth around the elimination of harmful practises.

These coupled with the World Health Organisation Beyond FGM, Stop FGM now, Safe Hands for Mothers, Amnesty International, Daughters of Eve, Desert Flower Foundation, the AHA Foundation, Equality now and countless others along with women of the world are calling out for change and justice. Their shouts will not be silenced. Change is coming.



[11] 'Survivors speak: Women leading the movement to end FGM' (UN Women, 4 February 2019) <[www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/2/compilation-women-leading-the-movement-to-end-female-genital-mutilation](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/2/compilation-women-leading-the-movement-to-end-female-genital-mutilation)> accessed 23 January 2020

[12] 'International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Mutilation, 6 February' <[www.un.org/en/observances/female-genital-mutilation-day](http://www.un.org/en/observances/female-genital-mutilation-day)> accessed 23 January 2020



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## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

FGM is not only a violation of human rights, it reflects a deep-rooted inequality against women and girls. It is clear that what is at stake in this conflict is control over women's bodies through intentional acts of gender violence and so advocating for zero tolerance towards FGM is crucial to end this harmful practice and protect future generations.



Catherine Gould





# THE VILLAGE WHERE MEN ARE BANNED

*Blog*

*By Natasha Fothergill*

“BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL WOMAN IS A TRIBE OF OTHER SUCCESSFUL WOMAN BUILDING HER UP.”

There is a tradition, that whispers through everyday culture, the idea that women are second class citizens, that their rights matter less than that of men. This is not only outdated, but completely flawed, and these traditions must become a thing of the past. FGM (female genital mutilation)[1] and the forced marriage of women and children has indeed been a part of many societies for generations, but no more. Women are not dolls to be played with or objects to be mutilated. In 2020, there is no place for this practice in any society.

In the Samburu district of Kenya, in the village of Umoja, this is not only just a dream,

but a practice and a way of life. Here a group of women, abused for their own femininity took action and founded their own village. Umoja was established in 1990, by 15 women who suffered sexual abuse at the hands of British soldiers. The village has expanded in numbers, becoming a safe haven for women who are escaping child marriage, FGM (female genital mutilation), domestic violence and rape, all of which are still ongoing practices in the Samburu district. In this village, the women stand strong against the traditionally subordinate position of women in society. Together, they farm, build their own homes and earn money, without the assistance or need for men.

[1] Female genital mutilation (FGM) includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons





# THE VILLAGE WHERE MEN ARE BANNED

*By Natasha Fothergill*

## But what can we learn from this village?

These women stand up for each other and their rights when the culture oppresses them considerably more so than in western countries. Where the contrast is so great, these women stand on the front line, as activists of their worth and rights. Umoja highlights and emphasises the need for people all over the world to stand up for each other by demonstrating that in unity there is strength. In Samburu culture, a woman is but property, if the husband chooses that he wants his wife to be dead, that is his right to kill her. These women are not only brave for standing so strongly against these outdated and undignified cultural values but they serve as role models. We must all play our part and honour these women and ourselves by standing up against inequality alongside them.

Where it is not feasible to create this village on a global scale, segregating males in order to protect women, there is a very important

message that should be taken from this tribe. Matriarchal society is possible, but also that the worth of women, or indeed anyone should not be predefined through cultural context. These women had enough of how their society treated them, both enabling them to be abused, and washing their hands of them, outcasting them as damaged or diseased after being raped. But instead of accepting their lives for what they were, they revolted, and have risen up to change views and educate the younger generations to make their lives both safer and better. From the actions of these women, where the battle still has a way to go, FGM and forced marriage will become a thing of the past. This village truly reminds us that no idea, no matter how accepted, if it is wrong, can be challenged, and can be rectified.

So no matter how small your actions are today in the fight against inequality, just remember these women are both taking on elders and the threat of violence just to to decide the fate of their own bodies and determine their own way of life.





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## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

### English

Female Genital Mutilation is a direct violation of women's rights and highlights the inequalities that still occur today. It is our job to raise awareness to help protect those who may not be in the position to protect themselves.

### Spanish

La mutilación genital femenina constituye una violación directa a los derechos de las mujeres y recalca las desigualdades que aún existen en la actualidad. Debemos crear conciencia para ayudar a proteger a aquellos que no pueden protegerse a sí mismos

### Norwegian

Kvinnelig omskjæring er en direkte krenkelse av kvinners rettigheter og fremhever ulikhetene som fremdeles finnes i dag. Det er vår jobb å øke bevisstheten om dette for å beskytte de som kanskje ikke er i posisjon til å beskytte seg selv.



Jessica Pereira



# EMPOWERING RURAL NIGERIAN WOMEN: A CASE FOR CAPACITY BUILDING



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

An Article by:  
Evelyn Anietie James

Women empowerment cannot be overemphasised of its essentiality to the development and growth of any society. Millenniums' of battling inequalities rooted in gender imbalance has proven that recognising and advancing equal living standards and measures to and for all are the only road maps to sustainable development and global progress. This progress has over time been hampered through the creation of binaries and ascription of roles breeding inequalities between gendered species with women bearing the brunt of these inequalities especially in rural communities where "men are ascribed as productive and powerful and women as reproductive and weak". [1]

The need for women empowerment arose because of discriminatory practices against women, being subjected and positioned as second fiddles in society and the unequal distribution of rights and privileges prescribed by societal norms. Women are relegated to care work thereby making them invisible and unheard in decision making and contributing to the development of the nation to which they belong. These inequalities are strongly established in African traditional societies like Nigeria, especially in rural communities where women are seen and used as properties for men's pleasure in birthing children and handling domestic chores. Experience shows that women in rural communities suffer more from these oppressive and marginalised acts due to their low level of literacy and access to information. [2] These ill factors gave rise to the emancipation for gender equality and empowerment of women by feminist movement seeking to break away from the shackles of a patriarchal society, be rid of its oppressive, exclusive and marginalised acts expressed against women socially, culturally, politically and economically and for women to be truly be recognised for their worth and potentials.

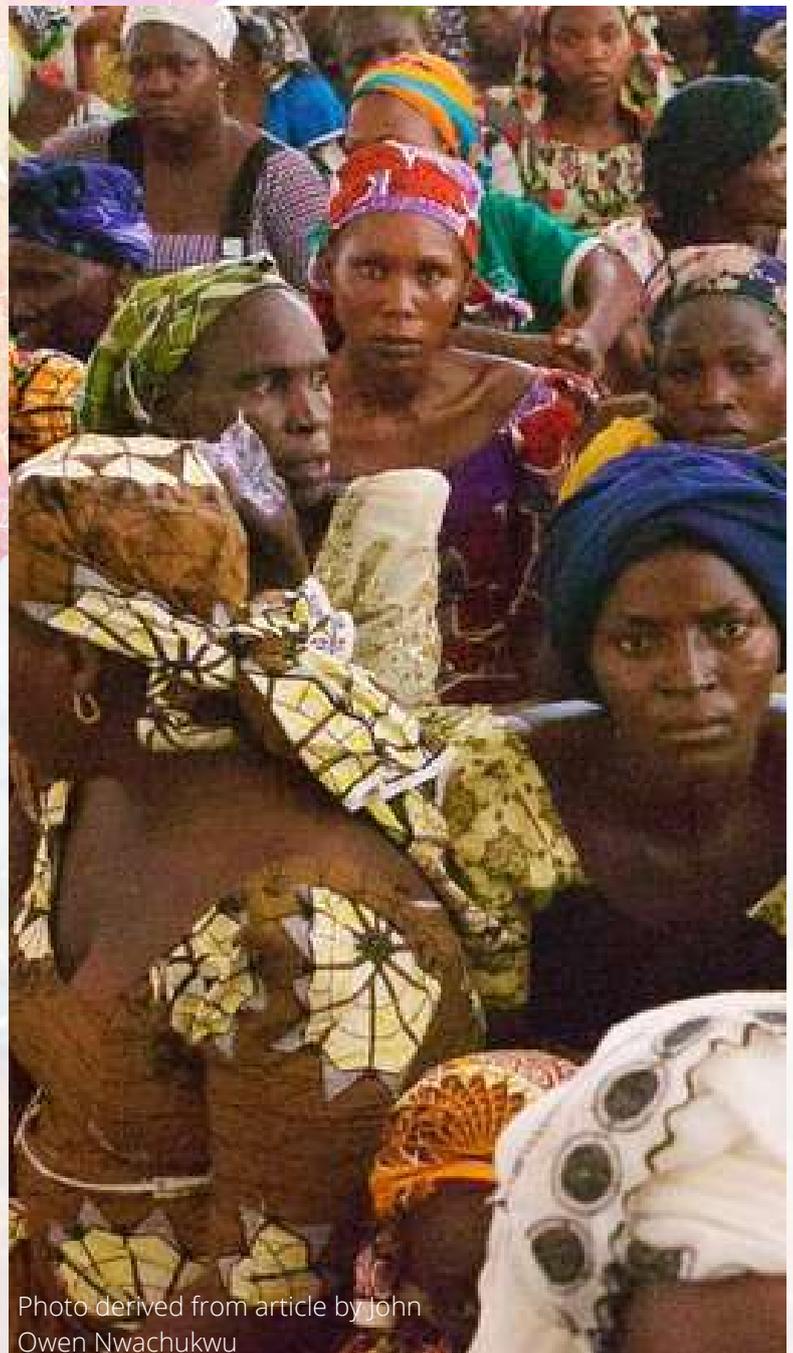


Photo derived from article by John  
Owen Nwachukwu

[1] Scott, J. (1986). Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis. *The American Historical Review*, 91(5), p.1053.

[2] Okeke, C. (2018) Women Empowerment and Development in Nigeria



## The question then is; how can women be empowered especially in rural Nigerian communities?

One of the basic recognised sustainable goals as stated by the United Nations is Gender equality. This is not only a fundamental human right as enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution and International Laws but is recognised globally as salient to eradicating inequalities, creating a balance in society and a medium through which other SDG goals can be fully realised.[3] When everyone has equal rights and access to opportunities that empower control over their lives, society thrives. As Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN executive director said: “Women are not simply consumers of prescribed solutions, they also design solutions for whole societies and they are equipped to address the issues that affect their lives”. [4] Gender equality is the starting point for empowering women to rid society of subjective and discriminatory ways. Women have been deprived of their right to dignity, worth and equality in all spheres of life, especially women in rural communities. Asides gender equality, empowerment through capacity building has also proven over time to be essential to the development of any society.



Photo credit: Lucy Brooks



Photo credit: PINS UTOMI EKPEI/Getty Images



Photo credit: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP/Getty Images

[3]United Nations (2019) Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all women and Girls. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/> [accessed 6 February 2020]

[4] <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/3/speech-ed-phumzile-international-womens-day> (2019).



Centre for African Justice,  
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An Article by:  
**Evelyn Anietie James**

Due to their low level of literacy, women from rural communities are known to mostly be involved in agricultural activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, processing and marketing to care for their homes. Some even rear domestic animals and birds. For decades these women have catered for the needs of their families with their raw skills and potentials, yet have received no recognition by society as being productive. Nor have their time and efforts been recognised as gainful work suitable for payment as opposed to work done by men. These women are entrepreneurs who have taken what little society has given to them to create a source of livelihood. They are key contributors to the wealth of the nation, yet get very little or nothing in return for their work. In Nigeria, the top priority of the government for the economic growth of the nation is Agriculture, shifting the focus from reliance on oil. [5] Agriculture, now being a government focus would mean, more and more women being used to execute this work and by societal norms being unrecognised and getting little or nothing for their labour especially in rural communities. Empowering rural women is a necessity that would go a long way to improving the economic life of women and also the well-being of individuals, families and the rural communities. Rural women lack basic access to productive resources, education, information technology and communication, all of which significantly contributes to rural women's poverty.



Photo credit: Global Green Initiative



Photo credit: Oxfam



Photo credit: Sierra Leone Telegraph

[5] 'Examining Buhari'S Agriculture Policy — Economic Confidential' (Economic Confidential, 2020)  
<<https://economicconfidential.com/2017/01/examining-buharis-agriculture-policy/>> accessed 31 January 2020].



Women are denied access to land, property rights and inheritance, especially in rural communities where only the men are recognised with the right of title to land and properties. It was not until 2014 that the Supreme Court in the popular case of *Ukeje vs. Ukeje* upheld women's right to inheritance and recognised the constitutional right against discrimination for all. [6] Despite this decision, women's access to land and property rights or inheritance still remains a challenge. There is, therefore, need for national laws and policies that promote women's rights to own land, property and have equal access to credit for their businesses. This is why the commitment from African Governments, regional and sub-regional organisations towards gender equality and empowerment through the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004) should be supported and effectively implemented in all regions.[7][8] Women empowerment economically is an investment worth taking to bridge the gap between gender equality, poverty and inclusive economic growth. Women should be recognised for their enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home.

These entrepreneurial activities are unfortunately categorised as belonging to the informal sector as such, not officially recorded and accounted for. Informal sector activities contribute substantially to the economic growth and development of the country yet the country fails to accord the importance of this sector in our national developmental deliberation and strategies. There is no other time than now for the Government, Non-governmental organisations and international agencies to be united in advancing the course for active and functional capacity building of women in Nigeria, especially women in rural communities. This can be done through programmes to equip them with knowledge, skills and opportunities. By sharpening their potentials and enhance their productivity, and value-added skills to the growth and development of their communities, Nigeria and the world at large. Institutions should incorporate Adult Education for women in rural communities to help them learn and improve their understanding of values and attributes to develop their entrepreneurial capabilities beyond their communities. It is not yet Uhuru but alas, as an organisation focused on equality and justice for all, we will keep lending our voice and pressing forward to ensure that justice is seen to be done for the good of all.

[6] *Ukeje v. Ukeje* In The Supreme Court of Nigeria (11 April 2014) (SC.224/2004 LPELR-22724(SC))

[7] African Union, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 11 July 2003, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3f4b139d4.html> [accessed 6 February 2020]

[8] International Federation for Human Rights, The Nigeria NGO coalition shadow report to the CEDAW committee, 31 July 2008, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/48a0007a2.html> [accessed 6 February 2020]



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## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Our greatest deeds are those taken to achieve justice and alleviate great and unnecessary pain and suffering of victims around the world. Please be reminded that every person holding any power, no matter how insignificant they think it is, and especially in regions where female genital mutilation is a wide practice, should condemn and order the immediate stoppage of this crime. To remember that this not an issue of cultural choice or freedom of religion, this is a practice dominantly practised against healthy, young helpless girls who cannot possibly consent to a lifetime of mental and physical suffering



Omar Al-Qudsi





Photo credit: World Bank Group

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# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

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WHY THE BULLYING IN  
SOCIETY MUST STOP

By Sulaimon Azizat



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

**Sexual Abuse is a common practice all over the world and women are the group most affected by this unruly act. Sexual abuse happens in different environments and settings. We must keep talking about this issue until a lasting solution is provided to end this abuse against young girls and women in society. Every woman is entitled to her body without any form of discrimination or harassment, for what she decides to wear, say or act. Women in Africa fall victim to sexual assault every day under society's watch, yet very little is being done to put an end to this menace. Just like a prisoner locked in the cells with no means of getting out till he is free, most girls face sexual abuse. This is usually tied to constant sexual assault, not being able to break free or even speak out.**

Photo credit: Amsayaro Studio

# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

An Article by:  
**Sulaimon Azizat**

Photo credit: World Bank Group

Girls and women who have been sexually abused are often distressed and stigmatized physically, socially, psychologically and emotionally. It doesn't only affect the way they view society or how they interact with people after the assault, but it also causes damage to their physical and mental health. Society must be held accountable for such evil acts, carried out by people who feel entitled and confident enough to sexually abuse women and young girls, without fear of being caught or penalized. It is almost impossible to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions because they are constantly encouraged and supported by society. Do not get me wrong, I am not saying that women should be blamed for being sexually harassed by men nor am I saying the perpetrators should be praised or given a medal for harassing women. All I am trying to communicate here is that in a society where women are constantly bullied and blamed for every unfortunate occurrence that happens to them, it is difficult to show abusers what they are doing wrong or even trigger them to stop. Women are wrongfully shamed for being sexually assaulted and more often than not blame is placed on the victims.

Society has a major role to play in tackling this problem, and this must be supported by governmental action. There is a demand for stringent laws to be put in place to prevent further assaults and also to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Many people may not agree with holding society accountable, but a societal change is necessary to protect women and young girls against sexual abuse. This will also encourage victims to speak out against their perpetrators, passing on vital information and preventing future assault. More women will be discouraged to share their stories with the world if victims are continually subjected to blame, and so challenging the current narrative of sexual abuse is critical to protect women and young girls in African society. I believe it is important to differentiate sexual abuse from sexual harassment, as young girls and women can fall victim to both. Sexual harassment can ultimately lead to sexual abuse if it continues and a harasser can be a sexual assaulter if nothing is done to prevent further harassment.

A person can be sexually abused when someone throws sexual advances or flirtation, through gestures or even physical touch. Women are constantly abused in Africa and this is wrongfully normalized. Just because of what their family will say, society, culture or religion will react to the situation and this keeps many women silent about being sexually harassed. As previously mentioned, society makes it difficult for these women. For instance, when a woman finally builds the courage to speak out, she may be shunned and there may be no consequences for the assaulter.

Photo credit: Amsayaro Studio

# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

An Article by:  
**Sulaimon Azizat**

Photo credit: World Bank Group

## What is Sexual Abuse?

Sexual Abuse is defined by the American Psychological Association as an unwanted sexual act done with the use of force, a threat from perpetrators and taking advantage of victims without their consent. Most victim perpetrators and victims know each other, while in some cases they are total strangers. Immediate effects of sexual assault include fear, shock or disbelief. Long term effects are fear or post-traumatic stress disorder. While efforts aimed at holding sex offenders accountable are not promising, psychological aid which includes group or individual therapy appears to be effective for those sexually abused. [1]

## What Is Sexual Harassment?

According to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center of the University of Michigan, sexual harassment is any form of unaccepted sexual request, sexual favors, sexual requests and other verbal or nonverbal (physical) act portrayed in a sexual way and it hinders a person from performing their duties or even depriving them of what is rightfully theirs. When a person is being conditioned to a sexual situation or forced to accept sexual advances, such a person is being sexually harassed. Sexual harassment comes in different forms or settings. It can be a conduct that may be detrimental to a person's education, employment or living environment. [2]

## Forms of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse comes in different forms and settings. It could be from a person one is affiliated with, a relative, friend or a complete stranger.

Whatever the situation may be, the abuse of women is intolerable in any way or form. As long as the person doesn't consent or is not aware of the situation they are being sexually abused.

As documented by the World Health Organization, sexual violence includes, but not limited to:

- Rape from a spouse, within marriage or during courtship
- Rape from friends, acquaintances or strangers
- Unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment from work or educational institutions
- Sexual slavery, systematic rape, among other forms of sexual abuse during armed conflicts
- Sexual assault of mentally or physically disabled people
- Rape and sexual violence against children
- Sexual violence during cohabitation or forced marriage and wife inheritance

[1] American Psychology Association, 'Sexual Abuse' <[https://apa.org/topics/sexual abuse](https://apa.org/topics/sexual%20abuse)> accessed 28 January 2020

[2] Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center University of Michigan, 'What is Sexual Harassment' <<https://sapac.umich.edu/article/what-sexual-harassment>> accessed 19 January 2020

# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

An Article by:  
**Sulaimon Azizat**

## Cases of Sexual Abuse in Nigeria

Photo credit: World Bank Group

Let's take a look at the situation of Nigeria. Just like every part of Africa, Nigeria is constantly battling the issue of sexual abuse and the majority of cases go unreported. The laws in place are not strict enough to protect women from being sexually abused or hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, making it difficult to tackle sexual abuse in Nigeria. An article from Deutsche Welle talks about the role of social media in creating awareness of sexual violence. The Arewatoo Movement, Nigerian activists broke the silence on sexual abuse in the northern part of Nigeria. In revolt against sexual abuse, women began speaking up about their experiences. [3]

Sexual abuse is often unreported in Nigeria due to fear of shame or victim-blaming. Nigerian Human Rights lawyer, Caroline Ajie estimated that at least 2 million women in Nigeria experience sexual abuse annually and that out of these numbers, only 28% of rape cases are reported and only 12% of the reported cases result in convictions. Elsie Reed, the founder of Delta Women, an organization aimed at empowering and fighting for the rights of women in Delta, estimates that about 80% of Nigerian women have experienced some form of sexual harassment. The movement provides a medium for people to speak out about the experiences they have kept hidden from the world. Nigerians were shocked by reports of sexual molestation of young girls from the age of five. This is not because the revelations were new to them, there have been countless stories of children being sexually abused, from childhood, in their homes, schools, and religious institutions. However, many of these incidents were buried to the ground, shunned as a taboo subject and rarely spoken of.

The #Arewametoo movement started when a young lady called Khadijah Adamu who lives in the northern part of Nigeria, Kano summoned the courage after 2 years to share a personal experience of sexual violence on Twitter. Her story was welcomed with support, much to her surprise, and this pushed other people to start sharing their stories with the hashtag #Arewametoo. This movement brought about the discovery of many cases of sexual abuse in northern Nigeria, but the issue goes beyond revelation to challenge systematic flaws. Despite the many reported cases of sexual abuse in Nigeria, it has a relatively low record of rape convictions. Due to poor responses from both contemporary and traditional authorities, many reported cases are left unresolved and most victims do not have access to recovery services. They are often left unattended to, with psychological trauma, health issues and social stigma after the incident. [4]

The issue is that after survivors shared their stories, they faced a backlash from society, as well as those who gave them a voice. Although supported on social media, they were also met with critique. The critics went after those who used the hashtag, #Arewametoo to promote the movement and share stories of sexual assault. One of the activists, Awaisu, was arrested in her office in Kaduna. The Amnesty International Rights Group later referred to this as a way to silence and intimidate her. With nothing to charge her with, she was released on time. [5] Not only are victims shunned when they try to speak out, but they also try to intimidate those who try to make their voices heard. However, activists in Northern Nigeria remain determined because little is done to address individual cases and the overall issue of sexual abuse. They are working towards domesticating the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAAPP act), which they believe will prevent perpetrators from escaping the law, and bring justice for survivors of sexual abuse.

Photo credit: Amsayaro Studio

[3] Idris Uwaisu 'Street Debate: How #ArewaMeToo Shed Light on Sexual Abuse in Nigeria' (Deutsche Welle, 7 September 2019 <<https://www.dw.com/en/street-debate-how-arewametoo-shed-light-on-sexual-abuse-in-nigeria/>> accessed 27 January 2020

[4] Fakhriyyah Hashim 'How Nigeria's Conservative Northern Region came to terms with its MeToo Movement' (Quartz Africa, 22 July 2019) <<https://qz.com/africa/1671204/nigeria-metoo-movement-shook-up-north-with-arewametoo/>> accessed 20 January 2020

[5] Fakhriyyah Hashim 'How Nigeria's Conservative Northern Region came to terms with its MeToo Movement' (Quartz Africa, 22 July 2019) <<https://qz.com/africa/1671204/nigeria-metoo-movement-shook-up-north-with-arewametoo/>> accessed 20 January 2020

# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

An Article by:  
**Sulaimon Azizat**

Photo credit: World Bank Group

Another case of sexual abuse that created an uproar in social media is that of Busola Dakolo, a Nigerian celebrity photographer and wife to Timi Dakolo a popular musician in Nigeria. The news broke on the 28th of June, when Busola accused Biodun Fatoyinbo, one of the pastors heading the largest Pentecostal churches, the Commonwealth of Zion Assembly also known as Coza, of rape. She stated that she was raped by the pastor when she was a teenager in an interview she shared on YouTube which later reached different social media platforms. It was gathered that Fatoyinbo had been accused of sexual abuse by a former church worker some years prior and nothing was done about the case. Bukola gave details of the assault, as she could remember, but the pastor denied all her claims. [6]

There was a protest aided by social media, as Bukola got support from other celebrities, as well as those who believed her. However, she also received backlash from people who felt her story was untrue and from strong supporters of the accused. The case was taken to court by Bukola, in her attempt to get justice, however, she lost and her counsel was charged with 1 million naira for “wasting the court’s time”. After going on and off on the case, the court dismissed the case, saying it was based on sentiments and was an abuse of the judicial process. [7] They believed the case was a waste of their time and as a result asked her to pay a fine.



Photo credit: Healthline



Photo credit: The Walrus



Photo credit: SABC News

[6]Aanu Adeoye 'The Young Women Leading Nigeria's #MeToo Revolution (Vice, 17 July 2019) <[https://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/xwnj77/nigeria-me-too-movement-biodun-fatoyinbo](https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/xwnj77/nigeria-me-too-movement-biodun-fatoyinbo)> accessed 28 January 2020

[7]Pulse Nigeria 'Court Throws Out Busola Dakolo's Case Against Biodun Fatoyinbo' (Pulse Nigeria, 14 September 2020) <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/court-throws-out-busola-dakolo-case-against-biodun-fatoyinbo>> accessed 28 January 2020

# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

An Article by:  
**Sulaimon Azizat**

Photo credit: World Bank Group

BBC published a documentary after gathering several testimonies from victims of sexual abuse in universities. The BBC Africa Eye sent undercover journalists to pose as students of the University of Lagos in Nigeria, and the University of Ghana.

Unknown to the lecturers that were targets of the investigation, as they already gathered information from victims of their assault, the undercover reporters were wearing a hidden camera, and the female reporters were sexually harassed by senior lecturers of the institutions. [8] The reason for the documentary was to bring the sexual harassment against female students by male lecturers to public attention as this is an ongoing problem in many Nigerian universities.

Sadly when the victim does not get support from those in power, it is difficult to get justice.

Something may have been done about Bukola's case and other cases of sexual abuse if the institutions in Nigeria were more attentive and responsive to cases of sexual abuse. In Nigeria, many victims remain silent because of the assaulter's position or influence in society. Also due to religious and cultural beliefs, victims may decide not to speak out.

Sexual abuse is a serious issue that needs to be tackled in Nigeria. Not only are women raped in their homes (by relatives or close friends) but also at work (by their boss or male colleagues), school (by their lecturers or male students) and religious institutions that are meant to be sacred (by religious leaders or guardians).

The women empowerment team believes that every woman should be able to live her life without any form of fear and should be confident to pursue their dreams. We believe it is important for children to be educated about sexual abuse. It should be included in the curriculum of every school in Nigeria, starting from the primary level. Sadly, many children do not know if they are being sexually abused and are often too scared to talk about it. Platforms need to be created for women to speak out and share their stories as a means to help them and relieve them of their pain. These platforms are essential to aid the recovery of survivors but it is also important to penalize the perpetrator to prevent another person from being a victim.

While we can aid victims and create awareness on the issue, the greater good is finding justice. The government and institutions need to be held accountable. They need to proffer solutions to create a safer environment for young girls and women in Africa.

**The question is who will hold the government accountable?**



Photo credit; BIGSTOCK

[8]BBC News 'Sex for Grades' Undercover in West African Universities' (BBC, 7 October 2019) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-49907376/sex-for-grades-undercover-in-west-african-universities>> accessed 28 January 2020



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

FGM is a violation of the rights of young girls and women. This is a practice that should be eradicated, as every young girl and woman needs to be protected not endangered.



Sulaimon Azizat





Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

## Book Project

February 2020  
A Report by:  
**Sulaimon Azizat**

# EMPOWERING THROUGH EDUCATION

*The Second-Hand Book Project is a scheme planned and organised by the Women Empowerment team of the Centre for African Justice, Peace and Human Rights.*

The project is aimed at young girls and women struggling to go to school or acquire the necessary materials needed to aid their education. The purpose of the project is for the books to reach primary and secondary school libraries and universities in Africa. The project was initiated by the Women Empowerment team of the CAJPHR and made possible thanks to the commitment and contributions of the

CAJPHR, the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), the Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) who donated second-hand books from their library. We are confident about the success of the project due to the support of a partner company who will assist in the delivery of the books to the designated country in Africa.



Collecting books donated by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague  
Veronique Mirre-Gervais (left) Adesola Adeboyejo - Secretary (Middle) Sulaimon Azizat ((Right)



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

## Book Project

February 2020  
A Report by:  
**Sulaimon Azizat**

# EMPOWERING THROUGH EDUCATION

With the effort and commitment of the Women Empowerment team, here at the CAJPHR, alongside notable institutional collaborations, this project has successfully grown. The objective of the Women Empowerment team is to empower women and girls and to provide them with the necessary tools to fulfill their greatest potential and what better way can this be achieved than through education! The project is aimed at all parts of Africa and the focus for this year is Nigeria. We we aim to spread across other parts of Africa and aid even more communities the near future.

Education is an important aspect of empowerment. It is important to build knowledge, as every penny spent on education builds a stepping stone in development. It is important to educate women societal issues and how they can be a force of impact and growth. It is not possible to fix what you are not aware of or create a better condition for yourself without having the tools to aid that. The Women Empowerment team believes that everyone regardless of gender, race or religion should have access to education. We are willing to do everything in our capacity to equip women with the instrument they need to succeed.

The project is aimed at less privileged girls and girls with disabilities. The project also targets girls who are not able to continue with their education or haven't been able to start due to financial difficulties or cultural barriers among other reasons that may deprive them of proper education. Some books have been gathered from different sources that were willing to contribute to the cause , most notably, the ISS, THUAS and the ICC. Members from the CAJPHR also donated some of their books to aid the project. We would like to gather as many books as possible for it to reach a wide audience and we are open for any form of book donations from individuals and organizations that would like contribute to our project. The books we aim to collect are not just for primary and secondary schools in Africa, but also universities. Primary and



Photo Depicts: Veronique Mirre-Gervais (left), Sulaimon Azizat (Right) with books collected for the project.

secondary school books of different subjects which include; Literature books, Mathematics, History, Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Computer Studies. The books required for tertiary education are adult literature, relevant textbooks on arts, sciences, humanities and social studies.



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Peace and Human Rights

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# EMPOWERING THROUGH EDUCATION

The CAJPHR will be supporting the education of these women by donating the books to their schools and libraries. So far, we have been able to gather a total of 118 for the tertiary level. However, we have not been able to gather enough books for the primary and secondary level. We have been able to collect a few books for the secondary level but no books have been gathered for the primary level. We hope to collect more books for all educational levels to widen distribution.

The books we have been able to gather were organised by the women empowerment team from CAJPHR. This project was started by Cynthia Ngozi Kamara Njoku, Ibrahim Mohammed and Sami Bottu from the women empowerment team. Currently, Cynthia, Azizat Sulaimon from the women empowerment team and Veronique Mirre-Gervais from the Administrative team are working towards the completion of this project. We need further contributions to make the project a success. We are open to partner with individuals or schools to help make this project a success. The book project started in the middle of 2019 and we aim to complete it in the early months of 2020. This is the first time the Women Empowerment team is working on this kind of project aimed at the education of girls and women in need. The entire team of CAJPHR are happy that there is progress since the initiation of this and would like to thank every individual and organisation who have contributed to the actualisation of the book project. With access to books and educational materials, we wish to support female students in Africa through the empowerment of education.

The Women Empowerment team hopes to continue on this track and would appreciate further help to make this project successful.



Photo Depicts: Veronique Mirre-Gervais (left), Sulaimon Azizat (Right) with books collected for the project. The lower photograph shows first hand collection from the ICC (International Criminal Court)

A follow up of this project will be provided in our next issue and the information will include every detail of the second-hand book project and hopefully the completion of the project. Individuals or organisations willing to donate books or want to contribute to our project can contact us through our website at [centreforafricanjustice.org](http://centreforafricanjustice.org) or via my email at [azizat@centreforafricanjustice.org](mailto:azizat@centreforafricanjustice.org). Thank you in anticipation.



Centre for African Justice,  
Peace and Human Rights

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

### English

Female genital mutilation is an atrocious practice of which high numbers of women and girls have long suffered. This not only represents a violation of their most basic rights but also puts an obstacle to their physical and mental Health, as well as a great challenge to their lives and their safety.

### Spanish

La mutilación genital femenina es una práctica atroz de la cual un gran número de mujeres y niñas han sufrido por largo tiempo. Esto no solo significa una violación de sus derechos más básicos, sino que también supone un obstáculo para su salud mental y física, así como una gran dificultad a superar para sus vidas y su seguridad.

### Catalan

La mutilació genital femenina és una pràctica atroz de la que un gran número de dones i nenes han sofert durant molt temps. Això no només representa una violació dels seus drets més bàsics, sinó que també suposa un obstacle per a la seva salut mental i física, així com una gran dificultat a superar per a les seves vides y la seva seguretat.

### French

La mutilation génitale féminine est une pratique atroce dont un grand nombre des femmes et filles souffrent depuis longtemps. Ça représente une violation de leurs droits plus élémentaires, un grand obstacle pour sa santé mentale et physique, et une grande difficulté à surmonter dans leurs vies et pour leur sécurité.



Júlia Miragall Mas





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