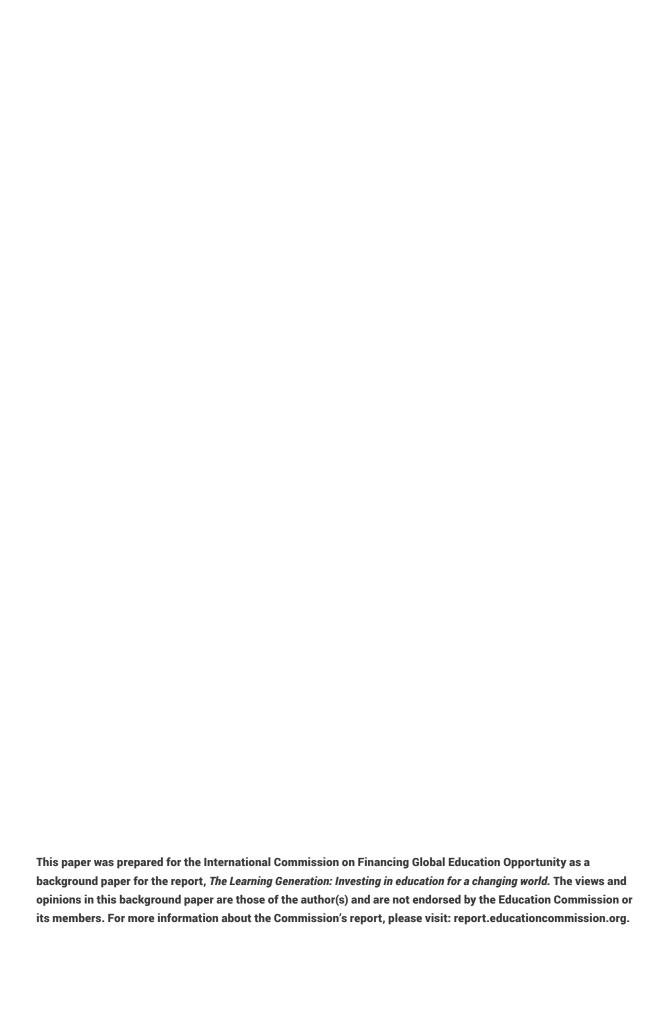## the Education Commission

Background Paper
The Learning Generation

The Role of Families/Communities in Supporting Girl's Education
A Case Study of Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia

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The Role of Families/Communities in Supporting Girls' Education: A Case Study of Kenya, Malawi and Zambia

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AIC   African Inland Church

ASRH   Adolescent Sexual & Reproductive Health

AU   African Union

EFA   Education for All

FAWE   Forum for African Women Educationalists

FGC   Female Genital Cutting

IHS3   Third Integrated Household Survey

KDHS   Kenya Demographic Health Survey

MDGs   Millennium Development Goals

MOE   Ministry of Education

NGOs   Nongovernmental Organizations

SAFE   Student Alliance for Female Education

SDGs   Sustainable Development Goals

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF   United Nations Children Fund

Executive Summary

In September 2015, Sub-Saharan Africa joined the global community in embarking on a new and ambitious agenda to change our world. The continent, together with countries from around the world adopted17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter, SDGs), that will guide the development agenda in the next 15 years. Africa and the rest of the globe hopes that by 2030, countries all around the world will be able to enjoy "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all" and more than half of the world's population will no longer live in poverty (United Nations, p. 4). Acknowledging the central role that education will play in the realization of this agenda, countries, through the SDGs, have committed to ensure that "all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development" and that they learn in an environment that will allow them to "complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education". In addition, through these SDGs, countries also commit to eliminate "all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation" (United Nations, 2015, p. 4).

Beyond these "global" objectives, Africa has also developed a *Continental Education Strategy* that will guide her towards addressing the challenges that are impeding the universalizing of quality basic education. The objectives set out in this strategy include among others, 1) recruiting, training and deploying well qualified teachers, 2) scaling up successful interventions that help keep girls and boys in school, and enhancing their achievement; and 3) mobilizing the community to become partners in ensuring that girls and boys "enroll, stay and achieve in schools" (African Union, 2015, p. 21). Undoubtedly, these are very ambitious commitments given that most sub-Saharan African countries were unable to meet the

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended in 2015. Going forward, sub-Saharan Africa must develop new, innovative ways of addressing the continent's challenges.

Building upon Africa's new agenda of advancing sustainable development on the continent in the next decade and a half, this report documents the successful, scalable intervention programs supported by the FAWE Regional Secretariat in three case study contexts (Kenya, Malawi and Zambia) to empower families and communities to support girls' education. Findings show that communities supported by FAWE's programs are playing a participatory role in girls' education by 1) helping to rescue girls at risk of female genital cutting (FGC) and child marriage; 2) educating girls on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues; and 3) encouraging girls that have dropped out of school as a result of early marriage and /or adolescent pregnancy to re-enroll and complete their studies.

Based on the findings of the present study, this paper proposes a number of policy recommendations that governments in sub-Saharan Africa could adopt in order to enhance girls' educational opportunities:

1. Educate communities that have a prevalence of female genital cutting and child marriage about the dangers that these cultural practices pose on girls' lives and on the value of educating girls. Communities should be encouraged to send their daughters to school rather than marrying them off at a young age;

2. Educate communities on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRH) so that they in turn can educate their daughters about these issues. This would empower girls with knowledge on their sexuality and on their reproductive health thereby reducing their susceptibility to ASRH-related problems;

3. Offer communities that practice female genital cutting (FGC) and child marriage an alternative means of making an income so that they do not resort to marrying off their daughters for wealth;

4. Pass laws that protect girls from harmful traditional practices such as FGC, child marriage and others that violate the rights of girls;

5. Significantly increasing spending on education so that poor families do not have to carry the burden of educating their children;

6. Utilize the untapped reservoir of skills within the community that can help support girls' education. For example, local women, youth, and opinion leaders (e.g. Chiefs and the clergy) can be important agents of change where girls' education is concerned.

Introduction

In the past two decades, African countries have made tremendous strides in increasing the number of children who have access to basic education. According to UNESCO's *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* for 2015, primary school enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa increased by 75% between 1999 and 2012, leading to an estimated 144 million children joining school. However, despite this remarkable achievement, there are still large numbers of children that remain out of school on the continent. An estimated 34 million children are out of school in sub-Saharan Africa and of these number, 18.6 million are girls (UNESCO, 2015). This high percentage of out-of-school girls is not surprising given that girls continue to face numerous obstacles to education.

According to existing literature, barriers that hinder girls' education include: school-based violence, parental concern for girls' safety en route to and from school, cost of education, cultural attitudes towards girls' education, domestic and care work (King & Winthrop, 2015), female genital cutting (FGC)[1] (Finke, 2006), child and adolescent marriage (Clark, Bruce & Dude; Nguyen & Wodon, 2014; Parsons et al., 2015; Pesambili, 2013), unintended teenage pregnancies (Birungi et al., 2015) poverty (Inoue et al., 2015) armed conflict (UNESCO, 2011), HIV/AIDS (Clark, Bruce & Dude), child labor and household work among others (Winthrop & McGivney, 2014).

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[1] Although the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organizations use the term "female genital mutilation" (FGM), the terminology used in this paper is "female genital cutting" (FGC) in congruence with other scholars who oppose the use of the term FGM; since for cultures that practice this norm, "mutilation is not the intent of the action" (Toubia, 1998, p.2).

King and Winthrop (2015) raise a critical question when they ask: "why do gender gaps persist, and what are the best ways to further reduce these disparities?" (p. 24). Indeed, it seems that even with all the efforts that have gone into supporting girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere in the developing world, girls continue to contend with the same issues that their mothers and grandmothers grappled with as young women. In light of this, sub-Saharan African countries need to embark on new pathways that will help to further reduce gender disparities in education. In line with the 10-year *Continental Education Strategy for Africa,* countries need to mobilize local communities to become partners in ensuring that girls and boys "enroll, stay and achieve in schools" (African Union, 2015, p. 21).

While a substantial body of work on girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa has focused on exploring the hurdles that keep girls from accessing education, there has been very little attention in the literature on the ways that families and /or communities support girls' education. However, the few studies that have focused on this issue seem to indicate that communities can play a critical role in girls' schooling (Robinson, Winthrop & McGivney, 2016). Therefore the present study seeks to examine the ways in which families/communities in three countries namely, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia mobilize local communities to support girls' education.

Study Objectives
1. To investigate the ways in which FAWE's programs help to support girls' education in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia;

2. To provide recommendations on how governments can better support girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach in order to understand the role families and/or communities play in supporting girls' education in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. Regarding the qualitative research paradigm, Palys (2008) writes that:

> For one thing, qualitative researchers are less often interested in asking about central tendency in a large group…, and much more interested in case study analysis –why particular people (or groups) feel particular ways, the processes by which these attitudes are constructed, and the role they play in dynamic processes within the organization or group (p. 697).

Consistent with this approach, purposive sampling was used to select research settings and research participants for this study (Maxwell, 2005; Palys, 2008). According to Maxwell (2005), purposive sampling, "is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 88). Therefore, to get the information we needed, we chose to carry out this study in Kenya (Kajiado, Kisumu and Busia counties), Malawi and Zambia because FAWE has previous and/or on-going projects that support girls' education in these regions. Participants sampled for the Kenya study included: 1 School Principal, 1 Deputy Principal, the Chief of Kajiado Central Sub-County, and twenty (20) members from two women's groups.

Key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to solicit information from participants involved in the Kenya case study. Interviews were conducted in both *Kiswahili* and English (Kenya's official languages) and lasted between one hour and 2½ hours. For Malawi and Zambia, a literature review of the FAWE country programs was conducted. Additionally, a broader literature review on barriers impacting girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa was used to inform the study. To analyze data, statements, phrases and words were studied for emergent themes using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Sloan, 2014).

Results

This section presents results of the study. The first part explores how AIC Girls' Boarding Primary School in Kajiado County in Kenya coordinates with local authorities to rescue girls faced with the risk of undergoing FGC and/or child marriage. The second part will examine the role two women's groups in Busia and Kisumu counties in Kenya play in support of girls' education. The last section will review women's and girls' role in enhancing girls' education in Zambia and Malawi.

AIC Girls Primary School: A FAWE Centre of Excellence in Kajiado, Kenya

The AIC Girls Boarding Primary School in Kajiado is an old institution that was established in 1959 by the African Inland Church (AIC). The school was set up to meet the needs of the local community (i.e. Maasai) in Kajiado District (Presently Kajiado County). At the time, AIC was one of the few schools in the area. In 1999, FAWE introduced the 'Centre of Excellence'

concept at AIC Girls Primary with the aim of assisting the school to provide a conducive, gender-responsive learning atmosphere for girls and to help rescue girls at risk of child marriage, female genital cutting, incest and other forms of gender-based violence. AIC Girls Primary was among four schools in Africa where this concept was first piloted. The other schools where this model was piloted were the FAWE Girls' School, in Gisozi, Rwanda, Grand Diourbel Junior Secondary School, in Diourbel, Senegal and Mgugu Secondary School in Kilosa, Tanzania. Today, the FAWE model has been initiated in 23 schools in Africa.

The FAWE model of excellence is a holistic approach where teachers, school administrators and the surrounding community are trained to be attentive to the specific needs of girls and boys. This model also empowers girls and boys through the *Tuseme*[2]Clubs where they learn to voice their concerns about problems impacting their schooling and to critically think about finding solutions to these problems. Further, these Clubs give girls and boys an opportunity to participate in debates with other schools, help to increase their self-confidence and empower them with life skills. The *Tuseme* Clubs also provide an avenue for teachers to develop a positive attitude towards girls (FAWE, 2003).

An important role that AIC Primary School plays within the community is collaborating with local authorities to help rescue girls who have been subjected to female genital cutting, child marriage and other forms of abuse. In an interview with the school's headteacher, she stated the following,

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[2] This is a Swahili word meaning "let us speak out" (see FAWE, 2005, p. 2)

We work closely with the area chief and the police to rescue these girls. Once we find out that a girl is going to be married off and the case is genuine, we make efforts to rescue her and bring her here. Some of the girls come here when they are so young and have been through so much. And often they need a lot of counseling to cope.

The school provides girls with the psychosocial support that they need to cope with their experiences of FGC, child marriage and other abuses that they may have experienced prior to being rescued. Ms. Sakaja the guidance and counseling teacher stated that:

We usually do a lot of counseling for these girls because when they arrive here, they are usually so traumatized. It can take long for them to overcome their trauma. In fact, some of the girls can be so quiet. They are withdrawn because of the abuse.

According Ms. Sakaja, some girls are not able to return home after being rescued and end up staying at the Rescue Center for long periods of time in order to avoid the risk of being forcibly married off:

There are girls who stay here throughout the year. They cannot go home because they are still at [high] risk of being married off. Some have stayed here for more than a year without going home to their parents.

Importantly, the goal of the school is not to keep rescued girls at the Centre long-term. According to Ms. Sakaja, school authorities make every effort to reconcile children with families:

We usually try to reconcile the children with their families. But this takes time. We have to be sure that these families will not marry off their daughter once we release her to them. We try to encourage them to understand the importance of educating their girls and once we see a genuine change of attitude, we work with local police to help reconcile them with their children. And we do a follow up once these children have returned home just to be sure that they are okay.

Although the present literature on FGC in Kenya has paid little attention to the insecurities surrounding child bride rescue missions, the rescue of girls can become a risky affair when families are unwilling to cooperate with authorities. In an interview with the deputy headteacher of AIC Primary School, she cited examples where the school came under threat for rescuing a girl:

One time a male relative of a girl we rescued came here with a gun and started threatening us. We had to call the police. They eventually came and took him away before he hurt anyone.

In another incident, the deputy headteacher was accosted on the streets of Kajiado town for being 'one of the women who rescues girls':

There was one time I was walking on the streets in Kajiado town then, a group of [Maasai] men approached me and started accusing me of taking their daughters away. These are some the challenges we deal with.

Similar concerns about security came up during conversations with Ms. Sakaja:

At times the rescues are done at night and this can be dangerous coz we're going

into people's homesteads. Other times we manage to rescue a girl and after

bringing her to the school, her family sends people to come after her. And they

are usually very aggressive. They'll tell us they are ready to die to get back the

girl. Sometimes they are armed with the *Njora*[3] and they will say: "give us back

our woman or we finish this right here."

Placed within a broader context, this incidents reflect the tensions within Kajiado concerning

the issue of FGC. Many in the community, particularly older women, still advocate for the

circumcision of girls. Two years ago, over 2,500 Maasai women gathered in Kajiado to advocate

for the practice (Citizen TV, 2014). This unusual event surprised many. Since then however,

there have been other protests in support of FGC –a clear indication that the campaign to

eradicate FGC in Kenya is far from over.

The Chief of Kajiado Central who was interviewed for this study pointed out that

eradicating FGC is a challenge as communities have discovered new ways of concealing the

practice:

In a way, the practice has been discouraged. That's why it is now done *chini ya maji*

(Swahili slang meaning 'in secret'). Before the celebrations [for girls who were newly

circumcised] were done in the open but these days they are done undercover. After a

girl is circumcised they go to church to give thanks to God but they do not celebrate.

They no longer make announcement about these ceremonies. Most women in our

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[3] The *Njora* is a Maasai sword.

community believe that because they underwent FGM, their daughters also have to undergo this tradition.

Although FGC continues to be entrenched in Kajiado (Towett, Oino, & Matere, 2014), the Chief is proactively involved in spreading the anti-FGC message to the broader community through public open air village meetings (commonly known in Kenya as *barazas*)[4] and schools:

> During *barazas* or at school meetings we talk about these issues because there are a lot of people who still don't know the dangers of FGM. Previously there was taboo around uncircumcised women and girls but these days we can talk about it. We do not search for a spouse for our children. If a girl is uneducated, you have to find a husband for her. But, if she goes to school, she can find a husband for herself.

In addition to advocating against FGC, the Chief's office is also involved in rescue missions. The Chief himself has been involved in rescues with the AIC Primary School on several occasions:

> We have coordinated with AIC Primary on several occasions to rescue girls. Usually we go to the police station, get police officers then go to the home of a girl who needs to be rescued.

Aside from engaging in rescues, the Chief leads by example. His daughters attend the AIC Primary School and have not undergone FGC:

> Two of my daughters attend AIC Girls Primary. One is in class 6 and the other in class 7. Both of them have not been circumcised and I will not put them through that

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[4] For an extended definition of the chief's *baraza*, see Omanga, D. (2015). 'Chieftaincy' in the social media space: Community policing in a twitter convened *baraza*. *International Journal of Security & Development,* 4(1), 1-16.

experience. I have attended trainings on FGM and child marriage so I know the danger

of these practices and I would not want to expose my daughters to them.

Arguably, the Chief's sentiments demonstrate that a parent's level of education can influence

their stance on FGC; regardless of their gender, the higher a parent's education level, the more

likely they are to advocate for the abandonment of FGC and vice versa (El Bashir, 2006).

Empowering Communities to Support Girls' Education: The Women's Entrepreneurship Project (WEP) in Western Kenya

In 2012, FAWE introduced the Adolescent Sexual & Reproductive Health Program

(ASRH) in four counties in western Kenya namely; Kisumu, Siaya, Busia and Kakamega. The idea

was to help local communities deal with rampant teenage pregnancies, school drop outs and

other problems that were affecting young people in these areas. Four women's groups that

were already involved in adolescent girls' issues (one from each of the four counties) were

selected for the project. These groups received training on how to do outreach in schools and in

the broader community on adolescent issues. They were also equipped with other skills such as

sewing reusable sanitary towels. These products were sold to the community at a subsidized

price.

In 2015, FAWE initiated the Women's Entrepreneurship Project (WEP) in the same

counties using the same groups that had previously been involved in the Adolescent Sexual &

Reproductive Health (ASRH) Program. The aim the WEP was to equip these women's groups

with financial and entrepreneurial skills so as to help them overcome poverty and to be able to

finance their children's education, particularly girls' education.

In April 2016, a study was conducted to examine the ways that two out of the four women's groups are supporting girls' education. Focus groups were employed to interview a total of 20 group members; 10 from the *Kitmikayi Community Development Group* (Kisumu County) and the other 10 from the *Aba Esibembe Group* (Busia County). Members of these two groups said they had benefited a great deal from the WEP. For example, they had acquired new (financial) skills which enabled them to begin and manage small businesses. In turn, they became economically empowered and were able to meet their needs and those of their families.

The groups also stated that the Women's Entrepreneurship Project helped them develop skills to empower the wider community. For example, they learnt how to sensitize community members on issues affecting the youth and encouraged a community discourse around these issues. Most importantly, these groups invested time and money to support girls' education. They used their [financial] resources to keep girls in school and also encouraged fellow parents and others in the community to do the same. Virtually all the members of these two women's groups stated that their children and/or grandchildren were in school and they attributed this to their membership in these groups. Group members said they had high hopes that their children would successfully complete their studies and find employment.

Since the majority of group members had low levels of education, they were very keen to see to it that their children and/or grandchildren got an opportunity to go to school. Women told narratives about how they went door-to-door talking to families in their communities about the importance of educating girls. They also stated that they engaged in community

policing and took it upon themselves to report misbehaving youth to their parents in order to curb delinquency and reduce incidences of unintended teenage pregnancy.

These women's groups felt that they were doing a lot to change community attitudes around girls' education and were proud of their efforts. They described instances where they were proactive in advocating for girls to stay in school and complete their studies. For example, they talked about how they approached their local area chiefs to intervene in situations where young girls had left school after being lured by motorbike taxi men (commonly known in Kenya as *boda boda*) into relationships. Another strategy involved taking advantage of chiefs' *barazas*, to discourage a popular fad among youth known as *disco matanga* –where young people attend overnight discos at funerals. These 'funeral parties', group members argued, endangered girls by exposing them to young boys and men who would lure them into having unprotected sex, leading to early, unintended pregnancies. Based on their narratives, it appeared that these women's groups' proactive involvement in the lives of their daughters and those of other women in their communities was contributing in an important way to girls' education.

FAWE Zambia's SAFE Clubs
Like many sub-Saharan African countries, Zambia has faced its share of challenges in dealing with girls' education. Over the years, Zambia has invested less in education compared to other African countries. Consequently, this has had an indirect, negative impact on girls' learning. With less dollars going into schools, the school environment continued to be less favorable for girls. Poor infrastructure and lack of sanitation were some of the problems girls

grappled with. Another key barrier has been the increase in teenage pregnancies. Research shows that teenage pregnancies and child marriage are an acute problem in Zambia. According to UNICEF's *State of the World's Children 2015 Report*, 34 percent of women ages 20-24 gave birth before 18years of age and 42 percent were first married or in a union before 18.

FAWE Zambia (FAWEZA) has been among the actors involved in helping get teenage girls who become pregnant back into school. In 1996, FAWEZA helped to lobby the Zambian government to introduce a school re-entry policy to ensure that pregnant girls were allowed back into school once they had given birth. Presently, this policy is in place and has helped secure girls' opportunities in school after pregnancy.

In addition, since 2002, FAWEZA has encouraged schools to form Student Alliance for Female Education (SAFE) Clubs, which are student networks that promote positive learning experiences for both girls and boys. The Clubs also provide an avenue for young people to acquire life skills, and to learn about other issues like HIV/AIDS and Adolescent and Reproductive Health and Rights. SAFE Clubs help girls to build self-esteem and to openly discuss issues affecting them, including issues around sexuality. The Clubs promote peer-to-peer mentorship where young women in institutions of higher learning receive training on adolescent reproductive health and counseling, after which they partner with schools, to help provide counseling and advice to adolescent girls. So far, about 624 clubs have been formed in primary, secondary and tertiary schools across Zambia. The Clubs have helped reduce incidences of teenage pregnancies among participating schools.

FAWE's Mothers Club Initiative in Malawi:

Malawi's population was estimated at 16 million in 2014 (World Bank, 2015). Malawi is one of Africa's poorest nations. The country's Third Integrated Household Survey (IHS3, 2012) reveals that, "the national poverty rate is 50.7 percent indicating that almost half of the population is poor" (p. 204). Poverty in Malawi has implications for education. An estimated 21 percent of young Malawians aged 15 and above say they have never attended school and of this population, 44 percent report that lack of money is the primary reason they missed out on schooling (IHS3, p. 24). Further, 28 percent of females of this age group have never been to school compared to 14 percent of males in the same age category. This empirical evidence is a clear indicator that more females than males are missing out on education in Malawi.

To address the low levels of girls attending school in Malawi, FAWE Malawi (FAWEMA), in 2002, introduced a concept where local women take the lead in advocating for girls' education. The Mothers' Club initiative has been beneficial to rural women in that it has equipped them with skills and opportunities for community leadership. Some of the training women receive includes topics on gender-based violence, child-friendly schools, HIV and AIDS, human development and relationships and guidance and counseling. Further, women get training in resource mobilization so that they can learn how to raise money to support poor girls and to sustain their Mothers' Club.

Since this initiative began, many girls, particularly those who had dropped out of school as a result of pregnancy, have been able to return to school. Like Zambia, Malawi has a policy that allows teen mothers to return to school after giving birth (Birungi et al., 2015). This has had

a positive impact on girls' learning as it has enabled adolescent mothers to return to school and complete their studies.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Action

The present study found that communities in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia are playing a significant role in supporting girls' education. In Kenya, the AIC Girls Boarding Primary School is working in close collaboration with local authorities and law enforcement to rescue girls at risk of FGC and child marriage. Although the authorities are educating communities about the dangers these traditional practices pose on girls' lives, this culture still persists. As such, rescue efforts are not only challenging but also risky for all those involved. While this situation has not deterred authorities from continuing rescue missions, it raises questions about what approaches could be employed to better address the question of FGC prevalence in Kajiado. In other counties, NGOs have partnered with the government of Kenya to introduce an 'alternative ritual' that excludes female genital cutting, but, where "other essential components such as education for the girls on family life and women's roles, exchange of gifts, eating good food, and a public declaration for community recognition" are maintained (Chege, Askew & Liku, 2001). This approach could work in Kajiado as it has been embraced in counties like Samburu where FGC is prevalent (Mepukori, 2016; Nation TV, 2016).

Regarding adolescent sexual and reproductive health, the current study shows women and youth in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia are playing a critical role in equipping girls with information on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in an effort to avert unintended adolescent pregnancy and other consequences. In all three study contexts, these

efforts have resulted in adolescent mothers re-enrolling in school after giving birth. Overall, the results show that when communities are empowered with information about girls' lives, they can help to empower girls.

Critique of Policy Option(s)

- o **Implementing laws that protect children from child marriage and/or FGC**: While a number of countries have introduced laws to protect children from child, early forced marriage and FGC, implementation continues to be a hurdle. In some countries for example, there does not seem to be a political will to fight these cultural practices. Some political leaders have shown reluctance to support the prosecution of individuals involved in these practices for fear that they will lose popularity amongst voters. Similarly, the police are also less likely to enforce these laws because often, child marriage and FGC are viewed as cultural norms and not crimes against children. Another concern is that there are still countries where the minimum legal age of marriage is under 18 which not only legitimizes child marriage but violates the rights of children;

- o **Educating communities on the dangers child marriage and FGC pose to girls:** Although countries have shown commitment to ending child marriage and FGC there is still need for communities to be educated about the dangers child marriage and FGC pose to young girls. The fact that these practices are still prevalent in many communities in sub-Saharan Africa raises questions as to whether governments and civil society organizations are doing enough to help eliminate these practices.

- o **Financing Education:** In the last 15 years, many countries have failed to follow through with adequately financing education despite having made commitments to meet the MDG goal of universalizing basic education by 2015. Consequently, low education budgets have had a negative impact on the quality of education accessible to learners. Because of insufficient spending within the education sector, schools often lack the finances they need to develop infrastructure and to provide learning materials to the growing numbers of school children. These costs continue to be passed on to parents making it particularly difficult for poor families to afford an education for their children.

Policy Recommendations and Actions

In order to enhance the quality of basic education and to reduce the numbers of out-of-school children, particularly girls, the governments of sub-Saharan Africa need to:

- o Do more to educate communities about the dangers that cultural practices such as child, forced early marriage and FGC pose to young girls and women and encourage these communities to send their daughters to school. In many rural areas, the cultural norm promoting child marriage is still very much entrenched. A lot of communities that practice FGC still believe that once a girl undergoes the 'cut', she is ready for marriage. This belief cannot be reversed overnight. Communities need to be continuously educated on the multiple dangers girls face when they are circumcised. And the best way to go about this is to use local "experts" to spread the message. Indeed, as we found in our research in Kenya, women and girls can play a leading role in educating others about issues that affect girls' lives. Intervention programs should target women

and girls in rural communities where FGC is prevalent and equip them with knowledge about the harmful effects of these cultural practices. This could have a cascading effect where women/girls teach others and in so doing help eliminate the scourge of FGC and child marriage. Another approach would be to use village meetings as avenues where community members are educated on these issues (as was the case in our study of Kenya where the chief's *baraza* became a platform on which to educate the wider community about the dangers of FGC and the importance of keeping girls in school);

o Pass and implement laws that will ensure the protection of girls from child marriage and FGC. Further, governments must demonstrate a political will to fight these cultural practices by leading the campaign to end child marriage and FGC and impose severe sanctions for perpetrators of these crimes;

o Offer communities where FGC is a prelude to child marriage, an alternative means of making an income so that they do not resort to marrying their young daughters off in exchange for bride price. Recent research suggests that this approach has worked in some regions of sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the Population Council found that rewarding communities in Ethiopia with economic incentives such as animals for keeping girls in school for a 2-year period, helped delay marriage (Erulkar, 2014). This strategy could be employed in other contexts where child marriage continues to persist.

o Significantly increasing spending on education so that poor families do not have to carry the burden of educating their children;

- o Utilize the untapped reservoir of skills within the community that can help support girls' education. For example, local women, youth, and opinion leaders (e.g. Chiefs and the clergy) can be important agents of change where girls' education is concerned.

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