

**GALKAYO EDUCATION CENTER FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT
(GECPD)**



Galkayo, Puntland State of Somalia, Tel: +252 543-6457 / +252 544-6457

P.O. Box 3885, Postal Code 00506 Nairobi, Kenya

Email: gecpd2004@yahoo.com / gecpd2009@yahoo.com

Contact Person: Hawa A. Mohamed, Cel: +252-5795111

NARRATIVE REPORT

COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY

8TH MARCH 2014

THEME; "EQUALITY FOR WOMEN IS PROGRESS FOR ALL"

SUBMITTED TO:

DDA

SUBMITTED BY:

GECPD

DATE OF SUBMISSION:

15th March 2014

1. INTRODUCTION

On the 8th March of every year, women around the world join together in celebration of the intelligence, strength, courage and beauty of women, in commemoration of the International Women's Day (IWD). Since the early 1900's, this has been a day to recognize women from all walks of life without regard to their national, ethnic, cultural or political differences and to celebrate their achievements.

GECPD is committed to the empowerment, protection and promotion of the welfare of women and girls including protection from all acts of violence and harmful traditional practices such as FGM and early marriage. Since inception in 1999, GECPD in partnership with various agencies and collaboration of women community based organizations and support groups has been organizing various activities including forums, seminars, workshops, demonstrations/marches and advocacy through the media, to mark this day. GECPD has been utilizing these activities to strengthen its advocacy work towards building a caring and peaceful society, which protects its women, girls and children from all forms of violence, women economic, political and social empowerment.

To commemorate the day in 2014, GECPD in conjunction with community women groups and with the support of Donor Direct Action grant from Lara Lee/Cultures of Resistance fund organized a week-long traditional handcraft exhibition in Galkayo starting 8th to 15th March. The event was organized under the International theme **Equality for Women is Progress for All**. This report highlights the achievements of the activity, challenges faced and lessons learned.

2. OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the exhibition were;

- Celebrate the progress and promote IDP women in their struggle towards economic empowerment through production of traditional handcrafts.
- Promote engagement in production of traditional handcraft as an alternative source of livelihood to traditional female circumcisers
- Promote products made locally from biodegradable material as a contribution to environmental conservation efforts

3. PROGRESS ON ACTIVITY

Mobilization

Mobilization for the commemoration started was done between 1st and 7th March with preparation of the venue, organizing of exhibition materials and sending out invitations to targeted participants to the exhibition. Buildup events to the exhibition included radio and street banner messages on issues of Gender Equality, GBV/FGM, women economic empowerment and environmental conservation. The radio messages run on two radio stations in Galkayo (Radio Codka Nabada and Radio Galkayo). Other build up activities included mobilization of women and youth support groups to participate in the exhibition. The mobilization and build-up activities reached an estimated 3,000 people of varied ages, gender and diversities.

Exhibition Launch



A section of the participants at the official launch of the Exhibition

The official launch of the Women Traditional Hand craft Exhibition was on 8th March 2014 to coincide with the commemoration of the International Women Day. The event was held at the GECPD Main Center (the venue of the exhibition) and it brought together

over 300 people (200 Females and 100 Males). Categories of people represented at

the launch included women rights activists, youth, representatives of local and international NGOs and government representatives. The launch was graced by Mudug Regional Governor Mohamed Yussuf Tigey and traditional chief Bashir Abdulle Osman. The event featured speeches and a drama themed on the importance of shunning the use of polythene bags and adopting more environmental friendly carry bags which are available locally. Speakers at the event called for the revival of positive cultural values and practices that promoted women participation in decision making, economic development and which abhorred violence against women.

GECPD VAW Programs Officer Hawa Yusuf Ahmed in her speech gave a chronology of the International Women's Day celebration and explained the significance of this year's theme (Equality for Women is Progress for All) to the participants. Hawa congratulated

women exhibitors for their efforts in



Hawa Yussuf Ahmed addressing the exhibition launch

producing the items on exhibition underscoring the need to adopt locally made products as a means of protecting the environment and creating employment for hundreds of women and youth. "Through this we can create employment for hundreds our girls. We can create alternative sources of livelihood to women who continue to perform the harmful practice of FGM on girls for purposes of earning some income." She said.

Women Rights Activist Hawa Mire underscored the need to economically empower women and girls through increased access to employment and income generation opportunities saying it was the only way to ensure speedy economic development of the society. She also called for concerted efforts by all sectors of the society to end violence against women and girls such as FGM and other forms of GBV adding that women and girls should be accorded their rights as enshrined in the teachings of Islam.

Titled Traditional Chief Bashir Abdulle Osman commended Somali women for the major role they have played in society since the advent of the civil war adding that without them the stability and development being witnessed would be a mirage. Bashir said although women had realized much worth celebrating, policy makers at all levels should look into ways of addressing challenges affecting their development and advancement including access to gainful employment opportunities and ending acts of violence against them.



The Governor displays one of the items on offer while addressing the launch

Mudug Governor Mahamed Yussuf Tigey commended Somali women for their contribution in peace building over the past 24 years. Mohamed said Somali women had worked hard to secure the family unit while the civil war raged hence protecting the society from disintegrating. The governor

commended women for their skills and talents which have made a major contribution to the economic development of the society. "Somali women are famous for their skills and talents in making various traditional handcrafts such as the baskets and mats. They have the potential to turn this into an industry that will employ many." The governor committed to work with GECPD in promoting the making of traditional hand craft as an alternative source of livelihood for female circumcisers and other women without definite sources of income besides promoting it as an environmental conservation initiative.

Conclusion

The exhibition was closed on 15th March at a ceremony that included speeches and a drama on VAW. An estimated 1000 people visited the exhibition over the one week period and purchased some of the products on exhibition.



Top Left; Visitors led by the Governor visiting the exhibition stands **Right;** Some of the female circumcisers engaged in the handcraft as an alternative livelihood **Bottom Left;** Ushers to the exhibition stands clad in traditional Somali attire **Right;** Visitors queue to pay for the purchased



4. ACHIEVEMENTS

- In the spirit of its Integrated approach in elimination of FGM/GBV, GECPD was able to effectively reach out to a wide range of society with its anti-FGM messages while addressing other problems facing the society including unemployment and environmental conservation.
- Key community opinion leaders are gradually joining the campaign against VAW hence giving hope that positive policies and legislation will be put in place to end the vice.
- Although in a different event, the Puntland President issued a decree banning all forms of FGM. The decree was a culmination of longterm advocacy and awareness efforts by civil society groups to which GECPD has been a part.
- IDP women who are mostly marginalized were empowered economically through the sales of products made during the exhibition.

5. CHALLENGES

- There is still low participation of men in awareness creation and advocacy activities on women rights issues. Save for a few, a majority of men still feel that these issues are a responsibility of women and should thus be dealt with by women themselves hence the slow progress in realizing change given that men occupy most of decision and policy making offices.
- Lack of understanding of the basic gender principles at the family unit and society level has made it difficult to advance the quest for equal opportunities for women at the national level.
- High illiteracy levels amongst a majority of women has hindered their economic empowerment making them susceptible to acts VAW
- Weaknesses in law and policy enforcement institutions has made it difficult to follow up and effect policies passed to end VAW/FGM

6. LESSONS LEARNED

- Utilizing an integrated approach to addressing FGM/GBV is the most effective way of wrapping in key policy makers into the campaign hence making the campaign more effective
- Provision of education to women and girls that is integrated with awareness raising on gender and VAW issues can be an effective way of economically and socially empowering them.
- Low participation and engagement of men in promoting women rights remains a big obstacle in efforts to eliminate incidences of Violence Against Women hence advocacy activities and efforts should target to consolidate and enlist their support.
- For women to make headway in their quest for increased community participation they must first have well organized structures that transcends all levels of society
- Efforts to mainstream gender may not achieve much unless communities are educated on and embrace basic gender principles in their day to day lives at the lower level.
- Highlighting and recognizing achievements made by women in Somali communities under very difficult circumstances could embolden and encourage fellow women to champion for their rights.